

Archived Information

Department of Education

AMERICAN PRINTING HOUSE FOR THE BLIND

Fiscal Year 2009 Budget Request

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For carrying out the Act of March 3, 1879, as amended (20 U.S.C. 101 et seq.),
[~~\$22,000,000~~] \$21,616,000. (Department of Education Appropriations Act, 2008)

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Amounts Available for Obligation
(\$000s)

| | 2007 | 2008 | 2009 |
|----------------------------------|--------------|---------------|--------------|
| <hr/> | | | |
| Discretionary appropriation: | | | |
| Appropriation | \$17,573 | \$22,000 | \$21,616 |
| Across-the-board reduction | <u> 0</u> | <u> -384</u> | <u> 0</u> |
| Subtotal, appropriation | 17,573 | 21,616 | 21,616 |
| Total, direct obligations..... | 17,573 | 21,616 | 21,616 |

Obligations by Object Classification
(\$000s)

| | 2007 | 2008 | 2009 |
|--|----------|----------|----------|
| <hr/> | | | |
| Grants, subsidies, and contributions..... | \$17,573 | \$21,616 | \$21,616 |

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**Authorizing Legislation
(\$000s)**

| Activity | 2008 Authorized | 2008 Estimate | 2009 Authorized | 2009 Request |
|---|--------------------|------------------|--------------------|-----------------|
| American Printing House for the Blind <i>(20 U.S.C. 101 et seq.)</i> | <u>Indefinite</u> | <u>\$21,616</u> | <u>Indefinite</u> | <u>\$21,616</u> |
| Total definite authorization | 0 | | 0 | |
| Total appropriation | | 21,616 | | 21,616 |

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Appropriations History
(\$000s)

| | Budget Estimate to Congress | House Allowance | Senate Allowance | Appropriation |
|------|-----------------------------------|--------------------|---------------------|---------------------|
| 2000 | \$8,973 | \$9,000 | \$10,100 | \$10,100 |
| 2001 | 10,265 | 11,000 | 12,500 | 12,000 |
| 2002 | 12,000 | 13,000 | 14,000 | 14,000 |
| 2003 | 14,000 | 15,500 | 15,500 | 15,399 |
| 2004 | 14,000 | 16,500 | 16,500 | 16,403 |
| 2005 | 16,403 | 17,000 | 17,000 | 16,864 |
| 2006 | 16,864 | 17,000 | 18,500 | 17,573 |
| 2007 | 17,573 | N/A ¹ | N/A ¹ | 17,573 ¹ |
| 2008 | 17,573 | 17,573 | 22,000 | 21,616 |
| 2009 | 21,616 | | | |

¹ This account operated under a full-year continuing resolution (P.L. 110-5). House and Senate Allowance amounts are shown as N/A (Not Available) because neither body passed a separate appropriations bill.

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(Act to Promote the Education of the Blind, 20 U.S.C. 101 et seq.)

FY 2009 Authorization (\$000s): Indefinite

Budget Authority (\$000s):

| <u>2008</u> | <u>2009</u> | <u>Change</u> |
|-------------|-------------|---------------|
| \$21,616 | \$21,616 | 0 |

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

The Act to Promote the Education of the Blind authorizes an annual appropriation for the American Printing House for the Blind (APH) to produce and distribute educational materials adapted for students who are legally blind and enrolled in formal educational programs below the college level. The Printing House, located in Louisville, Kentucky, has received Federal support under this Act since 1879. Materials produced by APH include textbooks in braille and large type, educational tools such as braille typewriters and computer software and hardware, teaching aides, including tests and performance measures, and other special supplies. The materials are distributed, through allotments of funds to the States, to programs serving individuals who are blind. The allotments are based on an annual census conducted by APH of the number of students who are legally blind in each State and are provided in the form of credits. State educational agencies and programs serving persons who are blind may order materials free of charge up to the amount of funds allocated to each State for educational materials. Approximately 77.5 percent of the appropriation is used to cover the cost of operations to produce these materials. The Printing House uses the remainder of the appropriated funds to conduct research related to developing and improving products and to provide advisory services to professional and consumer organizations on the availability and use of materials produced by APH.

