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# Interpreter Boot Camp: Working Toward Achieving Interpreter Standards

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## Abstract

A project was established in the state of Pennsylvania to mentor interpreters who scored between 3.0 and 3.4 on the Educational Interpreter Performance Assessment (EIPA), missing the state minimum standard score of 3.5 or higher. This article serves as a template for interpreter trainers interested in setting up an interpreter “boot camp” to assist graduates in bridging the gap from an interpreter training program to work in an educational setting. Four mentees and four mentors, two instructors from interpreting programs, and one educational consultant participated in the Pennsylvania Interpreter Boot Camp. Although not all mentees achieved the targeted 3.5 score when they retook the EIPA, all did improve their interpreting skills.

Key Words: boot camp, mentor, mentee, Educational Interpreter Performance Assessment

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# Interpreter Boot Camp: Working Toward Achieving Interpreter Standards

Deaf children in the United States have a right to a qualified educational interpreter during classroom instruction under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA; Classroom Interpreting, n.d.). The word *qualified* can have different meanings. In order to define it, states have enacted laws to restrict who can interpret in educational K–12 settings; many use a minimum score on the Educational Interpreter Performance Assessment (EIPA), a measure of interpreter performance. EIPA scores are based on 38 criteria and scored on a 1–5 scale. Of the states that require the EIPA, there is disparity as to what score deems an interpreter as qualified. Twelve states that use the EIPA to qualify educational interpreters require a score of 3.5 out of a scale of 5 (Classroom Interpreting, n.d.). Four states require a 4.0, and seven require a minimum of a 3.0 (Classroom Interpreting). The state of Pennsylvania requires a score of 3.5. To increase the pool of interpreters achieving this minimum, to meet the interpreting needs of the deaf students in the state, staff from the Pennsylvania Training and Technical Assistance Network (PaTTAN; the entity responsible for the provision of training for educational interpreters), in collaboration with the program coordinators of the state’s interpreter training programs, developed the Interpreter Training Program to Pennsylvania School Boot Camp. This article will discuss the inception, implementation, and results of this project.

## *History*

The Commonwealth of Pennsylvania School Code, Chapter 14, “Highly Qualified Personnel” (Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, 2008), which mirrors the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), outlines regulations for educational interpreters (22 Pa. Code § 14.105(b)). The law states that all educational interpreters who work in K–12 settings must attain a minimum score of 3.5 on the EIPA or be registered with the Office for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (as a nationally certified sign language interpreter). Interpreters are also required to earn at least 20 hours of staff development activities related to interpreting or transliterating annually (22 Pa. Code § 14.105(b)(i-iii)). When the law went into effect in 2008, approximately 100 educational interpreters met the state minimum standard. To assist with bringing aspiring educational interpreters’ skill levels up to the required minimum score of 3.5, a formal mentorship program was established. PaTTAN, an initiative of the Pennsylvania Department of Education’s Bureau of Special Education that is responsible for providing professional development and technical assistance related to special education issues, included goals for establishing such a program in its State Personnel Development Grant (SPDG), which was funded through the Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP).

PaTTAN’s Educational Interpreter Mentorship Program was established in April 2008. The goal of the project was to expand the pool of highly qualified interpreters—those who had achieved a minimum EIPA score of 3.5—to work in educational settings, through a formal mentoring program, regional interpreting labs, and continuing professional development. Eighteen educational interpreter mentors were trained by experts from the DO-IT Center at the University of Northern Colorado. Mentors’ academic and credential eligibility requirements were a minimum score of 4.2 on the EIPA, a bachelor’s degree (preferred) or an associate’s degree from an accredited college or university, and at least 3 years’ experience working in an educational setting. The mentor training component consisted of 6 days of face-to-face training, which included methods of skill assessment, techniques

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for discussing interpreting performance, prioritizing of skill development needs, and strategies for enhancing reflective practice and decision making among K–12 interpreters.

Upon completion of the training, mentors worked one on one with individuals who had attained an EIPA score between 2.4 and 3.4. Each mentor had access to regional interpreting labs, which included professional development materials to support technical skills as well as the role and responsibility germane to the educational setting. At the time this article was written, 72 aspiring educational interpreters had been entered into the PA Educational Interpreter Mentorship Program. Of these, 49 attained a 3.5 or better on the EIPA. The remaining 23 participants continue in the program.

