

An Exploration of the Experiences of Educational Interpreters in Missouri

By
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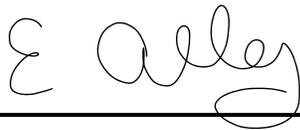
**Master of Arts in Interpreting Studies
and Communication Equity**

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Abstract

With the increasing number of deaf or hard of hearing students being educated in their home district since the passage of PL 94-142, the state of Missouri has established several policies regarding the qualifications of interpreters working in the K-12 setting. Missouri has also had a few initiatives to provide training to interpreters working in the educational setting. Since the 1990's, there has been little research into the interpreters' experiences in Missouri and the challenges they face. The results of this research can provide stakeholders with data that may be used to influence future program and policy decisions. The data provides information on the approximate number of interpreters working in the K-12 setting in Missouri, what certification and educational backgrounds they possess, and what education/training they are interested in pursuing and how they would like to receive it.

Chapter 1: Introduction

Missouri, like many other states, has undergone numerous changes to interpreter policy, changes in interpreter demographics, changes in the number of deaf and hard of hearing students attending public schools, as well as changes to the opportunities for ASL and interpreter training in the state. While Missouri may share some similarities with other states that have both rural and urban areas, its policies on interpreter certification make it fairly unique and hard to make comparisons and generalizations with other states. Current review suggests that there has not been any investigation of the state's educational interpreters for almost 30 years, although there have been numerous decisions that have had an impact on them. The researcher looked at the current status of educational interpreters in the state to gain a clearer picture of what is currently occurring in order to inform and potentially guide future decisions.

Missouri is a fairly rural state. There are approximately five general areas in the state that may be considered suburban or urban and have more than five educational interpreters on staff in their district. Outside of those, there are numerous school districts where there may be only one or a couple of interpreters employed. In 1993, almost 30 years ago, Jones conducted a study that focused on educational interpreters in Kansas, Nebraska and Missouri because of their similarity in rural demographics. Most of the interpreters working in education at that time worked in the urban areas that had larger programs for deaf and hard of hearing students. However, there has

not been any more recent investigation into the numbers of interpreters in the state of Missouri or what their experiences may be.

There have been more recent studies on rural educational interpreters (Fitzmaurice, 2017; Yarger, 2001) and while Missouri may be considered to have a large rural population, without more recent statistics on the numbers of educational interpreters and where they work, it would just be guesswork whether these studies can be applied to the state. In addition, many of the results of the studies have concluded that most rural interpreters were either not certified or under-certified. However, Missouri has had policies in place since 2003 that require interpreter certification along with minimum certification requirements to work in all settings, including K-12 educational settings (5 CSR 100-200.170). That is not to say that eliminates the possibility of under-qualified interpreters in the state, but the number of educational interpreters working without certification should be next to none. In addition, because of the difference in interpreter certification policy in Missouri as compared to other states the applicability of the various studies would be more questionable.

Since the time of the 1993 study, there has been a decrease in the number of programs across the state that offer programs in interpreting and ASL. At the time of the initial study there were three interpreter educational programs (IEP) whose graduates were contributing to the workforce of interpreters in Missouri, and three IEP just over the border in neighboring states. That number has since decreased to two in Missouri and two in the neighboring states. There were two colleges in Missouri that offered ASL programs and led to some graduates becoming interpreters, but one of those programs has closed in the past few years. Consequently, there are fewer programs offered now around the state than there were ten and twenty years ago.

There have been a number of policy changes in Missouri related to interpreting certification since as recently as 2014. One of those changes was the adoption of a new certification instrument used to assess interpreters' skills. Previously, the state used a Quality Assurance Screening Test (QAST) which resulted in five possible levels of certification. Three of the five levels met the minimum requirements to interpret in the K-12 setting. That system allowed interpreters who held either of the two lower levels of certification an avenue to work in the school setting for a limited number of years until achieving the minimum level. If that level was not achieved within the timeframe, potentially up to seven years, the interpreter could no longer work in the school setting as an educational interpreter (Missouri Code of State Regulations Archives). The new certification tests the state adopted, results in three possible levels of certification, the lowest of which allows an interpreter to work in the school setting (5 CSR 100-200.170). It eliminated that avenue for under-qualified interpreters to work in the school setting for an extended period of time.

Another change implemented at the same time was to increase the educational requirement of interpreters applying to take the certification exam. Before 2014, the minimum requirement to take the certification test was a high school diploma or its equivalent (Missouri Code of State Regulations Archives). After 2014, it changed to require 30 hours of college credit to take the written Test of English Proficiency (TEP) and 60 hours of college credit to take the performance exam (5 CSR 100-200.50). This was an increase, but still not the amount of education the national Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf (RID) requires.

Another change was an increase in the minimum score required on the Educational Interpreter Performance Assessment (EIPA) to obtain the certification that restricts an interpreter to work only in the educational setting (5 CSR 100-200.40). Taking the EIPA is not a

requirement to interpret in a Missouri school like it is for many others, but those who choose to take it must now demonstrate a higher level of proficiency to obtain the Restricted Certification in Education (RCED).

In addition, the new certification test has reported a low number of passing rates which would make entry into the profession even more difficult. According to the Texas Health and Human Services agency that developed the Board for Evaluation of Interpreters (BEI) certification exam that Missouri leases, during the FY2018 the pass rate for the written TEP was 55% and 44% for the Basic or lowest level of certification. There is potential for these systemic changes to have an impact on the number of and quality of educational interpreters in the state. However, without more recent data, the effects would be just speculation. This research is designed to increase our knowledge of the current state of educational interpreters in Missouri as well as learn more about their work experiences to guide future policy and educational decisions.

Chapter 2: Review of the Literature

History of the educational interpreting profession

The sign language interpreting profession is fairly young when compared with other professions. At the onset of the profession, during the 1950's, interpreters for the deaf typically were the children of deaf adults who had learned signed language at home. They had very little to no training or education in the practical skills of interpreting (Ball, 2007). That changed over the years as interpreter trainings and formal education programs arose, along with research on interpreting. Once the demand for interpreters increased, educational training programs were instituted, which moved from training those who already possessed sign language skills to training those who had to first learn sign language before learning interpreting skills. When formal training was finally offered to interpreters, the initial focus was on working with deaf

adults as that was the predominant population interpreters worked with at that time (Johnson, Taylor, Schick, Brown, & Bolster, 2018).

It wasn't until the passage of important educational legislation that there was a major paradigm shift in deaf education resulting in an increased demand for interpreters to work with children as well as adults. The main impetus was the passage of Education for All Handicapped Children Act (Public Law 94-142) in 1975, requiring children be educated in what was determined to be the student's "least restrictive environment." This resulted in increasing numbers of deaf and hard of hearing children being educated in their home school districts instead of the more traditional residential schools for the deaf (Marschark, Sapare, Convertino, & Seewagen, 2005). Sign language interpreters were introduced into the public-school setting to provide deaf and hard of hearing students access to the curriculum as well as to facilitate interactions with teachers and peers. This law later became known as the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) in 2004. This version saw the addition of educational interpreters to students' Individual Educational Plan as a related service provider, much like a speech language pathologist, occupational therapist, or physical therapist (Marschark, et al., 2005; Cogen & Cokely 2015). With these changes in the law the educational interpreting field faced several challenges.

