



Toward Effective Changes in AA-BA Partnership

Submitted by
the NCIEC AA-BA Partnership Work Team

"Reality is the leading cause of stress among those in touch with it." ~Lily Tomlin

The "reality" of our field is that change is eminent. In 2012, a minimum of a bachelor's degree will be a requirement for certification. Today in 2009, approximately seventy-five percent (75%) of our nation's approximate 140 interpreter education programs are offered at the associate degree level and housed in two-year institutions. While this mandate will result in a significant reduction in the stature of an associate degree, most interpreter educators recognize that two-year programs will not simply vanish on July 1, 2012.

Over the past 18 months, the *NCIEC AA-BA Partnership* work team has led a national conversation around the current issues in AA-BA transition, potential barriers to articulation and change. Guided by an exhaustive literature review, dialogue with AA and BA Program Directors and other discovery approaches, the *NCIEC AA-BA Partnership* work team has framed its work around the concept of "partnership," hoping to identify effective models of AA-BA partnerships that lead to successful interpreter education program design.

Through the initiative's efforts, much has been learned about our field's current knowledge, attitudes, behaviors and beliefs surrounding "2012." This information has been chronicled in a new publication entitled ***Toward Effective Practices: A National Dialogue on AA-BA Partnerships***. A free online publication available <http://www.lulu.com> (or hard copy at \$30), the 132 page document illuminates the needs, intentions, hopes, and concerns of interpreter educators as they internalize and address these increasing educational requirements. It captures the dialogues begun by interpreter education directors at both the B.A. and A.A. levels to ascertain how programs can and will creatively change, transform, and create new educational opportunities for their students within the framework of "2012." Moreover, it provides a historical perspective of our field, identifies current practices in the art of AA-BA partnership, offers a common language and definitions for shared dialogue, and descriptions of current practices in program partnership. Lastly, it shares the "lessons learned" from the B.A. Directors Meeting of October 2006 and the A.A. Directors Summit of May 2007, and provides recommendations for future action. We strongly encourage you to acquire it.

The *NCIEC AA-BA Partnership* work team is now turning its efforts to identifying innovative partnership models that appear to have merit for AA-BA partnerships in interpreter education. An online survey to learn more about existing AA-BA partnerships in interpreter education is concluding with survey analysis currently underway. The findings will be published in a second NCIEC monograph to be released in late 2008 or early 2009.

Based on survey findings, the work team will spend the next six to nine months taking a critical eye to the design of four to five partnership models that appear to have promise for interpreter education. Assisting the work team in this endeavor will be directors from five to ten IEPs who are either currently engaged in a successful partnership or have a strong desire to (and will) adopt a particular model. Working as a tactical discovery and writing team, this “task force” of sorts will describe the critical components needed for a successful partnership, and share lessons learned through case studies. Needless to say, the AA-BA work team is excited about this work.

We all recognized that there are, indeed, many issues surrounding partnering of AA and BA programs. Among others are the need for ASL standards for articulation, the dichotomy of academic degrees (AA) versus technical degrees (AAS), limited educator credentials, lack of standardized entry and exit requirements, constraints of programs housed in two-year institutions, as well as numerous other equally important and challenging topics. However worthy the various topics are, it is important to remain purposeful in remaining focused on the identification of current practices which will lead to best practices, and elucidate for the field effective practices of AA-BA partnership.

There is much more to be learned about working together in new and creative ways. Based on the productivity and related outcomes of the *NCIEC AA-BA Partnership* work team’s endeavors to date, there is no question that 2012 and the need for partnerships is on everyone’s mind. Interpreting is not the first profession to face increased credentialing requirements. Thankfully, there are partnership models in other professions that can guide us. It is beneficial and enlightening to learn from other professions that have faced increased educational requirements for credentialing.

The work to date done by the work team has provided us with a slate of conclusions and recommendations. They are more chronicled in ***Toward Effective Practices: A National Dialogue on AA-BA Partnerships***, however we would like to share a few with you here.

- Constructing new models of partnership requires much time and daring to build creatively outside the box and perhaps outside one’s comfort zone. Collaboration is hard work--voluntary collaboration is even harder.
- A.A. programs are not going away anytime soon. All interpreter programs will *not* look the same in terms of partnering and evolving, and that is good.
- Two-year IEPs are not easily defined. They lead to a variety of degree outcomes: A.A., A.A.S., and certificate. They are housed in a variety of institutions: two-year colleges, four-year universities, public institutions, and private institutions. This variety presents challenges to articulation and partnership that must be addressed.
- Develop partnerships must be a joint venture between two- and four-year interpreter education programs. Ongoing conversation and collaboration are essential for effective partnerships.
- Simple articulation from an AA program to BA degree program in a general studies or a related field is not reflective of an effective partnership.
- Programmatic accreditation is a critical underpinning for educational success for interpreting students.
- Empirically-based research to define, describe and evaluate effective partnership models in interpreter education is a necessary component.
- All programs are facing:

- changing student and consumer demographics:
- increasingly limited resources with ever increasing demands on time and programs,
- fiscal restraints beyond programmatic control, and
- the task of determining what to “become” in the next few years.

These are very exciting times. It is rare that one is privy to monumental, pivotal points in one’s profession. Interpreter education is experiencing simultaneously the impact of policy change, demand for evidenced-based practice, and heightened consumer expectations. Spiraling academic requirements for credentialing and increased technological business products (e.g., video relay services) are driving the demand for more and better interpreters. These competing yet coalescing forces are occurring simultaneously with challenging factors such as financial resources, changing student and practitioner demographics, and federal funding agency demands for effective practices.

The NCIEC AA-BA Partnership work team extends a warm Happy New Year to our colleagues and friends. We look forward to a year of active engagement with interpreter education programs, and sharing new information, discoveries and approaches to AA-BA Partnership that we acquire throughout the year.

For more information about the NCIEC and their goals, please visit the website at www.nciec.org/.

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