The Printing House conducts basic and applied research necessary to develop and improve instructional materials in core curriculum areas such as science, mathematics, and social studies and adapts testing materials related to these subject areas. In addition, APH conducts research in product areas specific to the population, such as braille reading, orientation and mobility, and adapted technology. Special materials are also developed for use in teaching students who are blind and blind students with additional disabilities and in areas such as early intervention and early childhood education, prevocational training, and the functional use of residual vision. Educational and Advisory Services are provided to consumers primarily through three departments: Field Services, Communications, and Resource Services. Examples of advisory services include administration of the Student Registration System, Louis Database of Accessible Materials, Electronic File Repository, and Expert Database, National Instructional Partnership activities, and production of a variety of communication vehicles, such as catalogs, brochures, videos, and web-based information. APH also convenes ad hoc advisory committees and focus groups to address specific issues, as necessary.

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As of December 2007, APH had 204 Federal Quota accounts administered by 142 ex officio trustees who represent State educational agencies, schools for the blind, and other agencies serving the blind in each State. The Quota accounts represent funds from the appropriation that are allocated to the ex officio trustees in the form of credits that the trustees may use to order materials from APH. These trustees are responsible for the administration of the Federal accounts in each State. Items to be produced and distributed by APH are reviewed and approved by a seven-member Educational Products Advisory Committee (EPAC). The purpose of this committee, made up of ex officio trustees, is to ensure that all educational materials produced and research undertaken by APH are effectively focused on meeting the needs of students who are blind. In addition, a second five-member advisory committee of ex officio trustees, the Educational Services Advisory Committee (ESAC), provides oversight and accountability regarding APH's outreach and support services.

The States are required to provide a free appropriate public education, including appropriate related materials and supplies, to all students with disabilities under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). Materials provided through this appropriation supplement the resources otherwise available to the States to achieve this goal. In order to meet their responsibilities under the IDEA, many States make additional purchases from APH and other suppliers of materials for students who are visually impaired.

Funding provided through the Act for educational materials in fiscal year 2007 represented approximately 64.2 percent of the Printing House's total sales income of \$18.55 million. Total funding provided through the Act represented approximately 66.4 percent of its total budget of \$26.45 million.

The Department of Education grant for the National Instructional Materials Access Center (NIMAC) and Federal research grants and contracts from agencies such as the Internal Revenue Service and the National Library Service Talking Book program of the Library of Congress represented about another 18.1 percent of APH's total budget for fiscal year 2007. Nongovernmental contracts and revenue from unsubsidized product sales to State and local agencies, direct sales to individuals who are blind, and private sector contract sales provided most of APH's remaining budget. In addition to sales, APH receives corporate and individual donations from the private sector and interest income from endowments and other investments. APH has also been designated by Congress as the recipient of a grant to run the National Instructional Materials Access Center (NIMAC). The Printing House received a planning grant for NIMAC in fiscal year 2005 and a 5-year grant to implement the Center in fiscal year 2006.

Funding levels for the past 5 fiscal years were:

| | (\$000s) |
|-----------|----------|
| 2004..... | \$16,403 |
| 2005..... | 16,864 |
| 2006..... | 17,573 |
| 2007..... | 17,573 |
| 2008..... | 21,616 |

FY 2009 BUDGET REQUEST

The Administration requests \$21.6 million for activities to be conducted by the American Printing House for the Blind (APH) in fiscal year 2009. The request would maintain funding for APH at

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the fiscal year 2008 appropriation level. The program received a 23 percent increase in fiscal year 2008, while the number of children it will serve only increased by 692 children or 1.2 percent over 2007. For fiscal year 2009, the Printing House is only projecting an increase of 362 children or 0.6 percent. As such, the Department does not believe that an increase for this program is warranted for fiscal year 2009. Over the past 10 years, from 1998 to 2008, funding for this program increased by \$13.4 million, or 264 percent. However, the number of students served by APH increased by only 1,698, or 3 percent, between 1998 and 2008.

