

The Fears of Adopting the BEI Test: Much Ado about Nothing



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The institution of the BEI Interpreter Certification Test in the state of Missouri is a prime example of what economists refer to as an “opportunity cost”, which says that the value in this opportunity might create some temporary discomfort but the benefits of having competent interpreters and equal access to information under the law is far outweighing. According to Michael Lippig, a Senior Consultant with IDCON, Inc, his article “*The Cost of Doing Nothing*” suggests that:

“The cost of maintaining the status quo is enormous. The status quo affects each and every one of us every hour of every day, at work and at home. We have come to accept doing nothing as a safe and acceptable alternative. We even make it the default solution. Doing nothing is the equivalent of a baby’s soother. It makes us feel safe and comfortable, but there is a cost to doing nothing. (idcon.com)”

It is no longer news that Missouri is finally bracing for a long-overdue upgrade to the 17 year old Interpreters’ testing instrument. In a few weeks, we will release the much awaited BEI testing instrument which was selected because it has been proven to be valid, reliable, effective, and objective.

To prepare us for this, we have held highly regimented and result-oriented training sessions for prospective evaluators and trainers. The test process consists of series of empirically-based and criterion-referenced exams developed by the University of Arizona’s National Center for Interpretation Testing, Research and Policy (UA National Center) and the Texas Department of Assistive and Rehabilitative Services’ Board for Evaluation of Interpreters. The first day of training featured an overview of the test, an explanation of its development, administration, scoring, and the overall reliability and validity.

There was positive and enthusiastic feedback from almost all prospective raters during the overview, while some, understandably had many questions about some of the differences between the old test and new. At the end of day one, the participants watched the source material for one level of the performance test so they may become familiar with the source and see the corresponding script. After the first day of training was over, the BEI trainers, MICS Coordinator Peggy Withrow, and our Staff Interpreter Crystal Anderson all met with me to discuss impressions of the

participants. Day two began with the announcement of teams and the levels they would be scoring followed by a training review that we agreed would happen before every scoring session to ensure consistency among raters. After the test was scored, the results were compared to the score given by trained raters from the state of Texas to identify any similarities. All groups did an excellent job and rated very closely to the experienced raters from Texas.

We look forward to progress with the new testing instrument and greater public confidence. It is important for us to expect to see progress unless we are just wasting our time. Procrastination dominates management styles in every facet for a disturbingly large number of people. Even still, I remain optimistic that once people have had a chance to voice their concerns and express skepticism over our new system, we can work together to put the past behind us and focus on the future that lies ahead.

We know that for so many other persistent problems, there are solutions available and we will continue to seek better and more efficient means of addressing them. As we embark on this journey forward with releasing this new system, I'd like to give a special thanks to everyone who has lent both their support and patience. The old adage goes, "If you keep doing what you have always done, you will keep getting the results you've always got". In taking steps to change our status quo we are proud to continue making strides forward and are excited for the many great successes this new infrastructure will bring. Remember *we are stronger when we speak with one accord; we are mightier when we walk in unity!*