

**BEST: Year Three Final Report  
October 2016 through September 2017**

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**Introduction**

The BEST project, which is an effort of four collaborative partners: American Council of the Blind of Ohio (ACBO), Assistive Technology and Accessible Educational Materials Center (AT & AEM Center), Ohio Center for Deafblind Education (OCDBE), and the Ohio State School for the Blind (OSSB), received funding for a five-year scope of work starting on October 1, 2014.

This report summarizes the work of year three (October 2016 through September 2017) of the BEST project, making summative claims about the project to answer the following four evaluation questions:

1. Did the BEST project accomplish the work it set out to accomplish?
2. Did the BEST project achieve target levels of quality, relevance, and usefulness?
3. Did the BEST project have a significant impact on the learning of educators in braille and technologies used to make braille accessible to students with visual impairments?
4. Was the BEST project responsive to the needs of key clients and stakeholders?

**Goals and Objectives**

The project goals are included here so that readers of this final report can refer to them readily in reference to the specific evaluation findings assembled thus far and discussed below.

**Goal 1:** Increase the braille competency of Ohio's educators through the provision of high-quality professional development and technical assistance that focus on results-driven outcomes.

**Objective 1.1:** Provide professional development to educators.

**Objective 1.2:** Provide technical assistance and support to educators.

**Objective 1.3:** Provide avenues to communicate information and support to educators.

**Goal 2:** Increase the knowledge and use/implementation of braille and state-of-the-art technologies of Ohio educators through high-quality professional development/learning opportunities and technical assistance that focus on result-driven outcomes.

**Objective 2.1:** Provide high-quality professional development training to educators in Ohio serving students who are blind and visually impaired or deafblind to increase their knowledge and use/implementation of braille and state-of-the-art technologies.

**Objective 2.2:** Provide technical assistance and support relating to state-of-the-art technologies to educators in school districts by adults who are blind and technology experts.

**Goal 3:** Increase the competency of personnel providing quality braille materials for Ohio students who require braille through the provision of high quality professional development training and technical assistance support.

**Objective 3.1:** Provide high quality professional development to educators related to the production of braille.

**Objective 3.2:** Provide technical assistance to school districts that produce braille for Ohio schools.

**Objective 3.3:** Expand braille production capacities at the local school district level.

### **Manage Project**

**Management Task 1:** Lead and participate in the BEST Advisory Board.

**Management Task 2:** Lead and participate in BEST Leadership Meetings.

**Management Task 3:** Work with External Evaluator in managing project data and reports.

**Management Task 4:** Contract with Qualified Personnel.

### **Methods**

The evaluation team used various methods for gathering information about the project: participant ratings of professional development (PD) sessions, pre- and post-assessments of PD sessions designed to teach braille and Duxbury, review of project documents (e.g., postings to the project Listserv), and discussions with BEST project staff.

Forms that allow participants to rate the professional development sessions in which they participate include four parts: (1) a set of questions that provide details about the quality of the session; (2) a set of questions that permit participants to judge the extent to which the session added value by increasing their knowledge and skills; (3) a set of questions that address the requirements of Government Performance and Results Act (GPRA) by allowing participants to rate the overall quality, relevance, and usefulness of the session; and (4) a set of open-ended questions enabling participants to describe what they learned and how they plan to use it as well as to provide suggestions to presenters and BEST project staff.

## Findings

This report of summative findings addresses the four evaluation questions highlighted on the first page of this report. Interpretations of the findings are provided in a section of the report, “Discussion and Recommendations,” which follows this section (“Findings”).

### **Did the BEST Project Accomplish the Work it Set Out to Accomplish?**

During the third year of the five-year project, the BEST staff performed activities that addressed all of the project’s objectives for Year 3. Appendix A presents tables that show accomplishments by goal. Note that the *Blended Basic Braille Course 1.1* given from August 2017-November 2017 and *Blended Basic Braille* given from August 2016-November 2016) span project years. Appendix B reports the accomplishment of accomplishments related to leadership and management of the project.

### **Did the BEST Project Achieve Target Levels of Quality, Relevance, and Usefulness?**

On all counts, BEST project activities exceeded target levels of quality, relevance, and usefulness. Notably, a target of 3 on a 4-point scale would represent above-average quality, relevance, or usefulness. As the information in Figures 1-4 shows, participants’ mean ratings of the quality, relevance, and usefulness of all categories of project activities were above 3.0 and typically above 3.5.