One of the first challenges was the lack of training and education to prepare educational interpreters. Witter-Merithew & Johnson (2004) described the market disorder that occurred within the interpreting field due to the differences in standards set by the profession and those set by the marketplace because of the high demand for interpreters in a short amount of time.

Another challenge arose with the advent of interpreters as a related service provider which implied their role as part of the educational team. Interpreters should possess academic

credentials, professional credentials, continuing education, as well as supervision and an accountability system that parallels other related service providers according to Johnson, et al., (2018). Most interpreters do not possess the education, skills or knowledge that other related services providers were expected to have and, consequently faced difficulty gaining respect from colleagues. As a result, educational interpreters are often excluded and not consulted regarding what should be considered their area of expertise. Brimm (2018) surveyed 121 educational interpreters and found that only 30% of the 116 respondents indicated they always participated in the IEP meetings. The other 70% indicated varying amounts of participation, ranging from never attending to usually attending.

For deaf students who rely on sign language, the capabilities of the educational interpreter can have a major impact on the student's linguistic competence, academic achievement, and social outcomes (Schick, Williams, & Bolster, 1999). According to the U.S. Department of Education (2006), approximately 87% of deaf children are enrolled in mainstream education. Therefore, educational interpreters have tremendous impact on a large population of deaf students, and this drives the need to learn more about the training and education of interpreters in the K-12 setting.

Qualifications and education of educational interpreters

Numerous studies and reports on educational interpreting have reported that many, if not the majority of educational interpreters, especially those working in rural schools, were underqualified (Jones, Clark, & Solz, 1997; Yarger, 2001; Jones, 2004; Cogen and Cokely, 2015; Fitzmaurice, 2017; Johnson, et al., 2018). Cogen and Cokely (2015) report that the majority of new graduates from interpreter education programs (IEP) typically go on to work in K-12 education within one year of graduation. They also reported only 74% of IEPs offered any

specialized instruction in educational interpreting, while most offered only one course. Even though it has been shown that there is a difference in interpreting between the different populations, there has been little done to offer more programs focused on the specialty of educational interpreting. Their statistics show that many students graduating from interpreter education programs are not fluent in ASL, which is unfortunate when they may be the only language model a deaf or hard of hearing student has at school.

Johnson, et al. (2018) listed general interpreting competencies into five domains—(a) theory and knowledge, (b) human relations, (c) language skills, (d) interpreting skills, and (e) professionalism. Best practices of any discipline are identified through replicable and generalizable research in that field, leading to a body of evidence that defines and supports best practices. This in turn, informs pre-service programs in higher education, federal and state statutes, employment practices within the discipline and the professional services of practitioners. Without a body of evidence, the professionalization of a specific field cannot be realized (Johnson, et al., 2018). This has led to differences in testing instruments used to certify interpreters and different requirements for employment depending on the state. Some states do not have any standards for certification, either relying on national standards or not having any.

Instead of following national interpreter certification and standards, the state of Missouri chose to require its own certification and licensure that applies to all interpreters working in the state. The state initially used a Quality Assurance Screening Test (QAST) that issued five levels of certification, which allowed them to determine what level of certification is required before an interpreter may work in specific situations, including educational K-12.

Difference between interpreting for adults and children

Some differences in interpreting for children as opposed to adults are that adults are generally competent in at least one language, have coping strategies and world knowledge from life experiences, and can self-advocate (Johnson, et. al, 2018). To obtain national generalist certification, RID requires pre-service education equivalent to a bachelor's degree, demonstration of knowledge sets and interpreting skills, continuing education, and standardized accountability system (Johnson, et al., 2015). This certification is typically required to work in most settings with adults, such as medical appointments, legal settings, social services, etc. Some states require the EIPA exam before working with children in educational settings, with each state requiring a different minimum standard. The EIPA exam does not have as many prerequisites before taking the exam as those required to work with adults. Because of the importance of language modeling, the lack of a formal language, and lack of self-advocacy skills, the mainstreamed K-12 environment has been recommended by Cogen and Cokely (2015) to only be undertaken by the most fluent and experienced interpreters. However, the typically poor pay and low hiring requirements do not attract those qualified individuals. Cogen and Cokely (2015) go on to say that underqualified interpreters “inadvertently undermine development of language competence and contribute to idiosyncratic use of sign language, low literacy rates and poor academic and social outcomes for many deaf students” (p. 9). These effects can be devastating and affect deaf children for the rest of their lives.

Interpreting in rural settings

There have been a number of studies that looked at interpreting in rural school districts. Most of them noted that interpreters were typically under qualified to work with this population, and some did not have any certification (Jones, Clark, & Solz, 1997; Yarger, 2001; Fitzmaurice, 2017). Some challenges that were more unique to interpreters in these districts included

difficulty in providing training to interpreters, difficulty in getting support, lacking exposure to signing that may improve their skills, and isolation from other professionals.

Difficulty recruiting and maintaining employment of educational interpreters in rural schools is not unique to the interpreting profession. There are similar challenges faced by the special education profession in these areas, especially for low incidence populations like the deaf. This has implications for the deaf in rural settings since the schools may likely have a harder time finding an interpreter as well as other professionals who are trained to work with them (Berry, Petrin, Gravelle, & Farmer, 2011; Mitchem, Kossar, & Ludlow, 2006).

Yarger (2001) made several recommendations for educational interpreters in rural schools. Some of them included states offering a provisional period in the beginning of interpreters' careers for mentoring; workshops four times a year, three skills based and one for the dissemination of information; requiring 30 hours of self-paced videos on the roles and responsibilities of interpreters, collaboration of interpreters with other professionals, raising the expectations for sign skills, bringing knowledge and education to interpreters already working in rural areas, develop a lending library of material for interpreters to use, Deaf adults to provide mentoring, and for districts to not use novice level interpreters in school settings.

Chapter 3: Methodology

Research Question

The aim of this research was to provide a clearer picture of the state of educational interpreters in Missouri in order to provide data to make more informed decisions regarding policies, programs, and training affecting educational interpreters. To that end, it was necessary to know the numbers of educational interpreters in the state and the environments in which they

work. Before drawing any parallels with current research regarding interpreters in education, it was important to understand this state's demographics to compare to those in other studies. This information has the potential to be beneficial for stakeholders to better understand the impact of the issues the educational interpreters face. Specifically, demographic and experiential information was collected first through more quantitative methods, then the use of qualitative methods would be used to collect rich, descriptive information to understand the experiences of the working interpreters. The research set out to answer the questions of what challenges educational interpreters in Missouri faced and what additional training/education they are interested in pursuing and how they would like to receive it.

Methodology Design

A Qualtrics survey consisting of 27 questions was used to collect data in this study. The survey's aim was to gather two types of information—factual and behavioral. The factual questions targeted demographic information as well as the interpreter's background, education level, formalized training, and certification. The behavioral questions asked what types of tasks the interpreters do as well as how they engage in professional development and network with other educational interpreters (Hale & Napier, 2013).

The survey design included mainly closed-ended questions, with some in which a respondent could choose "other" and provide a short description of what "other" meant. The purpose of this design was to help the questionnaire be brief, requiring less time to complete with the goal of increasing the number of responses. In addition to limiting the amount of time needed to complete the questions, the format would decrease the amount of time the researcher needed to record information and make the data more easily quantifiable during analysis (Hale &

Napier, 2013). At the end of the survey, participants were asked if they would be willing to participate in an interview sharing their experience as an educational interpreter.

