



TASK12

Training and Assessment Systems for K–12 Educational Interpreters

In the Beginning...

John Copenhaver, Director
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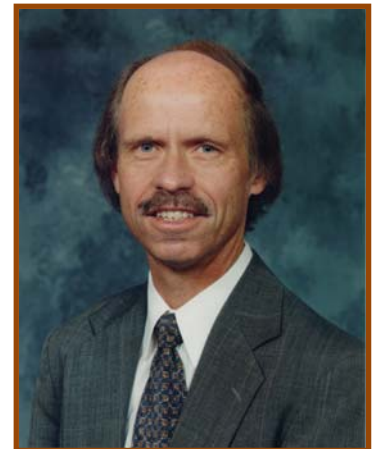
This is our first TASK12 newsletter, so I thought it would be important to provide a short history of the TASK12 project.

Prior to 2000, there was very little thought given to the whole area of school-based sign language interpreters and ensuring they had adequate signing skills. As we know, within our region there are literally hundreds of interpreters that work with children with hearing impairments in the school setting. Their main responsibility is making sure that these children

truly benefit from their educational experience. No one ever questioned whether these interpreters had adequate skills and expertise to do their job in the most efficient and effective manner.

A group of four individuals in our region approached me to inquire whether we could put together a regional program that would assess the skills of school-based sign language interpreters. Individual States were trying to address this challenge within their own State. The group felt it might be more efficient to come together as a region and hire someone who would go out and assess the skills of sign language interpreters. The individuals with this vision were Marilyn Pearson from Montana, Cheryl Johnson from Colorado, Marsha Gunderson from Iowa, and Miriam Podrazik from Arizona. These four individuals were truly visionaries in creating this consortium and improving the skills of school-based sign language interpreters.

We took the idea to the State Directors in 1999. Initially, the directors were somewhat suspect and a little nervous of the financial ramifications of entering into such a big project, but because of the leadership and determination of Marilyn, Marsha, Miriam, and Cheryl, the Directors were finally convinced to enter into a consortium of States. The next challenge was to find someone with the skills to do the assessments. We put out an RFP to the region and received two proposals.



In late 1999, Marilyn, Cheryl, Marsha, Miriam, and I met for two days at the Marriott at the airport in Denver to review the proposals and make a recommendation for funding. I'll never forget that meeting because everyone was so passionate to make sure we made the right decision.

The winning proposal was from a young upstart by the name of Bernhardt Jones. He was housed at Johnson County Community College in Kansas City. Bern had a national reputation in the low incidence community. We settled on the name of Regional Assessment System (RAS). Bern established

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a relationship with Boys Town in Omaha, Nebraska, and we were ready to begin testing. Robert Hill from Nebraska periodically assisted Bern with the assessments. During the third year of the project, we started to expand from a multi-State consortium to a regional consortium. Many States started to inquire and join the RAS project. We developed a website that further assisted with communication. Matt Brahana was an excellent webmaster and with Bern's leadership, developed a top-notch website. Bern decided to move the project to Tucson, Arizona. A relationship was established with the University of Arizona, and they became the RAS fiscal agent. The name of RAS was changed to ASK12 (Assessment System for K-12), and an Advisory Board was established that met on an annual basis. The purpose of the Advisory Board was to advise Bern of things that were going well and things that perhaps needed to change.

In 2006, the Advisory Board strongly encouraged that ASK12 end their relationship with the University of Arizona and have Utah State University pick up the total administrative and fiscal management responsibilities for the project. Bern became a USU employee, and we hired Cheryl Sheffield as his staff assistant. The board felt we needed a full-time person to keep Bern in line and keep things organized. The project began to go from regional to national, and we picked up States in every regional resource center area. The Advisory Board began having discussions around extending the program from assessment to interpreter training, and the project was changed to TASK12 (Training and Assessment Systems for K-12). Now the program is addressing both the assessment and training of school-based sign language interpreters. Currently, 14 States belong to the TASK12, and we are in phase eight of the project.

None of this would have been possible without the commitment and passion of Marilyn, Marsha, Miriam, and Cheryl. The only person of these four that remains on the TASK12 Advisory Board is Marsha. The other three have either retired or taken other positions. I think it is always important that we look to our past and acknowledge those individuals that have created the foundation for our present.

We'd like to give a special "tip of the hat" to those four leaders.

As we move forward, we have a new generation of leadership on the TASK12 Advisory Board. It is now their responsibility to sustain the efforts of TASK12 and provide guidance and direction as we move into the future. An



important variable of any good organization is that when we lose leadership, other individuals step forward in order not to compromise the goals and objectives of the program. As always, TASK12 is ultimately about keeping the main thing the main thing—children and youth with hearing impairments and building capacity of school-based sign language interpreters.

TASK12 Test Dates

Upcoming test dates:

January 24–25, 2009: Salem, Oregon. We currently have 6 registered.

January 31–February 1, 2009: Macon, Georgia. We currently have 15 registered.

February 7–8, 2009: Phoenix, Arizona. We currently have 6 registered.

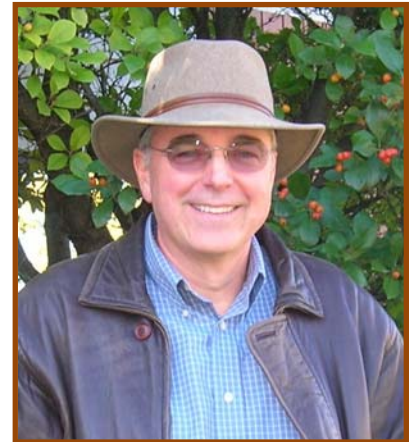
February 21–22, 2009: Wichita, Kansas. We currently have 7 registered.

