

Strategies for Interpreting Spelling Tests

Many teachers will use weekly spelling tests to reinforce new vocabulary from classes such as Science or Social Studies, or to tie in Holiday or other class themes. In the early grades, many times the spelling word will have a commonly known sign. As the student progresses through school, the spelling words will become more difficult and are often words that have no sign associated with them. So what's an educational interpreter to do?

(Not in order of preference...)

- With input from the student, **create a sign** for the word to be used *only* during the spelling test (this can often help the student understand the meaning of the word – using a related sign and then initializing it, for example)
- **Mouth the word**, if the student has some lipreading ability
- **Use Cued Speech**, if the student is familiar with that method
- Give a **definition of the word** (although this really is testing a student's knowledge of the definition as well as his/her ability to correctly spell the word – therefore the deaf student is being required to do more than his/her hearing classmates)
- Have the student **choose the incorrectly spelled words from a passage**
- **Quickly fingerspell the word** – if the student can read it and then reproduce the word on paper, he/she knows how to spell it! Many teachers do not trust this method, but it is appropriate if the word is fingerspelled rapidly as it would be in a conversation (the interpreter must be careful to keep the speed at an appropriate pace to avoid giving the answer)