The interview was designed using semi-structured questioning, beginning with general questions that allow the participant to describe the situation “in their own terms” while the researcher “brackets” her own professional knowledge as Stringer (2014) described as an interviewing practice. Along with allowing participants to describe events in their own terms, interviews would serve to recognize the legitimacy of participants’ experiences (Stringer, 2014). Another interview tactic as described by Stringer (2014) was the use of grand tour questions which begin by asking the participant to describe their work and environment without any suggestions or leading questions from the researcher. This was to allow the participants to define what is important to them and how it affects them and their work. It would also allow the researcher an opportunity to explore topics she may not have considered. The researcher would then be able to follow up with more open-ended questions to gain more understanding of the problem or concern.

To add to the credibility of the study as Stringer (2014) suggests, the length of the interview was designed to allow the participants to fully express their experience of events and issues. The interview was predicted to take one hour to complete. The interviews were to be recorded, which could negatively affect participants’ willingness to share their opinions. However, by explaining the intent of the research initially and establishing an environment of trust and rapport those feelings of hesitancy may be alleviated.

Data Collection

Initial inquiry began by contacting the Missouri Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (MCDHH) to get an approximate number of educational interpreters serving deaf and

hard of hearing students in the state. MCDHH has been collecting data on the various settings in which interpreters work by means of self-report on annual interpreter certification renewal forms which historically have a very high response rate. They reported that the number of interpreters who indicated they work in the K-12 setting in 2019 was 285, with only a handful of interpreters not answering the question. That number may not be exact as there are interpreters in surrounding states who have Missouri's certification and may have responded that they worked in the educational setting; however, it may not necessarily be in Missouri. Also, there is the possibility that some interpreters hold national certification through RID and are licensed to work in Missouri without the state's certification and did not have the opportunity to respond on the annual certification renewal form.

The online survey was available by a shareable internet link. It was shared through various Facebook groups for interpreters in different regions of the state (i.e., Mid Missouri Interpreters Meet Up, Missouri IEIS, WWU Interpreters: Past and Present, Sign Language Interpreters of Southwest Missouri), as well as one for participants in a previous rural interpreter project (REISET Missouri Interpreters for the Deaf). The aim was to take advantage of the snowball effect by asking interpreters to share with other interpreters through their system of networks, reaching more than the researcher can do alone (Stringer, 2014). It was also shared through the Missouri Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing's e-newsletter that many interpreters around the state receive weekly. Because of the low numbers of interpreters certified through RID in this state, especially educational interpreters, some of the traditional methods for sharing information among interpreter groups were not pursued.

The survey was expected to be shared with special education administrators through the state's Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) special education listserv,

which accesses every public-school district around the state. The intent was to reach more educational interpreters, especially those who may not have connections to other educational interpreters. Unfortunately, when contacted, the agency stated they survey was not something they could send through their listserv as it did not originate from them. Instead, individual emails were sent to special education/services administrators or school principals of every public-school district in the state. However, by the time the survey was distributed by email to the schools, all public-schools were closed due to COVID-19 precautions. It is unknown how many educational interpreters were reached during this period of time. After the initial small response to the survey, it was distributed to the various interpreter referral agencies that serve the state of Missouri as listed on the resource page of MCDHH, requesting it be shared with their colleagues. The goal was to possibly reach more interpreters than through just social media and the emails to school since some educational interpreters may work through interpreter referral agencies as well.

Respondents to the survey could indicate that they wanted to participate in the interview to share their experiences as an educational interpreter. The researcher planned to use random selection to pick ten interpreters out of the pool of interested respondents to interview. However, with the small number of responses, there were no respondents to participate in the interview.

Data Analysis

After the survey was made available for two months, a total of 22 responses were received. The survey data was collected and the number of responses to each question's possible answers were recorded. After recording the data, some information was compared amongst groups according to educational background, certification level, and the number of educational interpreters in their school. This was meant to detect any patterns among the groups.

Strengths and Limitations

One challenge that was not anticipated, was the small number of responses to the survey. The survey was distributed immediately before the national pandemic that called for immediate social distancing procedures to slow the spread of the disease. Shortly after, many urban and suburban public schools in Missouri were mandated to close. Within a week, every public school around the state had closed and began remote instruction. During this time, the focus of many professionals in public education, including educational interpreters, shifted to a sudden change in teaching methods and the resulting concern about communication access for deaf and hard of hearing students. It is believed that this mass shift of focus within the educational community and around the nation, led to a much smaller number of responses than anticipated due to availability of potential participants.

The researcher also expected more reach and response through social media. However, the initial recruitment through this method only yielded 10 responses. The researcher may have overestimated the motivation of educational interpreters to participate simply to increase knowledge in the field. The researcher expected some reluctance by some interpreters to participate due to time constraints, thus the reason to collect as much data through a short survey first. However, the hour-long time commitment for the interview may have prevented some from participating beyond the survey. It was also expected that some interpreters may not want to participate if they perceived their responses may be viewed negatively, especially since they would be recorded for accuracy even while remaining anonymous. It should be noted as well that the state's interpreter licensure rules that are punitive may have also contributed to a lack of cooperation out of fear to reveal anything that may reflect negatively on themselves or the school in which they are employed.

Chapter 4: Results and Discussion of Findings

Of the 22 total responses, the age range of the respondents was 23 through 55 and over, with a mode of 6 in the 45-55 age range. (see Table 1)

Age Range	No. of Responses
18-23	0
23-28	5
29-35	4
36-44	3
45-55	6
55 and over	4

Table 1: Participant Age

To ascertain how the interpreters learned sign language and whether it was their native language, multiple questions were asked. Five participants responded that they had a family member who was deaf, although none of them had deaf parent(s). A later question showed that 100% of respondents answered that English is their first language, resulting in all participants learning ASL as a second language. A later question reflected that 95% of respondents learned ASL through college courses, either exclusively or in conjunction with other avenues.

Next, the number of years worked as an interpreter was compared to the number of years working as an interpreter in the K-12 setting. 18 of 22 (82%) respondents indicated they had worked in the K-12 setting for the same range of years as the number of years they had been interpreting in general (see Figures 2 and 3). This correlation could lead one to expect that those

18 individuals have been working in this setting for the majority, if not the entirety, of their career, possibly immediately after completing interpreting and ASL coursework.

