

Washington State Transition Plan to the Unified English Braille Code

Prepared by the Washington State UEB Committee

Background

The United States members of the Braille Authority of North America (BANA) voted to adopt Unified English Braille (UEB) to replace English Braille American Edition. BANA established January 4, 2016, (Louis Braille's birthday) as the implementation date. As of this date, UEB, Nemeth, Music, and the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) will be the official codes for use in the United States. Nemeth Code will be integral to braille in the United States, according to BANA.

Recommendations

The experience of other nations (Australia, New Zealand, Canada, Nigeria, South Africa, and the United Kingdom) which preceded the United States in implementation of UEB has been considered. Success in these countries has been afforded by beginning the transition with the youngest braille readers. The transition will be a slow gradual process and will likely take many years in the United States. This is an adaptable proposal. As more information and direction comes from BANA, changes may be required. Washington is targeting full implementation for the 2016-17 school year.

Their research leads us to recommend the following to TVIs in Washington for the fall of 2015:

- Pre-kindergarten to 2nd grade – begin using available UEB materials
- Adventitiously blind – begin teaching UEB
- Older, academic braille-reading students - instruction in the changes of UEB
- Nemeth will continue to be used for Mathematics instruction for all grade levels

Timelines for Washington State

2014 – Creation of the Washington State UEB Planning Committee

- Begin revision process WAC 181-82-130 (formerly 181-82-130) Braille Competency law
- Research and write Transition Plan for Washington
- Train the Trainers in UEB
- Begin total revision of Braille Literary Usage Exams

2015 – Instructional year - Educators and braille producers will become proficient in UEB

- Jan. –Dec. UEB Workshops, conferences and webinars offered
- Jan. –WSSB website will post UEB learning resource links
- Sept. forward – Offer BLUE certificate holders UEB certification options
- 2015-16 school year – Begin UEB instruction for new braille readers driven by the IEP
- 2015-16 school year – Introduce older braille-reading students UEB rules
- Develop, field test and validate new braille exam for BVI educators

2016 – Implementation year

- Jan. - WAC revision effective
- Jan. - BLUE exam becomes obsolete; offer new UEB for BVI educators
- 2016-17 school year – Teach UEB to all students with the expectation that new materials will be in UEB and existing materials will be in EBAE

Braille Transcription

Textbooks and other materials previously transcribed will remain in their original codes. During the transition years the IEP should be the driving force for UEB instruction.

2015-16 School year

- Subjects using literary braille (i.e., social studies and language arts), not previously transcribed, may be produced in UEB
- Technical subjects (i.e., science and mathematics), not previously transcribed, may be produced in Nemeth Code with EBAE or UEB with Nemeth Code

2016-17 School year

- Subjects using literary braille (i.e., social studies and language arts), not previously transcribed, will be produced in UEB
- Technical subjects (i.e., science and mathematics), not previously transcribed, will be produced in UEB with Nemeth Code

2017-18 School year

- All school-age materials will be produced in UEB and Nemeth code. All students who read braille will be expected to access material produced in UEB.

Resources

The WSSB Website will post links to resources and update as new information is available.

- Washington State School for the Blind www.wssb.wa.gov
- Braille Authority of North America www.brailleauthority.org

Committee Members

Colleen Lines, Facilitator – Ogden Resource Center
Zach Lattin, Braille Expert – Ogden Resource Center
Michael Sivill, Braille Expert – Ogden Resource Center
Craig Meador, Statewide Vision Coordinator – Washington Sensory Disability Services
Hans Michielsen, Principal – Washington State School for the Blind
Sean McCormack, Associate Principal – Washington State School for the Blind
Mike Bicknell, Digital Learning Coordinator – Washington State School for the Blind
Mike Freeman, President – National Federation of the Blind of Washington
Cindy Van Winkle, President – Washington Council of the Blind
Tracey Gaver, Past-President – Pacific Northwest AER
Danielle Miller, Director – Washington Talking Book and Braille Library
Holly Lawson, Professor – Portland State University