Report of the Educational Products Advisory Committee

to the Trustees of the

American Printing House for the Blind

 Fiscal Year 2020

# PURPOSE

The purpose of the Educational Products Advisory Committee (EPAC) is:

* To advise the American Printing House for the Blind (APH) in establishing priorities, standards, and policies regarding products.
* To review research and development priorities, suggest additional areas of interest, and advise APH staff on the prioritization of needs and projects.
* To review products under development and to consider approval of finished products for purchase with Federal Quota funds.
* To recommend parents, caregivers, students, clients, and professionals in the field serve as subjects for research or field-test purposes, as project consultants, and/or as committee members.

# INTRODUCTION

In June 2020, the EPAC met in Louisville, KY, at APH for the nineteenth year as a formal advisory committee to address the 2019 EPAC report and to develop commendations and recommendations for the current fiscal year. To assist with this endeavor, presentations were made by APH’s product development staff, including progress updates on the 2019 recommendations, operations and information on new initiatives.

# COMMENDATIONS

The EPAC commends APH for the following:

1. With the onset of COVID-19 and drastic changes in the way we are delivering services to children with visual impairment, APH provided amazing services and access to products.
	1. Creation of the Virtual Academy was timely and innovative.
	2. The APH Accessible Textbook Department continued to work with EOT’s during the COVID-19 Pandemic, in spite of tremendous roadblocks and seemingly impossible circumstances, they have reached out to us and worked diligently to make sure that we get our textbooks.
	3. The increased level of communication with the EOTs. APH has done a remarkable job of keeping us informed during the COVID pandemic, meeting our needs during an unprecedented upheaval of services and providing information about training webinars and the Excel Academy.
	4. Providing access to electronic files of BOP and other products at no charge for TVIs.
2. APH has made progress on most of the recommendations that were suggested last year with all but two either in the *Implementation in Process* or *Implemented* stage. Great to see pictures back in the catalogue.
3. APH has reduced the backlog of orders significantly from over $2,000,000 to just about $250,000 dollars. This is incredible!
4. The website has been slowly improving. When the APH IT department becomes aware of a problem on the website they try to fix it immediately.
5. The launch of the preschool Building On Patterns program and it’s correlation to the learning standards and that APH has received positive feedback from the U.S. Department of Education.
6. Production and provision of simultaneous access to mathematical reference booklets for students reading either UEB technical or Nemeth code.
7. Recognizing the importance of the braille music code by developing products to support students in the education of braille music.
8. The increased emphasis on modern technology to support learning in 21st-century schools and that options exist to utilize quota funds for the purchase of that equipment.
9. It is the perception of the EPAC that the training and systems that have been implemented at APH this year have improved internal communication throughout the agency.

# RECOMMENDATIONS

**Consistent with the Act to Promote the Education of the Blind (1879), the Educational Products Advisory Committee (EPAC) recommends that APH:**

1. Developing QR codes or some other accessible technology for products to be used in a variety of circumstances including surveys, webinars, product descriptions etc. These could be linked to the product description in the catalogue (online and print) and included in the documentation when the item is shipped. This would provide timely access to resources.
2. When producing materials in UEB technical, a supplement is not sufficient. The item should be produced and released in both versions at the same time.
3. Add a products review option to the website that includes the ability to share ideas in the use of APH products. If this is implemented, it could help in determining what products should be discontinued.
4. Including EPAC in the process of obsolescence.
5. Providing more comprehensive training for customer service staff in the products and their use.
6. Generating an automatic notification on the website when an item has been discontinued while maintaining the record for use in researching the product.
7. Sending a complimentary copy of the student book from Building on Patterns to TVI’s who require a braille manual until the updated UEB teacher’s manual is completed.
8. Make sample braille and tactile graphics available for order of pic blaster and page blaster to enable people to make informed decisions.
9. Selling the instructional materials separately in the revised Envision kit.
10. Developing more products and access technology to support math instruction and production of math materials.
11. An increased focus on higher level science materials to support blind and low vision students.

Respectfully Submitted,

Educational Products Advisory Committee 2020

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