

**Beta Test of Eportfolio Certification Report**

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**Efforts of the Beta Test Committee (April 4, 2015- July 20th, 2015)**

**Presentation of Initial Outcomes to DB Network at Summit: July 21st, 2015**

**Session Presenters:**

Ruthanne (Mimi) Garcia, Intervener, Texas

Angie Lynch, Intervener, Minnesota

Shannon Zywiec, Intervener, Minnesota

Carole Flack, Intervener, Minnesota

Lisa Adele Kurtz, Intervener, Arizona

Kristina Buck, Intervener, Utah

Angel Wilson, Intervener, Utah

Tiffani Crotts, Intervener Utah

Debbie Sanders, Utah School for the Deaf and Blind, Project Specialist

Cindi Robinson, Arizona Deafblind Project Director

Cathy Lyle, Minnesota Deafblind Project: Educational Consultant

Edgenie Bellah, Texas Deafblind Project, Family Specialist

Leanne Cook, National Center on Deaf-Blindness

Amy Parker, National Center on Deaf-Blindness

**Other partners who were involved in the Beta test of the eportfolio system:**

Jo Ann McCann, Lead Project Officer for Deaf-Blind Network, OSEP

Linda McDowell, National Center on Deaf-Blindness

Ritu Chopra, PARA2 Center, University of Colorado Denver

Alana Zambone, East Carolina University

Susan Patten, Director of Utah Deafblind Project

Gretel Sampson, Project Specialist, USDB

Mary Alice Dredge, Project Speciaist, USDB

Nicole Holmstead, Project Specialist, USDB

Deanna Rothbauer, Minnesota Deafblind Project, Family Specialist

David Wiley, Texas Deafblind Project, Transition Specialist

Jeff Denton, National Center on Deaf-Blindness

Jenna Beresheim, National Center on Deaf-Blindness

Greg Zobel, Western Oregon University

Eight interveners and 4 state deaf-blind project partners shared personal experiences and insights on the Beta test in a presentation to the DB Summit audience on July 21st, 2015. The link to the group presentation may be found here:

<https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1_0bk-zvIKhnDlp7xI14oqIxNdkugJZksVIi4cDnciiE/edit?usp=sharing>

The following report offers more details on the process and outcomes of the Beta test from April, 2015 through July, 2015.

**Purpose of Eportfolio Beta Test to Design a National Certification Process for Interveners:**

The National Center on Deaf-Blindness (NCDB) was tasked by the Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) to design an eportfolio system and application process with our network partners that will support a national certificate for interveners. Rather than a system that would be based upon certifying training programs through a program of study review, the system to be designed would be based upon individual applicants’ performance on nationally recognized knowledge and skills competencies for interveners through an eportfolio. NCDB invited state deaf-blind project partners, who have had long standing processes for systematically training interveners, to participate in the design of this system. Four state partners were interested and available to participate: Minnesota, Arizona, Texas and Utah.

Secondly, the invited state deaf-blind projects who agreed to participate were asked to identify 1-2 competent, technologically savvy interveners to participate in developing and refining the eportfolio system by using it. Practicing interveners who were already recognized for their competence were invited so that we could focus on the design and testing of the system, rather than supporting interveners who were still learning the basics of intervention. Interveners were brought into the process first with the understanding that their draft portfolio effort would not lead to immediate certification, as the whole system was under development. Interveners were offered a $1000.00 honorarium and a sponsored trip to Salt Lake City, to intensively participate, to evaluate and to dialogue about the process and product. Eight interveners were chosen to participate as intervener leaders and co-designers of this process: 3 from Minnesota, 1 from Arizona, 1 from Texas and 3 from Utah.

Finally, NCDB worked with two university partners, who were familiar with national competencies for interveners and paraprofessionals, to design a draft review protocol and process to be used to examine draft portfolios. By design, these three types of input were sought not only to develop the portfolio but to build consensus from key stakeholders regarding the elements which would be necessary to guide future intervener applicants, coaches/mentors and reviewers. The goal of this partnership is to use a participatory method to design a high quality, national digital system that could be sustainably scaled to meet the growing demand for high quality interveners. Initially NCDB designed a prototype of an intervener portfolio in an online system called Mahara to support national scalability and sustainability.

**What is Mahara?**

Mahara is an open source digital portfolio system that was designed by the New Zealand government and launched in 2006. It is frequently used by international students and educators to document career-based skills. The Mahara system allows users to create media-rich portfolios that are password protected and that also allow confidential reviews and feedback to be provided to applicants. Before the launch of the beta test, the Mahara portfolio system was customized and adapted to include sections that address nationally accepted knowledge and skill competencies for interveners that have been validated through the Council for Exceptional Children. During the beta test, user feedback was incorporated into the system.

