

From Access to Engagement: The Power of In-House Interpreting Services

One of the pillars of a strong Language Access Policy is high-quality interpreting services that ensure meaningful and culturally responsive communication with our multicultural families. When done thoughtfully, interpreting becomes a bridge to **engagement, trust, and belonging**.

Interpreters play an essential role in building strong connections between families and schools. Every day, they do far more than translate words—they convey tone, context, and cultural meaning.

They help families feel seen and heard, and they help educators better understand the communities they serve. In this way, interpreters are not just service providers; they are partners in student success.

So how do we move from simple access to genuine engagement?

Two years ago, when I transitioned into my role as a Language Access Coordinator, my goal was clear: to build a **community of in-house interpreters** grounded in a shared sense of purpose and belonging. Instead of relying solely on external vendors, I began investing in people—developing a team that understands our district, our families, and our values.

This in-house model has allowed us to:

- Foster **consistent, relationship-based communication** with families
- Build **cultural competence and trust** across schools
- Provide interpreters with **ongoing training, collaboration, and support**
- Create space for interpreters to **share experiences and strengthen their practice**

As a result, interpreters are more connected—not only to the work, but to each other and to the communities they serve. Families, in turn, experience more than access; they experience **welcome, respect, and partnership**.

A Parent's experience with our In-House interpreting services

“She is kind, and makes us feel safe in any of our meetings”

- Spanish speaking mom of a third-grade student at Frost Elementary

Special Education Services department leading the way in -House interpreting services:

Between August 2024 and December 2025, our Special Education services logged a total of **23,802 minutes of interpreting support**, each minute representing a conversation where families were able to fully participate in their child's education.

But the most powerful insight is not just how much interpreting happened, it's **who made that connection possible**.

A Community-Driven Model in Action

- **62% of Guest Interpreters (external contractors)**
The majority of services were delivered by interpreters embedded in our school communities. These individuals bring not only language skills, but also cultural understanding and relationship-building that strengthens trust with families.
- **14% of In-House Interpreters (bilingual staff members)**
Our growing in-house team reflects a strategic investment in consistency, collaboration, and belonging. These interpreters are deeply connected to district practices and play a key role in elevating communication standards.
- **14% Agencies**
Agencies continue to provide critical flexibility, helping us meet demand across languages and schedules when additional support is needed.
- **10% Language Line**
On-demand services ensure immediate access, especially for urgent or unplanned needs—making sure no family is left without support.

Why This Matters

This data tells a bigger story:

We are not relying solely on transactional interpreting services—we are building a **relationship-centered model of communication**.

With **76% of interpreting (guest + in-house)** happening through people connected to our system, we are moving beyond access toward:

- Stronger relationships with families
- Greater cultural responsiveness
- More consistent and trusted communication

The Real Impact

Behind every percentage is a moment:

- A parent understanding their child's IEP for the first time
- A family asking questions with confidence
- A school team gaining deeper cultural insight

This is the power of interpreting done right not just facilitating language but fostering **belonging and engagement**.

As we continue this work, we remain committed to elevating interpreter voice, strengthening collaboration, and ensuring that every interaction with families reflects our core belief: **language access is not just about removing barriers, it's about opening doors to belonging and engagement**.