Quality ratings for categories of BEST project activities appear in Figure 1. The graphs show the ratings for each of the project years in order to provide a long-term view of project quality; the bars in the right-most grouping represent project year 3.

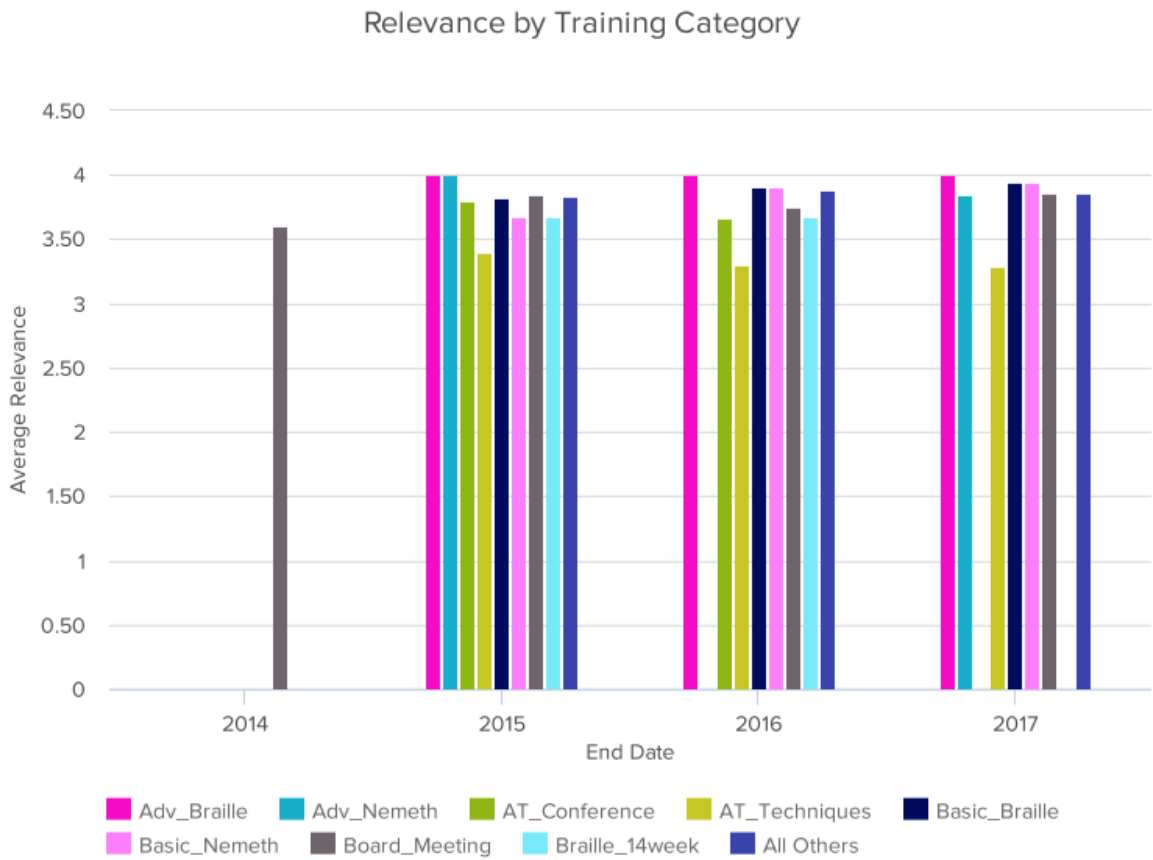
This presentation format is followed in Figure 2 (relevance) and Figure 3 (quality). The same pattern of findings prevails: average ratings typically exceed 3.5.