EIPA test administrators in Pennsylvania, acting as consultants for PaTTAN, discovered that the majority of students who graduate from American Sign Language (ASL) interpreter training programs (ITPs) were unable to reach the state minimum requirement score of 3.5. PaTTAN engaged ITPs in the dialogue to determine how to reduce the number of lower-scoring interpreters working in educational settings and increase EIPA scores to the 3.5 minimum. This effort additionally met one of the goals of the SPDG, collaboration with preservice programs.

In 2009, PaTTAN began conducting quarterly meetings with the state's three ITPs. Since the meetings began, a fourth ITP was established. (Two of these programs grant bachelor's degrees and two are community college programs granting associate's degrees; all focus on general interpreting.) Through informal discussions, the participants formulated ideas for helping to prepare qualified interpreters to enter the educational setting. An idea for a "boot camp" emerged, and an educational consultant from PaTTAN and two instructors (each representing a different ITP) further met to brainstorm setting up a program that would enhance the skills of new interpreters to meet the state minimum standard. Because the state already had a pool of qualified mentors who had undertaken extensive training, this seemed like a viable project to help bridge the gap and increase the number of educational interpreters in Pennsylvania meeting the state-established minimum requirements for qualification. The result was aptly titled the ITP to PA Schools Boot Camp.

## Mentoring and Sign Language Interpreting

In classrooms all across the United States, deaf children are placed in a mainstream setting with an educational interpreter. For these students, the interpreter is their gateway to language and education. However, in a study of the skill level of educational interpreters, Schick, Williams, and Bolster (1999) concluded that "educational interpreters who work in public schools are not always qualified to provide a child with an adequate interpretation of classroom discourse" (p. 150). As a result of interpreted messages that may be incomplete, these deaf children are not always receiving equal access to education.

The negative impact of unqualified interpreters on the language acquisition and education of deaf students has been discussed in the work of Monikowski (2004); Schick, Williams, and Kupermintz (2006); and Standley (2005). Most ITPs in the United States are housed in 2-year community colleges, resulting in a short period of time to teach both language and interpreting skills. Many ITP graduates score below the common minimum 3.5 score on the EIPA (Schick et al., 2006) and lack necessary language skills. Winston's (2004) discussion of various issues related to the interpretability of the classroom further highlighted the complexities of interpreted education, highlighting crucial elements that ITPs may not have time to incorporate into their teaching. Schick et al. (2006) proposed the question, "What training is required to ensure that schools are able to hire graduates who are ready to work?" (p. 15). With this question in mind, this mentoring-focused project was developed.

According to the National Consortium of Interpreter Education Centers (NCIEC),

A mentorship is a supportive relationship established between two or more individuals where knowledge, skills, and experience are shared. The mentee is someone seeking guidance in developing specific competencies, self-awareness, and skills in early intervention. The mentor is a person who has expertise in the areas of need identified by the mentee and is able to share their wisdom in a nurturing way. The mentorship established between two or more individuals is unique to their needs, personality, learning styles, expectations, and experiences. In this relationship, the mentee has the opportunity to ask questions, share concerns, and observe a more experienced

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professional within a safe, protected environment. Through reflection and collaboration between the mentor–mentee pair or group, the mentee can become more self-confident and competent in their integration and application of the knowledge and skills gained in the mentorship demonstrating best practice. (n.d., para.1–2)

The relationship between a mentee and a mentor are as important as the mentorship itself. The individuals involved must have complimentary personalities. They also must have the same vision regarding the purpose and expectations of the mentorship. It is equally as imperative to understand each other's perspectives.

The NCIEC has published reports related to the needs of interpreters. The “Interpreter Practitioner Needs Assessment” (Winston & Cokely, 2007) discussed the results of a survey aimed to discover if interpreters felt prepared with the education they had received, where they currently work, settings in which they would like to work with proper training, perceived gaps in training, and specific training needs for the future. There were 3,903 interpreters who responded. The survey included demographics about the respondents and resulted in 16 conclusions. Interpreters noted inadequate educational opportunities and identified areas in which they would have wanted more training. Respondents strongly felt they needed more mentoring opportunities to improve their skills. Tenet 7 of the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf (RID) Code of Professional Conduct is Professional Development, which can take place in the form of mentoring (RID, 2005).

