

Special Issue – March 2012

## VRSII Interpreter Educators Symposium a Success!

The VRS Interpreting Institute (VRSII) held its first Interpreter Educators Symposium March 7 through 11, 2012, in Salt Lake City at the Robert G. Sanderson Community Center of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing. The symposium was attended by 68 interpreter educators from colleges and universities across the nation and focused on the influential book, "What the Best College Teachers Do," by Dr. Ken Bain. The symposium was conducted in American Sign Language.



Symposium trainers, l to r: Dr. Carolyn Ball, Dr. Marty Taylor, Sharon Neumann Solow, Dr. Carol Patrie

Symposium trainers, Dr. Carol Patrie, Dr. Marty Taylor, Sharon Neumann Solow and Dr. Carolyn Ball, VRSII Executive Director, focused on concepts from the book, including creating a natural, critical learning environment for students as well as what the best teachers know about how people learn, what they expect of their students, how they conduct class, how they treat their students and how they evaluate themselves and their students. Each of these topics was explored in depth with attendees offering their perspectives and opinions of how the concepts could be best used and how they would implement the ideas in their curriculum. Richard Laurion of the CATIE Center at St. Catherine University said, "The symposium has given me many quick and easy strategies that I can employ right away in classes. It's unique in a symposium like this to be able to jump in early and have such in-depth discussion of the topics."

The symposium's open forum provided for rich input and opportunities for participants to explore and discuss issues and exchange ideas and opinions. Jeff Pollock of

the Davis Applied Technology College said, "One of the most valuable parts of the VRSII trainings is to see other teachers and what they are doing. I learned a lot from other educators at the symposium as well as from Dr. Bain's book and the facilitators. The group discussions gave me great ideas. I can't wait to implement them!" The symposium forum was extremely collaborative and provided an electronic repository in Moodle course management for participants to continue to share ideas after the close of the symposium. Dr. Patrie encapsulated the collaborative mood of the symposium when she said, "In my personal experience working with Marty and Sharon, though we may have differing opinions about certain topics, by working together in small groups we have developed many good ideas."

Dr. Patrie emphasized the impact of teachers in influencing others' lives by relating a story about her father who was a science professor at Gallaudet University. Upon his passing, the Dean of the College of Science demonstrated how her father touched the lives

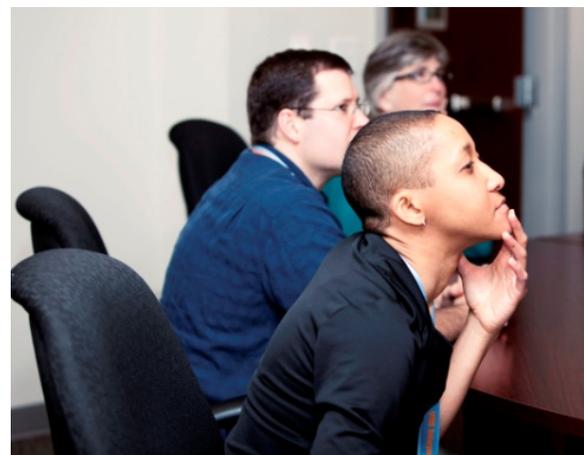


Symposium participants exchange ideas during a break.

teachers could have this type of impact on their students' lives.

of students by combining two vials of fluids – one that slowly but surely seeped throughout the larger vial and turned it a different color. He stated how

wonderful it would be if all



Participants listen to Dr. Bain

On Friday, Neumann Solow gave an impactful presentation about the way students learn. She used a video clip from the movie "The Gods Must Be Crazy." Discussion focused on the deeper values that impact learning, such as parallels and differences in language. An interpreter's role as a message conduit versus affecting the message was also discussed in this context.

On Friday evening, the VRSII hosted a reception on the VRSII campus. School-to-Work Program (STW) students presented to symposium participants about the STW Program and their experiences in the program. The STW Program bridges the gap between IEP graduation and work readiness.



**School-to-Work Program winter class of 2012**

When asked for comments, one student replied, "I witnessed throughout the symposium how passionate and dedicated these educators are. Presenting to several top educators in the nation was definitely one of the highlights of the past weekend!" Another said, "Being at the symposium was a look 'behind the curtain' for me. I felt so honored to be with the people who create the framework for our college experiences and watch them be challenged and grow just like we are challenged in our classes." Of her experience presenting, one student said, "Presenting about STW to individuals whom we have admired and whose publications we have read is an experience we will never be able to recreate. I can only hope in the amount of time [we had] they were able to understand how AMAZING our experiences have been and hope they encourage their graduates to apply to STW. Thank you VRSII for these experiences and lasting memories!"

On Saturday morning, Dr. Carolyn Ball opened the symposium by welcoming participants. Ball received high praise from symposium participants, STW students and VRSII staff and faculty in the form of a rousing standing ovation, after one symposium participant commented on

the STW presentations, the quality and value of the STW Program, the benefits it offers and the "obvious joy" it brings to STW students and how that joy clearly comes from Ball and the environment she has created at the VRSII.



**Dr. Ken Bain, keynote speaker**

Keynote speaker, Dr. Ken Bain, then addressed participants for the entire day. He discussed his book and, particularly, focused on creating a critical learning environment.

Dr. Bain addressed the ideas of "deep learning" versus "surface learning," or "strategic learning," and the different reasons for each. He discussed "flexible" versus "fixed" intelligence," evaluating students with less emphasis on grades and appropriate educator feedback. He also explained subtle actions teachers may unwittingly carry out, called "stereotype threat," that can ultimately affect a student's performance. The lack of civility and the reasons behind the phenomenon were discussed. In addition, Dr. Bain emphasized the importance of allowing students to fail - and creating a safe environment in which this could take place.

The symposium came to a close on Sunday. Elizabeth Jean-Baptiste of the University of Cincinnati said, "I have learned so much at this symposium that it's nearly overwhelming! I keep thinking of how I can incorporate all this great information into our classes."

