

**Massachusetts  
Unified English Braille (UEB)  
State Implementation Plan**

**Approved by the Massachusetts  
Department of Elementary and Secondary Education  
July 28, 2015**

**Background**

The Braille Authority of North America (BANA) is the standard-setting body for braille and tactile graphics in the United States. The Braille Literacy Advisory Council (BrLAC) is charged with developing a plan for implementing Unified English Braille (UEB) in Massachusetts to present to the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE). In November 2012, BANA voted to adopt Unified English Braille (UEB) as an official braille code for the United States. UEB is a revision and extension of English Braille American Edition (EBAE) with additional provisions for representing technical materials (STEM). In November 2013, BANA, following a UEB Transition Forum consisting of delegates from 31 national organizations involved in instruction, production and distribution of braille, affirmed that January 4, 2016 would be the nationwide implementation of the general use of UEB, formally and finally replacing the current EBAE code. UEB is a code for all subject areas, but BANA has decided to continue support for the Nemeth Braille Code for Mathematics and Science Notation for those who choose to use it. Delegates from Massachusetts included Carrie Brasier (Accessible Instructional Materials Library), Kim Charlson (Perkins Library) and Jackie Sheridan (National Braille Press), all three of whom are members of the Braille Literacy Advisory Council.

Consequently, the default alternative instructional materials format for blind students under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) will be UEB. The Braille Literacy Advisory Council proposes the following plan for transitioning to a full implementation of UEB to ensure a free appropriate public education (FAPE) for students with vision impairments in Massachusetts.

**Goal**

The Braille Literacy Advisory Council recommends that all school-aged students for whom braille is appropriate in Massachusetts as determined by the educational team will be fully transitioned into the use of UEB for all subjects by the end of the 2019-20 school year. The following timeline is proposed to reach this goal.

**Timeline**

Implementation of this timeline involves the collaboration of state and national partners and may change as state and national information changes or becomes available.

## 2015-2016 School Year (SY)

- **UEB Information** will be disseminated to directors of special education, Teachers of Students with Visual Impairments, and other recognized stakeholders throughout Massachusetts by the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education.
- **Teachers of Students with Visual Impairments (TVIs)** will receive professional development training in UEB.
- **TVIs** begin to expose and instruct braille learners in non-technical UEB on an individual basis.
- **Instructional Materials** will be available in UEB, EBAE, UEB with Nemeth and/or EBAE/Nemeth.
  - **AIM Library** will accept requests for instructional materials in the above-mentioned formats.
  - **School districts** should be prepared to support requests for instructional materials in the above-mentioned formats.
- **Statewide Assessments** will be provided in EBAE and UEB for non-technical subject areas (based on the availability of materials in UEB format) and EBAE/Nemeth for mathematics and science.
- **Teachers-in-Training** at UMass Vision Studies will receive braille instruction in UEB (technical and non-technical) and Nemeth.

## 2016-2017 SY

- **UEB Information** will continue to be disseminated to directors of special education, Teachers of Students with Visual Impairments, and other recognized stakeholders throughout Massachusetts by the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education.
- **TVIs** will receive professional development training in UEB.
- **TVIs** begin instruction of non-technical UEB for their braille learners.
  - **Students new to learning braille**, including pre-kindergarten through second grade and older adventitiously blind learners, will receive braille instruction using UEB for both non-technical (literary) and technical (STEM) areas of the curriculum.
  - **Students in grades three through eight** will transition to UEB for both non-technical and technical materials according to individual learning plans designed by the IEP team.
  - **Students with graduation/transition dates on or before 2020** will be introduced to UEB for non-technical materials. Learners within this group who have well-established skills with Nemeth code will continue to use Nemeth for technical materials and state assessments while receiving instruction in UEB for technical materials as time permits. Decision to transition to UEB in upper secondary grades is placed with the IEP team.

- **Instructional Materials** will be available in UEB, EBAE, UEB with Nemeth and/or EBAE/Nemeth.
  - **AIM Library** will accept requests for instructional materials in the above-mentioned formats.
  - **School districts** should be prepared to support requests for instructional materials in the above-mentioned formats.
- **Statewide Assessments** will be provided in UEB, UEB with Nemeth and/or EBAE/Nemeth.
- **Teachers-in-Training** at UMass Vision Studies will receive braille instruction in UEB (technical and non-technical) and Nemeth.