Educational Materials. The Administration's request includes \$17.1 million for educational materials, the same amount as provided for fiscal year 2008. Materials produced by APH include textbooks in braille, large type, and audio recording formats; educational aides such as braille typewriters, raised graphics, and computer software and hardware; teaching tools such as tests and performance measures; and other special supplies. The materials available through this program offer States an additional resource to assist them to provide a free appropriate public education, as required by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), and to ensure that persons who are visually impaired receive the accessible educational materials they need to succeed in school.

The timely delivery of non-literary-based textbooks in accessible media for braille-reading students is crucial to ensuring that blind children have the same access to a free appropriate public education as their non-disabled peers. The legally blind population served through the Act is small, but has very specialized needs. In order to address this issue, APH initiated a 5-year program in fiscal year 2006 called the Braille Textbook Improvement Project to increase the number of textbooks available in braille and to improve the infrastructure necessary to facilitate innovative braille translation and production processes throughout the United States. The purpose of this project is to increase the quality and quantity of braille textbooks, assessment materials, and tactile graphics. The project is identifying and developing new technology to create products to provide students greater access to textbooks and other educational materials. As part of this program, APH is increasing the number of textbook titles it produces in braille and initiating improvements in the production and delivery of braille nationwide by working with partners, consultants, and experts in the fields of blindness, software development, and education. The request includes \$500,000 for the Braille Textbook Improvement Project as part of the request for educational materials, the same as the fiscal year 2008 amount.

The request for educational materials also includes \$1.2 million for the Accessible Textbook Initiative and Collaboration (ATIC) project, the same as the fiscal year 2008 level. The goal of ATIC is to deliver custom-produced accessible textbooks in a variety of media in a timely manner, which requires the adaptation of a large number of different textbooks, with very little lead-time to produce them. In addition to traditional hard copy textbooks in braille, this project has provided APH with the capacity to provide textbooks through on-demand transcription or enlargement, electronic media that can be downloaded from a file repository on the APH web site, audio files with synthetic speech, and digital files with human voice.

Advisory Services. The Administration is requesting \$1.5 million for Advisory Services for fiscal year 2009, an increase of \$100,000 over the amount for fiscal year 2008. Advisory Services general operations support the annual meeting of the ex-officio trustees, advisory group meetings, the annual census of students who are blind, printing and distribution of catalogs of

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available materials, and field services such as consultation, in-service training, and workshops. Staff in the Advisory Services area provide ongoing consumer information and technical support to customers and establish and maintain communication with APH's network of ex-officio trustees. These trustees are responsible for the administration of the Federal account in each State. APH also provides support and information to staff and teachers at the local level. Due to the large number of requests for presentations on a variety of topics, ranging from the use of APH databases to product demonstrations, APH has launched an initiative to provide training through the World Wide Web. These webcasts have allowed the Printing House to expand its ability to reach those who need information in an efficient, low-cost manner (www.aph.org).

Examples of projects that would continue to be funded in fiscal year 2009 include the Expert Database and Consumer Use initiatives, National Instructional Partnerships program, APH File Repository, APH Research Library, APH Web Site, Accessible Media Producers Database, and Collaborative Instructional Partnership with Teacher Training Programs. APH announced a new internet-based student registration system in October 2005 that was implemented with the January 2006 count of eligible individuals who are blind or visually impaired. The Administration believes that the request provides sufficient funds to cover all these advisory services.

The request includes \$100,000 for the second stage of a \$300,000 project begun in fiscal year 2008 to enhance the ability of the Louis Database of Accessible Materials to provide information to State and local educational agencies on electronic files that have been modified so they can be used to directly produce educational materials in accessible formats. The Department believes that the Louis Database can play an important role in relation to the National Instructional Materials Access Center (NIMAC). The Printing House is designated by section 674 of the IDEA as the grantee for the NIMAC, which became operational on December 3, 2006. This Center acts as a repository for electronic files from publishers that have been formatted in compliance with the National Instructional Materials Accessibility Standard (NIMAS). NIMAC checks the files to make sure they comply with the NIMAS standard and distributes them to State and local educational agencies or accessible media producers (AMPs) designated by these agencies. These agencies then use the NIMAS-compliant files to produce educational materials in accessible formats for use by students who are blind or have other print disabilities. However, portions of mathematics, science, geography, and other textbook files that do not use literary braille are not fully accessible using NIMAS-compliant files because translation software that will provide accessible formats of graphical material does not currently exist. As the NIMAS-compliant files cannot be used to produce graphs, pictures, and other visual elements in textbooks, or may need additional formatting before they can be converted into certain types of accessible materials, additional effort is necessary to produce a complete, accessible version of a book. State and local educational agencies or their AMPs must make the modifications or add the missing information.