Number of years interpreting

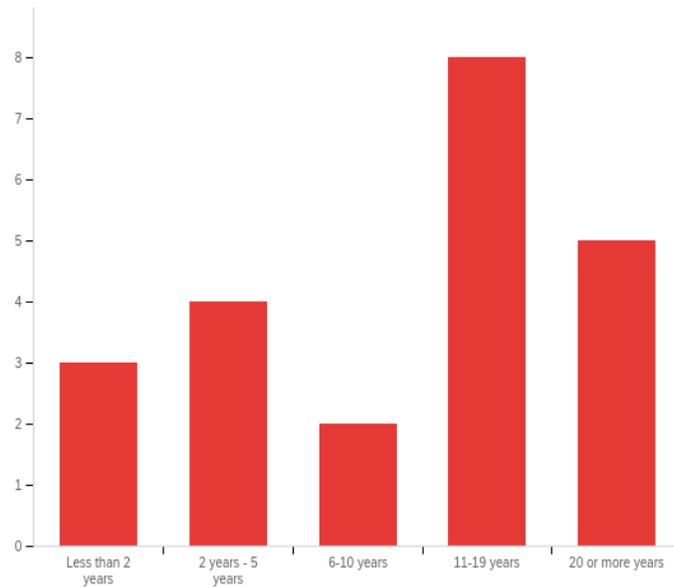


Figure 1: Number of years interpreting

Number of years interpreting K-12

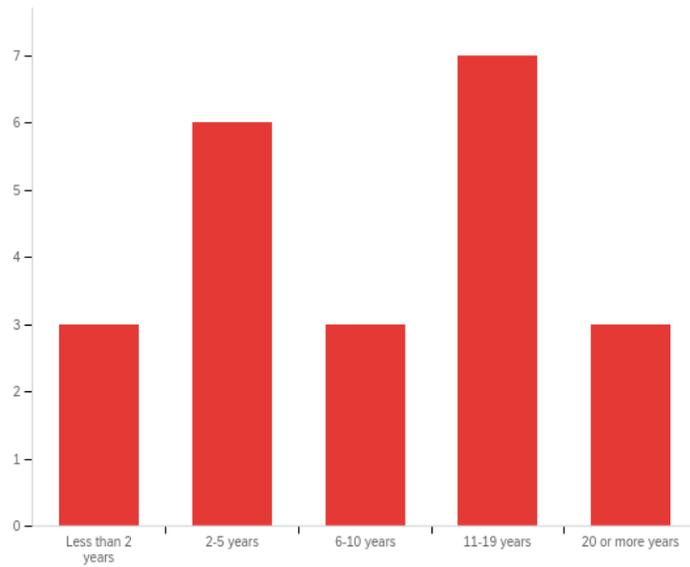


Figure 2: Number of years interpreting K-12

A look at the certification levels that the participants hold showed that the vast majority (17 of 22) of respondents indicated they held either the Basic or Advanced levels of Missouri certifications, while two held the top level of Master and another two held a Provisional Certification in Education (PCED). The PCED is a temporary certification offered in Missouri, with the purpose of allowing an interpreter to work for up to a year in only the K-12 setting while in the process of obtaining their permanent certification. Only one participant indicated holding more than one certification, one being the MICS Master as well as National Interpreter Certification (NIC). That same participant was the only one who had a certification issued by the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf (RID), the national interpreters' professional organization. Only one participant responded that the Educational Interpreter Performance Assessment (EIPA) had been taken. Those who hold MICS Basic, Advanced, or Master certifications obtained their certification under the state's previous Quality Assurance Screening Test (QAST). Any who hold MO-BEI Basic or Advanced certification would have taken the more recent exam leased from Texas' Board for the Evaluation of Interpreters (BEI) exam that Missouri adopted and began administering in 2015. Basic level is the first of three levels and the minimum certification required to work in the educational setting in Missouri. Advanced is the second level of certification in the Missouri system, which allows one to work in a variety of settings, including all of those allowed for the Basic level, plus the addition of medical, mental health, and some

legal. The Master level is the third or top level of certification offered and allows one to interpret anywhere, including legal settings (see Figure 3).

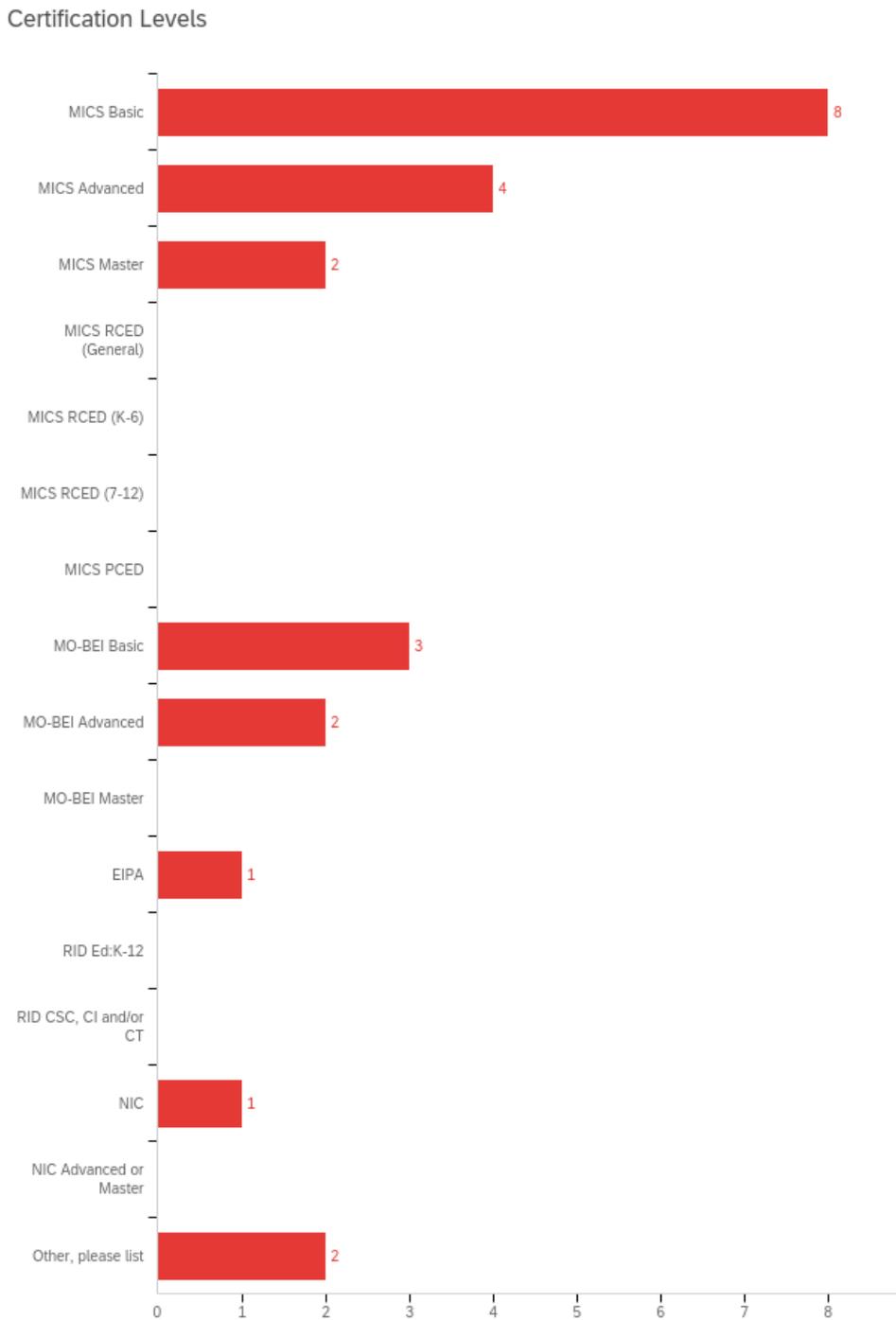


Figure 3: Certification levels of interpreters

The education level of the interpreters showed that 13 have a bachelor's degree, five have an associate degree, and three hold master's degrees (see Figure 4). Of the 13 participants with bachelor's degrees, seven of them are in interpreting. Missouri does not require any requisite level of education specifically in interpreting. In fact, it was only in 2014 that any college credit was required before taking the MICS tests. At that time, it was determined that a minimum of 60 hours of credit in any field would satisfy the educational requirement. Because of this lack of requirement and the lack of educational opportunities around the state at that level, it was surprising that most participants in this study had a BA degree or higher. Of the three interpreters with a master's degree, one did not have any degree in interpreting, one had only their associate degree in interpreting, and the other had both a BA and MA in interpreting (see Figure 5). Only one indicated otherwise, instead learning through family and the deaf community. This information correlated with the data showing 95% of respondents learned sign language from college courses.