## 2017-2018 SY

- **UEB Information** will continue to be disseminated to directors of special education, Teachers of Students with Visual Impairments, and other recognized stakeholders throughout Massachusetts by the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education.
- **TVIs** will continue to receive professional development training in UEB.
- **TVIs** will continue instruction of UEB for their braille learners.
  - **Students new to learning braille**, including pre-kindergarten through second grade and older adventitiously blind learners, will receive braille instruction using UEB for both non-technical (literary) and technical (STEM) areas of the curriculum.
  - **Students in grades three through nine** will transition to UEB for both non-technical and technical materials according to individual learning plans designed by their IEP team.
  - **Students with graduation/transition dates on or before 2020** will continue to receive braille instruction in UEB for non-technical materials. Learners within this group who have well-established skills with Nemeth code will continue to use Nemeth for technical materials and state assessments while receiving instruction in UEB for technical materials as time permits. Decision to transition to UEB in upper secondary grades is placed with the IEP team.
- **Instructional Materials** will be available in UEB, EBAE, UEB with Nemeth and/or EBAE/Nemeth.
  - **AIM Library** will continue to accept requests for instructional materials in the above-mentioned formats.
  - **School districts** should continue to be prepared to support requests for instructional materials in the above-mentioned formats.
- **Statewide Assessments** will be provided in UEB, UEB with Nemeth, and/or EBAE/Nemeth.
- **Teachers-in-Training** at UMass Vision Studies will receive braille instruction in UEB (technical and non-technical) and Nemeth.

- **UEB transition** for non-technical materials is complete.

## 2018-2019 SY

- **UEB Information** will continue to be disseminated to directors of special education, Teachers of Students with Visual Impairments, and other recognized stakeholders throughout Massachusetts by the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education.
- **TVIs** will continue to receive professional development training in UEB.
- **TVIs** will continue instruction of UEB for their braille learners.
  - **Students in grade 10 and below** will receive braille instruction using UEB for both non-technical (literary) and technical (STEM) areas of the curriculum according to individual learning plans designed by their IEP team.
  - **Students with graduation/transition dates on or before 2020** will continue to receive braille instruction in UEB for non-technical materials. Learners within this group who have well-established skills with Nemeth code will continue to use Nemeth for technical materials and state assessments while receiving instruction in UEB for technical materials as time permits. Decision to transition to UEB in upper secondary grades is placed with the IEP team.
- **Instructional Materials** will be available in UEB, EBAE, UEB with Nemeth and/or EBAE/Nemeth.
  - **AIM Library** will continue to accept requests for instructional materials in the above-mentioned formats.
  - **School districts** should continue to be prepared to support requests for instructional materials in the above-mentioned formats.
- **Statewide Assessments** will be provided in UEB, UEB with Nemeth, and/or EBAE/Nemeth.
- **Teachers-in-Training** at UMass Vision Studies will receive braille instruction in UEB (technical and non-technical) and Nemeth.

## 2019-2020 SY

- **UEB Information** will continue to be disseminated to directors of special education, Teachers of Students with Visual Impairments, and other recognized stakeholders throughout Massachusetts by the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education.
- **TVIs** will continue to receive professional development training in UEB.
- **TVIs** will continue instruction of UEB for their braille learners.
  - **Students in grade 11 and below** will receive braille instruction using UEB for both non-technical (literary) and technical (STEM) areas of the curriculum according to individual learning plans designed by their IEP team.
  - **Students with graduation/transition dates on or before 2020** will continue to receive braille instruction in UEB for non-technical materials. Learners within this group who have well-established skills with Nemeth code will continue to use

Nemeth for technical materials and state assessments while receiving instruction in UEB for technical materials as time permits. Decision to transition to UEB in upper secondary grades is placed with the IEP team.

- **Instructional Materials** will be available in UEB with limited availability of materials in UEB with Nemeth.
  - **AIM Library** will continue to accept requests for instructional materials in the above-mentioned formats.
  - **School districts** should continue to be prepared to support requests for instructional materials in the above-mentioned formats.
- **Statewide Assessments** will be provided in UEB, UEB with Nemeth, and/or EBAE/Nemeth.
- **Teachers-in-Training** at UMass Vision Studies will receive braille instruction in UEB (technical and non-technical) and Nemeth.

**UEB transition for non-technical and technical materials is complete.**

**The Braille Literacy Advisory Council recommends all instruction and material production beyond 2020 are done in UEB while acknowledging that the Nemeth code could still be recognized as a viable code in the United States by the Braille Authority of North America. Provisions will be made for instruction and materials in Nemeth code when Nemeth is recommended by the IEP team.**