

Illinois Unified English Braille (UEB) Transition Plan September 2015

Dynamic Document

The Illinois UEB Transition Plan is intended to be a dynamic document that is continually edited and updated. The plan was initially drafted on July 15, 2015 and will be updated at least once per year during the next several years while the UEB transition is taking place. The Illinois UEB Transition Timeline included in this plan outlines the annual updates to the plan that are proposed to coincide with Illinois Association for Education and Rehabilitation of the Blind and Visually Impaired (IAER) Conference each February.

Introduction

UEB is the revised braille code for reading and writing for students who are visually impaired. It has originated from the need to revise the English Braille American Edition (EBAE) code due to changes that have been occurring to print over time. As print is modified so should the braille code be modified in order to maintain its viability.

The changes to UEB include, but are not limited to, the elimination of nine contractions, changing of some punctuation and composition signs, and additions to typeforms, accented letters, electronic addresses and other symbols.

In the United States, adoption of Unified English Braille to replace English Braille American Edition (EBAE) was voted on November 2, 2012 by the Braille Authority of North America (BANA). The target date to begin implementation is January 4, 2016; implementation is expected to take five years. Intense preparation is required to ensure the infrastructure is in place for learning of UEB by braille readers, including school children and adults who are visually impaired.

Full text of the formal motion by BANA to adopt UEB on November 2, 2012 is as follows:

In 1991, it was brought to the attention of the Braille Authority of North America (BANA) that there seemed to be a steady erosion in braille usage, by both children and adults. Among the reasons cited was the complexity and disarray of the braille code. The BANA board decided that an overhaul was needed.

BANA began the process of developing a unified code for English Braille. In 1993, code development was internationalized and taken on by the International Council on English Braille (ICEB). Throughout the next decade, evaluations were conducted, seminars and conferences took place, and numerous articles were published both in the United States and in the other English-speaking countries working on code development.

In 2004, ICEB determined that Unified English Braille (UEB) was sufficiently developed to warrant adoption by its member countries. At that time, BANA decided to observe its implementation in countries adopting UEB and would monitor progress.

During the ensuing years, it has become increasingly apparent that although the accurate, automated conversion of print to braille (forward translation) and from braille to print (back translation) is possible, inconsistencies within the current braille code, as well as changing print conventions not effectively addressed in the current literary braille code, serve as significant roadblocks to translation.

In addition, the potential for the integration of braille into education and everyday life is now greater than ever because of the proliferation of computers and mobile devices that can generate braille; and the ability of a braille user to write in braille for instant communication and collaboration with non-braille readers is becoming ever more essential in our digital age.

UEB has been developed with input from many people with the intention of achieving an optimal balance among many factors, including keeping the general-purpose literary code as its basis, enabling braille to convey the same information as print, allowing for the addition of new symbols not currently available in literary braille, providing flexibility to change as print changes, reducing the complexity of rules, and allowing greater accuracy in back translation.

Specialized braille codes such as those used for music, the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA), and mathematics have continued to be of use and enjoy wide acceptance among their users because of their suitability for their intended specific purposes. The most prevalently-used of these, the Nemeth Code, a braille code for mathematics and science notation, has been widely recognized as a powerful and efficient system for representing these subject areas in braille.

Therefore, it is moved that the Braille Authority of North America (BANA) adopts Unified English Braille to replace the current English Braille American Edition in the United States while maintaining the *Nemeth Code for Mathematics and Science Notation, 1972 Revision*; the *Music Braille Code 1997*; and the *IPA Braille Code, 2008*. The official braille codes for the United States will be *Unified English Braille, Nemeth Code for Mathematics and Science Notation, 1972 Revision* and published updates; *Music Braille Code, 1997*; and *The IPA Braille Code, 2008*;

And, that the *Guidelines and Standards for Tactile Graphics 2010* and *Braille Formats: Principles of Print-to-Braille Transcription 2011* continue to be used in the United States as well as other relevant guidelines developed for specialized and uniquely-formatted materials;

And, that BANA will immediately embark on implementation by developing a preliminary transition timetable and by forming a group of related committees composed of stakeholders from the consumer, educational, and transcription and production communities. These committees will be charged with helping to plan in their respective areas for the development of training materials and for other relevant aspects of the transition. These plans will take into consideration all aspects of creating, teaching, learning, and using braille in a wide variety of settings.

Position of the Committee

As BANA has stated, “Therefore, it is moved that the Braille Authority of North America (BANA) adopts Unified English Braille to replace the current English Braille American Edition in the United States while maintaining the *Nemeth Code for Mathematics and Science Notation, 1972 Revision...*”

It is the position of the Illinois UEB Transition Committee that UEB shall be used for literary braille and that Nemeth Code shall be used for math and science notation.