Figure 1



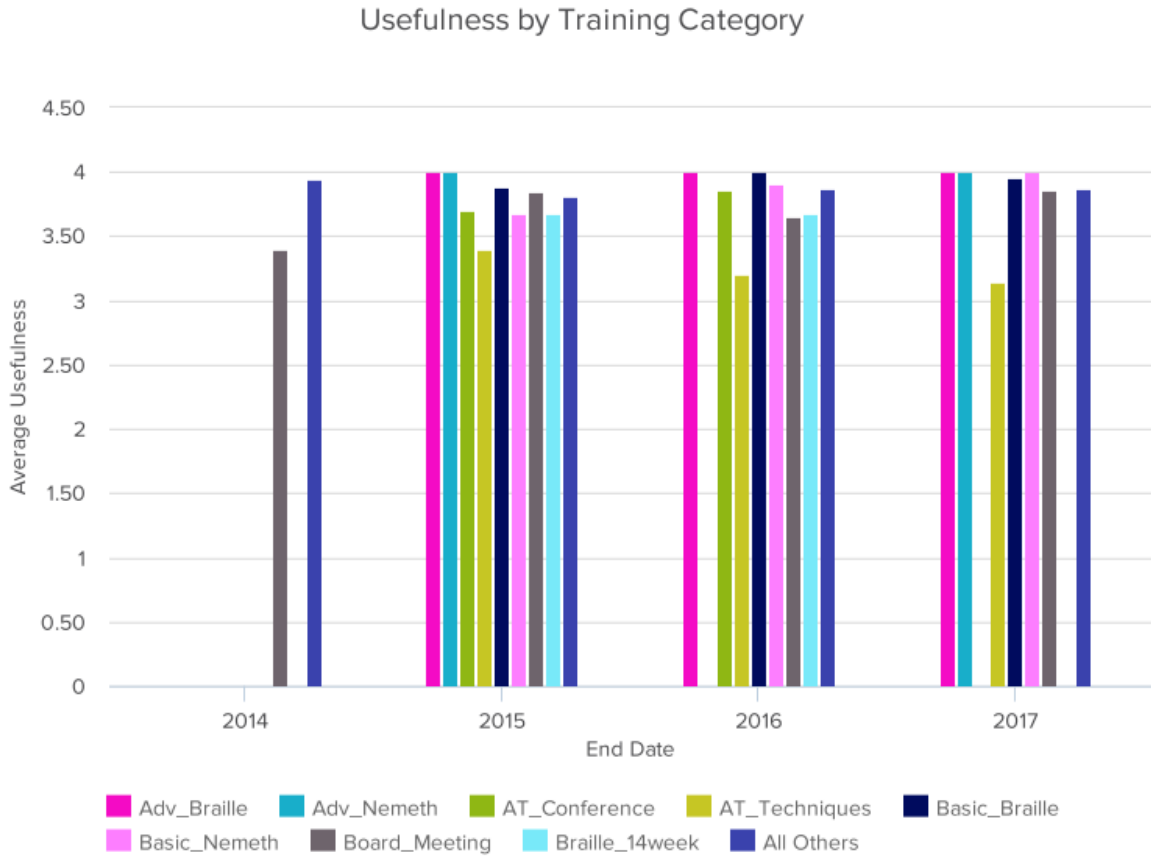
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Figure 2



