



RID-NCIEC MENTORING GRANTS



StoryBlend 2008 Mentoring Grant final Report

StoryBlend received a 2008 mentoring grant from RID and the National Consortium of Interpreter Education Centers (NCIEC). This is the second of two articles outlining the process and outcomes of the project. The directors of StoryBlend are interpreter, Patty Gordon, and deaf actress, Nic Zapko. StoryBlend is funded by a combination of grants, participant fees and donations. 2008 was the fourth summer of the program.

StoryBlend 2008 served 11 interpreters: 9 pre-certified, 1 interpreter holding a CT and one holding an NAD III. Years of experience ranged from 2008 graduates to an 18-year veteran in the field. Evaluation comments from participants and mentors indicated satisfaction with their experiences.

"I think I've become more expressive in my ASL production and I know that my receptive skills have improved," said one participant. Others felt their fluency skyrocket, becoming "more relaxed, less choppy and more fluid" in their signing style. One owes their improvement to the theatrical base of the program, stating "(I can) use characterization more successfully and incorporate stronger facial expressions and use of space."

Participation in StoryBlend's activities is far from optional for the 11 interpreters and the 4 deaf mentors on staff. When beginning a game or drama, emphasis on action, as opposed to discussion, is key. In 2008, the phrase "just do it" quickly became mantra. In fact, often observation and analysis of instinct generated the most powerful realizations for both deaf and hearing members.

"We learned not only to work as a team but learned how to trust each other, something that you don't really walk out of other workshops with," stated one member. Another saw the intrinsic value of the relationships forged, saying "You can't put a price on the Deaf experience. Learning what they know is something we can never be taught in a classroom and (that) has really opened up my mind for the future."

Another 2008 participant stated; "It was great to have the opportunity to discuss our experiences openly with deaf mentors and get the sense that we brought something of value to the table as well. After StoryBlend, I feel more comfortable generating those discussions outside of the workshop environment."

Deaf participants also reported gaining skills and knowledge applicable to their daily life and work, often becoming both mentor and mentee in the process. As one shared, "(StoryBlend) impacted my understanding of how to improve the interpreters, (and) also expanded my knowledge and perspective on (the) hearing experience."

This ground-breaking workshop shares and capitalizes on RID's initiative of reuniting the Deaf and hearing communities for their mutual benefit, and this goal was realized in more than one participant's evaluation comments.

"(StoryBlend) taught me to bond with interpreters," a Deaf mentor wrote. "Nobody can ask for anything better than that."

Thank you to Cassie Lang for help with this article. StoryBlend will next be offered Aug 10-21, 2009 in St. Paul, Minnesota. Applications will be available in January, 2009. More information can be found at www.storyblend.com.

