NATIONAL CODE OF
ETHICS
AND STANDARDS OF PRACTICE

FOR TRANSLATORS IN EDUCATION

By the American Association of Interpreters and Translators in Education

December 2023

Acknowledgements

This work has been made possible by the vital input of interpreters, translators, and other experts who dedicated their time and knowledge to further the educational interpreting and translation professions. We sincerely thank all those who generously shared their time and expertise, assisting us in completing the *National Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice for Interpreters in Education* and the *National Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice for Translators in Education*. We express our gratitude to past co-chairs and members of the Ethics and Standards Committee for their contributions.

We acknowledge Carola Lehmacher-Richez, Giovanna Carriero-Contreras, and Katharine Allen for their work as primary authors of the Preface to the *National Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice for Translators in Education*. We thank Barbara Garrett and Sofía García-Bayeart for their invaluable contributions, and Eva H. Vargas for the design.

The *National Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice for Translators in Education* was submitted to and reviewed by professional associations and selected stakeholders from distinct backgrounds in the translation field: academics, trainers, practitioners, service administrators, advocates, community members, and representatives of professional associations. We thank our fellow associations for their support and our stakeholders for their contributions.

As the educational interpreting and translation professions in the United States mature and evolve, it is essential to create a clear, shared understanding of research-based, relevant, and ethically appropriate principles and practices. To define and guide ethical behavior, AAITE followed a formal research process to obtain data about the critical ethical situations professional interpreters and translators in education face daily. To make this document accessible to all, in addition to selecting the ethical principles, we created standards of practice, each with accompanying examples, to clarify the scope of ethical behavior. This work is a labor of love that expresses our profound respect for those whom we serve as well as for those who work in this setting.

AAITE Ethics and Standards Committee

The *National Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice for Translators in Education* and *Standards of Practice* was drafted by the Ethics and Standards Committee.

Chair:
Carola Lehmacher-Richez
FCCI, CT, 2023-2024 MCI candidate
Interpreter, Translator and Trainer

Secretary:
Rolando T. Cerda
District Interpreter & Translator
Guadalupe Union School District,
Guadalupe, CA

Members:
Giovanna Carriero-Contreras
Community Interpreter, Translator, Trainer and Advocate

Melissa González, MA, CMI-Spanish, CT
Interpreter and Translator
Austin Independent School District, Austin, TX

Linda Gutiérrez
Interpreter/Translator II
Linn Benton Lincoln Education Service District,
Albany, OR

Mujahed Hasan
Family Liaison, Arabic
Cajon Valley Union School District,
San Diego, CA

Manar Kodamah, MA
Language and Comunity Services Coordinator/
District Liaison
Dearborn Public Schools, Dearborn, MI

Tina Peña
Associate Professor, Tulsa Community College
Interpreter Coach RICARTI Group

Rita Weil
Interpreter and Interpreter Trainer

Past Committee Co-Chairs
Llubinka Brkich-Breyfogle
Loana Denis
Dr. Holly Silvestri

AAITE Board of Directors
The *National Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice for Translators in Education* was reviewed and approved by the Board of Directors.

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Jennifer Williams, Director-at-Large

Dr. Bill Rivers, Advisory Council to the Board

Stakeholders

The *National Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice for Translators in Education* and *Standards of Practice* was reviewed and validated by the following stakeholders.

Natalia Abarca
Program Specialist, Language Services
Orange County Department of Education, CA

Laurence Ibrahim Aibo, PhD
Adjunct Professor of Translation and Interpreting
Certified Healthcare Interpreter & Certified Translator

Jennifer Love, Ed.D.
Supervisor of Language Access & Engagement
Prince George's County Public Schools, MD

Corinne McKay
Certified Translator and Conference Interpreter

Glynis Ramos Mitchell
Independent Educational Interpreter and Translator

Dr. Bill Rivers
Language Access Advocate and Lobbyist

Marifer Sager
Director of Strategic Communications and Public Affairs
Multnomah Education Service District, OR

Eliane Sfeir-Markus
Trainer, Certified Medical and Legal interpreter

Carol Shaw
Independent Translator and Interpreter

Elizabeth Watkins
EL/Special Education Consultant

Caitilin Walsh
Translator, ATA Education & Pedagogy Committee

Dr. Sue Ellen Wright
Professor Emerita
Modern and Classical Language Studies
Kent State University, Kent, Ohio

Professional Associations

American Translators Association (ATA)
Veronika Demichelis, President
Madalena Sánchez Zampaulo, Past President (2021-2023)

Certification Commission for Healthcare Interpreters (CCHI)
Natalya Mytareva, Executive Director

National Association of Judiciary Interpreters and Translators (NAJIT)
Robert Joe Lee, Advocacy Committee

Special Thanks for the Contributions to the Preface

Sofia Garcia-Beyaert, PhD
Assistant Professor
School of Translation and Interpreting Studies
Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona, Spain

Barbara D. Garrett, PhD, CI and CT
Chair and Professor
Department of ASL & Interpreting Studies
University of Northern Colorado

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PREFACE

Introduction

A code of ethics defines the core values and principles that guide the decision-making process of a profession or a group of professionals. The goal of this document is not to dictate rigid regulations or impose prescriptive behaviors, but to encourage critical thinking, responsible judgment, and adherence to ethical considerations when navigating professional situations and dilemmas.

In efforts to adhere to ethical standards, professionals strive for sound judgment and situational awareness, and they need to rely on critical thinking and systematic approaches to achieve balanced decision-making in any given context. They must also accept accountability for their actions in cases of non-compliance. Codes of ethics are intended to safeguard both the individual and society at large, providing guidance to all parties involved and promoting outcomes that benefit everyone.

Education Is a Distinct Setting

Interpreters and translators working in education face unique situations that differ from challenges encountered in other settings and thus require a broader range of specialized knowledge. It is the only setting where legal, medical, community, and conference interpreting and translation regularly overlap. Education is driven by national- and state-level language access and disability legislation that involves diverse stakeholders interacting in a wide array of school encounters, programs, and mandates. In this specialization, limited English proficient (LEP) communities require continual access to language services, often for many years, while their children attend school. Interpreters and translators in education must obtain sufficient knowledge and expertise to

navigate these multifaceted, ever-changing intersections among educators, legislation, policies, students, families, and communities on a daily basis.