Many State and local educational agencies use the same textbooks and other educational materials. However, there is currently no way for educational agencies to determine whether NIMAS-compliant files have already been downloaded from the NIMAC repository and adapted and, if the files have already been adapted, into what formats. Listing information about these materials on Louis and the agencies that maintain the files will make it easier for other State and local education agencies and educators to locate converted files quickly and efficiently. This will help ensure that the files only need to be converted into the necessary accessible format once, by one agency, and therefore prevent duplication of effort. The hardware and software upgrade

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will ensure that the Louis system can handle the influx of information on accessible materials, improve the ability of users to search the database, and ensure that the NIMAC and Louis can share data in the most efficient manner possible.

Educational and Technical Research. The Administration is requesting \$3 million for research in fiscal year 2009, the same amount as provided for fiscal year 2008. The Administration supports the need for a robust research department at APH, so that it can continue to meet the changing needs of students who are blind and visually impaired. We believe the request will provide sufficient funds for APH to conduct a robust research program, including a wide variety of projects to develop new products for use with infants and toddlers, preschoolers, and school-aged children who are visually impaired, materials for students who are visually impaired with secondary disabilities, equipment and other materials to assist students with low vision, materials for learning braille, classroom learning materials, tactile graphics, and tools to aid in the transition from school to postsecondary educational or job settings.

Examples of research activities planned for fiscal year 2009 include: (1) developing materials to teach effective nonverbal and social communication skills that are usually learned by sight; (2) materials to help blind and visually impaired students to perform daily living skills such as food preparation, clothing management, and personal/environmental management and instruments to assess skill attainment; (3) developing a math manipulative that enables non-braille-reading teachers to present math concepts to braille-reading students; (4) developing activity books that address orientation and mobility for the early years; (5) producing a video showing examples of caregiver-child interactions that promote emergent literacy such as early communication, extended discourse, developing concepts, and interactive reading aloud; and (6) developing accessible graphing tools needed for creating bar graphs, pictographs, pie charts, Venn diagrams, etc., encountered in math and science textbooks to allow students to independently create graphs, charts, and graphical displays.

The request for research includes \$275,000 for APH's Accessible Testing Program, which is the same as the amount the Printing House estimates that it will use for this program in fiscal year 2008. The goal of this initiative is to:

- provide tests, practice tests, test administration manuals, and other test-related materials in high quality accessible media in a timely manner;
- promote the inclusion of blind and visually impaired individuals during test development; and,
- enhance the test performance of blind and visually impaired individuals through research, education, and communication.

A major focus of the program in fiscal year 2009 will be on the education of test publishers, test developers, State assessment personnel, parents/caregivers, and test takers on issues specific to making test items accessible in a range of media for students who are blind and visually impaired. Fees collected from State educational agencies and test publishers help offset the cost of operating this program.

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PROGRAM OUTPUT MEASURES (\$000s)