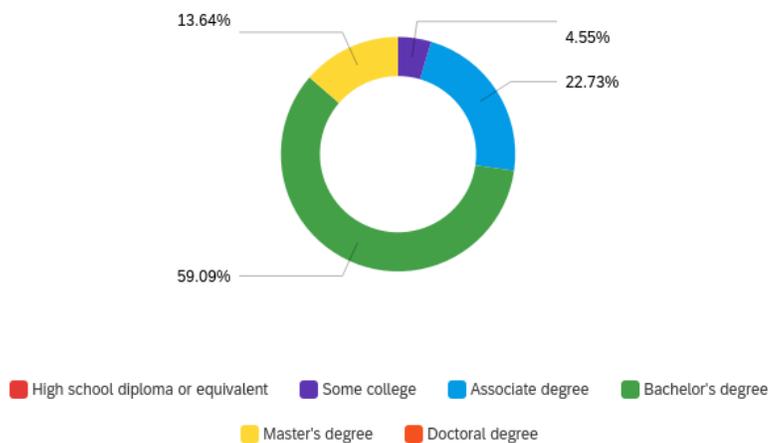


Figure 4: Educational level of interpreters

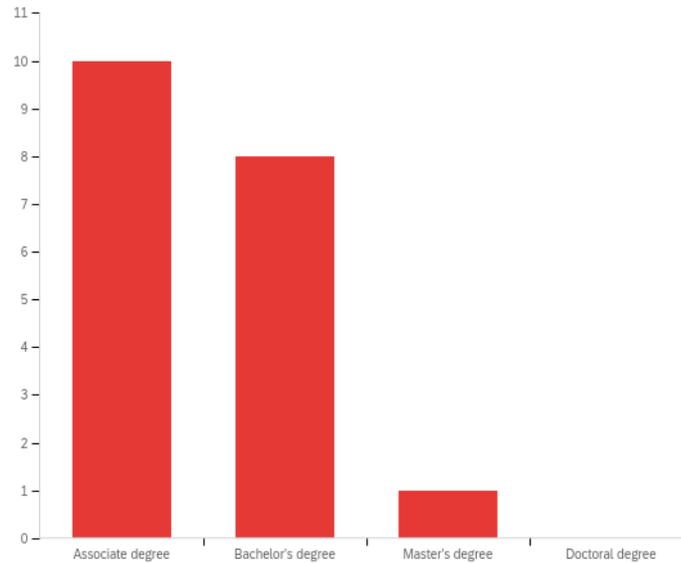


Figure 5: Degrees in interpreting

59% of respondents work in a school district that employs five or more educational interpreters. Approximately 23% responded they were either the only interpreter or fewer than five in their district. 18 % did not respond to this question while they did respond to every other question on the survey. This may indicate they were not aware of how many interpreters work in their district (see Figure 6).

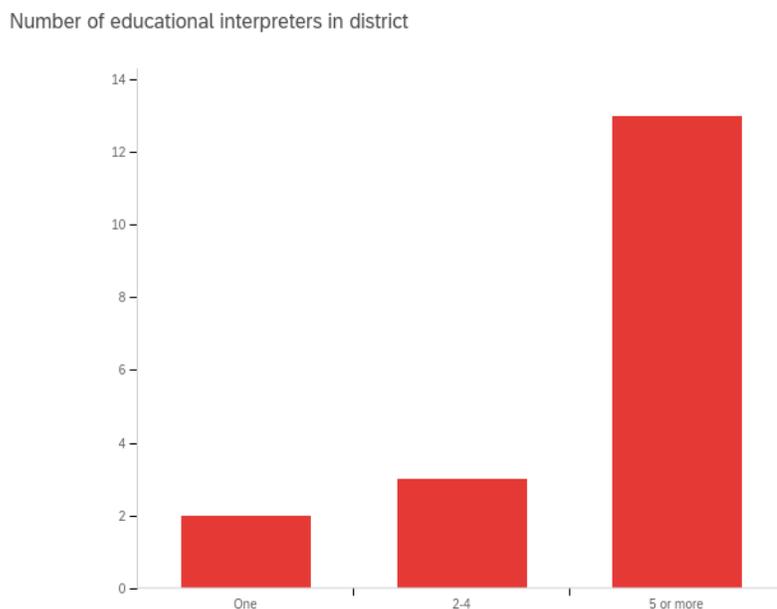


Figure 6: Number of educational interpreters in district

Of the 22 interpreters, 19 indicated that their employment status is fulltime staff for the school district, two were contract interpreters, and one mentioned they were recently retired and thus not currently employed by a district. 13 indicated that the special education director/administrator was their supervisor while four had supervisors who are teachers of the deaf (TOD). It was interesting that one marked “other” and explained that it was confusing as it seemed to depend on the situation who was their supervisor.

The vast majority (86%) indicated their job title is “interpreter”, while one checked other without specifying their title. Another mentioned their title was not clear, being called “interpreter” at times while at other times being referred to as a “paraprofessional.” The final participant listed the title of “Visual Communication Specialist.”

When comparing statistics based on the size of school districts, of the 13 whose district employed five or more educational interpreters, nine of them are members of a worker’s union. Only one person said they were a member of a union that was employed by a district with less than five educational interpreters. Of the others who work in a district with fewer than five

interpreters or who did not specify how many were in the district, only one marked that they were a member of a union. Apparently, those in larger districts had more opportunity to join a workers' union.

When looking at the job duties they performed, all interpreters indicated they interpreted in the classroom and 19 of them interpret extra-curricular activities as well. Outside of those main duties, two also tutor students, one who is from a larger school district and one from a small one. Two interpreters in the larger school districts provide language instruction. These numbers were a little surprising since the literature indicates that often the rural districts or those with fewer staff typically have educational interpreters perform those duties. Only one interpreter indicated they provide direct instruction to students (see Figure 7).