The research conducted by the AAITE Ethics and Standards Committee revealed the complexity and unique nature of the ethical challenges that arise in educational encounters—challenges different from those seen by practitioners of other specializations. It became clear that this complexity is not adequately addressed in existing codes of ethics for interpreters and translators. Nor are these codes sufficient to establish a common understanding of ethical behaviors and practices for the rapidly expanding and professionalizing interpreting and translation workforce in education. Having a nationally recognized code of ethics and

standards of practice is imperative to ensure consistent expectations among all stakeholders and to elevate the quality of educational interpreting and translation across the country.

That being the case, the AAITE Ethics and Standards Committee chose to create new codes rather than merely adopting or attempting to adapt an existing set of ethical principles. The Committee was tasked with developing a validated, comprehensive framework to guide ethical decision-making for educational interpreters and translators in the practice of their professions. The approach the Committee applied is both revolutionary and evolutionary. It was chosen because of a desire to go beyond the traditional approach underlying existing codes of ethics, as those codes no longer fully meet the needs of interpreters and translators, particularly in educational settings. Modern interpreting and translation, with their various specializations, are embedded in increasingly disrupted and changing settings. As the demands of these settings evolve, so too must these professions, including the approach to ethical conduct.

Two Codes of Ethics

Although interpreting and translation share many similarities, they are two distinct professions with separate skill sets and requirements. However, in education, the two professions have been folded into a single, confused job position in school settings for decades. Bilingual school staff with translation

duties are widely assumed to be able to do both translation and interpreting when needed, with little to no recognition of the different skills required for each profession. "In fact, employers of translators or interpreters in K–12 educational settings often expect them to perform tasks associated with both professions," as one report noted.[1] To avoid further legitimizing this practice, and drawing on the results of its research, the Committee decided to create two separate codes of ethics and standards of practice in an effort to bring educational interpreting and translation into closer alignment with the broader interpreting and translation professions. Only the creation of separate codes for interpreters and translators can effectively address the unique requirements and practices of each profession. The research-based development process used to gather both the data and the insights needed to inform this decision is described below.

> *Having a nationally recognized code of ethics and standards of practice is imperative to ensure consistent expectations among all stakeholders and to elevate the quality of educational interpreting and translation across the country.*

1   Joelynne Ball, Mónica Rodríguez-Castro, Helena Senatore, Gabriela Siebach, Holly Silvestri, and Mónica Villalobos-Russell. "What Employers Are Looking For: A Nationwide Job Description Analysis for Translators and Interpreters in Educational Settings," AAITE, March 2023. Available at https://www.aaite.org/.

The Committee members, members of the translation and interpreting professions who responded to the survey, the AAITE members, and other key stakeholders who participated in the research and creation process come from across the United States. Together, they provided the Committee with the first and most comprehensive representation of the work translators and interpreters carry out in education in this country. As a result, the Committee is proud to present the first truly national codes of ethics for interpreters and translators in education. They are meant to serve as a foundational effort and a cornerstone resource for the continued professionalization of these two essential professions.

The remainder of this document focuses primarily on the *National Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice for Translators in Education*. In this context, "code of ethics" refers to the ethical principles and their corresponding standards of practice. The document has a two-part structure.[2] The first section details the research and development process the Ethics and Standards Committee undertook to create a nationally relevant, validated, and research-based code of ethics and standards of practice for educational translators. The second section provides a framework discussion on the approach to values, ethics, and standards that are embodied in the code itself.

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2   Please refer to the introduction to the *National Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice for Interpreters in Education* for additional information about its creation.

SECTION 1: Research and Development

The 11-Step Development Process

The *National Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice for Translators in Education* and the *National Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice for Interpreters in Education* are the culmination of an extensive, deliberate, and thorough process, grounded in formal research that began in 2020. They are the result of a four-year effort and thousands of hours of work conducted by a group of dedicated volunteers. This effort is a foundational step in AAITE's mission of contributing to the professionalization of the fields of educational interpreting and translation. To achieve this goal in a structured and organized manner, the Ethics and Standards Committee defined the following 11-step development process.

The 11-Step Process© | AAITE 2022
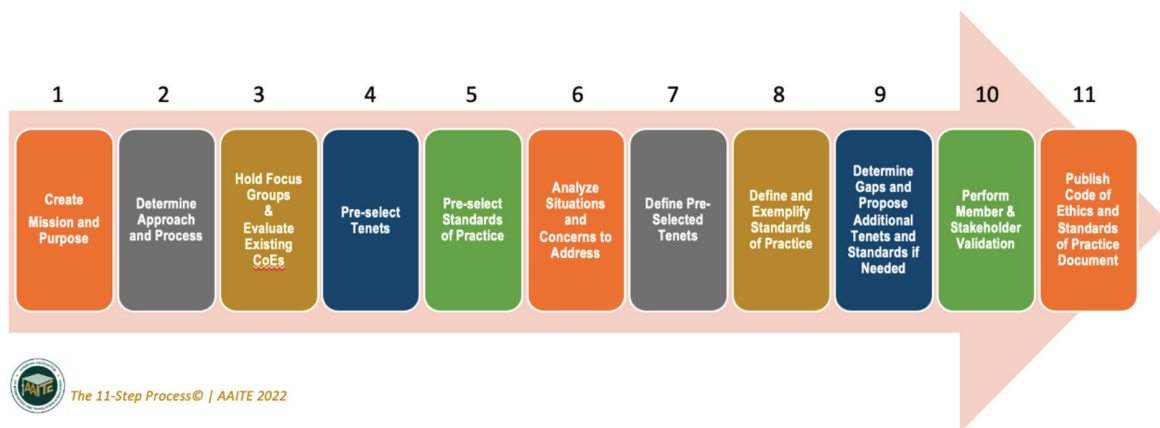
Step 1. Create the mission and purpose
First, the Committee agreed that the following vision and mission would guide their work:

> *To lend stature to the Interpreting and Translation roles in education by providing unified criteria and establishing expectations and norms to guide and support the profession.*

Step 2. Determine the approach and process
Second, the Committee decided that, despite the relevance of existing interpreting and translation codes of ethics and standards of practice and their potential application to the education setting, it would focus on identifying gaps that reflect the reality and real-world experiences on the job.