| | <u>2007</u> | <u>2008</u> | <u>2009</u> |
|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| Distribution of funding: | | | |
| Educational materials: | | | |
| Operations | \$12,153 | \$15,423 | \$15,396 |
| Braille Textbook Improvement Project | 500 ¹ | 573 ¹ | 500 ¹ |
| Accessible Textbook Initiative (ATIC) | <u>1,220¹</u> | <u>1,220¹</u> | <u>1,220¹</u> |
| Subtotal | 13,873 | 17,216 | 17,116 |
| Advisory services | 1,200 | 1,300 | 1,400 |
| Louis upgrade | <u>0</u> | <u>100</u> | <u>100</u> |
| Subtotal | 1,200 | 1,400 | 1,500 |
| Educational and technical research: | | | |
| Operations | 2,225 | 2,725 | 2,725 |
| Accessible Testing Program | <u>275</u> | <u>275</u> | <u>275</u> |
| Subtotal | 2,500 | 3,000 | 3,000 |
| Total | 17,573 | 21,616 | 21,616 |
| Number of persons served | 57,696 | 58,388 | 58,750 |
| Average per student allotment (whole dollars) | \$232 ¹ | \$265 ¹ | \$262 ¹ |
| Advisory committee meetings | 5 | 5 | 5 |
| Ad hoc committee and focus group meetings | 8 | 8 | 8 |
| State educational agencies visited | 5 | 5 | 5 |
| Residential programs visited | 10 | 8 | 8 |
| Rehabilitation programs visited | 2 | 3 | 3 |
| Teacher training program contacts and product loans | 11 | 11 | 11 |
| In-service training programs and webcasts | 10 | 10 | 10 |
| Product training presentations and exhibits | 119 | 122 | 125 |
| Catalogs distributed: | | | |
| Print catalogs | 61,300 | 70,000 | 80,000 |
| Cassette catalogs | 650 | 3,000 ² | 800 |
| Disk catalogs (CD ROM) | 5,100 | 6,500 | 7,000 |
| Total employees (full-time equiv.) | 305 ³ | 309 ³ | 314 ³ |

¹ Funds used for the Braille Textbook Improvement Project support planning committees, focus groups, and team meetings/workgroups related to the improvement of braille materials provided by APH. As such, the project is shown under Educational Materials. However, these funds are not included as part of the calculation of the average per student allotment because they are not directly used to produce products. The funds for ATIC are included as part of the calculation of the per student share.

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² The Printing House only produces new catalogs in cassette format every other year. APH estimates that the demand will increase in fiscal year 2008 because the new catalogs will become available this year.

³ Includes personnel assigned to the NIMAC project.

PROGRAM PERFORMANCE INFORMATION

Performance Measures

This section presents selected program performance information, including, for example, GPRA goals, objectives, measures, and performance targets and data; and an assessment of the progress made toward achieving program results. Achievement of program results is based on the cumulative effect of the resources provided in previous years and those requested in fiscal year 2009 and future years, and the resources and efforts invested by those served by this program.

APH has been reporting data from customer satisfaction surveys for several years. The survey results indicate that the educational materials provided through the Act to Promote the Education of the Blind are appropriate, timely, and of high quality and allow students who are visually impaired to benefit more fully from their educational programs. However, the Department has expressed concerns that the data are subjective in nature and do not provide sufficient information on key outcomes. As described below and under the Follow-Up on PART Findings and Recommendations section, the Department and the Printing House worked together to develop more objective, appropriate measures of outcomes for APH activities and introduced six new measures in fiscal year 2007.

Goal: Pre-college level blind students will receive appropriate educational materials that result in improved educational outcomes.

Objective: *Appropriate, timely, high-quality educational materials are provided to pre-college level blind students to allow them to benefit more fully from their educational programs.*

Measure: The percentage of American Printing House for the Blind trustees, advisory committee members, consumers, and teachers who agree that the educational materials provided through the Act to Promote the Education of the Blind are appropriate, timely, and high quality and allow blind students to benefit more fully from their educational programs.

Trustees-Percentage who agree

| Year | Target | Actual |
|------|--------|--------|
| 2004 | 96 | 99.5 |
| 2005 | 98 | 100 |
| 2006 | 98 | 99 |
| 2007 | 98 | 100 |
| 2008 | 98 | |
| 2009 | 98 | |

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| <i>Advisory Committees-Percentage who agree</i> | | |
|---|--------|--------|
| Year | Target | Actual |
| 2004 | 100 | 100 |
| 2005 | 100 | 100 |
| 2006 | 100 | 96 |
| 2007 | 100 | 100 |
| 2008 | 100 | |
| 2009 | 100 | |

| <i>Consumers-Percentage who agree</i> | | |
|---------------------------------------|--------|--------|
| Year | Target | Actual |
| 2004 | 95 | 99 |
| 2005 | 95 | 96 |
| 2006 | 96 | 98 |
| 2007 | 96 | 99 |
| 2008 | 96 | |
| 2009 | 96 | |

| <i>Teachers - Percentage who agree</i> | | |
|--|--------|--------|
| Year | Target | Actual |
| 2004 | 96 | 98 |
| 2005 | 96 | 99 |
| 2006 | 97 | 100 |
| 2007 | 97 | 99 |
| 2008 | 97 | |
| 2009 | 97 | |

