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K-12 Educational Online Job Posts:
Titles, Descriptions, and Qualifications

By

Anne Carlson

A thesis submitted to
Western Oregon University

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of:

Master of Arts in Interpreting Studies

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ABSTRACT

K-12 Educational Online Job Posts: Titles, Descriptions, and Qualifications

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In the 1960s, federal and state legislation was enacted allowing children who are deaf and hard of hearing the opportunity to attend local public schools. Education of the deaf has been a documented struggle throughout history. Students with disabilities were denied education and discriminated against because they could not hear. A new profession called educational interpreting entered the workforce responding to an increased demand (Ball, 2013). Educational interpreting was implemented in classrooms providing free, appropriate public education (Yell & Bateman, 2019) before educators, administrators, and school districts knew how to hire for the role. Since then, educational interpreting has been laden with problems that hinder advancement and professionalization (Ball, 2013; Johnson et al., 2018; Winston, 2004).

Online job posts for K-12 educational positions revealed inconsistent job recruitment practices regarding titles, levels of expertise, qualifications, and

responsibility expectations. Using qualitative research methods, Minnesota job postings were collected from public Internet domains for one year. Position announcements contained four themes that were compared to industry standards and legal compliance. The findings show the educational institutions' recruiting practices for jobs working with deaf and hard of hearing students conflict with recommended industry standard qualifications (NAIE, 2019). Research on job posts has an impact on the system of professionals who work in the educational setting such as school administrators, principals, managers, teachers, staff, students, and families.

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Background

How did interpreting become a profession? Authors like Dr. Carolyn Ball (2013), Lou Fant (1990), and Harlan Lane (1984) have captured rich stories about the people who helped grow sign language interpreting into a profession. In *Legacies and Legends: History of Interpreter Education from 1800 to the 21st century*, Ball (2013) documented the birth, growth, and advancement of signed language interpreting (See Table 1) including extensive detail about events and people who have had an impact on the interpreting profession.

Table 1

Timeline of the interpreting profession and advancement (Ball, 2013)

1800-1900	The roots of interpreter education.
1900-1960	The emerging needs for training and education.
1960-1970	The advancement of interpreter education.
1970-1980	The professionalization of interpreter education.
1980-1990	The convergence of professional educators.
1990-2013	The creation of program standards and accreditation for interpreter education.

The need for signed language interpreting grew after federal legislation was enacted in the 1950s and 1960s (Ball, 2013 pp. 15-16). In 1967, the Minnesota Human Rights Act state law passed that includes protections for people with disabilities and prohibits discrimination in a variety of public settings. At the national level, educational acts passed starting in the 1970s led to students with disabilities being afforded the opportunity to receive educational services in public school settings. This newly enacted legislation increased awareness, opportunity, and attention at a local and national level for and by people with disabilities. Social services expanded and became available for

deaf people who used signed language. Interpreting went from service provision to career opportunity through the creation of an organization and the development of interpreting training curriculum (Ball, 2013; Fant, 1990). However, those interpreting accomplishments have been replaced with concerns about education, credentialing, and qualifications to advance (Johnson et al., 2018; Olson & Swabey, 2017; Schick et al., 2005; Winston, 2004; Witter-Merithew & Johnson, 2004).

Table 2

Federal legislation related to interpretation for students who are deaf and hard of hearing

1973	Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act
1975	Public Law 94-142: Education for All Handicapped Children Act
1990	Americans with Disabilities Act
2002	No Child Left Behind Act
2004	Individuals with Disabilities Education Act
2015	Every Student Succeeds Act

Since the 1950s, laws have been crucial in protecting student rights to language, communication, and education. Early advocacy efforts were seen from key players involved like Boyce Williams, William Stokoe, and Dr. Homer Babbidge. The first deaf federal employee, Boyce Williams, worked with the U. S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare Vocational Rehabilitation Services to establish and enhance mental health services for deaf people (Ball, 2013, p. 15-16). Rehabilitation services were the first enacted to finally allow access for deaf citizens. Additional support services were needed for deaf and hard of hearing people to access communication to receive the rehabilitation services. Sign language interpreting was born with national recognition as a fundamental service. The 1960s brought deaf people accessibility to mental health

services. At the same time, the natural language and visual mode of communication, ASL, was first recognized as an official language (Armstrong, 2000).

In Washington, DC, at Gallaudet College (now Gallaudet University), professor William Stokoe published the first dictionary emphasizing the unique linguistic and grammatical features of the visual language used by Deaf people (Ball, 2013, p. 14). He was granted the honorary title of “Father of American Sign Language” or “Founder of Sign Language Linguistics” (Armstrong, 2000; Ball, 2013, p. 13). Formal recognition of ASL led to changes in how communication could be accessed by people who could not hear spoken language.

Dr. Homer Babbidge wrote one of the first reports about educating the deaf for the Secretary of the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare in 1965 (Babbidge, 1965; Ball, 2013). Babbidge’s (1965) recommendations for improving education sounded progressive and inspiring:

Our responsibility in the education of the deaf is the same as it is for all our youth—to assist them in developing their talents fully, to prepare them to be responsible citizens, and to offer them stimulus and opportunity for cultural enrichment of their lives. (p. xvi)

In some respects, what Babbidge proposed regarding early detection efforts has been successfully developed for families to detect deafness (NASDSE, 2018). However, problems regarding communication accessibility and academic achievement gaps continues to remain a persistent issue in Minnesota (Minnesota Department of Education, 2020) and presumably across the nation.

The federal legislative actions occurring in the 1960s later became the most foundational work, changing the educational opportunities for children who are deaf and hard of hearing (U.S. Department of Education, 2016). Mainstreamed classrooms could allow deaf or hard of hearing students visual access to education through an interpreter. Local school districts are now required by law to allow deaf or hard of hearing children access to the mainstreamed classroom by providing them with an interpreter who facilitates communication access using signed language (NASDSE, 2018).

In summary, K-12 educational interpreting would not be a profession today if it were not for individuals like Boyce Williams, William Stokoe, and Dr. Babbidge who saw and addressed problems of access. Without legislation, deaf and hard of hearing people would have had to wait longer for access to vital services. Nevertheless, educational interpreting still needs improvement in the educational system where roles, responsibilities, qualifications, and knowledge to perform the job are clearly defined.

Researcher Description

What sparked my interest in pursuing research regarding educational interpreting is a publication by Johnson et al. (2018). The publication, *Complexities in Educational Interpreting: An Investigation into Patterns of Practice*, is a stark reminder that educational interpreting is still riddled with inconsistencies that hinder the advancement of the profession and add to the growing list of complaints that have been well-documented over the years. Johnson et al. (2018) conducted an extensive K-12 educational interpreting study, investigating the problems that persist in the interpreting field. Knowing what I had read and experienced through working in the environment

plagued with problems, I felt compelled to act and promote change by bringing attention to the educational issues in interpreting for students who are deaf and hard of hearing.

A particular issue addressed by Johnson et al. (2018) was the lack of clear information in job descriptions, which only further contributes to the struggles of credibility, professionalization, and knowledge related to working with deaf and hard of hearing children in educational settings (p. 110). To date, there is no research about job descriptions available in educational settings. With a lack of research and literature, how are educational institutions supposed to gather accurate information about job descriptions and qualified interpreting services?

My work experience in K-12 educational settings since 2012 has exposed me to the continued lack of awareness regarding interpreters, students who are deaf and hard of hearing, and ASL. The knowledge gaps about educational approaches, accommodations, and modifications further perpetuates low student achievement rates (Minnesota Department of Education, 2020). What results is an illusion of accessibility where deaf and hard of hearing students struggle to gain access to an inclusive educational environment (Caselli et al., 2020).

My professional interpreting work experience in education makes this study personal. I have seen and experienced the problems in schools and classrooms where knowledge about deaf and hard of hearing student access is limited. Information about the role and technical skill of interpreting is even more lacking. My knowledge and experience working in K-12 educational settings compels me to highlight the purpose of interpreters in the classroom.

Working as an educational interpreter, I have been exposed to the continued lack of awareness regarding communication accessibility for students who use ASL, signed language, and access communication through other modalities. Based on the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf's (RID) *Code of Professional Conduct*, interpreters have a professional responsibility to accurately facilitate all spoken and signed language communication for consumers (RID, 2005). Interpreting requires formal education, training, and expertise. In Minnesota, there are also statutes in place for qualifications and credentials that interpreters must possess to prove their capabilities and ethical decision-making skills (American Sign Language/English Interpreters [Minnesota Statute], 1994).

I believe all interpreters working in education deserve a title that is determined by current industry standards established by professionals and scholars. Titles give a sense of who the participants are in the interaction. More awareness about educational interpreters and accommodations for deaf and hard of hearing students would bring necessary equitable change to educational systems. Improving the working conditions of interpreters can allow both interpreters and students to be more successful in public education. As Johnson et al. (2018) stated, "Students who are deaf and hard of hearing are more likely to thrive when they have the right services" (p. 113). I am here to advocate for both those "right services" and qualifications for the "right services."

How do educational institutions know how to write an appropriate job description? How do hiring administrators, managers, and teachers know who is considered a qualified candidate? When school administrators are hiring for specialized jobs working with children who are deaf and hard of hearing, how are they ensuring the school environment and services are appropriate? Do educational teams know the

student's language and communication profile well enough to create a position that fully supports the student's needs rather than the entire classroom? Are educational teams familiar with interpreter qualifications?

Statement of the Problem

Titles, Roles, and Responsibility

Some job titles are inconsistent with descriptions of the job within the posting. The title of the job is different from the expected job duties. Some job titles are listed with multiple, conflicting roles, which lacks precision for clear, concise role performance in the broader system of K-12 educational professionals. Conflicting titles and roles do not allow the interpreter to function at full capacity to ensure deaf and hard of hearing students are successful.

Additional observations of K-12 educational interpreters in Minnesota and across the nation show that some interpreters are lumped into job categories that lack clear role delineation. A documented problem is the ongoing lack of awareness about the signed language interpreter's role and responsibilities where they are categorized with other support staff such as paraprofessionals, educational assistants, or aides (Johnson et al., 2018, p. 113; Stuckless et al., 1989; Winston, 2004).

Qualifications

The lack of awareness in K-12 education regarding minimum qualifications creates problems for interpreters and the consumers who depend on them. I have observed vacancies posted online by educational entities who are hiring but fail to include the minimum qualifications that follow industry standard recommendations

established by professionals and legislation. When those qualifications are ignored, educational opportunities are jeopardized for deaf and hard of hearing children.

Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities

Additional problems in job posts are related to the knowledge, skills, and abilities needed for employment. To keep up with the rapid technology changes and shifts in educational instruction, schools should be recruiting candidates who have knowledge and experience using a variety of digital platforms. Other knowledge should relate to staying current in interpreting, languages, child development, technology, and events (RID, 2007).