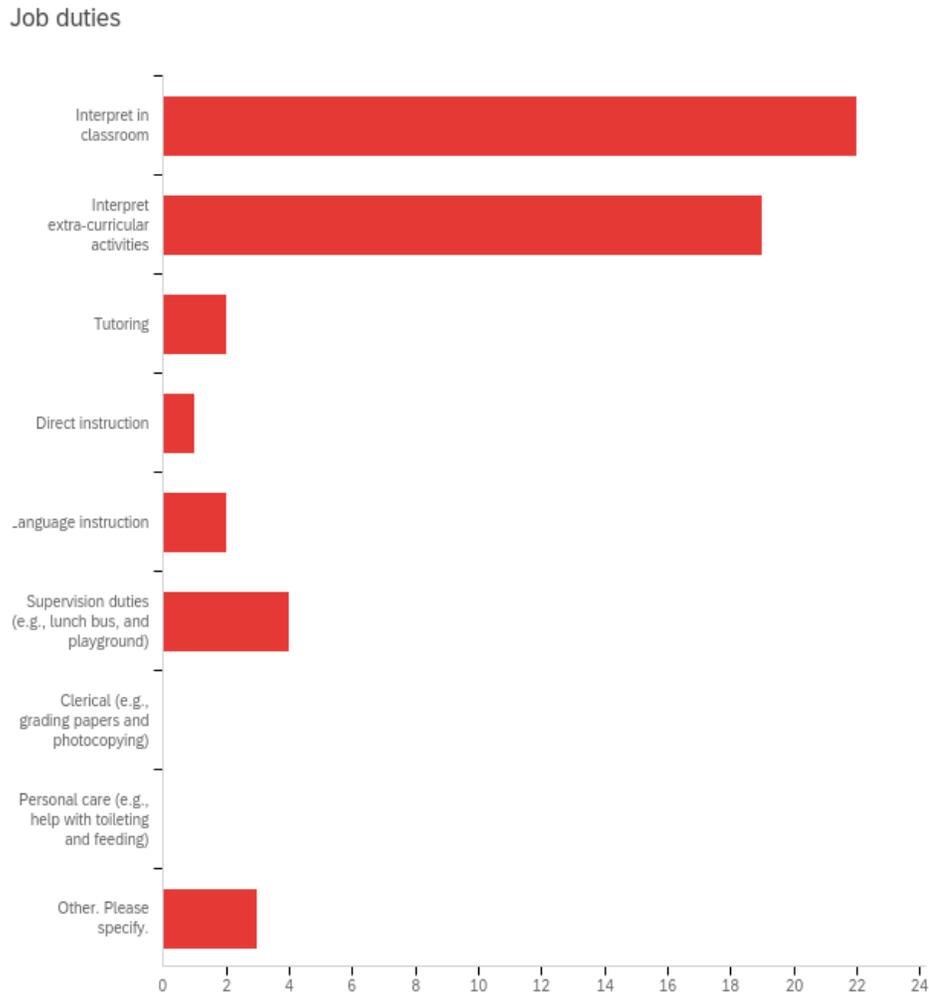


Figure 7: Job duties

When looking at networking opportunities, four are members of the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf (RID). Of those four, none are a member of RID's Interpreters in Educational and Instructional Settings (IEIS) member section, while one is a member of the state's affiliate chapter of MO-RID. Only one interpreter indicated they were a member of the National Association of Interpreters in Education (NAIE). While it was a little surprising that none were members of a professional organization specifically for educational interpreters. While only one interpreter held national certification (NIC), four were members of the professional organization.

Most interpreters surveyed were not members of the professional organization for educational interpreters, half were involved in specialized Facebook groups, two were members of online discussion groups, and five are members of in-person meeting groups for educational interpreters. It appears that more of them associate with colleagues on either a more local or less formal level. Almost half did not indicate any professional association outside of work.

Support from school districts for professional development (PD) varied. Some interpreters responded that they were offered school-sponsored workshops, financial support to attend PD, paid time off to attend workshops, and the flexible scheduling to pursue PD. Seven did not mark any of the school supports, with two of those being because they are contracted interpreters.

Of the various ways to earn professional development CEUs, almost everyone shared that they used online workshops, workshops not provided by the school districts, and interpreter conferences. Almost half also engage in independent study. There were more workshops offered by the school districts themselves in the schools with a larger number of interpreters (see Table 2).

Number of interpreters in school district	5+	2-4	1	Unknown
Face-to-face workshop provided by school	5	2	0	1
Workshops outside of school	14	2	1	2
Online CEUs	10	2	0	4
Interpreter conferences	7	3	2	2
Independent study	6	3	0	0

Table 2: Ways of earning professional development

As barriers to professional development, the most frequently checked reasons were that a) topics were not related to their needs, b) a lack of opportunities near them (geographically), and c) financial hardship. Then they were asked to indicate what topic(s) they would like to see for professional development, specialized vocabulary and language acquisition of deaf children were listed the most often. Of the preferred modes of learning, in-person workshops outside of their school was the most popular, followed by conferences focused on educational interpreters, mentoring, and then online workshops (see Table 3).

Number of interpreters in school district	5+	2-4	1	Unknown
Topics not related to my needs	5	0	1	3
Lack of opportunities close to me (geographically)	5	1	2	2
Financial (can't afford registration and/or travel)	4	1	2	1
Not being aware of what is available	2	1	0	2
Not given time away from work to pursue PD	3	0	0	1
Not having technological resources and/or expertise to participate in online opportunities	0	0	0	1

Table 3: Barriers to professional development

Chapter 5: Conclusion

Limitations

This research aimed to increase the knowledge of educational interpreter demographics in the state of Missouri as well as their experiences at work. This was intended to provide information to guide decisions on policies, education, and training that impacts them and thus the educational experience of deaf and hard of hearing students in this state. The impact of COVID-19 closing public schools during the research period severely limited the number of responses to the survey. Because the number of responses compared to the estimated number of educational interpreters is less than 10%, the findings would not make an accurate representation of the actual demographics around the state. In addition, the survey results were anonymous and while some of the questions were designed to help identify the size of the school in which they worked, it would be difficult to determine if it was representative to the various school districts. Therefore, the results are not able to be generalized to the state.

This research aimed to explore topics that the interpreters themselves would want to share in regard to their experience and work. Without having the ability to ask the open-ended questions through interviews as designed, there was a lot of potential information that could not be collected to share with stakeholders.

Further research

Due to the lack of responses, it may be beneficial to conduct another survey when schools are back in session and not focusing their energies on new modes of teaching and interpreting. Different recruitment methods may be reconsidered to reach more educational interpreters as well. The possible impact of the data collected may not have been explained from the beginning

to garner more participation. Other avenues may be considered to get the rich descriptive information sought after for the interview portion. Instead, maybe focus groups could be considered that may help participants feel heard. Also, by listening to others share their experiences, participants may be provided with topics to discuss that they wouldn't have considered on their own. Additionally, common themes could be explored further during the focus group that may not have been able to be explored if interviewing asynchronously.

Because the researcher was a Missouri interpreter and the state's licensing rules for interpreters requires interpreters to report any rule violations or be subject to punishment, there may have been hesitancy to participate due to fear of reprisal. Therefore, future research may be conducted by someone outside of the interpreting field to possibly mitigate those feelings.

To further explore educational interpreters' experiences in the classroom, with colleagues, and within their districts, a researcher may contact specific school districts based on certain factors such as size to find potential participants. Additionally, interviews could be conducted with various school personnel to learn how the schools view the educational interpreters in their district on their professional roles.

Recommendations

The information based on the data collected showed that the educational levels and certification levels of the educational interpreters is higher than many national and regional studies have indicated. Therefore, any discussion and decisions that impact them, should be based on local data as opposed to national data. This information may be able to dispel many myths regarding interpreter qualification and may help raise the view of the profession to other professionals as well as to interpreters who do not work in the K-12 educational setting.

Interpreters expressed areas they felt in which they needed more professional development and that may be used by state agencies and others to provide the education and training desired. This information also showed that almost every respondent utilizes online trainings as well as in person, with only one expressing difficulty using technology. They also expressed their barriers to professional development. This may be helpful to know how to best reach audiences when providing trainings specific to educational interpreters.

