### C:\Program Files\Microsoft Office\Media\CntCD1\ClipArt6\j0297265.wmfCONFERENCE TIPS WHEN USING AN INTERPRETER

#### Speak with the parents, not the interpreter

During the conference, always make eye contact with and talk directly to the parent (as opposed to speaking with the interpreter). Parents often understand more English than they can speak, so assume that they can understand reactions, comments and side conversations.

#### Speak evenly and pause frequently

Speak at a measured pace (not slowly or more loudly), and pause often so the interpreter can translate a manageable amount of information. Make notes beforehand so what you can communicate can be simple and succinct.

#### Use simple documents in your explanations

Use documents for visual support, but keep them simple. For example, don't offer a full-page single-spaced description of the curriculum. Offer an example of the student's work and a bullet list or rubric to show how it is evaluated, or a simple calendar with curriculum projects filled in.

#### Offer translated information if possible

While the teacher's remarks themselves may not be translated, the parents will have an explanation in their language of how their child is being evaluated, and will be able to get a good sense of their child's progress from the form. If your school offers such forms, they can be a highly useful tool in communicating with parents.

#### Leave time for parent questions

Underscore the importance of ongoing communication between the home and the school. Provide the parents with ways that they can contact you and communicate their questions and concerns with the necessary bilingual support.

* **Be aware of cultural differences**

In some cultures, parents going to school for parent/teacher conferences is not a common occurrence. As such, there may be a natural hesitancy by parents to attend conferences with the teacher or receive telephone calls from school personnel positively.

For some cultures, there is a general reluctance to use mental health services. While American school officials may not hesitate to use mental health providers or school counselors to assist with behavioral or abusive situations, parents of ELL students may not feel comfortable allowing their children to receive such care.

Students from other countries, including Mexico, may have varied educational experiences. Some may have gone to school regularly. Others may have limited attendance. This may be due to migrant/seasonal employment, war in their home countries, lack of available attendance centers or teachers, and other factors. Initially, their attendance pattern may reflect their prior educational experiences. Regular attendance may be an issue that should be addressed with ELL student families.

If possible, get some background information about your students' cultures and educational expectations that their parents may have. The following true anecdote illustrates the importance of this: *a kindergarten teacher held a conference with parents who were from an African country. The kindergarten teacher was very concerned about their child's excessive talking, activity, and inability to pay attention or play quietly with the other children. The parents beamed at the teacher and described how happy they were that their child was displaying such inquisitive and active intelligent behavior. They had a very different perspective on the behaviors of a successful learner.*