DataHero

Figure 3



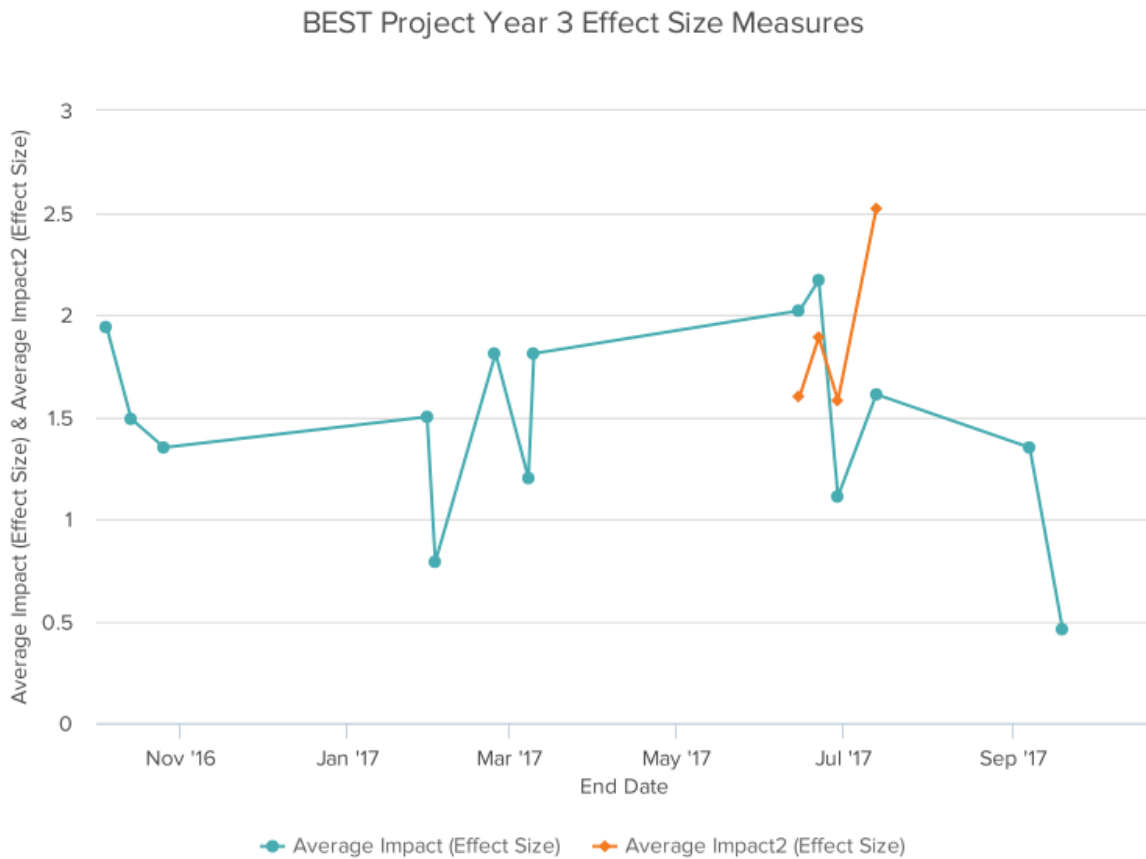
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### Did the BEST Project Have a Significant Impact on Learning?

The impact of project activities was measured in two ways. First, in the training sessions participants provided self-ratings of their levels of knowledge and skill before and after the session. Second, pre- and post-test scores were obtained for participants in four training sessions: Basic Braille, Advanced Braille, Basic Nemeth, and Advanced Nemeth.

Both approaches to measuring impact revealed very high levels of impact. Figure 4 presents effect sizes as assessed through participants' self-ratings and pre-to-post test scores. It's important to note that an effect size of .8 represents a *high* level of impact. Thirteen of 17 impact measures, however, equal or exceed  $ES = 1.5$  and of these, three are above 2.0.

Figure 4



DataHero

It seems notable that pre- and post-test measures of impact are high. Appendix A, in fact, shows that participant-estimated impact on learning is, on average, equal to pre-post impact.

**Was the BEST Project Responsive to the Needs of Key Clients and Stakeholders?**

Participant ratings of Advisory Board meetings provide one way to gauge project responsiveness. For both meetings, ratings for the quality, relevance, and usefulness of the meeting were very high (3.9, 3.8, and 3.6 respectively for the December 8, 2016 meeting and 3.8, 3.9, and 3.9 respectively for the April 27, 2017 meeting).

Another indicator of responsiveness are the numbers of times that BEST provided technical assistance (TA) to client groups. Records from Project Year-3 show that there were 328.5 contact hours for TA that was provided to clients.

## **Discussion and Recommendations**

Overall, the evidence collected through the external evaluation indicates that the BEST project accomplished what it set out to accomplish in Project Year Three. Furthermore, wherever client and participant measures are available (i.e., for all professional development activities and advisory activities), they indicate high levels of participant satisfaction as well as high levels of impact on the learning of educators, transcribers, and other adult participants.