The “readiness to work gap” has been referenced in several articles (Bontempo & Napier, 2007; Patrie, 1995; Resnick, 1990; Wiesman & Forestal, 2006). Pearce and Napier (2010) referred to this gap as “the time in which an interpreter graduates from their training program but is yet to either be accredited/certified by the sanctioning body or develop sufficient professional practitioner experience” (p. 62). New interpreters are often sent out on jobs with little or no support; many educational interpreters work in isolation and are not typically afforded many opportunities for skill development.

As previously stated, the developers of the Boot Camp felt it was important to consider the characteristics of the interpreters to be invited to participate as mentors. Gordon and Magler (2007) stated that an effective mentor is supportive, patient, aware of roles and responsibilities, a clear communicator, an effective guide, committed, empathetic and respectful. According to RID, “Depending on the goal of the mentoring relationship, the mentor should have a working knowledge of American Sign Language (ASL); English; other languages, if relevant; interpreting methodologies; ethics; business practices; or other skills or knowledge salient to the mentoring relationship and the interpreting process” (RID, 2007, p. 2). The selection of interpreters to be mentors in the Boot Camp was based on these characteristics, as well as on their experience of training through PaTTAN's Educational Interpreter Mentorship Program.

## Participants

### *Mentees*

The ITP to PA Schools Boot Camp was developed to provide formal instruction coupled with one-on-one mentoring in an intensive 3-week program. The participant criteria were interpreters who (a) had graduated from an ITP within the previous 2 years, (b) had scored between 3.0 and 3.4 on the EIPA within the previous 2 years, and (c) expressed interest in working as an interpreter in the educational (K–12) setting. The interpreters who were selected as mentees agreed to (a) attend all days of the Boot Camp, (b) work with their mentor during the time between the Boot Camp and EIPA retake, and (c) retake the EIPA.

The state of Pennsylvania currently has four ITPs. At the time of this first Boot Camp, however, only three of the programs had recent graduates; the fourth was just getting established and had no graduates. For the purposes of this article, we will identify the two bachelor's degree programs as Programs A and B and the associate's

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degree program as Program C (see Table 1). It was important to have representation from all programs in the state that had graduates, and the Boot Camp met this goal (Program A had two graduates participating).

*Table 1: Participating interpreter training programs*

Variable	Program		
	A	B	C
Degree granted	BS	BA	AAS
No. of participating mentees	2	1	1

For this project, the number of mentees was limited to four. The PaTTAN consultant approached instructors to identify recent graduates who had expressed a desire to work in the K–12 setting but had scored between 3.0 and 3.4 on the EIPA. Three of the four mentees met the criteria. One had a score of 2.9 but was permitted to participate so there would be representation from the ITP from which she graduated. At the end of the Boot Camp, the mentees had to retake the EIPA test at the same level and language choice as they did with their first EIPA test.

*Table 2: Mentee characteristics*

Variable	Mentee			
	Cora	Cathy	Caitlin	Cindy
Date EIPA taken	12/12/11	7/25/11	12/3/10	3/16/2012
Level	Secondary	Secondary	Secondary	Elementary
Language	PSE	PSE	PSE	PSE
Score	3.4	3.2	3.2	2.9
Program	A	A	B	C

*Note.* PSE = Pidgin Signed English.

### *Mentors*

Four mentors participated in the program, paired with the four low-scoring educational interpreters. The mentors were chosen out of the preexisting PaTTAN Educational Interpreter Mentorship Program mentor pool because each of them had undertaken extensive mentorship training through PaTTAN. Participants received training in utilizing the Ten-Step Discourse Analysis Process (Witter-Merithew, 2001) in their mentoring. Other materials provided by PaTTAN for their mentor program included a collection of resources called a “hub” of DVDs, books, and flip video cameras. These materials were provided by PaTTAN for this project as well. Therefore, each mentor had experience with the materials in the hub that were utilized during the Boot Camp. The mentors were also given the liberty to bring personal resources that they had found effective over the past four years of mentoring through PaTTAN’s Educational Interpreter Mentorship Program. The four mentors chosen for the Boot Camp were identified through review of number of mentoring hours (ranging from 65 to 192 hours), rate of improvement of previous mentees assigned to these mentors, as well as character traits of the individuals.