When administrators create jobs that are lumped together with other job positions like paraprofessionals or educational assistants, they could be impeding the educational opportunities of deaf and hard of hearing children who depend on vital communication services. Providing appropriately qualified interpreters and related service providers to perform these jobs is critical for student success (Johnson et al., 2018). Additionally, educational teams and administrators should be analyzing communication needs of students to ensure their services are being performed by the most qualified and skilled professionals.

Research Questions

The research questions guiding this work examine job titles and descriptions of online job posts in public K-12 educational settings for working with students who are deaf and hard of hearing. Various job titles for positions working with deaf and hard of hearing children were collected, studied, and compared to identify if a common description exists in Minnesota. I chose to focus on Minnesota because I work in the

Minnesota educational system; I have first-hand experience in the school system. I am also passionate about advancing educational interpreting jobs where interpreters are seen as colleagues to collaborate with as part of the educational team. But most of all, I care about this work because I believe students who are deaf and hard of hearing deserve better access and more attention regarding language, communication, and navigating the mainstreamed educational setting.

The descriptive language used in the online job posts for titling, roles, and responsibilities was analyzed in detail through qualitative methods. The job postings collected from publicly available internet sites were compared to scholarly literature that offers recommendations based on K-12 industry standards for having role designation, minimum qualifications, and skills.

My expectations prompting this research were that more than half of the online job posts collected from Minnesota would contain titles that included terms like facilitator, assistant, aide, or paraprofessional in addition to the title of Interpreter. Vacancies would also contain descriptive language outlining duties for interpreting between signed language and English along with responsibilities that are also part of a paraprofessional, assistant, or aide role. Another suspected conflict would be that collected job postings would not comply with the minimum qualifications recommended by scholarly literature and industry standards.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study is to explore the current trends in K-12 online job postings and job descriptions. This work contributes to the research available about the educational interpreting sector. My hope is to educate administrators about professional

interpreting. By hiring appropriately qualified interpreting professionals, deaf and hard of hearing students will have better access in the classroom thus improving their education.

Working as an interpreter in K-12 educational settings since 2012, I have observed areas that are increasingly problematic for the interpreting role. To satisfy my own curiosity, in June 2019, I began collecting online job posts from educational institutions located in Minnesota. I was frustrated to see my interpreting colleagues were not receiving recognition or credit for the services they were performing. Peers performing the same kind of work and attending the same workshops that I attended were assigned titles with a variety of other roles and responsibilities that I was not assigned to perform. My motivation for conducting research meant studying school districts' recruiting practices to identify the inconsistencies and deficiencies in online job posts.

Educational interpreters working in Minnesota are in school settings for the primary purpose of serving the deaf and hard of hearing students who access communication in the classroom through American Sign Language or signed language. This service is mandated by the Minnesota statute *American Sign Language/English Interpreters*, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, and Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) (U.S. Department of Education, 2016).

To study how school districts are promoting interpreting roles, I chose to study online job posts on the public internet domain. This approach to researching identified how school districts describe, label, and perceive the role of interpreter by reading through online job posts. I found ample information available online on the perceived role of the interpreter based on how educational institutions are recruiting and did not feel it necessary to conduct a survey of school districts.

To date, I have not found research about the current trends and patterns regarding job posts or job descriptions in the K-12 educational sector. As mentioned previously, Johnson et al. (2018) stated that future research on educational interpreting was needed. Studying the interpreting profession by obtaining information from job posts and job descriptions is a new angle for evaluating education, interpreting curriculum, and professionalization.

Various scholars have acknowledged the hardships and conditions of working as a K-12 educational interpreter but have not researched the titles and job descriptions (Fant, 1990; Johnson et al., 2018; Stuckless et al., 1989; Winston, 2004). I want to present data showing trends in job titles, duties, and qualifications. This information is collected through the public domain as this is what is being “advertised” to attract people to work in education. As Witter-Merithew and Johnson (2004) stated, “How to attract and sustain a qualified workforce is a concern” (p. 11). This research highlights some of these concerns using educational interpreting job posts collected for one year using the online search engine Google.

Theoretical Base

My study applies a qualitative research approach attempting to uncover information regarding recruiting practices in K-12 educational settings and professionalization. From my observation and experience working in K-12 settings, I have seen inconsistent recruiting practices used by school districts in Minnesota and across the nation. I used grounded theory to inform and guide my data collection and analysis to study online job posts and job descriptions. In this case, the text was used to identify trends, themes, and patterns in K-12 educational interpreting online job posts.

Grounded theory originated in 1967 by Glaser and Strauss who argued that its application extracts newfound information by analyzing settings in everyday life, which can lead to the creation of additional theories (Oktay, 2012, p. 5). Common characteristics of a grounded theory approach are that the study and researcher's hypotheses may actively change for the duration of the research process. New hypotheses may develop or evolve throughout the course of the study. As a study unfolds, the final stage is theoretical development. Grounded theory becomes a foundation for creating other theories (Oktay, 2012, p. 4).

Oktay (2012) discusses the application of grounded theory methods in the social science professions like sociology, social work, and nursing. For example, social work has used grounded theory to make evident the importance of having skilled and qualified professionals (Oktay, 2012, p. 4). Similarly, grounded theory applied to online job posts can show the various trends and patterns that educational institutions use for recruiting candidates with necessary qualifications.

The educational interpreting realm has been recognized as an area laden with challenges that have an impact on the vital role interpreters play in the classroom (Johnson et al., 2018; Seal, 2004; Winston, 2004). In this case, grounded theory becomes an appropriate tool for this research because there are no theories available on the current trends in educational interpreting online job posts. The textual information retrieved from job posts was extracted to track current recruiting practices of interpreters utilized by K-12 educational institutions. A study of online job posts allows for alternate ways to investigate and track how K-12 educational institutions are making sense of interpreters and personnel employed to work with deaf and hard of hearing students. My work creates

more awareness about the interpreting role in public education. In conclusion, grounded theory ends with the opportunity for theory development.

Strengths and Limitations of the Study

My experience as a current educational interpreter is a strength because I have knowledge and work experience in K-12 settings, schools, and navigating the educational system. Working in the educational setting since 2012, I have been supported to expand my learning and question the successes and failures of K-12 educational interpreting. Exposure to school professionals and administrators who are unaware of communication and language accessibility for deaf and hard of hearing students must change and improve. I have personally experienced, observed, and witnessed the problems in the educational system that cannot be ignored. A strength of doing research in my area is the attention and changes that could result from what is presented in the findings. Local leaders and educators can be shown with evidence the challenges of hiring and retaining educational interpreters.

Another strength from using data collected online is that it requires no further input needed from human respondents; the online data is widely accessible to the public. From research conducted in other countries about online job posts, the findings can reveal the facts related to knowledge, skills, and qualifications that employers desire (Md Nasir et al, 2020). The results can be further applied to interpreting workforce supply and demand, where limited information is available about current job needs and trends. A larger corpus of data could provide a more comprehensive view of K-12 educational interpreting labor markets and employability of interpreters.

An inherent limitation to reviewing only written job descriptions is the difference that may occur between job expectations and reality. A written job description may not show a thorough list of all job duties performed. An absence of interviews from administration and recruiters does not provide a complete picture about why job posts are inconsistent. Without observing or surveying human participants, the findings represent the job skills and competencies educational institutions desire.

Definition of Terms and Abbreviations

In the interpreting profession, more specifically K-12 educational interpreting, there are commonly used and known terms. For ease of reading, definitions are provided below for specific content.

Access refers to a student's right to language and communication present in the educational setting (NASDSE, 2018). Deaf and hard of hearing students may need accommodation services to access auditory information used by the majority of people in the educational setting.

American Sign Language (ASL) and signed language are used synonymously in this thesis. ASL is a visual and manual language with independent language structure and culture used by people who are deaf (Ball, 2013; Fant, 1990; Lane, 1984).

Certification, in the interpreting field, is most commonly recognized and awarded by the member-driven organizational body called the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf (RID). Certification testing systems have changed over the years with RID retiring and updating certificates. The currently offered, nationally recognized interpreting credential is called the National Interpreter Certification (NIC) exam. A certificate still recognized by RID but has since been placed under moratorium is the

Educational Certificate: K-12 (Ed: K-12), which formerly awarded interpreters certification status if they obtained a 4.0 or higher on the Educational Interpreter Performance Assessment (EIPA) and passed the written knowledge exam (RID, n.d.-d). The moratorium has caused interpreters to funnel certification efforts only to RID and CASLI; other testing systems are diminished in validity. Another exam that has been adopted in neighboring states is by the Wisconsin Department of Health Services implementing the Board for Evaluation of Interpreters (BEI; Wisconsin Department of Health Services, 2020).

Credentials are defined as awards, certificates, or successfully obtaining a minimum score on an interpreting examination to satisfy legal compliance set by the Minnesota Department of Education (2020) and Minnesota statute §122A.31. Minnesota recognized credentials include awards from RID, National Association of the Deaf (NAD), and EIPA 4.0 or higher plus written exam. Additional credentials mentioned in this study that are not specific to ASL interpreting include TECUnit and the ParaPro Assessment. TECUnit is uniquely aimed at cued speech transliteration (TECUnit, 2020). The ParaPro assessment is an exam that tests the skills and knowledge directly applied to paraprofessional work in educational settings (ETS, n.d.-a).

Deaf/deaf shall hold the same definition in this paper. However, it is important and relevant to recognize that within the Deaf Community, there are various identifying labels that students may choose to use and are not limited to, “deaf, Deaf, hard of hearing, hearing-impaired, and deafblind” (NAIE, 2019). The capitalized form of Deaf can be used to refer to individuals who belong to a specific community or culture of people who use ASL and share life experiences living in a society that speaks and hears (Fant, 1990).

Additional considerations about deaf and hard of hearing children is that “the overwhelming majority of deaf children are born to hearing parents, who are not typically proficient in American Sign Language (ASL), the type of language-rich interactions required to provide natural acquisition of ASL is often not available” (NAIE, 2019).

Education or educational, for the purpose of this thesis, will refer to Kindergarten through 12th grade (K-12), which includes children from age 3 through 21 years old in public school settings. Job posts were focused on K-12 educational settings working with students who are a children or dependents. Post-secondary education job announcements were not collected for this study and would require a different research lens where student populations are adult-aged learners.

Individualized Education Program (IEP) is a legal written document that designs and plans an educational program for a student with disabilities to participate with accommodation in public, mainstreamed classrooms (NASDSE, 2018; Smietanski, 2016, p. 9). In the interpreting community, IEP is a commonly used abbreviation referring to an interpreter education program (Bowdell et al., 2018; Hunsaker, 2020; Rice, 2020; RID, n.d.-a). To avoid confusion in abbreviations, IEP will be used to refer a student’s individualized educational program in the K-12 setting.