**About Beta Testing**

Beta testing refers to the first release of a product. The digital portfolio system that was crafted in April 2015 was relatively stable, but had never been tested by practitioners. We also knew that the system needed refinement and reorganization. A beta test focuses on the methodology and efficiency of the system. Invited interveners and state deaf-blind project partners were cautioned to expect bugs, crashes, and to recognize that they should anticipate technological challenges. As the beta testers, interveners and state deaf-blind project partners had specific roles in providing feedback so that design and systematic changes could be made.

A second component to the beta test was to look at the ways that artifacts could be constructed to represent national competencies. Although NCDB work group had agreed upon several types of “evidences” that could be used, with explanations, to show knowledge and skills competencies, we had not worked with practicing interveners to see how these would be used to construct a narrative to demonstrate competency. It was essential to partner with practicing interveners to have this dialogue and to make these discoveries.

**Method:**

There were a few types of input offered to interveners in this process: instructional modules in Moodle (*Using Work Samples to Build Your Portfolio; Building an Eportfolio in Mahara*); coaching from State DB Project partners; synchronous Adobe team meetings; Help Desk support; Mahara Byte (short, instructional) videos, and email support.

NCDB staff also consulted with university experts who were encouraged to review the instructional modules, the draft portfolios in Mahara, and the recorded Adobe meetings to design an initial review protocol and process for the beta test. By design, all eportfolios were to be reviewed by two independent reviewers (reviewers that were not from the interveners’ home state or project).

All participants met in Salt Lake City on July 20th to review progress on the draft portfolios and to offer group feedback on the process and product.

**Quantitative and Qualitative Scoring:**

Reviewers were instructed to evaluate portfolios across all of the 128 Council for Exceptional Children (CEC) knowledge and skills competencies for interveners.

**Time Estimates on Review Process**

* 1-2 hours for review training
* 30 minutes for orientation to Mahara
* 14-20 hours per portfolio

Each portfolio was reviewed by two reviewers from different states and from their reported data we calculated interobserver agreement (IOA). IOA calculates the consensus among reviewers and is an indicator of the reliability of the rating tool(s). The percentage of interobserver agreement is typically calculated by dividing the number of agreements by the sum of the number of agreements and disagreements then multiplying the result by 100.

Agreements

Agreements + Disagreements

X 100

The interobserver (IOA) scores on the knowledge competencies within the draft process ranged from 25%- 64%.

The interobserver (IOA) scores on the skills competencies within this draft process ranged from 32%-80%.

A minimum of 80% agreement is sought on IOA scores across knowledge and skills. This draft process helps our team refine both instructions provided to interveners, the review protocol instructions, and future training for reviewers.

**A Few Common “Themes” from Reviewers**

* It is not enough to document attendance or participating in a program. Within a performance based portfolio assessment, an applicant must demonstrate knowledge and skills through her work samples and reflective comments.
* Interveners needed more instruction on how to document and describe both knowledge and skills according to the Council for Exceptional Children (CEC) standards using artifacts.
* Across multiple reviewer comments, it was emphasized that there is a need for qualified reviewers to effectively evaluate interveners on the DB competencies. In other words, someone who is **not** deeply trained in the field of deaf-blindness, will not be able to adequately review the DB competencies. This has implications for how to develop a qualified panel of reviewers.
* Video is the strongest form of documentation. Eighty percent + IOA was achieved for skills scoring when interveners used video artifacts with explanations. Encourage interveners to use videos with clear explanation, especially as a demonstration of skills.

**Next Steps:**

All collected data will be used to systematically refine the Mahara system. NCDB will use the themes of data from the group, rather than individual comments, to hone in on the changes to be made to the instructional modules, the Mahara system, the tutorials, etc.

* We will review the review protocol and instructions to interveners to clarify review protocol and process.
* Improved portfolio rubrics and instructions will be provided to interveners in Phase II of the Beta test.
* New reviewers will be recruited and trained to use a refined protocol and process to independently review portfolios; new IOA scores will be reviewed; process will be refined again.
* Continue to partner with state deaf-blind project partners, university partners to refine materials, instructional modules, and processes.
* Continue to work with an appropriate certifying agency to host an eportfolio system designed and validated by the DB network with input from practicing interveners.

Beyond the revisions based upon the data gathered with partners, the partners involved in this beta test, need to engage in next steps, both as a planning group and with the larger national DB network. Here are a few community engagement opportunities that have been discussed:

* National webinar on the use of CEC Knowledge and Skills within an Eportfolio
* National webinar on the outcomes of Phase I and II of the Beta test
* Dialogue on the NCDB Intervener Initiative page
* Update via national blog