To match mentees with mentors, the PaTTAN consultant interviewed each potential mentee to gain knowledge of the individual’s character. The PaTTAN consultant also reviewed the mentees’ EIPA results pertaining to strengths and targeted areas for skill development. The PaTTAN consultant then matched each mentee with the mentor who would best meet the skill development needs and personality traits of the mentee.

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Table 3: Mentor characteristics

Characteristic	Mentor			
	Elaine	Eleanor	Elsie	Ellen
Years as mentor	14	5	27	15
EIPA score	5.0	4.5	4.2	4.2
Years working in K–12	17	6	36	23
Education in interpreting	AAS in interpreting	AAS in interpreting	MA in school counseling and guidance	AAS in interpreting

## Boot Camp

### Logistics

A location for the Boot Camp was needed. One of the participating institutions, University A, had a classroom and lab area that met the needs for the morning classroom lectures as well as private rooms in the library equipped with flat-screen TVs, VHS and DVD players, and computers. The dining accommodations were arranged so that the mentees and mentors could eat in the cafeteria. Overnight accommodations were arranged at a local hotel.

### Curriculum

With the mentees' consent, the educational consultant provided the two instructors a copy of the mentees' EIPA results. The instructors identified patterns of weakness common to all four mentees: (a) discourse mapping, (b) appropriateness of fingerspelling, (c) prosody, (d) emphasis and register, and (e) sign to spoken English (voicing) with emphasizing important information. The EIPA scores of each of the mentees in each of these targeted skill areas are listed in Table 4. Classroom lectures and activities were developed around these areas, and materials for the curriculum were chosen from a hub of resources that PaTTAN had provided to each mentor: a collection of EIPA practice materials and source texts from Digiterp Communications.

Focusing on the five identified skill sets, the instructors communicated via conference call and email to develop a blended curriculum, with the PaTTAN consultant providing support and guidance. Mentees received articles to read in advance that were accessible online, as were all of the resources to be used in the course.

Table 4: Targeted skills for the Boot Camp and participants' EIPA score in that skill

Skill	Mentee			
	Cora	Cathy	Caitlin	Cindy
Discourse mapping	2.3	1.7	2.0	1.3
Appropriate use of fingerspelling	3.3	2.7	3.0	2.3
Prosodic information	3.3	2.7	3.0	3.0
Prosody register	3.0	2.7	3.0	2.7
ASL to English:	2.5	3.0	2.5	2.5

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### Emphasizing important words

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During the morning, there was focused instruction on each of the five targeted skills. In the afternoon, the mentees and mentors met one on one for activities and focused practice based on the morning sessions. Each morning the mentees recorded themselves interpreting predetermined stimuli, focusing on a specific skill set for the day, and reviewed and discussed the recorded work with their mentors in the afternoon.

#### *Preparations*

Prior to arrival, mentors and mentees received each other's contact information and established contact. Some mentors assigned work for their mentees to complete before the first day. All participants arrived at the hotel the day before the Boot Camp began; during dinner, the instructors and PaTTAN staff made final preparations, and the mentees sat separately and got to know each other.

#### *Day One*

On arrival at the university, the mentees recorded a baseline interpretation sample—a text at the appropriate grade level. Three of the mentees had taken the Pidgin Signed English (PSE) secondary stimulus exam and one had taken the PSE elementary stimulus, and they recorded baseline samples of these as well. In order to simulate testing conditions, each mentee was taken to a separate room for a warm-up period, was given the lesson plan for the stimulus content and a piece of blank paper to use for planning purposes, and had 10 minutes to review and make notes. After the preparation time, the mentees interpreted the stimulus, using flip cameras for recording. The videos were transferred onto laptops for the assigned mentors to view. The mentors collected their mentees' notes as well, to understand how they used their preparation time.

The instructors began the classroom portion by asking the mentees to describe their preparation for the interpretation: Three of the mentees wrote synonyms for some of the key terms; one mentee wrote nothing. All of the mentees said they mainly practiced fingerspelling the key terms outlined on the lesson plan.