To achieve this, the Committee had to focus on obtaining real-world data from the field rather than solely analyzing academic work.

Step 3. Hold focus groups and evaluate existing codes of ethics

The third step consisted of conducting focus groups and forums to gather insights from a wide range of stakeholders regarding non-compliance with language access legislation requirements in the field of education. Concurrently, the Committee conducted a comprehensive and methodical review and analysis of existing codes of ethics for medical and court interpreters in the United States that were published by state entities and national associations, and of documents governing the profession in other countries, such as Australia and Canada.

Steps 4 and 5. Preselect ethical principles and standards of practice

With this foundation, in steps 4 and 5, the Committee preselected nine ethical principles and their corresponding standards of practice from existing codes of ethics to guide its work and the initial data analysis. The results of this analysis informed the creation of a national survey that was conducted for step 6.

11-Step Process

1. Create the mission and purpose

2. Determine the approach and process

3. Hold focus groups and evaluate existing codes of ethics

4. Preselect ethical principles

5. Preselect standards of practice

6. Analyze situations and concerns to address

7. Define preselected ethical principles

8. Define and exemplify standards of practice

9. Discern gaps and propose additional principles and standards if needed

10. Perform member and stakeholder validation

11. Publish National Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice documents

Step 6. Analyze situations and concerns to address

The goal of the national survey was twofold: 1) to gather formal data on situations and concerns interpreters and translators in education face to complement the information collected during the focus groups; and 2) to determine whether the preselected ethical principles and standards of practice actually addressed recurring issues in the field, as well as to pinpoint any gaps that required attention in order to help stakeholders navigate complex situations.

The in-depth data analysis of the survey results performed in step 6 identified more than 500 concerns, with many overlapping ethical issues. This information helped the Committee identify gaps in the scope of existing codes of ethics, and it informed the Committee's work to create codes of ethics that reflected and addressed the experiences reported by stakeholders currently involved in language access in education.

Steps 7 and 8. Define preselected ethical principles and exemplify standards of practice

The Committee proceeded with steps 7 and 8: draft the ethical principles, standards of practice, and examples. The Committee continually referred to the data collected in the survey (step 6) as well as to the information gathered during the initial forums and focus groups (step 3).

Step 9. Discern gaps and propose additional principles and standards if needed

In step 9, the Committee evaluated whether to incorporate additional ethical principles to ensure that all aspects of the over 500 concerns raised were addressed and to advance the creation of complete and purposeful codes of ethics.

Step 10. Perform member and stakeholder validation

Step 10 consisted of carrying out member and stakeholder validation in a three-step review process: 1) review by the AAITE Board; 2) review by AAITE members; and 3) review by stakeholders. In early 2023, the Committee submitted the first draft of both the *National Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice for Interpreters* and the *National Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice for Translators* to the AAITE Board for review. The codes of ethics included the ethical principles, the corresponding standards of practice, and examples illustrating each standard. The Board provided extensive feedback to the Committee, which then proceeded with a thorough internal review of both drafts.

As part of step 10, the second draft of each code was presented to approximately 80 AAITE members[3] during a focus-group session at the AAITE Edu-Con conference held in Denver, Colorado, in May 2023. Presenting the draft to AAITE members was a crucial step in the development process. During this session, AAITE members were asked to review the proposed ethical principles, standards of practice, and examples for their accuracy, relevance, and clarity, and to provide feedback to the Committee.

The Committee then reviewed the feedback and suggestions received at the AAITE Edu-Con conference event, conducted another review, and submitted a final draft to additional groups of carefully vetted stakeholders. The Committee leadership and the Board intentionally

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3   AAITE members currently represent 39 states and are working interpreters and translators in education, language access coordinators, supervisors, and school and district administrators.

selected stakeholders from distinct backgrounds in the interpreting and translation fields: academics, trainers, practitioners, service administrators, advocates, community members, and representatives of professional associations. This process provided validation and assurance that the Committee had comprehensively addressed all aspects of the work and that the suggested ethical principles and standards of practice were not aspirational but both practical and capable of being implemented.

Step 11. Publish two separate complete and accurate codes of ethics and standards of practice
The Committee undertook this lengthy, comprehensive, and collaborative process to officially publish the *National Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice for Translators in Education* and the *National Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice for Interpreters in Education* on December 12, 2023.

The *National Code of Ethics for Translators* includes the following ethical principles:

ETHICAL PRINCIPLES FOR TRANSLATORS IN EDUCATION	
Accuracy:	The educational translator faithfully translates written text from the source language into the target language.
Confidentiality:	The educational translator does not disclose any information learned in the performance of their professional duties except when so mandated by law.
Impartiality:	The educational translator remains unbiased toward the author of the source text, the text itself, and the intended readers of the translation by rendering the content in a manner that preserves the spirit and meaning of the original message.
Professional Conduct:	The educational translator acts in a manner that reflects the highest standards and best practices of the profession.
Professional Development:	The educational translator commits to consistently improving and broadening their knowledge and skills through professional development.
Representation of Qualifications:	The educational translator provides an accurate representation of their credentials and of their relevant training and experience, along with truthful professional references.

Section 2: Values, Ethics, and Their Application

Introduction

The previous section outlined the meticulous field research the Ethics and Standards Committee undertook to select the core ethical principles included in this document. Assessing the on-the-ground reality that educational translators confront was essential, and heretofore unattempted, work necessary to create this code of ethics. However, the field research was not done in a vacuum. Professions have been governed by codes of conduct for thousands of years. Most are framed by the centuries of research and discourse on human values, along with framework concepts and additional elements unique to each profession.

Section 2 of this document identifies the overarching values that govern the code of ethics and lays out AAITE's decision to move away from creating a more traditional normative code of ethics and instead embrace descriptive ethics for educational translators.

As part of this effort, cultural awareness is presented here as a framework concept that is inextricably woven through the application of every ethical principle, and is therefore not a principle in and of itself. This overall change in approach greatly expands and strengthens the practical resources translators, trainers, and educators have at hand to support ethical decision-making in the field. As the discussion below shows, embracing descriptive ethics represents a significant maturation in the professionalization of educational translation, and of translation in general.