Interpreter Training Program (ITP) and interpreter education program will share the same meaning but be abbreviated throughout as ITP. For the purposes of this study, the abbreviation ITP is used to alleviate misunderstandings caused by the commonly used abbreviations in K-12 education for Individualized Education Program (IEP). In Minnesota, there are three interpreter education programs offered and

recognized by RID. All three are located in the Twin Cities metro area: North Central University, Saint Catherine University, and Saint Paul College.

National Association of the Deaf (NAD) is a human and civil rights organization that supports and protects people who are deaf and hard of hearing (NAD, n.d.). NAD previously offered a certification that certified interpreters with credentials NAD III (Generalist), NAD IV (Advanced), or NAD V (Master) (RID, n.d.-b). The credential obtained from NAD is still recognized as certification.

Paraprofessional titles may include other labels like assistant, educational assistant (EA), and aide. In the school environment, paraprofessionals perform responsibilities to support the entire class. Additional responsibilities include assisting the broader educational community of teachers, staff, administration, and students, performing bus, lunch, and general supervision duties, and possibly administering health or personal care assistance. These roles are crucial to the educational systems success. In Minnesota, school districts recognize a minimum score of 460 on the ParaPro assessment as an evaluation tool (ETS, n.d.-b).

Provisional is a temporary license to practice interpreting in educational settings only, issued by the Minnesota Department of Education, written into legislation by the Minnesota Office of the Revisor of Statutes (American Sign Language/English Interpreters [Minnesota Statute], 1994).

Qualifications, for purposes of this thesis and analyzing online job posts, covers an umbrella category of the necessary minimum level of education and certification or credentials that should be obtained for employment.

Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf (RID) is the member-driven organizational body that has established specific codes of professional conduct to guide the professional work of interpreting (RID, 2005, 2007, 2010).

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

The topics covered in the review of the literature pertain to laws and legislation directly impacting the educational setting, definitions of interpreting, job descriptions, and diverse student profiles. There is no published literature available studying job descriptions. However, many scholars outline strong evidence recommending necessary minimum qualifications working in the educational settings with deaf and hard of hearing youth.

Educational Accessibility Legislation

There are five federal laws that extend protections for children with disabilities and accessibility in a variety of contexts. These federal laws created educational opportunities for students who are deaf and hard of hearing. Unfortunately, the educational opportunities that some children with disabilities have been provided has presented important accessibility legal challenges between schools and families (Yell & Bateman, 2019).

In the 1970s, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act (1973) and the Education for All Handicapped Children Act (1975) were enacted to address education for children with disabilities. Later in 1990, the Education for All Handicapped Children Act Public was reauthorized and renamed to Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA) (2020). The 1990s also saw the passing of both the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and No Child Left Behind, which later became Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA).

However, the legislation lacked clear descriptions of effective and appropriate implementation and interpretation about the accommodations and services for students with disabilities. Federal-level protections exist to ensure that children who have

disabilities are not discriminated against when receiving a public education. Over the years, the Supreme Court has seen cases between children and their families disagreeing with the service accommodations public schools provided in the educational environment. A prominent case held in the Supreme Court in 1982 was the *Board of Education v. Amy Rowley*, which shaped the definitions of appropriate accommodations for students with disabilities accessing mainstreamed public education (Yell & Bateman, 2019). Students are provided special education accommodations if needed to access the educational environment.

School districts must also comply with the Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act and Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) to provide and design a free, appropriate public education. Covered under Section 504 and IDEA, students between the ages of 3 through 21 years old identified with a disability qualify and are eligible to receive accommodations, aids, and services that allow the child to access all school programs, curricular and noncurricular, and activities offered (NASDSE, 2018).

Legal compliance is an issue of concern when discussing the role of the educational interpreter. Like IDEA, Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Amendments Act (2008) states that students have the right to effective communication, which identifies the support service of *qualified interpreters*. Unlike Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act and IDEA, the ADA uniquely pertains to any individual of any age identified with a disability, covering a variety of settings such as education, employment, and public access.

Another federal law that specifically addresses educational settings and student achievement is Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). Originally passed as No Child Left

Behind, ESSA was revised and renamed in 2015 (U.S. Department of Education, 2015). Through assessment-based practices, the ESSA applies to all students in public school education ensuring that students are meeting academic performance and goals. A Supreme Court case between *Endrew F. v. Douglas County School District* in 2017 determined that students receiving special education services should have educational plans that are specifically designed to foster the individual child's needs (Yell & Bateman, 2017). Students receiving special education services should have educational plans designed for them to benefit developmentally and educationally from the services.

More locally, Minnesota has two laws ensuring students with disabilities can access public school education. In 1967, prior to previously discussed federal legislation, Minnesota Human Rights Act (1955) prohibited discrimination, which includes people with disabilities. The Minnesota statute §122A.31 (1994 & rev. 2019) American Sign Language/English Interpreters states the need for *qualified* interpreters who hold certification awarded by RID, NAD, or comparable state certification from the state commission of education. Through funding, Minnesota school districts who employ qualified interpreters can be reimbursed for those services through statute §125A.76 Special Education Aid and Minnesota Health Care Programs (MHCP) (Minnesota Department of Human Services, n.d.). A stipulation in statute §122A.31 (1994 & rev. 2019) reimbursement wording is that those interpreters claimed for reimbursement as *qualified* must successfully hold current certification and credentials. As documented in the *Biennial Report to the Legislature: 2020*:

School districts currently struggle with meeting the requirements for certified educational interpreters, often because they do not know how to find them. There

have been cases in which districts had to reimburse funds for interpreters because the personnel they hired did not meet minimum requirements. (Minnesota Department of Education, 2020, p. 18)

As presented in the literature about educational accessibility legislation, there have been documented challenges that gained attention regarding educating students who have disabilities receiving a special education. When educational interpreters are implemented in educational plans, standardization concerning levels of qualifications is lacking (NAIE, 2019). As seen in previous legal cases, ambiguity in legislation combined with a lack of understanding is not beneficial for students, families, educational systems, and professions.

Definition of Professional Interpreters and K-12 Educational Interpreters

In the signed language interpreting field, there is a distinction between *professional interpreting*, *educational interpreting*, and *professional educational interpreting* (Winston, 2004). Like other professions, there are different areas of specialty in the field. In the broadest sense, professional interpreting encompasses areas of signed language interpreting working in medical, legal, freelance, video relay, or education venues. The description of the interpreter's function is dependent on the consumers involved in the interpreted interaction (Roy, 2000). The role of an *educational sign language interpreter* is "to facilitate the communication between the deaf or hard of hearing students and the teacher or teachers as well as other students in the class who are unable to use sign language" (Jones, 2004, p. 114).

Nationally known and defined by the RID (2007), professional sign language interpreting is a process that allows people who are Deaf or hard of hearing to

communicate with people who can hear. The interactions happen through the facilitation of communication between spoken English and visual ASL by linguistically, cognitively, and technically skilled professionals (RID, 2007, p. 1).

In the same year (2007), a standard of practice and ethical guidelines document, the *EIPA Guidelines for Professional Conduct for Educational Interpreters* (Schick, 2007), was published. Specifically concentrating on the educational system, interpreter roles were categorized as support and related service professionals. Related service professionals in school settings might include a mix of professionals like speech language pathologists, occupational therapists, or audiologists. When a student is on an IEP because they are deaf or hard of hearing, they can be provided accommodations like the use of an interpreter. With interpreters being recognized with other related service professionals, they were finally gaining a seat at the table with educational professionals to discuss programming and accommodations for deaf and hard of hearing students.

To accommodate different specializations in the field of ASL interpreters, the RID created a separate paper, *Standard Practice Paper: An Overview of K-12 Educational Interpreting*, explaining the work of educational interpreters (RID, 2010). This document focuses primarily on the necessity of minimum qualifications, clear roles, established codes of conduct, and expertise for interpreting in the educational setting. A section regarding how administrators supervise such positions was also included. When supervisors lack the knowledge and expertise of interpreting, they should seek consultation and advice from outside professionals (RID, 2010, p. 3; Taylor, 2004, p. 183).

The turn of the century in the 2000s offered definitions for the interpreter in a professional capacity, holding appropriate qualifications, and gaining recognition as educational team members. Even the local government website, Minnesota Department of Human Services, Deaf and Hard of Hearing Services Division explicitly states, “Professional American Sign Language interpreters facilitate communication between people who use ASL and people who don’t” (Minnesota Department of Human Services, n.d.).

Job Descriptions

Moving from the definitions of professional interpreters, published research has not been conducted studying job descriptions in the interpreting profession and, more specifically, K-12 educational interpreting roles. On the contrary, there is plenty of literature that discusses the nature of job descriptions and what should be included in them. Interestingly, interpreting job roles have struggled to be independent from other job roles in educational school settings.

In 1989, Stuckless et al. documented the state of educational interpreting for students who are deaf or hard of hearing. Interestingly, issues regarding interpreter job descriptions brought up in 1989 are still relevant to the educational interpreter in 2021. To avoid misunderstandings that can occur regarding the role of the educational interpreter, schools and administrators who are unfamiliar with interpreting positions should solicit expert advice to prepare these job descriptions (Stuckless et al., 1989, p. 5). Educational institutions utilizing interpreters showed a disregard for clearly separating the role of interpreter compared to the other roles that exist in the school setting (Stuckless et al., 1989, p. 5). The report offers a hint of a reason why institutions might be

writing inaccurate job descriptions: They lack awareness about the educational interpreter's function in a school setting.

In 1989, when Stuckless et al. wrote their report, school administrators were not creating job descriptions explicitly for interpreters. Positions outlining the work have since been laden with problematic roles and responsibilities separate from other positions in the setting. Interpreting has been performed in addition to positions with roles similar to a teacher's aide, paraprofessional, and educational assistant. When roles are combined, confusion and problems arise between interpreters and every other professional in the educational system.

Organizations like the National Association of Interpreters in Education (NAIE) have taken the lead on writing resource guides that offer best practices for writing job descriptions. From the *Professional Guidelines for Interpreting in Educational Settings*, job descriptions should accurately list job titles, roles, responsibilities, qualifications, and employment contracts (NAIE, 2019, p. 13). Other considerations should include how the interpreter functions in academic and nonacademic settings within the educational system.

Job Titles, Roles, and Responsibilities

A broader look at literature recognizing the necessity of proper job titles can be found in Kubiak et al. (2014), explaining that job titles provide a guide and expectation of the nature of the work (p. 91). When job titles, roles, and boundaries are combined with other roles, it can cause issues. Problems could include role delineation, student support, and minimizing qualifications.