The instructors began by talking about the importance of planning the interpretation, using the Ten-Step Discourse Analysis Process (TSDAP; Witter-Merithew, 2001). The instructors described each step and the group practiced together with a short English text. Participants were then given a longer English text to repeat the process with a partner. They then produced an interpretation of this text that was recorded and used in the afternoon session with their mentors. The participants said they felt that the TSDAP helped improve their interpretations.

After lunch, the mentees went to designated rooms in the library to meet with their mentors for 3 hours, to review the mentees' baseline video and the video recorded after conducting the TSDAP. The mentors and mentees discussed the videos and established plans for skill development. The mentees were assigned "homework" for that evening. All participants then gathered back in the classroom for a short debriefing meeting. The mentors, the educational consultant, and the instructors then excused the mentees and met alone to discuss how things went the first day. The mentors shared how each mentee was doing and offered each other suggestions for the next day's lessons and activities.

In the evening, the mentees and mentors returned to the classroom for skill-building activities following a short lecture, which on the first night focused on spatial mapping and classifiers. For the first activity, mentees watched a Pixar animated short video with no spoken language, while the mentors had their backs to the screen. The mentees used classifiers and their use of space to show the story to the mentors, and then everyone watched the video again together. The mentors gave feedback and offered suggestions for improvement. Then the mentees and mentors switched places; the mentors described the video clip and then they all watched the video and discussed using space and classifiers.

For the second activity, the mentees were each given a photograph and had to use only classifiers and their signing space to describe it while the mentors drew pictures based on the descriptions; then the drawings were

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compared to the photographs. This activity was performed with roles switched as well. The evening concluded, and the mentees went back to the hotel to work on their individual assignments.

### *Day Two*

The second day of Boot Camp focused on prosody and spatial mapping. The instructors led short lectures on these topics and showed videos in which the mentees had to identify when spatial mapping was used. First, the mentees watched *Mirrored Math* (Bowen-Bailey, 2002), which consists of one clip of a hearing math teacher teaching a lesson on number lines and another clip of a deaf teacher teaching a similar lesson. The mentees interpreted the first video from English into ASL. The mentees then watched the ASL model, noting and commenting on the use of spatial mapping and prosody. If there were areas that the mentees did not note, the instructors pointed out those examples.

Later in the morning, another video clip was presented, from the CD-ROM *Goats, Trolls, and Numbskulls* (Bowen-Bailey, 2003): a lecture on the talking animal folklore genre featuring the story “The Three Billy Goats Gruff.” The mentees once again used the TSDAP and produced and recorded interpretations of the text for review with their mentors in the afternoon sessions. Utilizing the storytelling aspect of this text, the mentees could apply concepts of prosody and spatial mapping when interpreting from English to sign language, following the TSDAP to first plan out how they would use space and cohesion markers. Once they completed their TSDAP and interpretation, the group discussed the process.

After lunch, the mentees and mentors again went to the library to view the recorded videos and to work on skill development activities. They met for 3–5 hours, and both groups commented that they did not realize how fast the time flew by! The mentees found this individualized attention to be a critical component of the Boot Camp. At the end of the day, the mentors, educational consultant, and instructors debriefed. The mentors commented on the mentees’ motivation—the mentees were already incorporating the feedback they had received into their interpretations; the mentors noticed a difference after just one day. The mentees’ drive was inspiring to the mentors as well as to the educational consultant and instructors.

For the evening activity on prosody, the mentees and mentors created scenarios using the sound “bah” that they acted out. The mentees could use only the one sound, raising and lowering intonation to get the mentors to guess whether the scenario was a question, an accusation, or a statement of shock, sadness or happiness. This activity was a challenge for some, because the mentees could not act out the scenario along with making the sound “bah,” but it proved to be fun in the end. The mentors and the mentees took turns doing this activity.