Assessment of progress: The survey instruments were constructed with the input of an external research firm and designed to measure the levels of satisfaction of various constituency groups with several factors. The Department has expressed concerns regarding the usefulness of these measures. The responses to these surveys are subjective, the ex officio trustees have a statutory connection to APH, and the teachers to be surveyed are identified by the ex officio trustees. Satisfaction surveys provide some indication of the success of the program, but are not sufficient, in and of themselves, to demonstrate the impact of the program. The Department added six new measures in fiscal year 2007 that are intended to produce more objective and verifiable information on APH's performance. Following an assessment of the data provided related to the new measures, we anticipate that some or all of the above surveys may be eliminated. APH anticipates having data for the above measures for school year 2007-2008 by October 2008.

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Measure: The percentage of trustees and teachers who agree that the performance of students and their participation in their educational programs improves as a result of the availability of educational materials provided through the Act.

Trustees--Percentage who agree

| Year | Target | Actual |
|------|--------|--------|
| 2004 | 99 | 100 |
| 2005 | 99 | 99.5 |
| 2006 | 99 | 99 |
| 2007 | 99 | 100 |
| 2008 | 99 | |
| 2009 | 99 | |

Teachers--Percentage who agree

| Year | Target | Actual |
|------|--------|--------|
| 2004 | 95 | 99 |
| 2005 | 95 | 98.5 |
| 2006 | 96 | 100 |
| 2007 | 96 | 99 |
| 2008 | 96 | |
| 2009 | 96 | |

Assessment of progress: As with the set of measures on satisfaction with APH products, the Department has expressed concerns regarding the usefulness of this data. Satisfaction surveys provide some indication of the success of the program. However, the responses to these surveys are subjective, the ex officio trustees have a statutory connection to APH, and the teachers to be surveyed are identified by the ex officio trustees. Following an assessment of the data provided related to the new measures, we will determine the extent to which the above measures are still necessary. APH anticipates having data for school year 2007-2008 available by October 2008.

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Objective: *To improve the quality of APH research and increase product usefulness*

| Measure: The percentage of APH products sold that are new products. | | |
|--|--------|--------|
| Year | Target | Actual |
| 2003 | | 6.5 |
| 2004 | | 18.3 |
| 2005 | | 15.4 |
| 2006 | | 15.2 |
| 2007 | 12 | 22.0 |
| 2008 | 12 | |
| 2009 | 15 | |

Assessment of progress: This measure was developed in fiscal year 2006 to help determine the efficacy of new products developed by APH. The purpose of the measure is to evaluate the reaction of consumers to new products created by the APH research department and introduced by the Printing House, which is determined by measuring the extent to which sales of new products represent an appropriate percentage of all products sold. This is determined through an examination of sales data reported by the Printing House. APH established an initial target of 12 percent based upon performance trends and an analysis of the average percentage that new products represented of all products offered by APH from fiscal year 2001 through 2004. We increased the target for fiscal year 2009 based on the additional data provided for fiscal years 2005 and 2006. The Printing House far exceeded the fiscal year 2007 target of 12 percent, with an historic high of 22 percent. Data for fiscal year 2008 will be available in October 2008.

In fiscal year 2006, the Department developed the following three new measures for APH. For each of these measures, the Printing House held its first panel review in fiscal year 2007. The panel of experts proposed by APH was approved by the Department and reviewed a random sample of seven new products produced by the Printing House. We expect to be able to establish baseline targets for these measures following the completion of the fiscal year 2008 expert panel reviews.

Measure: The percentage of American Printing House for the Blind products deemed to be of high relevance by an independent panel of qualified experts or individuals with appropriate expertise related to the target audience.