The literature available studying educational interpreters recognizes that job titling differences exist and have been present for many years (Jones, 2004; Langer, 2004; Seal, 2004; Stuckless et al., 1989). Stuckless et al. (1989) explained how interpreters are responsible in educational settings for providing deaf students with what is said between everyone in the environment (p. 7). The deaf students are privy to the communication that is had with them and everyone else in that space. Even if a conversation is not directed at the deaf student, those students shall have the opportunity, through interpreting services, to access what others hear.

Interpreters bear a hefty load to interpret all the communication happening in educational environments. Titles like paraprofessional should be avoided when discussing the nature of interpreting work, but not out of disrespect for the role (Langer, 2004, p. 95). When other titles are used in place of interpreter, it diverts the attention and importance of interpreting. When job descriptions list noninterpreting tasks, this can leave the interpreter conflicted about the primary job function (Metzger & Fleetwood, 2004, p. 172). A brief list of other responsibilities that should not be combined with the interpreting roles, yet sometimes are, include aiding in student instruction, tutoring, supervising and disciplining students, janitor, and teacher's assistant (Johnson et al., 2018; Langer, 2004; Metzger & Fleetwood, 2004; Smietanski, 2016; Stuckless et al., 1989).

Conrad and Stegenga (2005) explained that all-encompassing job titles, such as *language-aide*, *interpreter-tutor*, and *signing assistant*, cause unclear expectations of the role (p. 295). Ideally, job titles like *interpreter* dictate the primary role as interpreting and follow the legal language related to providing appropriate accommodations for students

who are deaf or hard of hearing. Vague job titles with ambiguous expectations of the primary role led to a minimization of the necessary skills and qualifications, along with an inaccurate portrayal of the level of dependency the student has on school personnel (Conrad & Stegenga, 2005, p. 295; Stuckless et al., 1989). Another mistake is that untrained teacher's aides, rather than interpreters, are hired to work with children who are deaf. This lack of appropriate service provision causes the students to appear deficient in skills when they cannot keep up (Humphrey & Alcorn, 2007, p. 326). The role of a teacher's aide is important in the school system, but it serves a very different purpose than the IEP-mandated services of interpreting related to a student's inability to access auditory information.

Langer (2004) similarly explained that an *aide* should not be expected to perform the role of interpreter and vice versa. When roles are combined, this can have negative repercussions on interpreters and students. There needs to be more awareness and understanding by teachers and administrators about the role differences (Humphrey & Alcorn, 2007, p. 328-337; Langer, 2004).

Smith (2013) designed a study collecting interviews and observing K-12 interpreter activities and responsibilities. The results showed the complex, multi-faceted role, along with interpreter decision-making skills. Again, problematic job duties were identified as an issue when interpreting was not an immediate need. Interpreters were expected to perform other duties like supervising children at lunch and recess, which often took precedence over the interpreter's prep time needed for reviewing class materials and meeting with teachers (Smith, 2013, p. 83). Considerations regarding

appropriate and effective working conditions for interpreters need to be more carefully reviewed by administrators and educational teams.

Brought to the forefront of the conversation is decades of research and literature documenting the ongoing lack of attention required to provide communication access in the K-12 setting (Smietanski, 2016). Interpreters expected to perform noninterpreting roles can lead to compromised access for a deaf or hard of hearing students (Smietanski, 2016, p. 36-38). Roles and responsibilities should be defined with the utmost clarity within the educational environment for the interpreter to provide effective and accurate interpreting, along with full access. Ultimately, legal compliance is the school district's responsibility (U.S. Department of Education, 2016, p. 43).

As the discussion branches out further, more evidence shows the need for reevaluation of job description roles and responsibilities of interpreters. "Nowhere was this more apparent than in K-12 educational settings where 'interpreters' were, and often continue to be, hired and 'supervised' by individuals who know nothing about the [Deaf] Community and its language, and where deaf children are often isolated from the [Deaf] Community" (Cokely, 2005, p. 13). Interpreters who were asked to perform other noninterpreting responsibilities may jeopardize the student's education in the mainstreamed educational setting.

A study conducted in 2011, called *The Wisconsin Study*, uncovered the impact of legislation and the complexities that occurred when low population rates of deaf and hard of hearing children were found in educational settings (Oliva & Lytle, 2014, p. 109). Many times, interpreters are working in isolation as the only interpreter in the school and even in the district (Taylor, 2004, p. 185). The isolation of educational interpreters

somewhat parallels the experience of deaf and hard of hearing students in the mainstream classrooms and school systems (Johnson et al., 2018, p. 110; Oliva, 2004, 2012; Oliva & Lytle, 2014). When issues of interpreting have not been able to change the story, what will be the change that drives educational institutions and administrators to improve hiring, supervising, and job description practices?

Qualifications for K-12 Educational Interpreters

Educational interpreting for deaf and hard of hearing students is work that requires a skilled interpreter (Schick, 2007; Schick et al., 2005; Seal, 2004; Taylor, 2004). The qualifications and skills required to interpret for children and students are important to consider when hiring in an educational setting. The ability to sign does not necessarily designate that someone has sufficient proficiency to interpret (RID, 2007, p. 1; Stuckless et al., 1989, p. 6).

How do educational institutions evaluate interpreting skills for interpreters? Across the nation, states have various options for evaluation that meet interpreting industry standards. Examination options might include, but are not limited to, the Educational Interpreter Performance Assessment (EIPA) offered by Boys Town National Research Hospital (n.d.), the National Interpreter Certification (NIC) examination offered by the RID (n.d.-c), and individual states granting licensure with separate screening processes. Minnesota uses recognized certifications and screening tools from the RID (n.d.-b), National Association of the Deaf (n.d.), and Boys Town National Research Hospital (n.d.). To further clarify, the Minnesota Department of Education State Commissioner has the authority to recognize additional certificates after input from

stakeholders revealed the EIPA was an appropriate that was not explicitly written into Minnesota statutes (Minnesota Department of Education, 2020).

When educational institutions are looking to cross state boundaries, the EIPA and NIC are current evaluation tools that can screen interpreters and deem them appropriately qualified if they obtain a satisfactory score. The scores for each assessment are different; the EIPA utilizes a numerical score, and the NIC follows pass/fail scoring. Schick (2007) recommended that a numerical score of 3.5 or higher on the EIPA should be the absolute “minimum level of competency” (p. 3). More recently, those previously established qualifications are being reevaluated by scholars to show the need for more advanced interpreting skills. Johnson et al. (2018) called for a more updated view of the changing interpreting standards stating, “Research indicates that an EIPA score of 4.0 is more appropriate for educational interpreters working in K-12 settings” (p. 5).

Table 3

Assessments currently offered to evaluate interpreting performance skills

<u>Name</u>	<u>Organization</u>	<u>Scoring</u>	<u>Educational Requirements</u>
EIPA	Boys Town National Research Hospital	1.0 Beginner – 5.0 Advanced	None
NIC	RID	Pass/Fail	Bachelor’s degree

The NIC is a recorded performance exam using prerecorded video material including a variety of situations (RID, n.d.-c). The EIPA is also a recorded performance exam that uses mock classroom video material recorded from school settings (Boys Town National Research Hospital, n.d.). The EIPA is an evaluation tool that can screen interpreters most effectively, as it uses educational testing scenarios. However, the educational degree requirements for each assessment are different as well. The EIPA

does not have a minimum degree requirement, whereas the NIC requires a bachelor's degree. Interpreting language qualifications need to be properly assessed (Taylor, 2004).

In 1989, Stuckless et al. identified the minimum educational qualifications of an associate degree with a bachelor's degree preferred (p. 31). More recently, Jones (2004) stated that the minimum qualifications needed for interpreting had changed, declaring "associate degrees in interpreting are not enough for the specialty area of K-12 educational interpreting" (p. 126). RID (2003) released an organizational motion stating the need for higher educational standards. A minimum of a bachelor's degree has been required to stand for the certification exam, starting June 2008. More education and time were being recognized as necessary, to further build interpreting skills. An associate degree for interpreting does not allow enough time to build the language fluency and interpreting skills, while also learning about child development. "The field needs to take the initiative now to encourage policy-makers and employers to embrace these academic qualifications" (Witter-Merithew & Johnson, 2005, p. 112). Not only should the academic qualifications be welcomed, but associate-level interpreting programs should be looking for ways to boost their academic rigor.

In a study by Schick et al. (2005), *Look Who's Being Left Behind: Educational Interpreters and Access for Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing Students*, they found the disheartening reality that "approximately 60% of the interpreters evaluated had inadequate skills to provide full access" (p. 3). This should be a red flag to schools and educational administrators that necessary minimum qualifications are needed for educational interpreting in order for deaf or hard of hearing students to succeed.

Another argument about accurate qualifications for educational interpreters is the important distinction interpreting for children who are deaf or hard of hearing, rather than adults (NAIE, 2019, p. 13). Nilsen (2013) emphasized the experience and skill differences that are required for interpreters working with children who are deaf or hard of hearing in an educational setting compared to interpreting for adults in a general setting. The interpreting skills for adults are not the same skills needed for school-aged children (Olivia & Lytle, 2014, p. 70). The consumer groups, adults versus children, require different skill sets when considering human development. This is compounded further when communication and language considerations are included as a necessary skill set the interpreter must possess when working with deaf and hard of hearing children in education (Jones, 2004, p. 126).

In 2018, the National Association of State Directors of Special Education (NASDSE) developed guidelines when considering instructional supports like educational interpreters indicating they “must meet professional standards that include minimum qualifications and ongoing performance monitoring” (p. 3). They also suggested that having high-quality service providers is imperative to a child’s educational success (NASDSE, 2018, p. 3).

From a global perspective, current literature from Gile and Napier (2020) discusses the profession of interpreting as still young (after 25 years) and inconsistent. In educational interpreting, even though there are laws at federal and state levels protecting deaf and hard of hearing children, the profession is still struggling to gain separation from other roles like aides, assistants, and paraprofessionals. The problem is not new. Roles and responsibilities have been recommended, qualifications have advanced and evolved,

and yet the story is still the same convoluted picture from years past. The disconnect between industry qualification standards of interpreters and situations of misunderstanding in educational settings is concerning. The literature recommends the level of experience needed for interpreters working in education, but it appears that these recommendations are still not being adopted and put into practice. The acceptance and awareness of educational interpreting as a profession with clearly defined roles within educational institutions need to occur. Otherwise, the position continues to be a problem. Educational institutions and administrators should work toward greater awareness and collaboration with local and national stakeholders to learn about interpreting qualifications and personnel that provide direct communication access for deaf and hard of hearing students.

Student Profiles

Worth briefly mentioning is the recognition of diverse student profiles and families (Johnson, 2018; NAIE, 2019). Educational interpreting is not a one-size-fits-all approach, nor is it the solution to educational accommodations for students who are deaf or hard of hearing. School districts individually designing educational plans should be inclusive of the child as a whole covering the language(s) they use at home and school, communication, academic progress, and social skills (NAIE, 2019).