### *Day Three*

On the third morning, the instructors discussed the use of fingerspelling and sign-to-spoken interpreting in the educational setting. Again, the instructors led the lectures with the use of video examples, and the mentees completed a TSDAP process for the two texts that were used. In both texts, ASL was the source language. The texts (“Leila” and “Justin”) were from the EIPA practice videos (available from [www.boystownpress.org](http://www.boystownpress.org)). The recorded interpretations from the mentees were used in their afternoon sessions with their mentors. The goal of the texts was to help the mentees sound more natural in their spoken English interpretations, using prosody, cohesion markers, and proper sentence type (e.g., making a statement instead of asking a question).

The mentees and mentors met again in the afternoon for more on-on-one intensive skill development. This afternoon the mentor and the mentee created a skill development plan for the mentee to work on the following week. There was no structured evening activity; the mentees used the time to work on assignments the mentors had provided. Mentees took the skill development seriously throughout the course. Mentors appreciated the mentees’ motivation and were pleasantly surprised at the amount of improvement they saw in just a few days.

### *Day Four*

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The final day of the Boot Camp was a wrap-up. The mentees arrived and went through the same exercise they had done on the first day when establishing their baseline videos; they were given the lesson plan and scratch paper for notes, and 10 minutes of preparation, then they were recorded interpreting the text. There was a notable difference in how the mentees prepared for this interpretation compared to the first baseline recording. For the first recording, all four mentees had made minimal or no notations. However, for the second, three of the four mentees used content prediction techniques they had learned, listing possible concepts, spatial mapping of content, and predictions of vocabulary that might warrant fingerspelling. The fourth mentee, who wrote nothing prior to the baseline taping, wrote a list of possible vocabulary terms. The mentors and mentees met and finalized an action plan for the following week.

The mentees then met privately with the instructors to talk about their experiences in the Boot Camp. The mentees spoke candidly, expressing their gratitude for the Boot Camp and describing the wonderful relationships they developed with their mentors, and they talked about how much they felt they had grown in such a short period of time. Mentees also provided feedback on how to improve the Boot Camp for the future.

## Experiential Learning Theory Applied to Boot Camp

Interpreter education approaches learning through the students' experiences. Teachers set up assignments in which students have to interpret segments, self-analyze their work, receive critique from peers and the teacher, and apply those comments to improve their work in the future. This is the *experiential learning theory* (ELT) process (Kolb, 1984), grounded in how students experience learning. There are four abilities to the ELT cycle: concrete experience (CE), reflective observation (RO), abstract conceptualization (AC), and active experimentation (AE). Kolb (1984) described how students should go through the process:

[T]hey must be able to involve themselves fully, openly, and without bias in new experiences (CE). They must be able to reflect on and observe their experiences from many perspectives (RO). They must be able to create concepts that integrate their observations into logically sound theories (AC), and they must be able to use those theories to make decisions and solve problems (AE). (p. 30)

This cycle of learning directly applies to the mentees' experience during Boot Camp. First, during the classroom portion, the instructors explained to the mentees the skill that was being focused on for that day. The mentees did video recordings where they had a concrete experience of interpreting a text. After the interpretation was recorded, the mentees were asked to reflect on their experience of interpreting and apply what they had learned from the lesson to their interpretation (RO). In the afternoon, the mentees went with their mentors for one-on-one time. The mentors and mentees viewed the recording, and the mentees were asked to reflect on and analyze their work (AC). The mentors came up with strategies to foster improvement in targeted areas for the mentees to apply to their next interpretation (AE).

As the mentees went through the cycle, they learned from their experiences. The mentors guided the mentees along the path of learning and showed the mentees how to incorporate new strategies and techniques into their interpretation skills. The tools that the mentees learned during the Boot Camp are ones that they can apply throughout their career as sign language interpreters.

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### Summer Institute

#### *After Boot Camp*

Over the following week, the mentees and mentors worked together on skill development. The mentors assigned homework and the mentees completed tasks. Most of the mentoring during this week was from a distance through means such as Skype, email, and online Dropbox servers. The mentees and mentors then met again a week after Boot Camp ended, at the PaTTAN Educational Interpreter Summer Institute, an annual two-day training that PaTTAN provides for Pennsylvania educational interpreters working in the K–12 setting. The training focus of the institute is identified by reviewing that year’s EIPA scores and determining areas of need for skill development. National presenters are brought in to address specific skill deficit areas. However, because the law states that working educational interpreters in Pennsylvania are required to earn a 3.5 on the EIPA, the target level of difficulty for this institute is relative to a 4.0 or higher, which was beyond the level of the Boot Camp participants.