Normative vs. Descriptive Ethics

Values are typically broad and general in nature and represent overarching ideas or concepts. They play a significant role in shaping an individual's or a profession's ethical framework and serve as the foundation upon which ethical principles are built.

Turning now to ethical principles, the Ethics and Standards Committee took into consideration two theoretical approaches to ethics while developing the codes of ethics: normative and descriptive.

Normative (or prescriptive) ethics prescribe *how* a group of professionals *should act*, whereas descriptive or comparative ethics *provide* the foundational guidance that supports professionals

in the field when they are faced with an ethical situation or dilemma. The ethical challenges and dilemmas translators face are often not simply questions of right or wrong, or good or bad. Time and again, the greatest challenge when making a professional decision arises in one of two ways:
1) a personal value conflicts with professional expectations, or
2) two values are in conflict with one another. Sometimes, both arise in the context of working on a single document.

Working translators need guidance to make the best decision among several possible options; a code of ethics should provide a framework and guardrails for those decisions. If a code of ethics is normative, it does not provide practitioners with the real-life examples that support the critical thinking and decision-making they need to apply the ethical principles. It is not enough to simply have a code of ethics that provides only binary "do this, don't do that" guidance. Professionals need to understand what a code of ethics is, know how the accompanying standards of practice apply, and use them to analyze the specific elements of each situation and then choose the most ethical course of action available.

The Ethics and Standards Committee therefore used a descriptive approach in creating the *National Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice for Translators in Education*. The reason for this decision was that the Committee determined it was best to create a code of ethics that did not prescribe, or "tell" a translator what to do in a given situation. Before drafting the ethical principles and standards of practice that constitute the code of ethics, the Committee meticulously analyzed hundreds of survey answers from various stakeholders in the field, organized them by theme, and formulated the ethical principles to guide the translator's behavior based on this comprehensive analysis. As a result, and in contrast to the traditional normative approach, the code of ethics focuses on describing values-based ethics in order to best apply professional ethical decision-making when faced with an ethical dilemma.

Normative Ethics or Prescriptive Ethics

"The study of moral problems which seeks to discover how one ought to act, not how one does in fact act or how one thinks one should act."

Source: P.L.E., "Morals, Ethics, and Metaethics." https://philosophy. lander.edu/ethics/types.html

Descriptive Ethics or Morals

"The study of human behavior as a consequence of beliefs about what is right or wrong, or good or bad, insofar as that behavior is useful or effective. In a sense, morals is the study of what is thought to be right and what is generally done by a group, society, or a culture. In general, morals correspond to what actually is done in a society."

Source: P.L.E., "Morals, Ethics, and Metaethics." https://philosophy. lander.edu/ethics/types.html

The Committee's main goal was to close the gap between what is sometimes considered "prescriptive ideal behavior" and what actually happens in the field. This shift takes into consideration a broader perspective: it goes beyond the translator's micro-decisions and "views the bigger, societal picture to determine the impact of certain practices and decisions."[4]

For example, educational translators often have dual roles at work. In addition to translating, they may also function as interpreters and/or cultural liaisons. This conflation of roles influences their ethical decision-making, as the nature of their role as cultural liaisons can affect how they read the original text or translate it into the target language. In these situations, there is typically no simple solution. To guide translation professionals in basing their decision-making process on values rather than on a list of mere dos and don'ts, the Committee created the code of ethics and standards of practice using a descriptive approach that allows for ample flexibility to apply critical thinking and decision-making skills to make the most ethical decision.

Codes of Ethics and Standards of Practice

A code of ethics is usually defined as a set of rules that members of a specific profession must follow. Codes of ethics generally outline strict rules and expectations to standardize conduct. They are often normative and prescribe what members of such profession should or should not do.

In contrast, standards of practice are descriptive by nature. They reinforce ethical directives by specifying in greater detail how to implement the ethical principles and are often accompanied by examples that provide additional clarity. The purpose of standards of practice is to guide professionals in their decision-making and to support the use of critical thinking in applying the ethical principles. The table below outlines the main characteristics and goals of codes of ethics and and standards of practice, and how they differ. Although initially created with interpreters in mind, the fundamental characteristics and goals shown also apply to translators.

The AAITE Ethics and Standards Committee chose to move away from the traditional normative approach of existing codes of ethics for translators. Instead, it has created a descriptive set of principles, supported by accompanying standards of practice for each principle.

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4   Leandra Cukur, "Towards an Ethical Framework for Evaluating Paid Translation Crowdsourcing and Its Consequences," *The Translator*, 2023, https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/13556509.2023.2278226?src=.

| Codes of ethics and standards of practice for interpreters
Common characteristics and goals | | | |
| Codes of ethics | | Standards of practice | |
Characteristics	Goals	Characteristics	Goals
Are often prescriptive and rule-based.	Standardize interpreter conduct.	Are generally descriptive, not prescriptive.	Show how to do the work well.
Share a common goal of influencing conduct.	Set expectations.	Tend to focus on professional practice.	Reinforce ethical directives.
May focus on "right vs. wrong" behavior.	Uphold the profession.	Are far less common than codes of ethics.	Standardize conduct (in more detail than codes).
Are widely similar around the world.	Maintain professional standards.	Are often called standards, practices or guidelines.	Specify expectations.
Tend to be called a code.[88]	Preserve privacy.	Are typically longer than codes of ethics.	Clarify ethical directives with examples, guidance.
Are of varying lengths.	Convey full message.	Are mostly, like codes, published by professional groups.	Show how to apply ethics.
Are mostly published by professional groups.	Provide a faithful rendering.	Often based on a specific code to amplify it.	Support critical thinking.
Are typically issued by interpreter associations.	Support each other.	Have variable structures, lengths and formats.	Build trust in the profession.
May comes from some courts.	Engage in honest business practices.	Include a wide variety of content (more than codes).	Build decision-making skills.
May be issued by language services or government bodies.	Respect all participants.	Are typically more detailed than codes.	Support professionalization.
Tend to be somewhat strict, rigid and binding (on members).	Respect colleagues.	Are sometimes included in codes of ethics documents.	Provide clarity and perspective on ethical requirements.