Our first Newsletter

as the TASK12 Project

Dr. Bernhardt Jones

This is our first Newsletter as the TASK12 Project. We have been TASK12 for six weeks, and it fits our evolution into a project that serves a greater number of K-12 interpreters in the TASK12 States. During this Task12 Advisory Board meeting in December, we will feature discussions that will focus on the training needs of the 14+ states we serve. We will look at training and education needs based upon EIPA performances by interpreters working in the states served by the Project. From that discussion, we will design training/education to meet the needs of the interpreters.



Let's look back over the year:

We have tested interpreters in all 14 TASK12 States for a total of 38 testing opportunities at 35 different testing locations. The total number of interpreters tested was 485.

We added the state of Georgia to the project and have served Georgia by videotaping the interpreting work of 140 interpreters during the year. This is the largest number of interpreters from a single state tested this past year.

Individual EIPA diagnostic documents are mailed to each interpreter and the TASK12 office 90 days after testing takes place. We have then provided comprehensive reports to TASK12 States regarding all interpreters tested in each state. Thirty-eight comprehensive reports have been written and shared with each respective state; some states have received multiple reports depending upon the number of interpreters participating in the EIPA.

Let's look ahead one year (and beyond):

Implementation of TASK12 training opportunities for interpreters can commence as early as the spring 2009. Distance training/education is an option we will discuss and pursue. I am also looking at establishing face-to-face (F2F) training during the summer of 2009. Part of a package of training would begin with F2F training in Arizona (40+ interpreters) and continue via distance delivery training. We will focus upon skills needing improvement with interpreters who have shown skill performances that are close to the minimum EIPA score required in most states, Level 3.5. Throughout the TASK12

States, this number equals 185 interpreters—just in the past fiscal year. Addressing these interpreters’ needs, we can impact services to students who are deaf or hard of hearing sooner rather than later.

I believe that for the expenditure of time and funding, not to mention the timeframe for completion and improvement of services to students, concentration of training/education should be upon the interpreters who have shown interpreting performance at EIPA Levels ranging from 3.0–3.4. There is a certain minimum level skill needed to make progress rapidly. The notion of “You can’t get there from here” applies. There are a large number of pre-interpreting skills required for an interpreter to demonstrate in order to perform well in the classroom for deaf and hard-of-hearing students. Prioritizing the training is a decision we are compelled to make for the improvement of services in the classroom in a relatively short period of time.

It must be noted, however, that there is a clear training/education need for interpreters who score below EIPA Level 3.0. This number of interpreters is 88 just in the last fiscal year. By and large, these individuals are in great need of second language development. Proficiency in American Sign Language (ASL) is crucial on the way to accurate interpretation. Therefore, ASL language development needs to be part of the education and training. However, ASL classes can better be offered in a F2F format locally throughout the TASK12 States. Options include postsecondary college programs listed on the website: www.task12.org.



The needs for interpreter training and education continue to grow, but the educational needs of students who are deaf or hard of hearing demand that we build avenues for interpreters to improve their service delivery.



Our new Website

We are happy to announce that we have a new web address:

www.task12.org

We are continuing to make improvements to the new website. Please help us to get the word out to interpreters.

TASK12

State Feature: Alaska

Tracy Pifer, TASK12 Advisory Board Member

Alaska is an exciting place to be an interpreter! We have a tight knit community of supportive interpreters and an active AK RID chapter. We just finished hosting our 4th biannual statewide conference in October. We had top notch presenters come from around the country and interpreters who came from around the state.



We have high quality interpreter training workshops throughout the year. The Alaska State School for Deaf and Hard of Hearing sponsors a weeklong statewide training each summer in August. The focus is on Educational Interpreting but it is open to all interpreters. AK RID hosts interpreter training workshops throughout the year. Our next jointly sponsored workshop will be Jan 9 & 10th with Cindy Farnham on mentoring.

AK RID hosts interpreter training workshops throughout the year

Thanks to a grant from the State of Alaska DEED, we are beginning our statewide mentoring program in January, 2009. The project is geared for Educational Interpreters, but depending on interest will be open to community interpreters as well.

Cindy Farnham will provide the training for mentors and we are working in partnership with WEIRC to help pair up our mentors and mentees. Cindy will then provide monthly teleconference trainings statewide that all the mentors and mentees will participate in. The mentors and mentees will then work together on specific individual skill development areas. Alaska has a 4.0 score set on the EIPA and we are finding that where you set the bar, is where people will strive to attain. We struggle with ways to support our interpreters in the more remote areas of the state, but with the addition of Skype, videophones and technology we are making it work.

We're looking forward to the addition of the "training" in the ASK 21 program as an additional resource in our state.

National Research Hospital EIPA Diagnostic Center

The EIPA Diagnostic Center at Boys Town National Research Hospital in Omaha, Nebraska is the center where all videotaped EIPA performances are sent for evaluation. The TASK12 Project has worked closely with the EIPA Diagnostic Center for more than six years to ensure that evaluation materials (EIPA videotaped interpreting performances by interpreters) are delivered to the Diagnostic Center quickly and securely so that results can be received by working K-12 interpreters in a timely manner. The EIPA is the national K-12 Educational Interpreting instrument and not only provides skill level information, but also provides a comprehensive diagnostic workup of the interpreter's skills. This becomes a document that is easily used when constructing a Professional Development Plan (PDP). PDPs are required by law. The interpreter's skills are measured by the EIPA so that progress is measured and demonstrated within the interpreter's PDP.