During the Institute, the mentees and mentors gathered for a final meeting, to prepare the mentees for the retake of the EIPA, the culmination of the Boot Camp, instructors went over basic test-taking strategies. The mentors and mentees shared what they had been doing during the week between the Boot Camp and the Summer Institute, and the meeting ended with a fun game to help ease tension. On the morning of the test day, the mentors and instructors met with the mentees for last-minute advice and nurturing.

### Results

All of the mentees who participated in the Boot Camp improved their EIPA score. Not all the participants earned the state minimum requirement of a 3.5, but all made improvements.

*Table 5: EIPA Comparative scores*

EIPA attempt	Mentee			
	Cora	Cathy	Caitlin	Cindy
Original	3.4	3.2	3.2	2.9
Retake	4.0	3.5	3.3	3.4

Cora and Cindy’s scores jumped by 0.6 and 0.5 points, respectively. Cora had been working as an interpreter since she graduated from her ITP. Cindy had just taken her EIPA a few months prior to the Boot Camp. She received her scores in April and the Boot Camp began in June. Even though Cindy did not score a 3.5, the Boot Camp clearly impacted her skills exponentially. Cindy had not been working as an interpreter, but she had been working with deaf people in other capacities since her graduation.

Cathy improved her score by 0.3 points. She had been working as an interpreter from the time she graduated until the start of the Boot Camp. Through her efforts, she improved her score to achieve the state minimum needed—but the score belies her actual improvement. Caitlin had not been interpreting since graduating from the ITP, and her EIPA scores were the oldest: She had taken the test a year and a half prior to Boot Camp. We can speculate that had she taken the EIPA more recently, her baseline score may have been lower, and thus her improvement greater, due the fact she had not been working as an interpreter or with deaf people.

The mentees felt enriched by this learning opportunity. One mentee noted that the Boot Camp was “a wonderful life-changing experience. The positive encouragement that the mentors displayed day in and day out was amazing. In the few days I was there, I grew to become a better interpreter and it made me more passionate

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about interpreting.” The mentors also saw improvement; based on the EIPA retake, it was evident that the Boot Camp successfully assisted all the mentees in skill development.

Table 6 shows the breakdown of the targeted skills the instructors and mentors focused on during Boot Camp. In nearly all categories improvement is evident. The only outlier is Caitlin’s score.

*Table 6: EIPA Comparative scores by skill*

Skill	Mentee			
	Cora	Cathy	Caitlin	Cindy
Discourse mapping				
Original	2.3	1.7	2.0	1.3
Retake	3.0	2.0	2.0	2.0
Appropriate use of fingerspelling				
Original	3.3	2.7	3.0	2.3
Retake	4.0	3.0	3.0	3.0
Prosodic information: Emphasis				
Original	3.3	2.7	3.0	3.0
Retake	4.3	3.0	2.7	3.7
Prosody register				
Original	3.0	2.7	3.0	2.7
Retake	4.3	3.0	2.7	3.7
Sign to voice: Emphasizing important words				
Original	2.5	3.0	2.5	2.5
Retake	3.0	3.5	3.5	2.5

## Conclusion

The Interpreter Boot Camp was ultimately a success. Every mentee who participated increased her EIPA scores. Even though only two out of the four achieved the 3.5 or higher required to work as an educational interpreter in the state of Pennsylvania, they all improved. The mentees commented that the experience was worthwhile and that they learned a lot in such a short amount of time. Mentors benefited as well. Reflecting on the Boot Camp, one mentor wrote to the PaTTAN Educational Consultant:

With your direction, your team brought together preeminent authorities in the field to provide the training and tools necessary to “grow” a mentor. As a result, not only was I able to support and assist my peers in “jumping the bar,” but personally and professionally I was tremendously enriched.

We hope that other states look at how these ITPs collaborated to orchestrate the ITP to PA Schools Boot Camp and consider replicating the program or creating a similar course. Raising EIPA scores by working with low-performing ITP graduates enlarges the pool of qualified educational interpreters; and it represents a step toward the ultimate goal of providing access to effective interpreting services for all children who need them.

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