Table 6.4: Comparison of common characteristics and goals of ethics and standards for interpreters

Consequently, the standards of practice and examples presented in this document are based on real-life experiences of translators working in educational settings. These standards and examples do not cover an exhaustive list of scenarios; instead, they suggest possible acceptable behaviors for when ethical principles are being used, in efforts to guide professionals in their decision-making. Professional educational translators, indeed all translators, develop professional conduct over time. It is therefore recommended that practicing translators seek additional training to learn how to navigate the complexities of the code of ethics, the standards of practice, and the challenges they may encounter in their daily work. Translators are invited to explore the comprehensive resources provided by the Ethics and Standards Committee in addition to those offered by other AAITE committees, such as the Job Task Analysis report.[5]

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5   Joelynne Ball, Mónica Rodríguez-Castro, Helena Senatore, Gabriella Siebach, Holly Silvestri, and Mónica Villalobos-Russell "What Employers Are Looking For: A Nationwide Analysis of Job Description for Translators and Interpreters in Educational Settings," AAITE, 2023. Available at https://www.aaite.org/.

Overarching Values

In the context of philosophy and human moral conduct, an overarching value refers to a fundamental principle or belief that serves as a guiding force for individual and collective actions. It represents a shared understanding of what is considered good, right, and desirable in a particular society or culture. Overarching values transcend personal interests and provide a framework for making ethical decisions that align with the well-being of others and the broader community. Moreover, they serve as guiding principles that determine interactions and shape the behavior of society at large. They create a shared understanding of acceptable conduct and delineate societal boundaries.

The core overarching values that guide our moral behavior and that are central to our conduct as translators are *non-maleficence* ("do no harm"), dignity, respect, honesty, and solidarity.

- Non-maleficence is grounded in medical ethics and is "the ethical principle of doing no harm." It dates to ancient times and is still relevant today as applied to human services professions. It is the prohibition against causing harm to others and is often expressed in the maxim "First, do no harm."[6]

- Dignity, in human services professions, is the principle of supporting a person's sense of self-respect, acknowledging and honoring each person's "capacities and ambitions," and promoting self-determination and doing "nothing to undermine it."[7]

- Respect is demonstrating regard for the feelings, wishes, rights, or traditions of others. It includes accepting people for who they are, even when you disagree with them or if they are different from you.[8]

- Honesty is commonly known as being truthful; it is the opposite of deceit. One is honest when genuinely adhering to that which is legitimate.[9]

- Solidarity refers to a bond of unity between people who are united around or toward a common goal.[10]

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6 Oxford Reference, s.v. "Nonmaleficence," accessed December 6, 2023, https://www.oxfordreference.com/display/10.1093/oi/authority.20110803100237642.

7 Social Care Institute for Excellence (SCIE), "Defining Dignity in Care," para. 7, https://www.scie.org.uk/dignity/care/defining.

8 Oxford Reference, s.v. "Respect," accessed December 6, 2023, https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/respect.

9   Merriam-Webster, s.v. "Honesty," https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/honesty.

10   Merriam-Webster, s.v. "Solidarity," https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/solidarity.

Ethical principles are rooted in values, most of which are universal in nature, and provide guidelines applicable across diverse cultures and contexts. Moreover, these principles help identify fundamental questions of right or wrong and offer guidance on how to act accordingly.

As many previous translators codes of ethics have done, the Ethics and Standards Committee sees overarching values as the foundation on which the *National Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice for Translators in Education* stands, but not as ethical principles in themselves. Rather, each overarching value is expressed through every individual ethical principle. For example, when translators remain faithful to the original text even when urged to change it because it could affect the outcome of a situation, or when they maintain confidentiality even when pressed not to by community members, they support the overarching values of non-maleficence and respect.

Ethical Framework

Drafting the code of ethics for translators did not pose the multifaceted challenges that the code of ethics for interpreters presented because the work of translators is affected neither by the numerous on-the-spot micro-decisions interpreters need to make nor by the pressure of navigating the dialogical back-and-forth. Under normal circumstances, translators have time to research any issues that arise during the translation process and can also consult with colleagues, provided they maintain confidentiality. Unlike in interpreting, there is no immediacy or bidirectionality in translation. The "interaction" takes place between the document to be translated and the translator. Although the translator should always keep the intent of the author and the target audience in mind during the translation process, the translator usually has no direct interaction with the author or the end users of a translation. This distance strips the translation process of several hurdles; however, it adds other difficulties; for example, in some cases the translator cannot ask for clarification.

Language nuances and contextual understanding might also constitute an obstacle for a translator. Sometimes, the lack of context can make it challenging to navigate subtleties to convey the intended meaning accurately. For example, "project-based learning" in the United States involves students learning through engaging in real-world projects. Failure to grasp the contextual significance of this teaching approach could result in a misleading or inaccurate translation. Likewise, a translation that does not correctly convert the meaning of what "project-based learning" means in the U.S. context could result in the phrase meaning absolutely nothing to the family reading the information, because not only are they not familiar enough with the U.S. educational culture to understand it but also they do not have any equivalent in their own framework of reference. Consider another example: the phrase "a gifted student" might refer simply to a student taking an advanced placement class but not to a student with exceptional abilities. On the flip side,

a word in a language other than English may have different meanings depending on where the document is from. If the translator is unaware of the country of origin of the document, the content could be mistranslated if the proper research is not carried out. Again, these examples may be problematic for the parents if the translator is unable to render concepts such as "gifted student" to support parents' understanding. Moreover, translators must be able to bridge the gap between cultures effectively. This is where the concept of cultural awareness comes into play.

Cultural Awareness

Culture refers to a collective framework comprising the shared values, beliefs, customs, and societal norms that are embraced and practiced by a specific group of people in a distinct cultural context. In this framework, the definition of culture goes beyond a geographical concept. It includes the totality of an individual's lived experiences, which inevitably include their own local and national culture, as well as their interactions with groups, places, and institutions that can span digital and other geographies.

In reality, no one person can ever claim to fully understand the cultural reality of another. What, then, is meant by *cultural awareness* in the context of ethical practice for translators? In this document, cultural awareness refers to having a partial knowledge of the unique mix of beliefs, customs, and social norms of the different cultures the people whose language they speak and translate come from. Cultural awareness also means being mindful of how our own culture shapes our perceptions of others and our interactions with them. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, cultural awareness means being aware that multiple cultures are intertwined in every single word they translate (i.e., the culture of the author of the text as well as the culture of each individual reader of the translation) and can influence the outcome, positively or negatively.

