Incentive to Create a Language Services in Education Division (LSED)

In the last decade, school districts throughout the country have increased their awareness of language access needs and it has become their responsibility to communicate information to families with limited English-proficiency in a language they can understand about any program, service, or activity that is shared with parents who are proficient in English. This includes, but is not limited to information about:

- Registration and enrollment in school and school programs
- Limited English Proficiency assistance programs
- Parent handbooks
- Report cards and parent-teacher conferences
- Requests for parent permission for student participation in school activities
- Meetings to discuss special school activities
- Gifted and talented programs and related tests and services
- Special education programs and related tests and services
- Student discipline policies and procedures
- Grievance procedures and notices of nondiscrimination
- Magnet, charter, and immersion schools
- And, for now, COVID-19 related information

Schools are also reminded to respond to a parent’s request for language assistance from parents who may be limited English proficient even if their child is proficient in English.

In addition, measures during the Covid-19 pandemic have extended schools responsibilities to the implementation of new technologies to provide language services and supplying content in different languages for immersion programs—which would have been previously handled differently.

Language assistance must be free to the families and provided by appropriate and competent staff or through appropriate and competent outside resources. Some school districts have created a T&I Department and—ideally—work to ensure that trained interpreters and translators fill the role and have knowledge of specialized terminology and processes, the ethics of interpreting and translating for educational settings, and the need to maintain confidentiality. It is not sufficient for the staff merely to be bilingual. For example, a staff member who is bilingual may be able to communicate daily content to limited English proficient parents in a different language but may not have enough vocabulary or the skills necessary to interpret a conversation or a meeting, or to translate written documents in and out of that language.

We want to be active and proactive in the changes needed in the education field to provide quality languages services. For these reasons, a Division within ATA that supports the work of a growing number of interpreters and translators who serve the school systems will help to:

- Welcome, inform, and mentor newcomers to the ATA Language Services in Education Division (LSED)
- Serve as a means of communication among education and language access T&I practitioners
• Raise awareness among the general public and educational institutions—from individual schools to school districts and governmental agencies—about the relevance of quality language access in K-12 education
• Share with division members new developments in language access in education and new technologies to address them
• Increase the visibility of professionals who provide language access in K-12 education inside and outside ATA
• Foster participation of Schools district professionals in events organized by ATA chapters' continuing education programs
• Raise awareness in the media about the importance of the service provided by educational settings professionals
• Reach out to related associations regionally, nationally, and internationally through mutually beneficial activities and training programs
• Help provide continuing education and professional development opportunities, like webinars, specific for educational settings professionals
• Welcome and foster the pursuit of innovation educational settings translation and interpretation

We see a range of needs within this field, including the following, to name a few:
1. Increase awareness about T&I and language access, possibly through communications departments;
2. Empower and inform parents;
3. Train staff and administrators, possibly including the training in teacher education programs;
4. Offer languages services for students themselves;
5. Promote the use of Plain Language in English; and, undoubtedly
6. Train interpreters and translators

Administratively, the Division Leadership would serve as representatives of Division members to ATA's Board of Directors, the Divisions Committee, and Headquarters, and promote and support ATA's policies, objectives and Core services.

In order to establish, maintain, and foster division activities, we will:

• Create a regular publication—such as a newsletter or blog—to keep members informed of news and events in language services in education;
• Create networking opportunities through a discussion forum, social media platforms, and a website;
• Assist ATA's Conference Organizer in recruiting speakers relevant to educational services professionals;
• Organize division networking events during the ATA Annual Conference;
• Serve as representatives of Division members to Headquarters and the Board of Directors;
• Promote professional development opportunities and transmit information in the Division's specific area of interest.

We agree to do this in accordance with the ATA Division Handbook and the ATA Governing Policy for Divisions.

Sincerely,
1. Romina Marazzato Sparano, MAT CT (ATA voting member)
2. Gabriela Penrod, CT (ATA voting member)
3. Marifer Sager, JD (ATA institutional representative)