

Board of Education Agenda Item

Item: _____ R. _____

Date: October 18, 2007

Topic: First Review of a Recommendation of the Advisory Board on Teacher Education and Licensure (ABTEL) to Approve the Sign Communication Proficiency Interview (SCPI) Assessment as an Option of Demonstrating Proficiency in American Sign Language and Establish a Proficiency Level for the Assessment

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Origin:

Topic presented for information only (no board action required)

Board review required by
 State or federal law or regulation
 Board of Education regulation
 Other: _____

Action requested at this meeting Action requested at future meeting: _____ (date)

Previous Review/Action:

No previous board review/action

Previous review/action
date _____
action _____

Background Information:

The *Regulations Governing the Licensure of School Personnel*, effective September 21, 2007, stipulate the following requirements for an endorsement in Foreign Language: American Sign Language.

Foreign Language preK-12 – American Sign Language

1. The candidate must have (i) graduated from an approved teacher preparation program in a foreign language – American Sign Language or (ii) completed a major in American Sign Language or 24 semester hours above the intermediate level in American Sign Language. The program shall include (i) courses in advanced grammar and syntax, conversation, and culture and (ii) a minimum of 3 semester hours of methods of teaching foreign languages at the elementary and secondary levels.

2. Native users or candidates who have learned American Sign Language without formal academic credit in a regionally accredited college or university must complete the following requirements:
 - a. Competency in American Sign Language demonstrated by written documentation of one of the following:
 - (1) Hold a current, valid qualified or professional certification by the American Sign Language Teachers Association; or
 - (2) Hold a current, valid Virginia Quality Assurance Screening Level III Interpreting certification or higher issued by the Virginia Department for the Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing; or
 - (3) Hold a current, valid Registry of Interpreters for Deaf certification in at least one of the following: Certificate of Interpretation (CI), Certificate of Deaf Interpretation (CDI), Reverse Skills Certification (RSC), or Comprehensive Skills Certificate (CSC); or
 - (4) Hold a current, valid National Association for the Deaf Level IV certification or higher; or
 - (5) **Complete requirements of an assessment demonstrating proficiency in American Sign Language prescribed by the Board of Education.**
 - b. Earned a minimum of 3 semester hours of methods of teaching foreign languages at the elementary and secondary levels from a regionally accredited college or university in the United States.

The regulations allow an individual to complete requirements of an assessment prescribed by the Board of Education to demonstrate proficiency in American Sign Language.

Summary of Major Elements:

The Advisory Board on Teacher Education and Licensure (ABTEL) has recommended the use of the Sign Communication Proficiency Interview (SCPI) as the Board of Education's prescribed assessment. The SCPI is a conversational approach to sign language communication skills assessment. The SCPI permits interview content to vary according to the job responsibilities, background, and interests of each person interviewed. The goal of the SCPI is to assess how well people are able to use sign language for their communication needs, and, as appropriate, to assist people in development of their sign language communication skills.

The SCPI involves a one-to-one conversation between the interviewer and candidate/interviewee, with each interviewee videotaped and subsequently rated independently by SCPI raters. The basis for ratings is the SCPI Rating Scale, a standard scale based on a highly skilled, knowledgeable native/native-like

signer. The SCPI assesses American Sign Language (ASL) as it is used among skilled sign language communicators in the United States. This use includes the full range of ASL from pure, linguistic descriptions of ASL to English influenced signing. This full range is characterized by:

- A. Meaning-based sign language vocabulary selection consistent with standardized signs in current use by skilled language users, and
- B. A variety of grammatical features that are consistent with effective use of gestural-visual language for communication. These grammatical features include: (a) space, indexing, eye gaze, sign movement directionality, and body shifts to separate ideas and to identify and discuss persons, places, and objects present and not present; (b) classifiers for describing and representing persons, places, and objects and their movements (for example, use of the index finger to represent "a person"); (c) sign-word order which facilitates effective communication in gestural-visual language; and (d) facial expressions and other body movements (non-manual signals) to support and add to information communicated (for example, affirmative and negative head movements). In addition to vocabulary and grammatical features, clarity of sign production, fluency, and comprehension are important to effective communication when using a gestural-visual language, and therefore are considered in SCPI ratings.

(Source: <http://www.rit.edu/~wjnncd/scpi/main.html>)

The Advisory Board on Teacher Education and Licensure recommended that the Board of Education approve the SCPI with a proficiency level of “advanced.” Below are the rating scale and descriptors for the assessment:

Rating Scale and Descriptors

(Source: <http://www.rit.edu/~wjnncd/scpi/main.html>)

Superior Plus

Able to have a fully shared and natural conversation, with in-depth elaboration for both social and work topics. All aspects of signing are native-like.

Superior

Able to have a fully shared conversation, with in-depth elaboration for both social and work topics. Very broad sign language vocabulary, near native-like production and fluency, excellent use of sign language grammatical features, and excellent comprehension for a normal signing rate.

Advanced Plus

Exhibits some superior level skills, but not all and not consistently.

Advanced

Able to have a generally shared conversation with good, spontaneous elaboration for both social and work topics. Broad sign language vocabulary knowledge and clear, accurate production of signs and fingerspelling at a normal/near-normal rate; occasional misproductions do not detract from conversational flow. Good use of many sign language grammatical features and comprehension good for a normal signing rate.

Intermediate Plus

Exhibits some advanced level skills, but not all and not consistently.

Intermediate

Able to discuss with some confidence routine social and work topics within a conversational format with some elaboration; generally 3-to-5 sentences. Good knowledge and control of everyday/basic sign language vocabulary with some sign vocabulary errors. Fairly clear signing at a moderate signing rate with some sign misproductions. Fair use of some sign language grammatical features and fairly good comprehension for a moderate-to-normal signing rate; a few repetitions and rephrasing of questions may be needed.

Survival Plus

Exhibits some intermediate level skills, but not all and not consistently.

Survival

Able to discuss basic social and work topics with responses generally one-to-three sentences in length. Some knowledge of basic sign language vocabulary with many sign vocabulary and/or sign production errors. Slow-to-moderate signing rate. Basic use of a few sign language grammatical features. Fair comprehension for signing produced at a slow-to-moderate rate with some repetition and rephrasing.

Novice Plus

Exhibits some survival level skills, but not all and not consistently.

Novice

Able to provide single sign and some short phrase/sentence responses to basic questions signed at a slow-to-moderate rate with frequent repetition and rephrasing. Vocabulary primarily related to everyday work and/or social areas such as basic work-related signs, family members, basic objects, colors, numbers, names of weekdays, and time. Production and fluency characterized by many sign production errors and by a slow rate with frequent inappropriate pauses/hesitations.

No Functional Skills

May be able to provide short single sign and "primarily" finger-skills spelled responses to some basic questions, signed at a slow rate with extensive repetition and rephrasing.

The SCPI assessment is offered at the Virginia School for the Deaf and Blind at Staunton and the Virginia School for the Deaf, Blind, and Multi-Disabled at Hampton.

Superintendent's Recommendation:

The Superintendent of Public Instruction recommends that the Board of Education waive first review and approve the Sign Communication Proficiency Interview (SCPI) as an option for demonstrating proficiency in American Sign Language and establish a proficiency level of "advanced" for the assessment.

Impact on Resources:

Any cost for the assessment will be incurred by the test taker.

Timetable for Further Review/Action:

School divisions will be notified of the action by the Board of Education.