**Appendix A**  
**All Measures for Activities in Project Year 3**

| PY | Goal | Start Date | End Date   | Name   | Quality | Relevance | Usefulness | Impact<br>Based on Self-Reported Knowledge Levels (Measured as Cohen's D Effect Size) | Impact2<br>Based on Pre- and Post-assessments (Reported as Cohen's D Effect Size) |
|----|------|------------|------------|--|---------|-----------|------------|---|---|
| 2  | 1    | 8/1/2016   | 11/30/2016 | 14 Week Blended Braille Course                             | 3.50    | 3.67      | 3.67       | 1.27  |   |
| 3  | 3    | 10/4/2016  | 10/5/2016  | Duxbury I  | 3.53    | 3.56      | 3.56       | 1.94  |   |
| 3  | 3    | 10/10/2016 | 10/10/2016 | Braille Production Center Setup - Margaretta Local Schools | 4.00    | 4.00      | 4.00       |   |   |
| 3  | 1    | 10/14/2016 | 10/14/2016 | Statewide UEB Training                                     | 3.90    | 3.90      | 3.90       | 1.49  |   |
| 3  | 3    | 10/25/2016 | 10/26/2016 | Duxbury II   | 3.87    | 4.00      | 4.00       | 1.35  |   |
| 3  | 3    | 11/10/2016 | 11/10/2016 | Braille Production Center Setup - Cedar Cliff Schools      | 3.80    | 4.00      | 4.00       |   |   |
| 3  | 4    | 12/8/2016  | 12/8/2016  | Advisory Board Meeting                                     | 3.92    | 3.80      | 3.60       |   |   |
| 3  | 2    | 1/30/2017  | 1/30/2017  | BrailleNote  | 3.91    | 3.94      | 3.94       | 1.50  |   |
| 3  | 1    | 2/2/2017   | 2/2/2017   | AT & Techniques Sharing                                    | 3.56    | 3.29      | 3.14       | 0.79  |   |

| PY | Goal | Start Date | End Date  | Name   | Quality | Relevance | Usefulness | Impact<br>Based on Self-Reported Knowledge Levels (Measured as Cohen's D Effect Size) | Impact2<br>Based on Pre- and Post-assessments (Reported as Cohen's D Effect Size) |
|----|------|------------|-----------|--|---------|-----------|------------|---|---|
|    |      |            |           | Workshop   |         |           |            |   |   |
| 3  | 1    | 2/24/2017  | 2/24/2017 | Statewide One-Day: How to Deal with Nemeth and UEB               | 3.79    | 3.87      | 3.93       | 1.81  |   |
| 3  | 3    | 2/24/2017  | 2/24/2017 | Braille Production Center Setup - Brunswick City Schools         | 4.00    | 4.00      | 4.00       |   |   |
| 3  | 3    | 3/1/2017   | 3/31/2017 | Post-Assessment Checklists Duxbury I and Duxbury II <sup>1</sup> |         |           |            |   |   |
| 3  | 3    | 3/7/2017   | 3/8/2017  | Duxbury I Follow-up  | 3.68    | 3.56      | 3.44       | 1.20  |   |
| 3  | 3    | 3/10/2017  | 3/10/2017 | Duxbury II Follow-up   | 3.67    | 3.86      | 3.86       | 1.81  |   |
| 3  | 3    | 3/15/2017  | 3/15/2017 | Braille Production Center Setup - OSSB                           | 4.00    | 4.00      | 4.00       |   |   |
| 3  | 2    | 3/20/2017  | 3/20/2017 | BrailleNote Touch  | 3.84    | 3.80      | 3.80       |   |   |
| 3  | 3    | 4/7/2017   | 4/7/2017  | Braille Production Center Setup - Cloverleaf Elementary School   | 4.00    | 4.00      | 4.00       |   |   |

<sup>1</sup> A pilot test of the tool was conducted during Project Year 3. Results are not reported, therefore.

