
Professional Assessments Policy 5.105

The Background:

For deaf, deaf-blind, or hard of hearing students, access to effective communication is critical to obtain the benefits of an education, including but not limited to further education, employment, and independent living. It is imperative that well-trained personnel provide this visual and/or tactile communication access. Currently in Tennessee, there is not licensure for educational interpreters as provided in surrounding states. Therefore, qualified interpreters are leaving Tennessee to seek employment in other states or the private sector, leaving our students at a loss for this critical service. In early 2015, a 19-member task force representing advocates from the deaf community, higher education, and the Department of Education convened to address this critical issue. Research from this group indicated that not only does Tennessee lack professional licensure for qualified educational interpreters, who must hold a bachelor's degree and national certification, but that many interpreters currently serving students have limited training which results in poor communication skills and limited access to general education curriculum for students.

The Tennessee Department of Education is recommending approval of an educational interpreter license for those holding the appropriate qualifications and updating employment standards for non-licensed educational interpreters as separate items. Pending approval of those items, all educational interpreters will be required to take and receive passing scores on the Educational Interpreter Performance Assessment (EIPA).

This item adds the EIPA requirement for educational interpreters to the Professional Assessments for Tennessee Educators Policy 5.105. Educational Interpreters are exempt from Praxis requirements consistent with other licensed school service personnel.

The Fiscal Analysis Impact:

Tenn. Code Ann. § 49-1-212 requires that the Department prepare a fiscal analysis of any policy, rule or regulation proposed to the State Board of Education. This item has no financial impact on an LEA.

The Recommendation:

The Department of Education recommends acceptance of this item on first reading. The SBE staff concurs with this recommendation.