In practice, culture cannot be separated from language. Language carries the values, beliefs, customs, and societal norms of the culture it comes from. The ways in which people express themselves, the words they use, their idioms and metaphors, all reflect the unique aspects of their cultural identity. Language not only conveys information but also encapsulates the worldview of a community. It shapes how individuals perceive the world, interact with one another, and interpret experiences.

Translators translate meaning for meaning—they do not translate word for word; and the only way to achieve an accurate, impartial, and complete translation is by exercising cultural awareness. In addition to monitoring the cultural beliefs and perspectives that shape human communication, translators must also comprehend their own cultural perspectives to avoid inadvertently imposing

biases when they make linguistic choices. Every single linguistic choice a translator makes is saturated in culture, which means that cultural awareness is also inseparable from the ethical principles of accuracy and impartiality.

Furthermore, translators cannot demonstrate the overarching values of respect, diversity, and dignity without cultural awareness. Being culturally aware is essential to ethical conduct. Translators should have a certain degree of cultural knowledge based on the languages they speak and the cultures or regions they are familiar with.

Normative codes of ethics that attempt to corral cultural awareness into a single ethical principle or to prohibit culture from being considered at all when translating ignore the on-the-ground reality that culture cannot be stripped from linguistic expression. As the above analysis shows, shifting to a descriptive code of ethics means providing translators with flexible strategies for applying cultural awareness that reflect reality. Those strategies are described in many of the examples provided in the standards of practice that support each ethical principle.

For all these reasons, the Ethics and Standards Committee chose to include cultural awareness as an essential concept embedded in every linguistic and ethical decision translators make.

Additional Considerations

The work of translators is widely misunderstood, as—in a certain way—it is often invisible. Nobody "sees" the translation process. Requesters simply hand in a document in one language and, shortly thereafter, receive a translation in another. In this sense, translators are comparable to IT technicians: When everything is working smoothly, nobody knows they are there. But the moment an issue arises, everyone points at them.

Because of the "invisibility" of the work, many stakeholders are unaware of the scope and complexities involved in the functions of a translator. Therefore, client expectations are often unrealistic and challenging to fulfill, especially when ethical principles are at play. For example, if translators are not given sufficient time to research technical terminology, their translation might not be accurate. Translation quality can also be affected by extremely tight deadlines.

As a result, client education regarding the role of translators is pivotal in fostering a deeper understanding of this profession. Familiarizing clients with the complexities and multifaceted nature of translation work promotes more effective collaboration and understanding, but also enhances the overall quality of translated content.

Advocacy for the profession is also highly encouraged. There is an ongoing need to raise awareness to avoid misconceptions and misunderstandings about the role of professional translators in education and to highlight the significance of the profession, outside of interpreted sessions. Advocacy efforts can also influence policies that support the profession's growth, development, and recognition. A better understanding of the profession will ultimately result in better working conditions, fair compensation, and an enhanced overall environment that will enable professionals in the field to thrive.

Likewise, comprehensive training for translators is an indispensable cornerstone in ensuring the highest standards of linguistic accuracy, cultural sensitivity, and professional competency. Translation is not merely about language proficiency (and staying abreast with the language evolution as the use of slang, idioms, and cultural references, among others, change over time) but also encompasses a deep understanding of diverse subject matters and of specialized terminology. This is especially true for translators working in the educational setting. As was mentioned previously, this is the only setting where the fields of legal, medical, and general translation regularly overlap.

Moreover, translators should have autonomy to make translation-based decisions. Clients may submit general guidelines and expectations to ensure translations are fit for their purpose, but they should not limit the translator's freedom regarding how they approach translation. This is another example of the importance of translator training. Professional translators have specialized knowledge not only about the subject matter but also about translation strategies and other tools they can use to their advantage. The more strategies and tools an educational translator adds to their toolkit through continuous training, the better the translation decisions they make are going to be.

Technology integration is another major issue that translators (and sometimes stakeholders) need to be mindful of. Training in translation management tools is indispensable for modern translators. The use of evolving technology ensures adaptability in a constantly changing landscape. Translation tools aid productivity, but they aren't flawless. Translators must learn how to use these tools effectively to maximize their potential without compromising quality or breaking confidentiality. Many tools exist that streamline the translation process and offer valuable features such as glossary management, translation memory, and project management functionalities.

However, one concern about these tools is that they can compromise confidentiality. Many of these platforms operate over the internet and involve the transmission of data to external servers.

Therefore, sensitive information can be exposed or accessed by third parties. Hence, it is crucial for individuals to carefully assess the sensitivity of the content being translated and opt for secure platforms when confidentiality is a priority.

Application of Ethics

A descriptive code of ethics is based on situations practitioners face in real life and avoids prescribing simplistic dos and don'ts. To abide by its principles, translators need well-developed critical thinking and ethical decision-making skills. This section outlines essential concepts and skills translators in education need to follow to apply the ethical principles and standards of practice contained in this document.

Critical Thinking

Critical thinking is a concept that has evolved over centuries. Like *culture*, it can be defined in many ways and from different perspectives. A useful definition of critical thinking in the context of translators and ethical decision-making is:

> the ability to effectively analyze information and form a judgment. To think critically, you must be aware of your own biases and assumptions when encountering information and apply consistent standards when evaluating sources.[11]

Critical thinking is pivotal in the ethical decision-making process of translators. It empowers translators to clearly discern, analyze, and navigate complex situations. It serves as a cornerstone in the transition from prescriptive to descriptive ethics, where professionals navigate decision-making based on situational demands and the guiding principles of professional conduct. Critical thinking aids translators in identifying ethical implications and the potential consequences associated with a decision.

Furthermore, applying critical thinking to the decision-making process enhances translators' understanding of ethical principles, enabling them to make well-informed and reasoned choices. Most importantly, critical thinking empowers translators to articulate their decision-making process by elucidating the values influencing their choices in any given setting. The standards of practice accompanying the ethical principles in this document are designed to engage critical thinking skills

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11   Eoghan Ryan, "What Is Critical Thinking? Definition and Examples," Scribbr, revised May 31, 2023, https://www.scribbr.com/working-with-sources/critical-thinking/.

to enable translators to make the best available ethical decisions when faced with difficult choices.

