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

## 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 March 2021, the EPAC met in Louisville, KY, at APH via ZOOM, for the twentieth year as a formal advisory committee to address the 2020 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 2020 recommendations, operations and information on new initiatives.

## COMMENDATIONS

The EPAC commends APH for the following:

1. During a world-wide pandemic, APH continued to provide relevant services and products in a timely manner. We would like to make a special note of the following:
	1. Flexibility in shipping materials directly to TVIs who had no access to their campus or school buildings.
	2. Willingness to ship products directly to the parents of students who continued attending classes virtually.
	3. The APH Accessible Textbook Department continued to provide the textbooks needed, including new adoptions in a timely manner.
2. Considering recommendations and input given by the EPAC committees. This was evident in including two EPAC members in the process of selecting items to be discontinued and providing the Envision Kit without the optical aids.
3. Developing a plan for launch of products for instruction on coding. From the Code Jumper to the latest RC Snap Rover Kit, these products have opened doors for the visually impaired and blind students that did not exist previously. It is obvious much research and thought were put into the connectivity between the products as they build upon each other for instruction. Each product is amazing on its own merits but together form an outstanding experience in learning the foundational concepts of coding.
4. Releasing an exceptional group of technology products in a year when they were vital to virtual classroom settings. We specifically recognize the Mantis Q40, Chameleon 20, Page Blaster and Pix Blaster. Having access to portable embossers was vital to braille production for TVIs who were serving students both in the classroom and in virtual settings, sometimes at the same time!
5. Engaging the field of service providers by providing numerous webinars directly related to the use of APH products.
6. Releasing products that utilize principles of universal design and for allowing students to customize products based on their preferences and interests to meet their individual needs.
7. Increased focused and development of STEM products for students who are blind or low vision. Graph Benders, Build-a-Cell, various coding products, and Practice2Master Abacus App are examples of products that are customizable and meet the needs of students.
8. The updating and refreshing of products such as the Barraga, SLK, Wilson Reading IV, KeyMath, Brigance, and addition of the alphabet tiles for the Reach and Match Learning Kit.

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

1. Develop and utilize QR codes or a similar technology, for APH products that would link to URL for training webinars in The Hive, APH website page with related items, parts list for kits, manuals and product feedback. A possible launching pad would be newer items that have training webinars in place. This could eventually be expanded to gather customer reviews for products. Something as simple as a rating scale or a thumbs up/thumbs down would give APH valuable data on the usefulness of a product.
2. When researching and developing new Math and Science products, the final product should be produced in both UEB Math and Science AND Nemeth Math and Science codes and included in one kit.
3. All discontinued items should consistently be marked on the website. For items that are being discontinued and still have copies available to purchase, there is no indication they are discontinued. For example, Bumpy Rolls Away is an item that has been discontinued but there are currently 100+ copies available for purchase. An indication that this has been discontinued and will no longer be available once the 100 copies are gone should be stated.
4. Continue to improve the website to insure all products and textbooks that are available for purchase can be found on the website and placed in shopping cart. There have been times when a product can not be pulled up on the website and customers must contact Customer Experience to see if the product is available. Other times, the product is found but for some reason cannot be placed into the shopping cart for purchase.
5. Although including EOTs in the obsolescence process has been beneficial, to receive more authentic and relevant feedback, TVIs and service providers should be included in the process. Consider utilizing EOTs to access a cadre of engaged and knowledgeable service providers from each state willing to provide this type of feedback. Transition-age students may be another valuable source of feedback.
6. Expand marketing efforts on new products as well as continue to feature the “oldies but goodies” on social media, newsletters and the website. Some products, such as the Health Education Guidebook for Teachers, are more obscure, may be overlooked and don’t receive the promotion that other items do.

Respectfully Submitted,

Educational Products Advisory Committee 2021

Pepper Watson, Chair

Scott McCallum

Kathy Segers

Leslie Bechtel Van Orman

Kay Ratzlaff

Dawn Soto

Armando Venegas