# Report of the Educational Services Advisory Committee to the Trustees of the American Printing House for the Blind Fiscal Year 2021

## PURPOSE

The purpose of the Educational Services Advisory Committee (ESAC) is:

* To provide oversight and leadership in the planning, evaluation, and delivery of product-related services provided by the Act to Promote the Education of the Blind.
* To identify new services as needed.
* To assist in the promotion of APH products through services.
* To advise APH on general operations and communications as they relate to the accountability of services provided.
* To advise APH generally on topics relevant to the education and rehabilitation of persons who are blind or visually impaired.
* To advise APH in planning future federal initiatives based on innovative ideas and current trends by helping APH staff keep informed of trends and important discussions/debates occurring in the field.
* To advocate for and support the administration of the ACT by APH.
* To facilitate communications and partnerships between APH and appropriate entities.

## INTRODUCTION

In March of 2021 the ESAC met via webinar with APH as a formal advisory committee to address the 2020 ESAC report and to develop commendations and recommendations for the current fiscal year. To assist with this endeavor, interactive presentations were made by APH’s administrative staff, including progress updates on the 2020 recommendations, operations and information on new initiatives.

## COMMENDATIONS

The ESAC commends APH for the following:

1. The ESAC offers a commendation on the progress towards the Keller Museum. Museum Director, Mike Hudson, in particular has done an excellent job establishing the importance, the historical context and the ethical considerations in its planning and design. ESAC also recognizes the intentional and thoughtful approach to the formation of an expert advisory committee. APH has demonstrated the requisite investment, strong leadership, and stewardship that are necessary as a keeper of our professional history and legacy.
2. The ESAC offers a commendation for the addition of Outreach Regional Representative positions as part of outreach services offered. This was first made as a recommendation by ESAC in 2018 and having these roles now developed in two regions of the U.S., with additional regions to be added in the near future, strengthens the capacity building of APH. The regional support for states will be a tremendous opportunity for APH outreach that allows for a more nuanced view of how each state operates, while at the same time strengthening professional learning opportunities, including tapping the talents of local district teachers of the visually impaired.
3. The ESAC offers a commendation for excellent progress this year in the creation and roll out of the professional learning platform, “The Hive.” To a degree, it has kept us together during the challenging time of separation during the pandemic. This project will continue to reap dividends of high quality professional development for families and educators to continue to support individuals who are blind and low vision to have the tools and the support they need in multiple learning environments based on evidence based practices.
4. The ESAC offers a commendation for working towards a system of an integrated electronic infrastructure across departments. This will eliminate redundant systems and provide one location for order updates that most APH staff would have access to further support customer service.
5. The ESAC offers a commendation for soliciting stakeholder feedback to shape the new vision for APH and for ongoing efforts to implement the vision across the organization guided by data and shaped by collaboration.
6. The ESAC offers a commendation to the Customer Service, Production, and Technology teams for substantially reducing the backlog of orders and increasing customer notification of back-ordered products.

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

1. The ESAC offers a recommendation that the bi-monthly virtual EOT meetings remain as a meeting space for EOT’s throughout the year and include an EOT only forum that could be facilitated by the EPAC or ESAC members. Additionally, the ESAC would like to see a standing agenda items be introduced to that meeting to allow for consistent communication on the following items:
   1. Regular updates on responses from EPAC and ESAC recommendations.
   2. New products and discontinued products that have been or will be introduced or removed from the catalog.
   3. An EOT highlight of innovative or new initiatives that would be beneficial for the greater group to hear.
   4. Regularly review the organizational chart of APH (by leadership positions and teams).
2. The ESAC offers a recommendation to formalize the APH Scholar selection process through the use of a scoring rubric and scoring document (sample available from 2021 ESAC). The ESAC also proposes that this scoring rubric be shared with applicants and EOTs to inform their application letters. Selected scholars should be required to make some type of formal contribution to the APH community such as, but not limited to, a webinar for the Hive, presentation at Annual Meeting, or videos about how they creatively use APH products.
3. The ESAC offers a recommendation to have the Outreach Regional Representatives assist in the ongoing marketing effort for APH as part of their role, including making connections with the medical community where postcards regarding the census will be sent, become acquainted with post-secondary institution staff who offer programs that lead to TVI and O&M certification, connecting with professionals who work with students who are blind or visually impaired, and disseminating information to parents.
4. The ESAC offers the recommendation to continue to develop the Hive based on input from the field that incorporates and coordinates with the goals and outcomes of the development of the Outreach Regional Representatives to meet the needs of the field.
5. The ESAC offers the recommendation to identify measures of success for EOT engagement to encourage increased participation and communication based on evidenced based research in promoting leadership in the field:
   1. Example: Identify the engagement goals for the following: survey response rate, bi-monthly meeting attendance and other engagement opportunities. Taking into account that over 50% of EOT’s have 10% of their work day dedicated to EOT duties, based on the customer service survey administered in FY 2020.
   2. Consider the creation of an EOT leadership academy or a one-to-one mentorship program or cohort approach, possibly in the hive, that promotes collaboration.
6. The ESAC offers the recommendation to develop an advocacy campaign for improvements to the Free Matter Shipping Standard through the USPS.

Respectfully Submitted,

Educational Services Advisory Committee 2021

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