



REPORT TO THE LEGISLATURE

Educational Interpreters – Performance Standards

2017

Authorizing legislation: Senate Bill 5142 (2017)

(<http://lawfilesexternal.wa.gov/biennium/2017-18/Pdf/Bills/Session%20Laws/Senate/5142-S.SL.pdf>)

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Executive Summary

Educational Interpreters provide sign language interpretation of concepts introduced by the teacher for students who are deaf or hard of hearing. The Professional Educator Standards Board (PESB) is assigned the responsibility to adopt standards and educational interpreter assessments for educational interpreters. The educational assessments are designed to demonstrate professional interpreting proficiency.

Senate Bill 5142 (2017) directed the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) to submit to the education committees of the House of Representatives and the Senate by Dec. 1, 2017, a report “evaluating the costs, associated timelines, and feasibility of conducting or contracting for a peer review” of the Educational Signed Skills Evaluation (ESSE). OSPI conducted several activities to complete the assignment, including communication with other states and professionals who work with interpreters and students who are deaf or hard of hearing. The ESSE is not used broadly in any state, and no evidence of peer reviews have been recently conducted, requiring OSPI staff to estimate the timeline and costs based on other peer review assessments conducted for student assessments and teacher assessments, such as the Praxis.

Based on these estimations, the ESSE peer review could be completed by June 2018 at a cost of approximately \$37,000. As there are other options currently approved by PESB which require no additional costs, and the ESSE was taken by only 534 teachers nationally over the last three years, OSPI does not recommend proceeding with a peer review of the ESSE. OSPI stands ready to implement the final decision of the legislature.

Introduction

In 2013, as a requirement of House Bill 2127 (2012), the Legislature directed the Professional Educator Standards Board (PESB) to adopt standards for educational interpreters, and to identify and publicize educational interpreter assessments that met specified requirements. HB 2127 (2012) also directed PESB to establish a performance standard for each educational interpreter assessment, defining what constitutes a minimum assessment result, and specifying that beginning in the 2016–2017 academic year, all educational interpreters employed by school districts must have achieved the established performance standards.

PESB adopted two options for educational interpreter assessments and performance standards using a workgroup-based process. Based on the analysis of the assessments and discussion by workgroup members, the majority of members recommended the Educational Interpreter Performance Assessment (EIPA) and the National Interpreter Certification as assessment options for educational interpreters in Washington state. Both

tests assess American Sign Language. Currently, there is not a PESB-approved test developed specifically for Signed Exact English (SEE), although the ESSE was reviewed¹.

Senate Bill 5142 (2017) directs OSPI to submit to the education committees of the House of Representatives and the Senate by Dec. 1, 2017, a report “evaluating the costs, associated timelines, and feasibility of conducting or contracting for a peer review of the ESSE”.

Background

Between May and November 2017, Special Education staff at OSPI conducted several comprehensive activities to gather the required information for the Educational Signed Skills Evaluation (ESSE). Those activities consisted of:

- Contacting Western Washington University and Eastern Washington University seeking information regarding the costs, associated timelines, and feasibility of conducting or contracting for a peer review of the ESSE. Neither university could provide assistance.
- Contacting the California, Kansas, and Oklahoma Departments of Education, as earlier research conducted by the PESB indicated these states used ESSE. Staff learned that Kansas no longer has an educational interpreters program and Oklahoma had not tested any candidate using the ESSE in 11 years. California Educational Interpreter Regulations require one of several available assessments, including the ESSE; however, staff were not able to provide us with information about a peer review.
- Contacting all State Directors of Special Education, using a National Association of State Special Directors of Special Education listserv, in an attempt to identify other states that used or may have conducted a recent ESSE peer review. None were identified.
- Contacting the Northwest School for Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing Children in Shoreline, WA to identify providers of SEE. The Head of School suggested the SEE Center for the Advancement of Deaf Children, which developed, provides, and trains on the ESSE. Staff at the SEE Center for the Advancement of Deaf Children were unable to provide assistance.
- Contacting Boys Town National Research Hospital, which developed, provides, and trains on the EIPA. Staff were told that candidates using Signed Exact English could be assessed using Manually Coded English, and that the EIPA was standardized.

¹ [PESB Educational Interpreter Standards Recommendations Report](#)

As OSPI staff were unable to find examples of previous peer reviews conducted on the ESSE, staff identified other assessment peer review processes to estimate the potential process and cost. This included alternate assessments for students with significant cognitive disabilities, and teacher assessments such as the Praxis.

Conducting a Peer Review

Costs

In conducting a peer review, there must be participation from experts in the fields of SEE, assessment of interpretation, assessment construct, and result validity and reliability. Due to the length of the assessment, approximately six reviewers will be needed for up to 24 hours of review each. As there are limited personnel in the nation who will have the qualifications needed to conduct the peer review, it will be necessary to bring in people from outside of the state, which will increase costs. A neutral and experienced peer review team leader will be responsible for identifying the process, exact timelines, and tasks, which will take approximately 64 hours (40 hours of preparation and report writing, and 24 hours of on-site facilitation of peer reviewers).

Estimated Costs of ESSE Peer Review	
Team Leader: \$150 per hour times 64 hours	\$9,600.
6 reviewers: \$125 per hour times 8 hours times 3 days – 24 hours	\$18,000.
Meal allowance: 7 reviewers for three days @ current per diem (\$69)	\$1,449.
Lodging: 7 rooms for three nights @ current rate (\$143.05)	\$3,004.
Anticipated travel costs	\$4,725.
Total Estimated Costs	\$36,778.

Timeline

January–February 2018	Identify and contract for a Team Leader
March–April 2018	Identify team members, develop process, timelines, and assign/complete individual tasks
May 2018	On-Site Peer Review Process
June 2018	Complete Peer Review Report

Feasibility

There is a lack of current research and peer review on the ESSE, a limited number of teachers potentially taking it (less than 534 nationally 2010–2012), and data that demonstrates that interpreters taking both the ESSE and EIPA and scoring at the 3.5 level had comparable passing rates for both tests.

PESB has existing requirements for interpreters, which provides interpreters with a choice of assessments:

- EIPA with a minimum score of 3.5, AND EIPA—Written Test—passing score; or
- National Interpreting Certificate with RID certification AND EIPA—Written Test—passing score.

While the EIPA assessment was not developed specifically for interpreters using SEE, it may be used effectively and produce a similar assessment result, without the additional cost of peer reviewing an additional assessment. The EIPA assesses Manually Coded English, of which SEE is a derivative. Although OSPI could conduct a peer review of the ESSE, the effort and expense seems unnecessary due to alternate options available currently within Washington, at no additional cost to the state.

Conclusion and Next Steps

OSPI staff have conducted a review of the history of the actions and decisions of the PESB in relation to the ESSE and other interpreter assessments, contacted several states and personnel working with children who are deaf and hard of hearing, and estimated the timeline and cost of conducting a peer review on the ESSE. Due to the availability of other interpreter assessment options available within the state, and the high cost of adding an additional assessment that will be used with a minimal number of interpreters with Washington, OSPI does not recommend proceeding with a peer review of the ESSE. OSPI stands ready to implement the final decision of the legislature.

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