Yarger's research listed several recommendations for rural educational interpreters such as workshops four times a year, three skills based and one for the dissemination of information. Because of the discrepancies in school support of professional development, the state may consider providing statewide training so all educational interpreters may benefit. Missouri has multiple agencies that may work collaboratively in these efforts. The Missouri Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing, Missouri's Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, and Missouri School for the Deaf's Outreach department all have a stake in deaf and hard of hearing children's education. There could be programs established through the use of self-paced videos, development of collaborative networks for educational interpreters and other related professionals. For those interpreters who found it difficult to find meaningful professional development, a lending library or online repository of materials for interpreters to access would be helpful. Deaf adults could be trained to provide language mentoring to those who need more support in giving deaf children access to the curriculum through visual language.

Conclusion

There is little literature that looks specifically at the population of educational interpreters in Missouri. Looking at the literature specifically for rural states with educational interpreters suggest that most interpreters working in the K-12 setting do not possess the education, training

or qualifications needed to be effective in the classroom. The data collected in this study showed that the majority of interpreters met minimum standards determined by the state, as well as attained higher levels of education than expected. The data provides information to guide future planning for professional development as well as opportunities for growth in creating professional networks. There is much left to explore, but this was the first attempt of a study of this population in over 20 years. It was meant to begin asking questions of an area of specialty within the interpreting community to get information directly from those doing the job. Hopefully this was just the beginning and more work is done to give these interpreters a voice as well as help those who make decisions that impact them.

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Appendix A Recruitment Flyer

My name is Peggy Belt and I am a graduate student in the Master of Arts in Interpreting Studies and Communication Equity (MAISCE) program at St. Catherine University. I am conducting a study on the experiences of educational interpreters in the state of Missouri. As part of my study, I will be conducting an online survey to obtain information on the demographics of educational interpreters working in Missouri, as well as on the type of work performed, and the professional development opportunities offered to them. From the survey, I will solicit volunteers to interview to gain insight into their experiences of working in the K-12 setting.

- ★ If you are an educational interpreter and are willing to participate in the survey, you may follow this link http://stkate.az1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_cXWJb53cnqALca1

This study has been approved by the St. Catherine University Institutional Review Board (#1386). You may contact the IRB office with any questions at 651-690-6204 or irb@stkate.edu. My research advisor is Dr. Erica Alley who you may also contact by phone at (651) 690-6018, by videophone at (612) 255-3386, or by email at elalley@stkate.edu.

Thank you for your consideration and I look forward to hearing from you.

Peggy Belt, graduate student in the Master of Arts in Interpreting Studies and Communication Equity (MAISCE) program at St. Catherine University

Appendix B Informed Consent

ST. CATHERINE UNIVERSITY Informed Consent for a Research Study

Study Title: An Exploration of the Experiences of Educational Interpreters in Missouri

Researcher: Peggy Belt, graduate student at St. Catherine University in St. Paul, MN.

You are invited to participate in a research study exploring the experiences of educational interpreters in the state of Missouri. The study is being conducted by Peggy Belt, graduate student at St. Catherine University's Master of Arts in Interpreting Studies and Communication Equity (MAISCE) program.

The purpose of this study is to contribute to the knowledge base of the educational interpreting field in Missouri. This study is important because the results can guide policy and educational programs that will benefit the educational interpreters of this state. An online survey will be distributed asking for volunteers who are currently working as an educational interpreter in a Missouri school. At the end of the survey, participants may choose to provide their email address to indicate they are interested participating in an interview. Approximately 10-12 people are expected to participate in the interview. Below, you will find answers to the most commonly asked questions about participating in a research study. Please read this entire document and ask any questions you may have before you agree to be in the study.

Why have I been asked to be in this study?

You were selected because of your participation in the online survey and your indication that you wanted to be interviewed to share your experience as an educational interpreter working in a Missouri school in the K-12 setting.

If I decide to participate, what will I be asked to do?

If you meet the criteria and agree to be in this study, you will be asked to do these things:

- You will be contacted to engage in an interview with the researcher, using an online meeting program (Zoom) one time. The interview will be recorded.
- The researcher will ask a series of questions, which should take no longer than one hour to answer.

- In total, this study will take approximately one hour during one interview session.

What if I decide I don't want to be in this study?

Participation in this study is completely voluntary. If you decide you do not want to participate in this study, please feel free to say so, and do not sign this form. If you decide to participate in this study, but later change your mind and want to withdraw, simply notify me and you will be removed immediately. You may withdraw until the end of the interview, after which time withdrawal will no longer be possible. Your decision of whether or not to participate will have no negative or positive impact on your relationship with St. Catherine University, nor with any of the students or faculty involved in the research.

What are the risks (dangers or harms) to me if I am in this study?

The risks of this study are minor as the researcher will be the only viewer of recorded data. All references to participants will be only by the pseudonym you choose.

What are the benefits (good things) that may happen if I am in this study?

Results of this study may benefit educational interpreting professionals in the state of Missouri as well as providing information that may be used in the future to provide programs and support to the educational interpreters in the state.

Will I receive any compensation for participating in this study?

There is no compensation for participating in this study.

What will you do with the information you get from me and how will you protect my privacy?

The information that you provide in this survey will not be personally identifiable. The information obtained will be used for statistical and informational purposes. The information provided through interviews will be recorded and stored with a pseudonym of the participant's choosing. All recordings will be stored in my personal storage folder in the program Box provided by St. Catherine University. I will finish analyzing the data and then destroy all original videos, survey documents and identifying information that can be linked back to you within 1 month of the study or by June 30, 2019.

Any information that you provide will be kept confidential, which means that you will not be identified or identifiable in the any written reports, presentations, or publications.

Are there possible changes to the study once it gets started?

If during the course of this research study I learn about new findings that might influence your willingness to continue participating in the study, I will inform you of these findings.

How can I get more information?

If you have any questions, you can ask them before you sign this form. You can also feel free to contact me at (573)999-1625 or plbelt@stkate.edu. If you have any additional questions later and would like to talk to the faculty advisor, please contact Dr. Erica Alley at (651) 690-6018 by phone, (612) 255-3386 by videophone, or elalley@stkate.edu. If you have other questions or concerns regarding the study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher, you may also contact Dr. John Schmitt, Chair of the St. Catherine University Institutional Review Board, at (651) 690-7739 or jsschmitt@stkate.edu.

You may keep a copy of this form for your records.

Statement of Consent:

I consent to participate in the study and agree to be videotaped.

My signature indicates that I have read this information and my questions have been answered. I also know that even after signing this form, I may withdraw from the study by informing the researcher(s).