Ethical Decision-Making

Ethical decision-making is the process of evaluating and choosing actions or courses of conduct that align with moral principles, values, and ethical standards. It involves considering the potential consequences of different choices and selecting the one that is ethically sound, just, and morally defensible. Ethical decision-making goes hand in hand with critical thinking. It would be impossible to create a comprehensive list of every possible ethical dilemma that might arise and provide the "correct" course of action. Sometimes, ethical principles conflict with each other; other times, there may be several possible choices to resolve a barrier to communication. In the absence of simple "do this, don't do that" answers, translators must develop their critical thinking skills to make a judgment about the best course of action available to them.

The standards of practice in this document are designed to aid educational translators in developing and implementing mature, ethical decision-making skills to appropriately apply their professional ethics.

Concluding Remarks

As we reach this new milestone in our profession, we look both to the past and to the future: remembering where we came from and what we have achieved so far, and looking to the road ahead and the work still to be done.

We are extremely grateful to all of those who have generously given their time and effort to this endeavor. It truly takes a village to bring such a project to life! We hope the *National Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice for Translators in Education* will be a beacon that will guide the work of many in the educational field.

With the utmost gratitude,

AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF INTERPRETERS AND TRANSLATORS IN EDUCATION

National Code of Ethics for Translators in Education

- **Accuracy**

  The educational translator faithfully translates written text from the source language into the target language.

- **Confidentiality**

  The educational translator does not disclose any information learned in the performance of their professional duties except when so mandated by law.

- **Impartiality**

  The educational translator remains unbiased toward the author of the source text, the text itself, and the intended readers of the translation by rendering the content in a manner that preserves the spirit and meaning of the original message.

- **Professional Conduct**

  The educational translator acts in a manner that reflects the highest standards and best practices of the profession.

- **Professional Development**

  The educational translator commits to consistently improving and broadening their knowledge and skills through professional development.

- **Representation of Qualifications**

  The educational translator provides an accurate representation of their credentials and of their relevant training and experience, along with truthful professional references.

Standards of Practice

ACCURACY

The educational translator faithfully translates written text from the source language into the target language.

1. The educational translator ensures that the translated text fully conveys the meaning of the source text without adding to, omitting, summarizing, or changing the content.

   o   Example: When translating a report regarding a child's reading comprehension, the entire report is translated, including handwritten notes made by the evaluator.

2. The educational translator ensures that the translation conveys the same register, tone, and intent as the source text.

   o   Example: The educational translator conveys the same formality as the original suspension letter, using equivalent legal terminology.

   o   Example: While translating a letter written by the foster parents to the principal, the educational translator ensures that equivalent colloquial expressions are used and that the register is maintained in the target language.

   o   Example: While being mindful of cultural norms, the educational translator maintains the same warm tone as the principal's welcome letter to newly arrived parents.

   o   Example: The educational translator translates the truancy letter exactly as written, despite finding the language blunt and offensive.

3. The educational translator is responsible for the end product of their work. Therefore, they thoroughly review their translation before delivering it, even when it has been reviewed by an editor.

   o   Example: Before submitting the translation of the district policy manual, the educational translator ensures that all sections are included, checks for typos and grammatical errors, and reproduces the original format as appropriate.

- o Example: After translating a 504 plan for the special education department, the educational translator reviews diacritics and syntax to ensure the message is precisely conveyed in the target text.

4. The educational translator considers the cultural implications of terms chosen in an effort to faithfully convey the intended meaning of the source text.

- o Example: After a severe storm, a letter issued by the district states, "Our prayers are going out to the families whose houses were damaged as a consequence of the storm." The educational translator selects a term for "prayers" that is culturally equivalent in meaning.

- o Example: The informational flyer about the upcoming bake sale needs to be translated. The educational translator is aware that newcomers may not be familiar with the bake sale fundraising concept. Therefore, the educational translator ensures that the meaning of the concept is properly conveyed in the translated flyer.

CONFIDENTIALITY

The educational translator does not disclose any information learned in the performance of their professional duties except when so mandated by law.

5. The educational translator does not share or use any information learned while in the translator role.

- o Example: At a school event, a family friend approaches the educational translator and tells them about struggling to get accommodations for their child. The educational translator has translated the child's 504 plan but does not discuss the information with the family friend, thereby preserving confidentiality.

- o Example: The grandparent of a limited English proficient (LEP) student contacts the Language Access Department over the phone to request additional information about a translated report provided by the school. The message is relayed to the translator, who informs the grandparent that the person who can answer their question will call them back with the aid of an interpreter.

6. The educational translator protects all materials related to the translation project and process, regardless of print or electronic format.

   o Example: When working from home, the translator must use a password-protected email account, a computer to which only they have access, and a password-protected internet connection. The educational translator may not work over a public Wi-Fi network and must never use a public computer that might allow confidential information to be disclosed.

   o Example: After a project has been completed, printed copies and documents provided to the translator are shredded and properly disposed of. The educational translator also complies with any additional requirements the requester may have.

   o Example: The educational translator uses online or cloud-based tools that encrypt files on the cloud and on the computer, using privacy setting configurations or strong passwords to preserve confidentiality.

7. The educational translator may consult with colleagues or subject matter experts from time to time without revealing any identifying information.

   o Example: The educational translator is unfamiliar with a medical procedure mentioned in an Individualized Education Program (IEP) report. To properly translate the term, they consult with a colleague without disclosing the student's name, date of birth, or address, or any other information that could identify the student.

IMPARTIALITY

The educational translator remains unbiased toward the author of the source text, the text itself, and the intended readers of the translation by rendering the content in a manner that preserves the spirit and meaning of the original message.

8. The educational translator remains objective without softening, strengthening, or otherwise altering the message because of their opinions, biases, or cultural views.

   o Example: While translating the initial assessment of an IEP, the educational translator struggles to render the term "learning disability" because of the negative connotation of this concept in the

target language culture. However, the translator chooses the equivalent term that best describes the original meaning without softening the content.