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

As previously mentioned in the introduction and review of the literature, there is no published literature available on the study of signed language interpreting job posts published on public domains. The purpose of engaging in new research practices is to identify, inform, and educate the interpreting community and consumer bases. This chapter describes in further detail the study design, data source, collection process, and analysis of the data. Further areas of consideration focus on the strengths and limitations of the methodology. The data collected for educational job postings were specific to K-12 educational settings.

Design

Publicly available job posts were collected through a Google search. Position vacancies were seeking candidates to provide communication access in K-12 educational settings. The intended population that would be receiving services are students who are deaf or hard of hearing using ASL or signed language to access communication in the educational environment.

Job postings were organized to analyze the titles, description of job duties, minimum qualifications, function or role, and responsibilities of positions compared to the recommended criteria. The job description criteria are from published literature recommendations presented along with expectations regarding role, responsibilities, and qualifications and position duties (RID, 2010; Johnson et al., 2018; NAIE, 2019).

The posting vacancies were also compared to Minnesota state and federal laws regarding communication access for deaf and hard of hearing children, Department of Education recommendations, scholarly literature publications, industry standards

established by RID, and best practices pertaining to working in K-12 educational settings in Minnesota.

The goal for retrieving and analyzing online job posts from Minnesota was to study K-12 educational interpreting without human subjects. This approach to studying the interpreting profession allows for researchers to have little to no impact on the data. The data is widely accessible and can be retrieved once published by the hiring entity.

A barrier to finding job posts was if the descriptions *interpreting* or *interpreter* appeared only in the job responsibilities section and not in the position title. In the K-12 educational setting, job postings were difficult to find due to inconsistent titling practices. Presented is just a brief sample of the search terms used to find these job posts:

interpreter, educational interpreter, language facilitator, interpreting paraprofessional, K-12 interpreter, interpreter for the deaf, signing assistant, signing tutor, para-educator, and language model. Each search term populated results for jobs available. The search terms give a glimpse into the various search terms a person could use when trying to find a job requiring ASL or signed language expertise.

Prior to analyzing the data, a pre-processing of the text was needed to organize text to allow for coding. Titles and description explanations were examined; specific school district graphics, headers, and logos were omitted. Analysis of the textual data in the titles and descriptions occurred throughout the collection of job posts. The study attempted to capture job posts samples from various regions in Minnesota. The text and qualifications to perform the job in the data sets were compared to scholarly publications for recommended minimum qualifications that educational interpreters should possess (NAIE, 2019).

Data Source

There were 24 job posts collected, downloaded, and analyzed from Minnesota. Attention was given to Minnesota job posts in the same way that Carol Schweitzer conducted work focusing on Wisconsin, stating need for reformation from educational systems (Oliva & Lytle, 2014). This study was conducted over a one-year timeframe to ensure a diverse sampling was collected. With schools in Minnesota following a nine-month school year, it was important to capture job postings before, during, and after the academic school year.

The job posts ranged in text length or word count length. Short job posts mentioned at minimum a title, position summary, and minimum qualifications. More in-depth job posts included detailed descriptions with recommended knowledge, skills, experience, credentials, and qualification required for the position. The job posts ranged in length from the shortest using 137 words to the longest shy of 1,100 words. The average length of a job post was about 530 words.

Data Collection

Saved job posts were downloaded and text was extracted from individual job posts. The text was then put into a document for further open coding (Smith, 2013, p. 36). Spreadsheet databases were used for organizing the textual information included in the descriptions. Information collected from the posts was the title, who supervises this job, job category, any recommendations about formal education, certifications, credentials, language considerations, roles, responsibilities, and any knowledge, skills, and abilities. The job posts were collected starting in July 2019 going through July 2020.

Data Analysis

The data analysis was conducted using a grounded theory approach to identify correlations and discrepancies that appeared (Smith, 2013, p. 36). The first step in analysis was to create codes or categories that organize textual qualitative data based on the idea or theme of the phrase. Those initial categories were further divided into subcategories to capture the patterns within a group. The four major areas analyzed were the titles; responsibilities; qualifications; and knowledge, skills, and abilities (KSAs).

Methodological Strengths and Limitations

One strength of using a grounded theory approach is that the researcher can show various correlations and patterns present in qualitative findings. The categories or codes that emerge from the data are representative of that set. The job postings collected from Minnesota may or may not have application at the national or global level. This study could and should be replicated in other states using similar methodologies to find out how educational institutions are hiring for position vacancies working with students who are deaf or hard of hearing. With the vast amounts of information available in the public domain, this study could be replicated in any area, community, state, or region.

A limitation to the grounded theory approach using open codes and axial coding to qualitative data is the inability to report on every single finding. Instead, this study should attempt to document and analyze what is in job posts collected from Minnesota. Another disadvantage to only collecting job posts on the public domain and analyzing them through coding is a lack of triangulation (Hale & Napier, 2013, p. 88). When researchers triangulate data collection, multiple forms of data are gathered where the findings can draw more sound conclusions targeting the “why” of a phenomenon.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

There were 24 Minnesota job posts reviewed. The textual information obtained from the job posts resulted in analyzing more than 12,000 words. Using a grounded theory approach in collecting and analyzing the data, patterns and themes emerged that were separated into codes. The main findings discussed in this chapter include titles; responsibilities; qualifications; and knowledge, skills, and abilities mentioned in job posts. An entire list of all the categories and subcategories can be found in Appendix A.

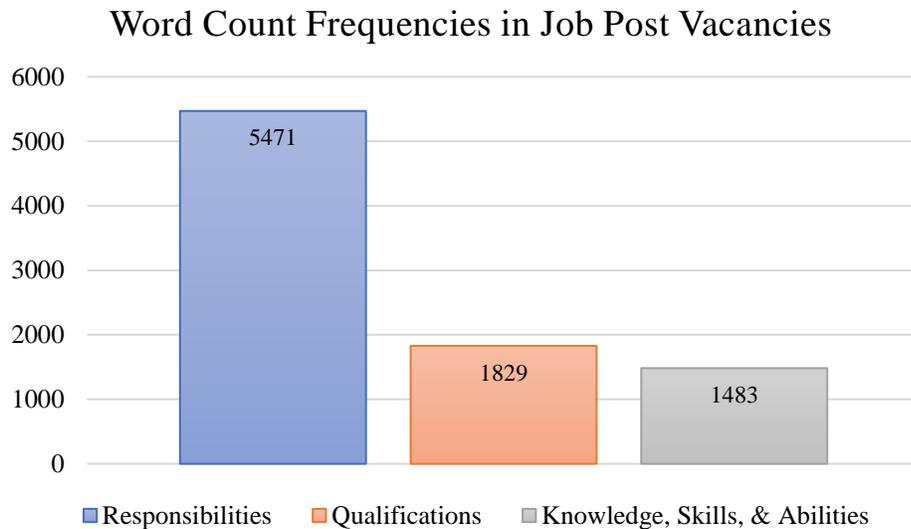


Figure 1. Word frequencies in job post vacancies for responsibilities, qualifications, and KSAs

From my initial reporting, there was not a consensus explicitly defining the interpreter, signed language interpreter, or educational interpreter. The only definition found in one job post references the legislation wording found in IDEA defining a disability, not a service:

The term “hearing impairment” means a diminished sensitivity to sound that is expressed in terms of standard audiological measures. Hearing impairment has the potential to affect educational, communicative, or social functional that may result

in the need for special education instruction and related services. (NASDSE, 2018, p. 8)

Job Titles, Roles, and Responsibilities

Titles

The job titles used for a person providing communication access for students who are deaf or hard of hearing in the educational setting are shown in Table 4 below. From the 24 job posts collected, there were 15 different titles used in job announcements.

Table 4

Job title and frequencies for job postings working with deaf and hard of hearing students

<u>Title</u>	<u>Frequency</u>	<u>Contain Interpreter</u>
Interpreter	4	4
Sign Language Interpreter	4	4
DHH Sign Language Interpreter	2	2
Language Facilitator	2	0
Special Educational Assistant	2	0
American Sign Language Interpreter	1	1
Educational Interpreter	1	1
Hearing Impaired Interpreter	1	1
Interpreter for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing	1	1
Interpreter Paraprofessional	1	1
Licensed Sign Language Interpreter	1	1
World Language Interpreter	1	1
American Sign Language Facilitator	1	0
Educational Assistant	1	0
Signing Education Assistant	1	0
Total	24	17

There were 21 online job posts (88%) that contained the title *Interpreter*. There were only two job posts collected that used *Interpreter* as the sole title for the position. There were four online job posts that used *Interpreter* as the only title with numerals identifying rank or level (Seal, 2004, p. 19). For example, an Interpreter I and Interpreter

II differ in qualifications. Fifteen different variations of titles were found where some contained the title of interpreter alone or in addition to other titles. There were 17 job posts (71%) that used additional descriptive titles plus *Interpreter*. Of the additional descriptive words in titles, nine various terms were used. The most frequent additional descriptor was *Sign Language*. The seven remaining job posts had no explicit interpreter labels in the titles. Three job posts that omitted interpreting in the title mentioned interpreting in some capacity in the description. Two used interpreting in the position description and one in the qualifications.

Some job titles were inconsistently used throughout the job post description. For example, a job title listed as a *Sign Language Interpreter* included another title in the description calling the role an *Educational Interpreter*. Similarly, a job post primarily titled *Hearing Impaired Interpreter* changed three other times within the description from *Interpreter* to *Sign Language Interpreter*, and ended with *Educational Interpreter*. Based on further reading in the job description, this job post appears to not be seeking a hearing-impaired candidate. The post wants an interpreter who has knowledge, skills, and experience working with students who have a hearing impairment.

Another example of inconsistent information found in a job post was from an announcement titled *Educational Assistant*. Conflicts appeared between the title, responsibilities, and minimum qualifications. The *Educational Assistant* position was responsible for tutoring, implementing behavior plans, monitoring behavior issues, reporting to classroom teachers, and assisting with communication using sign language or voicing. The minimum qualifications in this post stated: (1) an associate-level degree or higher, (2) a passing score on the ParaPro Assessment, and (3) holding current interpreter

certification or eligible to obtain a two-year provisional certification if the candidate is a new graduate of an ITP. Provisionals are a temporary certificate to practice interpreting in education working towards certification. The job post creates a contradictory puzzle for prospective candidates. The same post asks for certification as an interpreter, but also requires successful completion of a paraprofessional assessment. In this case, the roles and responsibilities are unclear as far as which duties take precedence.