Assessment of progress: For this measure, the Panel of Experts assessed whether: (1) there is evidence of need for the product; (2) there is evidence that APH sought the opinions of knowledgeable individuals on the need for the product; (3) APH made the decision to produce the product based on a standardized process for product selection; (4) the product addresses an identified need for individuals who are visually impaired; and (5) the product is fully accessible for the intended population. The expert panel rated 59 percent of the products reviewed as highly relevant in fiscal year 2007. The Department expects to receive new data for this measure by October 2008.

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Measure: The percentage of American Printing House for the Blind research deemed to be of high quality by an independent panel of qualified experts or individuals with appropriate expertise related to the target audience.

Assessment of progress: The Panel of Experts reviewed the research underlying the development and field testing of the seven products to assess whether: (1) appropriate research methodologies are being used consistent with the type of product being developed; (2) data are gathered from a geographically diverse U.S. population and a variety of potential user groups; (3) evaluation data are gathered from appropriately qualified individuals; (4) development demonstrates use of field-reviewed data for modification to the product prior to final development; and (6) data are gathered on student and consumer outcomes related to the use of the proposed product. The expert panel rated 53 percent of the research underlying the products reviewed as being of high quality in fiscal year 2007. The Department expects to receive new data for this measure by October 2008.

Measure: The percentage of American Printing House for the Blind products deemed to be of high utility by an independent panel of qualified experts or individuals with appropriate expertise related to the target audience.

Assessment of progress: For this measure, the Panel of Experts assessed whether: (1) sales of the new products indicate demand; (2) new product indicators, such as field evaluations and other feedback, substantiate that the new product is meeting a need; and (3) the products are considered highly useful for individuals with visual impairments. The expert panel rated 63 percent of the products reviewed as being of high utility in fiscal year 2007. The Department expects to receive new data for this measure by October 2008.

Efficiency Measures

The Department has been working closely with the Printing House to develop appropriate efficiency measures for the Federal program at APH. The following two measures were established in fiscal year 2006.

| Measure: The cost (in cents) per page to produce color large type textbooks. | | |
|---|---------------|---------------|
| Year | Target | Actual |
| 2006 | | 14.5 |
| 2007 | 14.21 | 14.74 |
| 2008 | 13.92 | |
| 2009 | 13.63 | |

Explanation: APH did not meet its target for fiscal year 2007. APH noted that the numbers of color large type pages produced, based on demand, were much lower in fiscal year 2007 than in fiscal year 2006. This resulted in a decreased efficiency (higher costs per page) of production, even with efforts by APH to reduce overhead costs based on forecasts of anticipated reductions in orders for on-demand color large type textbooks. The objective is to reach 13.05 cents (14.5 cents less 10 percent) by the end of fiscal year 2011. Large print

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material constitutes approximately 17 percent of APH total sales. We anticipate receiving data for fiscal year 2008 in October 2008.

| Measure: The cost (in cents) per page to produce braille textbooks. | | |
|--|---------------|---------------|
| Year | Target | Actual |
| 2006 | | 9.5 |
| 2007 | 9.31 | 11.1 |
| 2008 | 9.12 | |
| 2009 | 8.93 | |

Explanation. APH did not meet the target for fiscal year 2007. APH noted that the numbers of braille pages produced, based on demand, were much lower in fiscal year 2007 than in fiscal year 2006. This resulted in decreased efficiency (higher costs per page) of production, even with efforts by APH to reduce overhead costs based on forecasts of anticipated reductions in orders for on-demand braille textbooks. The objective is to reach 8.55 cents (9.5 cents less 10 percent) by the end of fiscal year 2011. Braille materials represent approximately 12 percent of APH total sales. We anticipate receiving data for fiscal year 2008 in October 2008.

Other Performance Information

The Department conducted an on-site monitoring visit to APH from March 12 – 13, 2007. The purpose of the visit was to examine compliance with applicable requirements, use of Federal funds, quality of Government Performance and Results Act and other program data, and the performance of selected programs. This included a review of the Braille Textbook Improvement Project. This review was conducted as part of the ongoing monitoring and evaluation of APH programs and administrative operations funded by the annual Federal appropriation. One issue that was discussed was changes to the definition of what constitutes a student who is blind, specifically the expansion of the definition to include students whose visual impairments stem from neurological, cortical, or cerebral disorders rather than traditional eye conditions. Other areas that were examined included the Printing House's policy regarding products not developed by APH, but available through the Federal program allocation, and how APH allocates Federal and private funds for educational and technical research that supports the development of new products. The Department requested additional information and is following up with APH on each of these issues.