- o Example: Even though the educational translator feels that the student is being treated unfairly, they translate the suspension letter maintaining the intent and meaning of the source language without letting personal opinions influence the translated text.

9. The educational translator uses culturally and linguistically appropriate solutions for the target language and audience in efforts to adequately render the author's message.

- o Example: The source text is written in a gender-neutral style and the target language is grammatically gendered. Setting aside any personal opinions regarding gender matters, the educational translator researches the topic and finds culturally appropriate, natural-sounding solutions for the target text that are mindful of gender neutrality.

PROFESSIONAL CONDUCT
The educational translator acts in a manner that reflects the highest standards and best practices of the profession.

10. The educational translator refrains from behaving in a manner that implies favoritism or bias.

- o Example: A school psychologist asks the translator, a personal friend, to expedite the translation of their evaluation report as a favor. The educational translator refers the requester to the school protocol established for requesting translation services.

11. The educational translator does not allow their experiences or opinions to influence their work.

- o Example: The educational translator accurately translates a letter from the superintendent to the parents, despite disagreeing with the sentiment and tone of the letter.

12. The educational translator accepts only translation projects that they are qualified for and that are within their scope of practice. They also disclose any limitations to the parties.

   o Example: The educational translator is asked to translate a court order in preparation for an expulsion hearing. The educational translator has limited experience with such documents and advises the requester that a legal translator would be better qualified for the project.

13. The educational translator encourages the implementation of working conditions that support quality translations and communicates specific needs to the parties.

   o Example: The educational translator receives a partially legible photocopy to translate. The educational translator reaches out to the requester and asks for a more legible copy, if providing one is possible.

   o Example: The educational translator receives several files that contain inconsistent information across documents. The translator contacts the requester to verify the information and to ask that any errors be corrected and that updated files be provided.

   o Example: The superintendent asks the educational translator to translate a large file 1 hour before the end of the workday. The educational translator informs the requester of the time needed to effectively and accurately translate a document and provides the shortest feasible turnaround time.

14. The educational translator respects and supports their colleagues.

   o Example: The educational translator disagrees with several changes an editor made to their work. The educational translator has questions about the corrections and reaches out to the editor, a colleague, to discuss these changes in a cooperative, constructive, and professional manner.

   o Example: The educational translator supports and mentors a new colleague by providing constructive feedback and by sharing glossaries, resources, and templates with them.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

The educational translator commits to consistently improving and broadening their knowledge and skills through professional development.

15. The educational translator seeks and welcomes constructive feedback to improve their work.

   o   Example: While translating a special education report, some issues with grammar and syntax arise. The educational translator asks a senior colleague for help and takes note of the suggestions provided.

16. The educational translator continuously seeks opportunities to further improve their knowledge of specialized terminology and technical skills.

   o   Example: The educational translator is a member of translation associations, regularly participates in continuing education workshops, and attends conferences.

17. The educational translator develops and regularly updates their specialized terminology resources and glossaries.

   o   Example: While translating a special education document, the educational translator researches terminology and finds out that an "ARD [Admission, Review, and Dismissal] meeting" in Texas refers to a type of special education meeting called an "IEP [Individualized Education Program] meeting" in other states. They promptly add these terms to their glossary and share it with their colleagues.

   o   Example: The educational translator updates their glossaries regularly as terms and their meanings change over time.

18. The educational translator stays up to date with customs, traditions, and cultural beliefs in their working languages.

   o   Example: The educational translator participates in an informative session about the cultural background of an Indigenous group they serve in the school district.

19. The educational translator participates in organizations and activities that contribute to the development of the profession.

   o   Example: The educational translator volunteers for their translation association chapter, helping with event organization.

20. The educational translator keeps current in their knowledge of computer-assisted translation (CAT) tools and other technologies that are used frequently in the profession.

   o   Example: The school district purchases a CAT tool for staff translators. Because the educational translator wants to integrate a terminology management tool with this CAT tool, they research learning opportunities and advocate for additional training on how to import their current glossaries.

REPRESENTATION OF QUALIFICATIONS
The educational translator provides an accurate representation of their credentials and of their relevant training and experience, along with truthful professional references.

21. The educational translator accepts only projects that they are qualified to translate.

   o   Example: A school district has requested that the minutes of a disciplinary meeting be translated. The educational translator is qualified to accept this request because they have extensive knowledge of the legal terms included in the minutes.

   o   Example: A translation request calls for a translation in a rare language pair for which no certification exam is available. The educational translator shows that they are an expert in the field by submitting proof of language-neutral training in translation and language proficiency certificates in both working languages.

22. The educational translator declines to undertake translation projects that are beyond their area of expertise, or for which they cannot be effective for some other reason.

- o Example: The school authorities request that a transcript from a foreign high school be translated and signed by an ATA-certified translator. The educational translator declines the project because they do not hold the ATA certification. Instead, they refer the requester to a colleague who is ATA certified in that specific language pair.

- o Example: The information package about university/college financial aid for parents of high school seniors needs to be translated into several languages. The educational translator does not have the required subject matter expertise and recommends that the task be assigned to translators knowledgeable about the federal financial aid system, processes, and regulations in the United States.

- o Example: The school nurse requests that a brochure about birth control methods and reproductive rights be translated for the student population. The educational translator suggests that a medical translator handle the translation since the topic is beyond their expertise.

- o Example: The school counselor requests that a brochure about e-cigarettes and vaping that includes national data, graphics, and charts be translated for the student population. The educational translator offers to translate the written content and suggests that the desktop publishing be done by the creator of the document because this part of the project is beyond their expertise.

- o Example: The educational translator declines an urgent translation request because they cannot hand in the translated document within the short timeframe specified by the requester.

The *National Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice for Translators in Education*, developed by the American Association of Interpreters and Translators in Education (AAITE), is the outcome of a national, research-based, and consensus-driven process rooted in a systematic, deliberate, and reflective approach. AAITE is confident that this document represents the values that working translators need to practice their profession. This document is designed to guide translators and the educational systems in which they work; it is written in alignment with current federal and state language access and disability policies and with regulations pertinent to the provision of competent translation services.

An electronic copy of this document is available on the AAITE website *www.aaite.org*