| PY | Goal | Start Date | End Date   | Name  | Quality | Relevance | Usefulness | Impact<br>Based on Self-Reported Knowledge Levels (Measured as Cohen's D Effect Size) | Impact2<br>Based on Pre- and Post-assessments (Reported as Cohen's D Effect Size) |
|----|------|------------|------------|---|---------|-----------|------------|---|---|
| 3  | 4    | 4/27/2017  | 4/27/2017  | Advisory Board Meeting                                    | 3.82    | 3.86      | 3.86       |   |   |
| 3  | 2    | 5/6/2017   | 5/6/2017   | AT Family Conference                                      | 3.77    | 3.77      | 3.77       |   |   |
| 3  | 1    | 6/12/2017  | 6/15/2017  | Week-long Summer Basic Braille Course for Educators       | 3.96    | 3.89      | 3.92       | 2.02  | 1.60  |
| 3  | 1    | 6/19/2017  | 6/22/2017  | Weeklong Summer Basic Nemeth Course for Educators         | 3.87    | 3.94      | 4.00       | 2.17  | 1.89  |
| 3  | 1    | 6/26/2017  | 6/29/2017  | Weeklong Summer Advanced Braille Course for Educators     | 4.00    | 4.00      | 4.00       | 1.11  | 1.58  |
| 3  | 1    | 7/10/2017  | 7/13/2017  | Weeklong Summer Advanced Nemeth Course for Educators      | 3.91    | 3.85      | 4.00       | 1.61  | 2.52  |
| 3  | 1    | 8/2/2017   | 10/18/2017 | 12-Week Blended Basic Braille                             | 3.80    | 4.00      | 4.00       |   |   |
| 3  | 3    | 8/7/2017   | 8/7/2017   | Duxbury and Scanning -- Perrysburg Schools                | 4.00    | 4.00      | 4.00       |   |   |
| 3  | 3    | 8/25/2017  | 8/25/2017  | Braille Production Center Set-up -- Huber Heights Schools | 4.00    | 4.00      | 4.00       |   |   |
| 3  | 3    | 9/6/2017   | 9/7/2017   | Statewide Scanning  | 3.73    | 3.72      | 3.85       |   |   |

| PY | Goal | Start Date | End Date   | Name   | Quality | Relevance | Usefulness | Impact<br>Based on Self-Reported Knowledge Levels (Measured as Cohen's D Effect Size) | Impact2<br>Based on Pre- and Post-assessments (Reported as Cohen's D Effect Size) |
|----|------|------------|------------|--|---------|-----------|------------|---|---|
| 3  | 3    | 9/6/2017   | 9/7/2017   | Scanning for Braille, Large Print, and Audio | 3.73    | 3.72      | 3.85       | 1.35  |   |
| 3  | 2    | 9/18/2017  | 9/18/2017  | BrailleNote Touch (Toledo)                   | 3.81    | 3.84      | 4.00       |   |   |
| 3  | 2    | 9/19/2017  | 9/19/2017  | BrailleNote Touch (Cincinnati)               | 3.50    | 3.56      | 3.52       | 0.46  |   |
| 4  | 3    | 10/11/2017 | 10/12/2017 | Duxbury 1                                    | 3.75    | 3.81      | 3.81       | 1.80  |   |

## **Appendix B**

### **Accomplishments Relating to Leadership and Management**

#### **Manage Project**

##### **Management Task 1: Lead and participate in the BEST Advisory Board.**

The Advisory Council was convened on December 8, 2016 and April 27, 2017 during Project Year 3. The purpose of this group is to share expertise with the BEST Grant Leadership team and the grant project staff.

##### **Management Task 2: Lead and participate in BEST Leadership Meetings.**

The BEST Leadership Team provided support to the BEST grant activities by advising and consulting with grant staff as needed. The Leadership team met on the following dates during Project Year 3: October 13, 2016, February 23, 2017, June 1, 2017, and August 3, 2017.

##### **Management Task 3: Work with External Evaluator (Dr. Aimee Howley) in managing project data and reports.**

The AT & AEM project staff met periodically with Dr. Aimee Howley to review project data and reports. For each of the grant activities a report was generated from data collected from the various activities. The project evaluator also assists in interpreting data for all reports including the quarterly, final, and Annual Performance Report. The AT & AEM Center formally met with Dr. Howley on the following dates November 2, 2016, December 13, 2016, January 27, 2017, February 22, 2017, March 27, 2017, May 25, 2017 and October 3, 2017. Additionally, many phone calls and email correspondences occurred between project leaders and the external evaluator throughout the year for the purpose of managing data collection, data analysis, and report writing.

##### **Management Task 4: Contract with Qualified Personnel.**

The BEST Grant continues to contract with quality personnel to conduct BEST grant trainings and other PD and TA activities. The staff is highly knowledgeable and dedicated, and many have been with the project for several years. Contract staff is recruited from within the state when possible; but when expertise is not found within the state, project leaders seek national expertise to conduct specific PD activities. There are currently nine contracted staff providing support to the BEST project.