In response to concerns raised by the Department during the site-visit that were related to APH's procedures for conducting expert panel reviews of the quality, relevance, and utility of its products, APH submitted revised procedures to the Department in October 2007 that were subsequently approved for use in fiscal year 2008. During the visit, the Department also noted that APH does not gear its budget requests for particular activities to the accomplishment of the annual and long-term performance measures. We will be working with the Printing House on the development of its fiscal year 2010 request to more explicitly tie the accomplishment of the performance goals with that budget request. The Department also is requiring APH to ensure that all future annual audits performed by its external independent auditor conform to the requirements of the Single Audit Act and OMB Circular A-133.

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Department staff were impressed with the Braille Textbook Improvement Project being conducted by APH. However, we raised concerns that the Printing House does not have a formal plan for the implementation and evaluation of the project. APH is developing a plan to address these concerns.

Follow-up on PART Findings and Recommendations

The Federal program at the Printing House underwent a PART review in fiscal year 2005. The program received a rating of "Results Not Demonstrated." The assessment determined that the purpose of the program is clear and unambiguous, it addresses a specific and existing need, and it is designed effectively so that resources address the program's purpose and reach the intended beneficiaries. However, the assessment found the annual and long-term performance measures that focus on key measures of program performance to be inadequate. Concerns were raised that APH does not measure the effectiveness of its activities; the Department lacked a formal schedule and mechanism to monitor the Federal program at the Printing House; and the Department has not evaluated the program to ensure that it is operating effectively and meeting the needs of its service population.

The PART improvement plan recommendations are presented below, followed by a description of the Department's actions to address them.

- *The Printing House shall implement rigorous performance measures related to the educational materials, advisory services, and educational and technical research at APH and how they are positively affected as a result of APH activities.* The Department worked with the Printing House for several years to develop more accurate, valid, and meaningful measures. In fiscal years 2006 and 2007, APH and Department implemented six new measures (described above).
- *Ensure that APH implements revised guidelines for evaluating the quality, utility, and relevance of products.* The Printing House hired a consultant to assist it to develop and run the expert panels and data collections necessary to provide appropriate outcome data for the new measures related to the quality of APH research and relevance and utility of new products. In fiscal year 2008, the Department will provide feedback to the Printing House on its process for evaluating the quality of APH research and the utility and relevance of products and ensure that APH adopts guidelines reflecting this feedback when using panels of experts to evaluate research efforts and new products. The Department also will ensure that APH conducts a new set of reviews consistent with these guidelines in fiscal year 2008.
- *Conduct an analysis of existing performance measures based on survey data to determine if there are measures that are no longer needed.* In fiscal year 2008, the Department plans to conduct an analysis of the six existing performance measures that are based on survey data to determine if there are measures that are no longer needed. These measures would be eliminated after the fiscal year 2008 data collection.
- *The Department will develop a formal mechanism and schedule for monitoring the federally funded programs for compliance with the Act to Promote the Education of the Blind.* In fiscal year 2006, the Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services

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developed a monitoring plan to obtain additional information from APH and improve oversight provided by the Department. The plan includes regular site visits and activities necessary to document the actual use of funds, assess program data quality, and assess the Printing House's compliance with the Act to Promote the Education of the Blind. The Department implemented the new monitoring activities in fiscal year 2007 and conducted a detailed on-site monitoring visit in March 2007. The next visit is planned for March 2008.

- *The Department will take affirmative steps to assess the scope and quality of the program to ensure that it is operating effectively, addressing its statutory purpose, and achieving results.* The Department believes that the monitoring and oversight procedures and the six new performance measures discussed above will provide substantial information on the effectiveness of the program of Federal support for APH and whether the program is meeting the needs of its service population.
- *Conduct an analysis of the how Federal funds are being used at APH.* In fiscal year 2008, the Department will conduct a monitoring visit to APH and review relevant documents regarding the extent to which activities funded by the Federal appropriation are effective, address the statutory purpose, and achieve results.