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S.E.E. CENTER



Educational Sign Skills Evaluation (ESSE)

Skill Evaluation Schedule

New testing dates for California are:
11/17/07 Santa Ana

Note: Registrations are accepted on a first come basis. Applications will be accepted only as long as the schedule has openings. Register early.

You can register online, or copy and print the application and either FAX or mail it.

[Application for Skill Evaluation \(Click here for on-line form\)](#)

Be sure to include in your application the location and date of the site for which you are registering.

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I. WHY THE E.S.S.E.?

Today roughly 67% of schools and classes for deaf/hh children use some form of sign communication. The Center for the Assessment and Demographic Studies at

Gallaudet University reports that over 75% of deaf/hh students now attend day or mainstream programs. Many receive the services either of a teacher of deaf/hh students or of an educational interpreter. Yet relatively few of these individuals have received an assessment of their signing skills---whether their ability to express themselves in sign or to understand children who sign to them. No state evaluates teacher signing skills prior to certification as a teacher of deaf/hh students, and the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf does not evaluate signing skills in an elementary or secondary school setting. Accordingly, many teachers and educational interpreters serving deaf/hh students have no documentation of the level of their skill or of the type of sign communication they use. This information is of importance not only to the teacher or interpreter who wishes to upgrade skills, but to administrators who hire, and parents seeking appropriate placements for their children. The E.S.S.E. was developed to provide a means of identifying the dominant signing style of an individual and to provide meaningful, helpful feedback on areas of strength and areas in need of improvement. It provides an overall expressive skills rating as well as information on the type, level, and degree of understanding demonstrated receptively for both English-related signing and signing in American Sign Language. **II. WHAT IS THE E.S.S.E.?** The ESSE consists of several different tools: the ESSE:R (receptive), ESSE:I (interpreting), and ESSE:T (teacher). **A. ESSE:R (receptive)** The ESSE:R is a videotaped evaluation of the ability of an individual to understand three different types of signing at three different levels (basic, intermediate and advanced):

- American Sign Language (ASL)
- Pidgin Signed English (PSE)
- Signing Exact English (SEE)

The basic level uses simple vocabulary at a fairly slow pace; the intermediate level presents a higher level of vocabulary and a faster pace; the advanced level includes fairly sophisticated vocabulary at a normal rate. The signers are deaf high school students. Each student presents two warmup sentences and ten test sentences. Individuals taking the evaluation write, in English, what they understood the sentence to be. A grid presents the results in terms of the percent of actual signs understood and the percent of sentence meanings grasped for each modality at each level:

<u>Level</u>	<u>PSE</u>		<u>SEE</u>		<u>ASL</u>	
	Signs	Sentences	Signs	Sentences	Signs	Sentences
Basic						
Intermediate						
Advanced						

The average percent of sentences understood is then assigned a receptive comprehension skill level for each modality as follows:

Below 40%	Beginner
40 - 54%	Advanced Beginner
55 - 69%	Intermediate
70 - 84%	Advanced Intermediate
85 - 100%	Advanced

B. ESSE: I (Interpreting) The ESSE:I consists of videotaped samples of actual classroom teachers which an educational interpreter is asked to interpret as s/he would to students. The interpreter is given a choice of elementary school, middle school, or high school classes. Once the school level is established, a warmup tape is shown of similar classes. At the end of the warm-up tape thirty seconds of each of the actual classroom teachers that will be interpreted will be shown. Therefore, the evaluatee will know what subjects they will be interpreting and have a brief experience of the teachers style. The evaluatee can warm up until s/he feels they are ready to be videotaped. The interpreter is videotaped while interpreting three classes, in different subject areas and with different teachers, each approximately 5 minutes in length. This videotape of the interpreter is viewed by a trained panel of five members (consisting of both hearing and deaf) familiar with a variety of signing styles and with education of the K-12 levels. Each of the five panelists completes a rating form with ratings from 1 (low) to 5 (high) for five separate areas: signs, fingerspelling, expressiveness, speechreadability and overall rating. In addition, checklists provide specific information on a number of components in each area and on technical factors such as dress, grooming, indicating speakers, eye contact, etc. The ratings of the five panelists are combined for an average rating in each of the five areas plus the receptive score of the dominant style of the individual. Also included are the pooled panelists comments and feedback on each component. The final rating indicates whether an interpreter is:

1	a beginner not ready to interpret
2	advanced beginning level interpreting skills

3	intermediate interpreting skills
4	advanced intermediate interpreting skills
5	advanced interpreting skills

C. ESSE:T (Teachers) The ESSE:T is designed for teachers, aides, or others wishing information on their expressive signing skills when signing for themselves. A 60-word screening test establishes the vocabulary level at basic, intermediate or advanced levels. The individual is then presented with 20 to 25 test sentences constructed with vocabulary at that level or below and including specific visual features such as negation, question marking, directionality, or placement. These sentences are presented on a transparency, and the individual videotaped while signing them. The individual is then given a choice of topics appropriate to the school level at which s/he works, time to organize ideas, and then an impromptu presentation on that topic is taped for approximately three minutes. This videotaped sample of signing skills is then rated by the trained panel of five members (which consists of both hearing and deaf), similar to the rating for interpreters described above. In this way, both a vocabulary sample and a more free-flowing, normal signing sample are obtained. **III. HOW**

VALID AND RELIABLE ARE THESE EVALUATIONS? The ESSE:R has a split-half odd even item correlation of .82 for the PSE segment, .84 for SEE, and .92 for ASL. During 1990-91, 23 individuals who took the ESSE:R rated the instrument 4.25 on a 5 point scale as a valid measure of their receptive skills.

Validity and reliability data were collected on the ESSE:I and ESSE:T by evaluating teachers and educational interpreters. During 1988-1990 individuals were evaluated and panelists were trained in Los Angeles, San Diego, and statewide Iowa. Two panels were established for comparative purposes; both panels included evaluators from each of the three areas, and both panels evaluated individuals from each of the three areas to determine whether variance in signing styles, vocabulary, and rural/urban backgrounds would affect the validity or reliability of the process. In 1990-91, evaluators and evaluatees were from the San Jose, California area and statewide Oregon. Both the **ESSE:I** and **ESSE:T** have excellent reliability and validity coefficients. Reliability was measured by correlations between two independent panels and by the rerating of a sample by the same panel after a one year lapse in time. **IV. WHAT IS REQUIRED TO**

TAKE THESE EVALUATIONS? The cost of the entire evaluation process (ESSE:R and either ESSE:I or ESSE:T) is \$225.00 per person. Dates and sites for the evaluations will be posted on this web site. School districts that have large numbers of interpreters in their program can make arrangements for on site evaluations by contacting the SEE Center. Travel costs will be needed for the person or persons who would be administering the evaluations. The time needed is approximately two hours for the ESSE:R (group administration), and

approximately 1/2 to 3/4 hour for the ESSE:I or ESSE:T (individual administration). Individuals being evaluated can expect to receive a detailed 8 to 10 page report plus suggestions in approximately 8 to 10 weeks. They also receive a certificate from the SEE Center indicating the evaluation taken and the level attained.

For further information, contact the SEE Center for the Advancement of Deaf Children, P.O. Box 1181, Los Alamitos, CA 90720. (562) 430-1467 voice or TDD, email address is seecenter@seecenter.org. **For further training information see our Skillshop section.**

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