Table 5

Minnesota counties compared to job titles

<u>County Name</u>	<u>Job titles collected from the County</u>
Anoka	Hearing Impaired Interpreter
Beltrami	American Sign Language Facilitator
Hennepin	American Sign Language Interpreter Educational Interpreter Special Educational Assistant World Language Interpreter
Morrison	Interpreter
Norman	Sign Language Interpreter
Olmstead	DHH Sign Language Interpreter
Ramsey	Interpreter Educational Assistant Signing Education Assistant Special Educational Assistant
Scott	Language Facilitator Sign Language Interpreter
Stearns	Sign Language Interpreter
St. Louis	Licensed Sign Language Interpreter
Wright	DHH Sign Language Interpreter Interpreter for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing Interpreter Paraprofessional Language Facilitator

A speculation that was also investigated was the regional differences that may have an impact on job titles and descriptions. In total, there were 11 counties represented in the job post data. To provide brief context, the Minnesota Twin Cities metropolitan area is made up of seven counties: Anoka, Carver, Dakota, Hennepin, Ramsey, Scott, and

Washington (Minnesota State Demographic Center, 2016). There were four metro area counties represented. Counties in Minnesota outside the metro area are Morrison, Norman, Olmstead, Red Lake, Stearns, St. Louis, and Wright. There was an equal split of job posts found for in and outside of the metro area. As shown in Table 5 above, the problem of inconsistent job titles is not an issue that only effects areas outside the metro area.

Roles and Responsibilities

The next section analyzed was the textual information detailing job responsibilities. Trends and themes that emerged in the broader category of job responsibilities can be seen in Table 6 below. A total of 340 textual phrases were found relating to the responsibilities of the role. It should be noted that descriptions were separated at the phrase level. There were more than 5,000 words analyzed in the responsibilities section. Table 6 displays a list of the job descriptions’ textual information pertaining to the responsibilities of the role.

Table 6

Responsibilities separated into subcategories in descending order frequency

<u>Responsibility</u>	<u>Number of statements</u>
Student Educational Team	55
Interpret	49
Facilitate Communication	42
Assist & Support	39
Preparation	32
Other Duties as Assigned	27
Supervising & Leading Students	19
Maintain Data	17
Setting	14
Rapport	8
Teaching	7
Personality, Demeanor, Strengths	5

<u>Responsibility</u>	<u>Number of statements</u>
Tutor	5
Legal Compliance	5
Note-taking	5
Personal and Health Care	5
Proctor Exams	3
Equipment & Technology	3
Total	340

As shown, the responsibilities section of the job descriptions was separated into 18 subcategories. Several subcategories had frequencies in the double digits. The subcategories with the highest frequencies were student educational team, interpret, facilitate communication, support and assist, preparation, and other duties as assigned.

The “student educational team” subcategory was identified with the highest frequency in the responsibilities section. In all, there were 55 times where expressions mentioned student educational plans. However, verbiage referencing *Individualized Education Program* or *IEP* was used only nine times. Many phrases talked about being part of an educational team with responsibilities to provide feedback and share ideas with appropriate teachers and staff. Some descriptions included maintaining communication with various teachers and service providers as an essential responsibility as a member of the educational team. Other descriptions mentioned collaboration with team members to ensure that student needs are being met. This responsibility was also described as contributing to the success of the deaf or hard of hearing student.

The highest occurring subcategory states the major job responsibility is following the IEP and communicating with members on the educational team. Some terms used to describe this task were: communicate, consult, interact, inform, recommend, collaborate, participate, and serve. Contexts for those terms directed who should receive

communication and consultation about the programming of the student. Also, this role interacts and informs teachers about the educational content providing recommendations for improvement. It is meant to ensure that the instructional materials are successfully accommodating the deaf and hard of hearing students. Other ways the role is responsible to the team is to participate and collaborate with teachers, staff, and other school personnel to serve the students who are deaf or hard of hearing.

The second highest occurring subcategory was “interpret,” with 49 phrases that referenced the role of interpreting or changing one language form to another language. There were 17 phrases that used the word “interpret” or “interprets,” 13 used “interpreting,” and 8 used the word “interpretation” to state the function of the role. Five of the 49 phrases mentioned “interpreter” rather than the act of interpreting. Lastly, there was a tie with one phrase each using the word “translation” and the other using “transliteration.”

The remaining four phrases included in the interpret category that did not explicitly use *interpret* but closely related meanings using written descriptions of interpreting. For example, one phrase described the nature of the work to “convert required written notices from one language to another where someone may need to read aloud documents in a language other than that in which they were written.” Two phrases used the words “change simultaneously the spoken language into finger spelling and sign language and conversely the sign language into the spoken language.” A final phrase stated “use ASL and/or Signed English based on the student’s mode of communication.”

The next subcategory with double-digit frequencies was “facilitate communication.” This subcategory contained 42 phrases that referred to facilitating

communication access in the educational environment. Various job posts referencing communication facilitation as providing access to auditory information, monitoring the student's understanding of the auditory information, reducing language complexity, modeling more complex language to foster skill development, paraphrasing in sign language, emphasize specific language, and facilitating communication between deaf and hard of hearing students.

To clarify, the subcategory "facilitate communication" does not include any word forms in the description of the role such as "interpret" or "translation." Some of the phrases in the job title of the position may include the word form *interpreter* but do not use the word "interpret" or "translation" as a position responsibility. The descriptions further explained the position as being responsible for facilitating communication between the students who are deaf or hard of hearing and the mainstream teachers and students. According to one job post, facilitating communication is "to provide meaningful benefit and access to the students in the educational environment." Other descriptions incorporate phrases like "model signs and cues during non-instructional times." Some phrases include maximizing communication by evaluating physical space to ensure it is appropriate for the student.

From my analysis, the phrases used in the section "facilitate communication" are written using student-centered language. For example, descriptions used in this section bring attention to the student's language considerations and how the student will benefit most from accessing the communication in the environment. "Student may actively participate" refers to a student's ability to be autonomous and included in the educational environment. Another example of student-centered language used in a job post was

“appropriate communication techniques to benefit the student and their communication needs.”

Reading through the descriptive phrases, it should be noted that “interpret” and “facilitate communication” are separated into two different subcategories. This was due to the high correlation to what was being interpreted, whereas facilitating communication had a high correlation to who would receive the services. Even though these two subcategories shared similar phrasing, separate codes were assigned to the phrases. Interpreting also occurred with phrasing specific to content and context whereas facilitating communication had a high correlation to the consumers in the educational environment. Another separation of the two subcategories was due to the various considerations educational teams address when designing services and plans for students who are deaf and hard of hearing (NASDSE, 2018, p. 1-4). An *Interpreter* is an option that educational teams can implement as an accommodation for a student, whereas “facilitating communication” is not the official name of the service accommodation.

There were 39 phrases collected from job posts that indicated duties that assist and support in the classroom. Altogether, there were 33 phrases that used the word “assist,” where just six mentioned “support.” The phrase “assist” appeared with “deescalate students,” “implement behavior management programs,” “classroom discipline,” “curriculum modification,” “crisis intervention,” “classroom instruction,” “educational functions,” and “general assistance where needed.” Most frequently referenced phrases were for assisting or supporting the teachers and students.

Preparation as a job responsibility appeared 32 times in textual phrase analysis. Phrases included wording like preparing for “upcoming classes,” “activities,”

“instructional curriculum,” “collaborating with teachers,” “setting up materials and equipment,” and “preview upcoming materials.” The majority of job posts explicitly mentioned material preparation as a position responsibility.

A total of 14 job posts used phrasing to mention that on top of all the duties mentioned in the description, there would be additional or other duties as assigned. Other duties that may be performed when they do not interfere with interpreting include tutoring, participation in meetings, and being an active member of the school’s educational team. Some job postings used additional language to describe the “other duties as assigned” including workshop attendance, advocacy for deaf and hard of hearing students in school settings and attending various settings with the deaf and hard of hearing student.

Qualifications

Two subcategories emerged with the highest word frequencies in the qualifications section of job posts. Certification was the top category (48 instances). Educational requirements were second with 38 instances. Findings for each section are further reported and discussed.

There were six job posts that did not ask for any minimum certification requirements to obtain employment. In Minnesota, an interpreter must possess certification to work in K-12 settings or must be awarded a provisional certificate issued by the Minnesota Department of Education to practice interpreting for two years post-graduation from an interpreter training program with the opportunity to obtain an extension. However, if the job position is working as a paraprofessional with no

interpreting job duties, then the job would not be subject to requirements of Minnesota Statute 122A.31 like an educational interpreter’s qualifications would.

Table 7

Certification and credential word frequencies

<u>Certification & Credentials</u>	<u>Frequency</u>
RID/NIC	10
NAD	8
ParaPro Assessment	6
Provisional	6
EIPA	5
Nonexistent Certification	4
Cued Speech	3
Current Certification	2
State Accepted Qualification	2
Generic	1
Mentoring	1
Totals	48

Altogether, 48 phrases were found in the job posts recommending some form of certification or credential. Elaborating more on the contents of Table 7, the most frequently occurring credential is from RID. The second highest frequency is the credential from NAD. Tied with six phrases each were the successful passing of the ParaPro Exam and the interpreting provisional certificate for recent graduates of an interpreter training program (ITP). Only five phrases were found related to the EIPA at the 4.0 level, and zero phrases mentioning or requiring the written knowledge exam. Four phrases mentioned certification that does not exist or was incorrectly worded. Three phrases mentioned certification from TECUnit in Cued Speech Transliteration. Two phrases used wording to state current, national interpreter or transliteration certification or a two-year provisional certificate, which still includes wording requiring certification without the employer naming the specific interpreting credentials. Similarly, two phrases

were found using wording of a comparable state certification accepted by the State of Minnesota Commissioner of Education. Wrapping up the certification and credentials were one phrase each for general remarks about eligibility to take an interpreting test (i.e., NIC or EIPA) and mentoring offered to individuals pursuing certification.

There were only 9 job posts out of 24 that requested valid interpreting certification or credentials (See Appendix B). The only valid interpreting certifications or credentials that qualify in Minnesota are from RID, NAD (exam since retired), and/or obtaining an EIPA level of 4.0 or higher plus passing the EIPA written exam. Recent graduates from an ITP are also eligible to receive a provisional certificate awarded by the Department of Education (American Sign Language/English Interpreters [Minnesota Statute], 1994). Five job posts did not mention valid interpreting certification or credentials. There is a discrepancy between word frequencies and the number of job posts because some job posts repeated certification or credentials twice in the description. For example, there were 10 mentions of RID credentials, but only nine job posts mentioned RID certification. A more detailed breakdown of each certification and credential mentioned in job posts can be found in Appendix B.

Education

There were 38 phrases mentioning some form of education (See Figure 2). The minimum level of education found for employment was a high school diploma or general education diploma. The highest level of education found was an associate degree. Interpreter training programs (ITPs) were not considered the highest form of education because these phrases did not specify a degree level.