Signature of Participant

Date

Signature of Researcher

Date

Appendix C Survey Questions

- 1) What is your age?
 - a. 18-22
 - b. 23-28
 - c. 29-35
 - d. 36-44
 - e. 45-55
 - f. 55 and over
- 2) If you have any family members who are deaf, please indicate their relationship(s)?
 - a. Parent(s)
 - b. Grandparent(s)
 - c. Sibling(s)
 - d. Child(ren)
 - e. Other
- 3) What is your first language?
 - a. English
 - b. ASL
 - c. Spanish
 - d. Other
- 4) How many years have you been interpreting?
 - a. Less than 2 years
 - b. 2 years – 5 years
 - c. 6-10 years
 - d. 11-19 years
 - e. 20 or more years
- 5) How many years have you been interpreting in K-12 setting?
 - a. Less than 2 years
 - b. 2-5 years
 - c. 6-10 years
 - d. 11-19 years
 - e. 20 or more years
- 6) In addition to K-12 interpreting, what other settings do you interpret? Check all that apply.
 - a. Medical
 - b. Legal
 - c. Mental Health
 - d. VRS
 - e. Post-Secondary Education
 - f. Other
- 7) What certification(s) do you hold? Check all that apply
 - a. MICS Basic
 - b. MICS Advanced
 - c. MICS Master
 - d. MICS RCED (General)
 - e. MICS RCED (K-6)

- f. MICS RCED (7-12)
 - g. MICS PCED
 - h. MO-BEI Basic
 - i. MO-BEI Advanced
 - j. MO-BEI Master
 - k. EIPA
 - l. RID Ed:K12
 - m. RID CSC, CI and/or CT
 - n. NIC
 - o. NIC Advanced or NIC Master
 - p. Other, please list
- 8) What is your highest level of education completed? (Does not have to be directly related to interpreting)
- a. High school diploma or equivalent
 - b. Some college
 - c. Associate degree
 - d. Bachelor's degree
 - e. Master's degree
 - f. Doctoral degree
- 9) Do you have a degree related to interpreting? yes/no
- 10) Where did you learn sign language? (Check all that apply)
- a. Family
 - b. Community sign class
 - c. Church
 - d. High school class
 - e. College class
 - f. Other, please list
- 11) If you are aware, please indicate how many educational interpreters are employed by the school district where you work?
- a. One
 - b. 2-4
 - c. 5 or more
 - d. Don't know
- 12) What grade level of student(s) do you currently interpret? Check all that apply
- a. Elementary
 - b. Middle school
 - c. High school
- 13) What is your employment status with the district?
- a. Staff interpreter
 - b. Contract interpreter
 - c. Other. Please explain
- 14) Who is your supervisor?
- a. Lead Interpreter/Other interpreter
 - b. Teacher of the Deaf
 - c. Special Education director
 - d. Other. Please specify
- 15) What is your job title?

- a. Interpreter
 - b. Communication Facilitator
 - c. Paraprofessional
 - d. Other
- 16) Are you a member of a worker's union that represents your interests as an employee of the school?
Yes/no
- 17) If you answered yes to question 16, please list the name of the union.
- 18) Please check all of the job duties you perform.
- a. Interpret in classroom
 - b. Interpret extra-curricular activities
 - c. Tutoring
 - d. Direct instruction
 - e. Language instruction
 - f. Supervision duties (e.g., lunch, bus, and playground)
 - g. Clerical (e.g., grading papers and photocopying)
 - h. Personal care (e.g., help with toileting and feeding)
 - i. Other. Please specify
- 19) What, if any, professional organizations are you affiliated? Check all that apply.
- a. RID
 - b. RID IEIS member section
 - c. MO-RID
 - d. NAIE
 - e. Other. Please specify.
- 20) Do you participate in a social network with other educational interpreters? Check all that apply.
- a. Facebook group
 - b. Online discussion group
 - c. In-person group
 - d. Other. Please specify
- 21) Does the school district in which you work support your participation in educational interpreting professional development (PD)? If so, check all that apply.
- a. School district sponsored workshops and training
 - b. Financial support
 - c. Paid time off to attend PD
 - d. Schedule flexibility to attend PD
 - e. Other. Please specify
- 22) How do you typically pursue professional development? Check all that apply.
- a. Face-to-face workshops provided by school
 - b. Workshops provided outside of your school district
 - c. Interpreter conferences
 - d. Online interpreting CEUs
 - e. Independent study
 - f. College coursework
 - g. Other. Please specify.
- 23) What challenges have you encountered in pursuing professional development (PD)? Check all that apply.
- a. Topics not related to my needs
 - b. Lack of opportunities close to me (geographically)

- c. Financial (can't afford registration and/or travel)
 - d. Not given time away from work to pursue PD
 - e. Not being aware of what is available
 - f. Not having technological resources and/or expertise to participate in online opportunities
 - g. Other. Please specify
- 24) Please check the top three areas of professional development you feel would be most beneficial to your personal development and work as an educational interpreter.
- a. ASL grammar
 - b. Use of space
 - c. Specialized signed vocabulary (e.g., computer, math, and band.)
 - d. Specialized communication systems (e.g., SEE 2 and Cued Speech)
 - e. Educational interpreter ethics
 - f. Working with other professionals in schools
 - g. Language acquisition of deaf children
 - h. Test preparation (e.g., EIPA, MO-BEI, NIC written or performance)
 - i. Working as a member of the IEP team
 - j. Interpreting more than classroom instruction (e.g., peer interactions and incidental learning)
 - k. Interpreting for tests
 - l. Other. Please specify
- 25) What would be your preferred method for receiving professional development? Check all that apply.
- a. Live workshop during allocated professional development time at school
 - b. Live workshop outside of school
 - c. Conference focused on educational interpreting topics
 - d. Mentoring with interpreting or language mentor (either in person or online)
 - e. Online workshops (either synchronous or asynchronous)
 - f. Peer professional development group
 - g. Other. Please specify.

Thank you for your participation in this research survey! Your results from this survey will not be linked with any identifying information.

If you would be willing to be interviewed regarding your experiences working in the K-12 setting, please enter your email address below. Ten people will be chosen by a random number generator for participation in interviews. If chosen, participants will be contacted within a month of completing the survey. Again, thank you for your participation.

Appendix D

Interview Script

To ensure that all participants receive the exact same information, I need to read from this script, O.K.?

First, thank you for your participation in this research study on the experiences of educational interpreters in Missouri. My name is Peggy Belt and I am a graduate student in the Masters of Interpreting Studies and Communication Equity program at St. Catherine University under the supervision of Dr. Erica Alley. Before we begin, I want to ask if you have any questions about any of the forms that you recently filled out.

Today you will be participating in an interview which should take approximately one hour. Your participation is voluntary. If you do not wish to participate, you may stop at any time. As you may recall from the Informed Consent and Video Release Form you completed; all information shared during this discussion will remain strictly confidential. The information that you provide in this study will be recorded for transcription purposes. All reference to you will use only the pseudonym that you provided. Additionally, any personally identifiable information (e.g., names of school, students) will be edited if necessary, in order to protect confidentiality.

Your participation in this interview should take less than one hour. If you feel you need a break at any time or wish to withdraw from the interview, please let me know. Are you ready to begin?

Great! Let's begin.

Appendix E
Interview Questions for Educational Interpreters

- 1) How long have you been working as an educational interpreter?
- 2) What does a typical day at work look like for you?
- 3) Can you provide an example of an atypical day for you?
- 4) What do you enjoy most about your work?
- 5) What is the most challenging part of your work?
- 6) What do you think could be done to help resolve some of those challenges?
- 7) How do you determine if you are effective in the classroom?
- 8) What about educational interpreting makes you want to continue working in the K-12 setting?
- 9) You must work with other school professionals such as administrators, general classroom teachers, special education/deaf education teachers, paraprofessionals, etc. What, if anything, do you wish other professionals you work with understood about your role as an educational interpreter?
- 10) What do you see in the future for educational interpreters in Missouri?
- 11) Is there anything else you would like to share with me to help me understand the experience of an educational interpreter in Missouri, that hasn't been mentioned so far?