CART and Interpreters in the Classroom

What is CART?

CART stands for Communication Access Realtime Translation. It is a service that brings a transcriptionist into the classroom either physically or virtually, who transcribes everything that is said in the classroom. The transcriptions are displayed onto a deaf or hearing impaired student’s monitor in real-time or projected onto a screen.

What is an Interpreter?

A sign language interpreter is a trained and certified professional who facilitates communication between a deaf or hearing impaired person and the professor and class. Interpreters cannot answer questions about the student or offer opinions. Their job is to translate only.

Before Class Begins

Each student is different. Some deaf or hearing impaired students prefer to communicate through sign language, some can read lips, some can speak for themselves, and some prefer to communicate through a transcriber. Have a private conversation with your student before the first class to find out what works best for his or her situation.

Effective Use of an Interpreter in the Classroom

- Have the interpreter sit or stand next to the speaker and opposite the deaf person. That way the deaf person can see both the speaker and the interpreter simultaneously.
- Do not place interpreters in front of windows, bright lights, or busy walls. Solid, darker backgrounds allow a deaf or hearing impaired person to clearly see the message.
- When showing a video, use video with captioning and provide a lighted area for the interpreter.
- Give copies of handouts to the interpreter or transcriber before class begins.
- Meet with the interpreter briefly before class to share outlines, texts, technical vocabulary, or any other background information that will help the interpreter perform the job better.
- Inform the interpreter and the ARC in advance if any scheduled class sessions are to be moved, rescheduled, or cancelled; if any additional class sessions will be added; or if you need to meet with the student for an extended period outside class.

For questions or concerns about any individual student or situation, please contact Cindy Yamnitz, Assistive Technology Coordinator, at 314-246-4245 or cynthiayamnitz36@webster.edu.
General Tips for Teaching with a Deaf or Hearing Impaired Student in the Classroom

- Speak at a natural pace.
- When addressing the deaf or hearing impaired person, look directly at him or her, not at the interpreter or transcriber.
- Give students a few minutes to read handouts before beginning a lecture. A deaf or hearing impaired person cannot read a handout and follow an interpreter/transcriber simultaneously.
- Face the class when speaking.
- Do not lecture while asking students to fill out forms or attendance sheets.
- Do not lecture while students are reading handouts, watching a video, or reading slides.
- Spell or write technical terms on the board.
- During class or group discussions, encourage students to speak one at a time. The interpreting process allows only one person to communicate at a time. Encourage students to wait before speaking or signing until you recognize them.
- Keep in mind the lag time between the spoken and translated or transcribed words. Interpreters normally interpret with a lag time of one to two sentences.