*Essential Elements for Energizing Interpreter Education*

*Through Context-Based Learning*

Rich descriptions of real-life examples provide opportunities for context based or situated learning. By using thorough descriptions of what qualified interpreters (with varying levels of education and expertise) do at work and why, interpreter educators can design lessons that develop critical skills and knowledge.

In the book, *More than Meets the Eye: Revealing the Complexities of an Interpreted Education* (Smith, 2013), the author documents examples of interpreters at work in 5th and 6th grade classrooms, but the findings are highly applicable to other contexts as well. The study investigated two main questions: what do educational interpreters do and what factors inform their moment-to-moment decisions.

Findings: Interpreters perform 5 primary tasks

1. Interpret and transliterate as needed
2. Seek, obtain and capitalize on available resources
3. Be helpful and productive employees
4. Interact with others
   1. With teachers
   2. With Deaf and hard of hearing students
      1. For social conversation
      2. To promote student interactions with others
      3. To maintain classroom flow
      4. To redirect student attention
      5. To allow student flow
      6. To alert student to important information
      7. To provide immediate reinforcement
   3. With hearing students
   4. With parents
   5. With other stakeholders and school personnel
5. Assess and respond to contextual, situational and human factors. Decisions about what takes precedence at any given moment are greatly influenced by three primary motivations. Qualified interpreters strive to:
   1. Optimize visual access
      1. Adjust physical position
      2. Direct student attention
      3. Adjust timing
      4. Modify interpretation
   2. Facilitate learning of content and language (ASL and English)
      1. Assess student learning needs
      2. Consider student placement and reading skills
      3. Make connections to prior knowledge
      4. Tutor, help, explain especially to even the playing field
      5. Support language development
      6. Consider stakes, accountability, preference, social implications, emotional well-being
      7. Consider communication options
   3. Cultivate opportunities for inclusion
      1. Prompt students to respond
      2. Respond directly to students
      3. Honor student flow
      4. Foster student independence while considering readiness
      5. Promote active participation in class activities
      6. Recognize and respect communicative intent