Word Frequencies of Educational Requirements

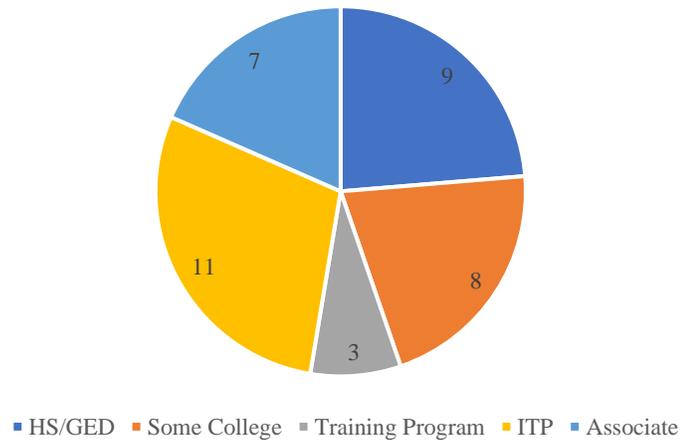


Figure 2. Word frequencies of educational requirements

As stated, the highest degree level found was an associate-level degree. Seven job posts were found mentioning an associate degree level or higher degree. Two phrases mentioned an associate degree studying education or similar fields. It could be argued that the wording “or higher degree” could be implying a bachelor’s degree. For the purposes of this study, the job posts had to explicitly state the level education.

Forty-five percent of job posts made specific reference to an area of study in post-secondary education. Interpreter training programs were mentioned 11 times. For a phrase to fall under the ITP category, it must clearly state an *interpreter training program*. If qualifications were completion of a training program affiliated with a state-accredited educational institution, then they were not counted as an ITP because they were nonspecific. Three job posts stated a training program as qualifications for employment. Only one ITP comment stated the length of program as a two-year, post-high school interpreter training program.

Almost tied with phrases stating ITPs was the frequency of phrases mentioning a high school diploma/GED. In all the job posts, the most frequently occurring educational recommendations were for candidates to possess a high school diploma/GED and successful completion of an interpreter training program. Ten job posts stated a high school diploma or equivalent as the minimum criteria to be considered. Three out of 10 job posts required a minimum of a high school diploma as the only education qualification needed for employment. The remaining seven combined high school diploma requirements with either an associate-level degree or completion of an interpreter training program.

A total of nine phrases mentioned some form of college education. This section was separated from other categories because there was not an indication of degree or level of achievement. Five phrases out of nine mentioned that the amount of college-level study should be two years. The shortest amount of college education that would be accepted was a minimum of three college credits. Only one phrase mentioned the study of ASL.

None of the job posts collected from Minnesota mentioned a bachelor's degree. Multiple positions asked for an associate degree as the highest form of education required to obtain employment. None of the posts incorporated wording like a "bachelor's degree preferred." Some posts recommend graduation from an interpreter training program, but that does not indicate the degree level (See Table 8).

Table 8

Educational recommendations breakdown from job posts

<u>Job Post</u>	<u>Some College</u>	<u>Associate</u>	<u>Bachelor</u>	<u>ITP</u>	<u>Training Program</u>	<u>HS/GED</u>
1	1	1				
2	1	1		1		
3					1	
4		1				
5				1		
6						1
7	1	1				1
8						1
9	1			1		1
10				1		
11				1		
12					1	
13						
14				1		
15					1	
16				1		
17				1		
18				1		1
19	1			1		1
20						1
21						
22	1	1		1		1
23	1	1				1
24	1	1				
Totals	8	7	0	11	3	9

Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities

As shown in Figure 3, the most prevalent section within recommended knowledge, skills, and abilities for obtaining employment positions specified interpreting, language skills, and cultural awareness regarding students who are deaf and hard of hearing. Specific wording frequently used was possessing knowledge and skills using American Sign Language (ASL), spoken English, signed language, and communication. Other knowledge would be an awareness of Deaf culture and deaf and hard of hearing

students. Listed are examples from job descriptions of verbatim text descriptions of interpreting: “the ability to articulate inherent differences between various settings and interpreter tasks,” “consecutive and simultaneous interpreting skills,” “turning spoken word into signed language,” and “expressive and receptive skills in American Sign Language.”

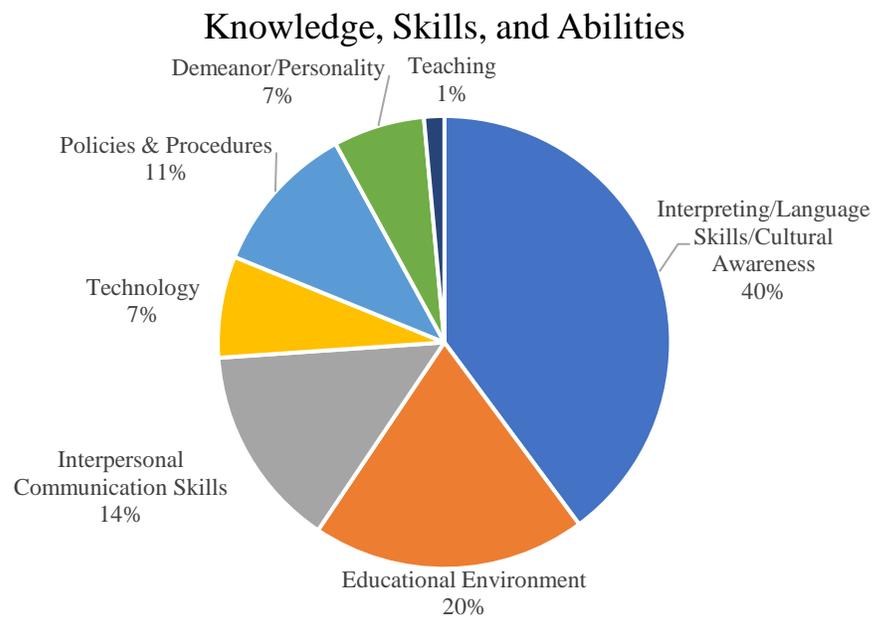


Figure 3. Percentage of Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities word frequency

Phrases relating to the educational environment included having the ability to work with students and knowledge of child development. Closely related phrases appeared in the interpersonal communication skills category, differing slightly but including students, staff, and teachers as people with whom they would frequently communicate.

There were 17 job posts that contained information about recommended knowledge needed to perform the job. There were only six job posts containing

knowledge of changing technology and computer or technology usage in the educational environment.

Discussion

To synthesize the extensive qualitative findings, four themes emerged in job descriptions. All 24 job posts collected between July 2019 to July 2020 contained at minimum of a title, summary of responsibilities, qualifications, and knowledge to perform the work. The job descriptions are from Minnesota K-12 educational institutions recruiting for a position working with children who are deaf or hard of hearing. The job posts were functioning to provide students with communication access to the academic setting. Some of the job posts collected were not interpreting positions but hiring for people who know signed language. However, there were many inconsistencies in the job post descriptions where they lacked explicit phrasing about whether the position would be interpreting or not.

As previously mentioned, an Educational Interpreter is not a one-size-fits-all accommodation for students who are deaf or hard of hearing. However, it is worth discussing the various needs of children who are deaf and hard of hearing and appropriately providing them with services to ensure they succeed in the educational environment. Support staff hired to provide direct communication services should also be appropriately skilled and qualified using ASL in education. Unfortunately, there are even fewer standards and less knowledge and awareness about positions that are noninterpreting.

Roles and Responsibilities

The roles and responsibilities section comprised the bulk of the data collected. This section of job descriptions also appeared to have the greatest variation of responsibilities. In total, there were 18 subcategories that made of the various responsibilities included in job posts. To recap, the top five responsibilities with the highest frequencies were position responsibilities to the “educational team,” “interpreting,” “facilitating communication,” “assisting and supporting,” and “preparation.” In addition to the most frequent responsibilities, many duties were found that had nothing to do with interpreting or assisting the students who are deaf and hard of hearing. Unrelated job duties should be carefully considered by the educational team to ensure those duties benefit the students’ participation in the educational environment.

Titles

There was only one job post collected that aligned with NAIE (2019) job title recommendations of an “Educational Interpreter” (p. 13). The majority of job titles contained *Interpreter* with additional descriptive titles. The original hypothesis for this study—that more than half of all job titles would include terms like *facilitator*, *assistant*, *aide*, or *paraprofessional* in addition to the title of *Interpreter*—was not supported. The findings showed *Interpreter* was the most frequent, but titles ranged in length and descriptive terminology like *facilitator*, *assistant*, and *paraprofessional*. There was a range of 15 different job title samples. When school districts in Minnesota are questioning their job post recruiting practices, they should refer to the Minnesota law §122A.31 American Sign Language/English Interpreters or federal legislation (U.S. Department of Education, 2016; NASDSE, 2018).

Qualifications

Job qualifications covered certification and credentials along with educational requirements. My expectations prompting this research study were correct in stating minimum qualifications written in job posts would be lacking in comparison to current industry standards and recommendations (Johnson et al., 2018; NAIE, 2019; NASDSE, 2018). More attention should be paid to writing and updating job descriptions to include accurate qualifications needed for educational interpreting and working with students who are deaf and hard of hearing.

It should also be mentioned that students who do not utilize interpreting services but benefit from direct communication in ASL or signed language should also be working with skilled and qualified professionals. Support staff such as paraprofessionals and educational assistants do not have standard recommendations for minimum qualifications (ETS, n.d.-a). If the job posts collected in this study offered any insights into the skills and qualifications needed, a noninterpreting position working with responsibilities like that of a paraprofessional or educational assistant should have, at minimum, an associate's degree level of education and obtained a score of 460 on the ParaPro Assessment (ETS, n.d.-b). More importantly, a prospective employee's education, background, or work experience should emphasize knowledge of ASL, English, and working with deaf and hard of hearing children. Other competencies may include knowledge of children with multiple cooccurring disabilities in addition to visual learning and communication.

Less than 40% of job posts collected from Minnesota mentioned certification requirements that matched industry recommendations. More concerning is that no job

posts required a bachelor's degree, which is recommended in the review of the literature (Humphrey & Alcorn, 2007, p. 327; Johnson et al., 2018; Jones, 2004; NAIE, 2019; NASDSE, 2018, Stuckless et al., 1989; Witter-Merithew & Johnson, 2005). If industry standards exist, why are school districts lacking those pertinent qualification details in their recruiting practices? Do school districts know about the state and national qualifications? Attracting the most qualified personnel to perform the job should be of utmost importance to ensure students succeed.

Schools should also be aware of financial reimbursement when employing qualified interpreters (American Sign Language/English Interpreters [Minnesota Statute], 1994; Minnesota Office of the Revisor of Statutes, 1995). Incentives to attract skilled professionals with knowledge of deaf and hard of hearing students, ASL, and navigating the educational system should be expanded to include other specialty services. An example of a recently developing specialization is deafblind intervention where qualified personnel provide one-to-one support for students who have combined hearing and vision loss. Learning modules called Open Hands Open Access (OHOA) have been developed for personnel to build and further develop skills working with deafblind children (National Center on Deaf-Blindness, n.d.). Providing specialty services to children with multiple disabilities and sensory deficiencies deserves more attention, education, and qualifications.

Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities

The majority of phrases in the knowledge, skills, and abilities category were related to the overarching theme of language and communication between various participants in the educational environment. The categories covered a range of modes

where candidates should possess skills using spoken, written, and signed language communication. Shockingly, only 7 job posts mentioned skills and abilities using computer technology. With advances in technology use in the classroom, especially considering the impacts of COVID-19, educational employers should be requiring more competency using a technology devices and platforms (e.g., Chromebooks, iPads, Tablets, iPhones, cellphones, and video conferencing). The technological advancements used in the educational system have changed how academic instruction is delivered shifting from in-person, hybrid, and full online distance learning (Minnesota Department of Health, 2020). Shifts in learning models have caused some educators to endure steep learning curves related to technology (e.g., video conferencing, online class materials, captioning, interpreting, prerecording instructional materials, online etiquette, and Wi-Fi capabilities).

Legal Compliance

Legal protections are in place for students who are deaf and hard of hearing to access mainstreamed education. Legislation in Minnesota also covers accommodations like ASL/English Interpreters working in K-12 settings. However, from my findings, the job posts lacked consistency regarding the titles and qualifications categories. There are not legalities written about recruiting practices but writing job posts to comply with legally mandated accommodations is advantageous for school districts, administrators, teachers, educational teams, and, most importantly, students. The most significant finding was job posts having lower than recommended levels of education. Even more concerning was that none of the job posts explicitly stated a bachelor's degrees as a preferred level of education.

From an IEP Discussion Guide posted on the Minnesota Department of Education's webpage,

The Individual Education Program (IEP) that is written for a student who is deaf, deafblind or hard of hearing should include considerations for students' access to language, mode of communication at home and at school, language development and fluency abilities, communication partners, school placement and other environmental impacts on language and communication needs. When these considerations are not a primary focus of the document, the power behind the IEP is not fully realized and appropriate services are not provided. The problem has been that weak direction within an IEP has led to weak services for students.

(Minnesota Department of Education, n.d.)

When job posts are not seeking the most qualified professionals to work in educational settings, the whole educational system will suffer. There is not documentation written about how to acquire the most qualified interpreter. The findings in this study could inform various stakeholders about continued lacking awareness regarding interpreting qualifications. Additional considerations should be aimed at how educational teams provide the most effective communication services for students who are deaf or hard of hearing.

Student Profiles

Educational programming individually designed to fit the student's needs should be the priority of educational teams. If an Educational Interpreter is determined as the most appropriate accommodation for the student, then state and local guidelines should be followed to ensure that students receive the most qualified services to deliver

appropriate accommodations. It should also be noted that an interpreter, alone, does not equal full inclusion of the deaf and hard of hearing student in educational environments (Johnson et al., 2018, p. 95). Support services should be utilized in a way that provides the student with the most educational benefit in respect to their individual needs. Students deserve more attention to language and communication needs to ensure they thrive in their education.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSIONS

In conclusion, this study focused primarily on the collection of Minnesota job posts found on the public domain for the K-12 educational setting. To date, there has not been research conducted on job posts or job descriptions for K-12 educational interpreters. Job posts collected, evaluated, and discussed information related to job titles, roles, responsibilities, qualifications, knowledge, and legal compliance. A grounded theory approach was used to analyze and identify the four main themes present in job posts working with students who are deaf or hard of hearing. The findings show that recruiting practices using job posts and descriptions were inconsistent and lacked the necessary minimum qualifications to perform as an *Educational Interpreter* in Minnesota. Interpreting is a challenging profession that requires appropriate education, training, certification, and ongoing professional development (Johnson et al., 2018).

The study offers evidence to local Minnesota educational leaders that job posts and descriptions for the *Educational Interpreter* may need to be reevaluated and updated to better align with current industry standards (NAIE, 2019) and comply with legal requirements (NASDSE, 2018). Focusing only on Minnesota, the information presented is not representative of trends happening across the nation. However, this kind of research study could allow for local, state, and national stakeholders to investigate the recruiting practices happening in the educational setting.

Lastly, the lack of human participants in this study does not allow for theoretical development as to why job descriptions appear to be inconsistent and lacking in pertinent job description information. The resulting conclusions show that educational institutions and educational teams across Minnesota need more advice and consultation to ensure

effective, appropriate, and equitable services are assigned to the students who are deaf or hard of hearing. Other implications these inconsistent findings influence is the interpreting field's level of accountability. How should the field address grandfathering veteran interpreters, experience without formal education, and advancing professional educational interpreting qualifications?

Recommendations

To identify trends happening in other states and nationally, studies on job descriptions could be expanded to survey the various people working with students who are deaf or hard of hearing in the K-12 educational settings. Future recommendations for study could also involve a direct comparison of the work performed in the classroom compared to what job descriptions say about the role. Interpreters and personnel hired to provide communication access could be researched and studied.

To understand why educational communication accessibility problems persist, a study could be done focusing on administrators, management, and recruiters about hiring practices. Additional research questions could include surveying administrators about processes and challenges obtaining reimbursement for interpreters in education.

Educational teams should routinely review the accommodations regarding language and communication needs to ensure school district administrators are finding and hiring the most appropriately qualified candidate to match the student's needs.

When creating a job post in Minnesota for an *Educational Interpreter*, the main categories it should highlight include:

- an appropriate job title (i.e., Interpreter, Educational Interpreter, or Sign Language Interpreter)

- a summary of responsibilities with the primary responsibility of interpreting
- accurate and current qualifications following legal compliance (i.e., EIPA 4.0 plus passing written exam or RID credentials such as the NIC) (Johnson et al, 2018, p. 162)
- minimum educational requirements of a bachelor's degree (Johnson et al., 2018, p. 162; NAIE, 2019, p. 11)
- necessary knowledge, skills, and abilities to perform in a variety of educational settings.

When hiring qualified *Educational Interpreters*, mixed or conflicting job roles should be avoided. “Educational assistants, signers, and teachers of the deaf are not interpreters” (Johnson et al., 2018, p. 95). Job titles and duties that deviate too far from interpreting could create conflict and hinder the overall performance of the position. Unrelated job duties could also be considered as a factor that could be minimizing the need for skilled and qualified professionals. Examples of some unrelated job duties include helping the general population of students, running errands for teachers, proctoring exams, teaching, supervising lunch or bus duties, and interpreting at IEP meetings for students and families. Educational Interpreters are, by law, considered members of the educational team who should be collaborating with administrators and teachers to promote student success (NAIE, 2019; NASDSE, 2018). When teams are unsure about specialty communication and language needs, they should refer to local, state, and national resources and leaders to build effective educational plans that are equitable for students.

If educational institutions choose to hire an interpreter, school administrators and educational teams should ensure those interpreters are supported and encouraged to seek out ongoing professional development opportunities similar to teachers, administrators, and related service professionals. New ideas for professional development opportunities should consider overlapping and combining professionals working together in educational settings. For example, teachers of the deaf and hard of hearing and interpreters on the same IEP teams should be encouraged to attend workshops and conferences together to ensure teams are engaging in a shared learning to benefit the student.

Additional areas of research that could inform various stakeholders would include studying the population of deaf and hard of hearing students in mainstreamed educational settings. How do diverse student populations impact and inform the educational curriculum of ITPs? How can educational interpreting curriculum be adapted to focus on equitable learning environments that better align with student demographics and recommendations from state Departments of Education? How can educational institutions collaborate and partner with Deaf language experts and schools for the deaf and hard of hearing to provide students with direct communication opportunities?

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APPENDIX A: JOB DESCRIPTION DATA

- 1) Titles
- 2) Supervisors
- 3) Job Category
- 4) Responsibilities
 - a) Student educational team
 - b) Interpret
 - c) Facilitate communication access
 - d) Preparation
 - e) Assist and support
 - f) Other duties as assigned
 - g) Supervising and leading students
 - h) Maintains data
 - i) Setting
 - j) Rapport
 - k) Teaching
 - l) Tutor
 - m) Equipment and technology
 - n) Legal compliance
 - o) Note-taking
 - p) Personal and health care
 - q) Personality, demeanor, and strengths
 - r) Proctor exams
- 5) Qualifications
 - a) Education
 - i) Some college education
 - ii) Associate degree
 - iii) ITP
 - iv) Training program
 - v) HS/GED
 - b) Certification and credentials
 - i) RID
 - ii) NAD
 - iii) EIPA
 - iv) Cued Speech
 - v) Generic
 - vi) State accepted qualification
 - vii) Current certification
 - viii) Nonexistent certification
 - ix) Provisional

- x) Mentoring
 - xi) ParaPro exam
 - c) Experience
 - i) Technology experience
 - ii) Work experience
 - iii) Interpreting experience
 - d) Driver's license
 - e) First Aid
- 6) Knowledge, skills, and abilities
 - a) Interpreting, language skills, and cultural awareness
 - b) Educational environment
 - c) Interpersonal communication skills
 - d) Technology
 - e) Policies and procedures
 - i) Policies
 - ii) Code of Professional Conduct or Code of Ethics
 - iii) Confidentiality
 - f) Demeanor, personality
 - g) Teaching
- 7) Job Requirements
 - a) Physical job requirements
 - i) Equipment
 - ii) Lifting
 - iii) Swimming
 - iv) Mobility and senses
 - v) Positioning and restraining students
 - b) Mental job requirements
 - i) Multi-tasking
- 8) Working Conditions
 - a) Setting
 - b) Exposure to bodily fluids
- 9) Professional Development/Continuing Education Units (CEUs)
- 10) Disclaimer Statements

APPENDIX B: INTERPRETING CERTIFICATION AND CREDENTIALS

BREAKDOWN COLLECTED FROM JOB POSTS

<u>Post</u> <u>#</u>	<u>RID</u>	<u>NAD</u>	<u>EIPA</u>	<u>Generic</u>	<u>State</u> <u>certi-</u> <u>fication</u>	<u>Para-</u> <u>pro</u>	<u>Pro-</u> <u>visional</u>	<u>Non-</u> <u>existent</u>	<u>Current</u>	<u>TEC</u>
1						1				
2	1				1	1	1			
3	1	1	1							1
4	1	1								
5				1						
6								1		
7								1		
8										
9	1	1				1				
10	1	1					1			
11							1		1	
12	1	1	1							1
13	1	1	1							
14	1	1			1					
15	1	1	1							1
16							1		1	
17								1		
18										
19								1		
20										
21								1		
22						1				
23						1				
24						1				
Totals	9	8	4	1	2	6	4	5	2	3