



OFFICE OF SPECIAL EDUCATION
ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER

89 Washington Avenue, Room 3010, Albany, NY 12242

www.p12.nysed.gov

Telephone: (518) 485-2000

Fax: (518) 485-2001

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Special Education Field Advisory

From: James P. DeLorenzo

Subject: Guidance for the Transition to Unified Braille

The purpose of this memorandum is to provide information to schools regarding their responsibilities for preparing students with disabilities for transition to Unified Braille Alphabet (UBA) to transition to Unified Braille Alphabet (UBA) as well as to provide resources for teachers for professional development. Professional development for math, science and technical subjects should be continued.

In 2012, the Braille Authority of North America (BANA) voted to adopt UBA to replace EBAE in the United States, effective January 1, 2015. The development of UBA was intended to be an effort to preserve the best in braille worldwide. As of this "effective" date, UBA, New International Braille Alphabet (NIBRA) will be the standard for use in the United States. Materials that have been produced in other braille codes prior to the 2015 UBA implementation date will remain in circulation.

For many individuals who are blind or visually impaired, the development of literacy skills is a critical component of their education. members of individuals who read braille will need to learn UBA or update their knowledge of braille to include the rules governing UBA. The main aspects of literacy skills that will be impacted by the change to UBA are the identification of UBA and the implications for the production of materials in UBA to ensure that students receive adequate instruction in the new code are summarized below.

State assessments administered during the 2015-16 school year will continue to be provided in the EBAE format for individuals who need accommodations in braille format. NYSED is currently developing a transition plan for state assessments in UBA, in consultation with stakeholders, to ensure that assessments are appropriately aligned with instruction for students with disabilities who may be impacted by this transition. Official

prior notice will be provided to the field prior to the Administrative Conference on Statewide the UEB format.

Summary of Changes to UEB

UEB is based on current literary braille, which is the most widely used code internationally; is designed to be more "computerable" (i.e., more easily automated); is less ambiguous (i.e., with fewer exceptions and rules), and includes some technical materials¹. This new code will standardize the code used by all states for English Braille. The New York State Education Department, in coordination with the work of BANA, continues to use the National Code of Braille for Braille and the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) for Braille. The changes to literary braille in UEB will retain many of the same basic structures as EBAE. BANA has identified changes to the following aspects of braille code:

- Elimination of and changes to contractions, contractions.
- Changes to punctuation, punctuation;
- Spacing;
- Period, decimal, dot and ellipsis;
- Capitalization;
- Italics, bold and underline;
- Numbers;
- Web and email addresses, telephone numbers and Twitter handles;
- Accents; and
- Formatting.

More detailed information on these changes can be found at <http://www.brailleauthority.org/ueb/uebmain.htm>.

Training Resources

School districts, Boards of Cooperative Educational Services (BOCES), independent private schools, state supported schools and other approved providers should be accessing training resources for their teachers or students who are blind or visually impaired as soon as possible. Teachers of the blind and visually impaired, and other relevant staff, will assist to be given an opportunity to attend training sessions on UEB. The following list includes some of the UEB training resources for teachers and students:

- Information about the National Library of Service for the Visually Handicapped (NLS) braille transcriber <https://nls.org/braille-transcriber>

¹ Unified English Braille Implementation Guide, 2011, Office of Statewide Assessment, 2011. <http://www.assa.org/Documents/Info%20Files/104200521094020582732020%20UEB%20Implementation%20Guide.pdf>

- An Introduction to Unified English Braille, from the Wisconsin Center for the Blind and Visually Impaired. <http://www.wvbraille.org/development/ueb-introduction>
- The Canadian National Institute for the Blind's (CNIB) Transcribers UEB Course: http://www.cnib.ca/en/living/blind/ages/Transcribers_UEB_Course.html
- The Hadley School for the Blind's UEB Courses: <http://www.hadley.edu/UEBTransition.asp>
- UEB Online, a new online UEB course from the Royal Institute for Deaf and Blind Children (RIDBC) in Australia, designed for sighted users.
- The Rules of Unified English Braille, Seventh Edition (International Code of English Braille (ICEB), 2013). <http://www.iceb.org>
- BANA's webpage on UEB: <http://www.brailleauthority.org/ueb.html>
- BANA's The ABCs of UEB: http://www.brailleauthority.org/ueb/ahcs/ahcs_ueb.html
- UEB Guidelines for Technical Materials (ICEB, 2008): <http://www.iceb.org/Guidelines-for-Technical-Materials-2008-10.pdf>
- BANA's guidelines for Nemeth Codes within UEB: <http://www.brailleauthority.org/ueb/nemeth-provisional-guidelines.pdf>
- BANA's Frequently Asked Questions: <http://www.brailleauthority.org/ueb/ueb-faq.html>

NYSED will provide information on future training opportunities as they become available.

Instructional Materials in UEB Format

The transition to UEB affects the production of instructional materials, content and software. The American Printing House for the Blind, Inc. (APH) has released its position statement on the production of braille materials in UEB which can be accessed at <http://www.aph.org/20140724Policies-Regarding-UEB-Transition-at-APH.html>. Schools that order materials from APH will need to be aware of their production audience. The vendor who produced braille materials to be accessed by districts through the Resource Center for the Visually Impaired (RCVI) is prepared to submit materials in UEB beginning in January 2016. There are a significant number of other entities that also produce or supply braille materials for students. When accessing materials through these entities, districts may need to specify the appropriate braille code for their materials. Materials above that have been produced in other braille codes prior to the 2016 UEB implementation date will remain in circulation.

Questions regarding this memorandum may be directed to the Policy Unit at 518-473-2859. To receive this memorandum, please contact your school district, State Superintendent's office or the following individuals such as Directors of Special Education, School Principals, or Committee on Special Education. Special.Education@ny.gov