Justification

In order to prepare for successful transition to UEB, support for this change must be provided. There currently is not a requirement for all teachers, transcribers, and adult service personnel working with people who are visually impaired to learn the new braille code. Because books, assessments, and materials will be transcribed into UEB, it is important that teachers, transcribers, and adult service personnel are competent in UEB. Providing resources and training will enable these professionals to learn UEB.

Examples of Consequences

If UEB is not implemented in Illinois for people who read and write using braille according to the January 2016 BANA timeline the following are examples of consequences that may occur:

- The ability for people who are visually impaired to interact globally with others using a unified code will be greatly diminished.
- Teachers, adult service providers, and other professionals who are not trained in UEB may not be able to assist students/clients.
- A shortage of certified UEB transcribers who can provide braille materials will continue to persist.
- People who are visually impaired using electronic devices (which default to UEB) to access materials may be confused if they are unfamiliar with UEB.
- Braille learners in Illinois will be behind nationally and globally.

The following timeline is to provide guidance in the code transition.

Illinois UEB Transition Timeline

SY* 2014-2015: Northern Illinois University (NIU) and Illinois State University (ISU) begin teaching UEB to teacher candidates

Jun. 2015: NIU launches Unified English Braille Online Training (UEBOT) and Hadley launches UEB course

Jun. 2015: Illinois UEB Transition Committee is formed

Jun. 2015: Training begins for personnel including transcribers, currently practicing teachers (e.g. TVIs), adult service personnel (e.g., VRTs), orientation and mobility (O&M) etc.

July 2015: Development of Illinois UEB Transition Plan

SY 2015-16: TVIs and adult service personnel who have been UEB trained begin teaching UEB to preK-12th grade students and/or clients as per the students' IEPs or 504 Plan

SY 2015-2016 and beyond: Training in UEB, EBAE, and Nemeth code content at the university level for pre-service personnel

SY 2015-16: State/district assessments provided in EBAE for literary content/Nemeth for technical content (e.g. math and science).

SY 2016-17 through SY 2019-2020: State/district assessments provided in EBAE for literary content/Nemeth for technical content (e.g. math and science). Assessment will be provided in UEB for literary content and Nemeth for technical content if specified in the students' IEPs or 504 Plan.

SY 2015-2016: Vocational rehabilitation braille assessment provided in EBAE or UEB through 2020-2021 as per the clients' prior training in braille

SY 2015-16: American Printing House (APH) begins providing new materials in UEB and technical materials available in Nemeth or UEB

Jan. 2016: UEB implementation date set by BANA and 5 year UEB transition period commences

Jan. 2016: Bookshare transitions Braille Ready Format (BRF) files to UEB

Jan. 2016: Transition Illinois state teaching licensure exam test items pertaining to braille content from EBAE to UEB

Feb. 2016: UEBOT training offered at IAER pre-conference (tentatively)

Feb. 2016: Reassess the Illinois UEB Transition plan

July 2016: Deadline for currently practicing personnel including transcribers, currently practicing teachers (e.g. TVIs), adult service personnel (e.g., VRTs), O&Ms, etc. to complete training in UEB

SY 2016-17: State/district assessments in UEB for literary and Nemeth for technical content

Feb. 2017: Reassess the Illinois UEB Transition plan

Feb. 2018: Reassess the Illinois UEB Transition plan

Feb. 2019: Reassess the Illinois UEB Transition plan

Sept. 2019: UEBOT training concludes

Feb. 2020: Reassess the Illinois UEB Transition plan and the need to continue teaching EBAE content with preK-12th grade learners and at the university level for pre-service personnel

SY 2021-2022 and beyond: State/district assessments provided in UEB for literary content and retain Nemeth for technical content going forward

SY 2021-2022 and beyond: Vocational rehabilitation braille assessment provided in UEB

Jan 2021: 5 year UEB transition period concludes

*SY = School Year. School year refers to school year calendar.

Ongoing Needs Related to the Code Change

The committee recognizes the need for braille curricula for middle school-age 21 students and also for adults to reflect changes in UEB.

Examples of UEB Resources

- Braille Authority of North America UEB information:
www.brailleauthority.org/ueb.html

- International Council on English Braille (ICEB) UEB Rulebook: www.iceb.org/ueb.html
- International Council on English Braille UEB training information: www.iceb.org/ueb-training.html
- Wisconsin Center for the Blind and Visually Impaired Introduction UEB six-part video series: www.wcbvi.k12.wi.us/outreach/ueb-introduction
- Arizona UEB Information: <http://azueb.coe.arizona.edu/page/learn-ueb>
- Paths to Literacy resource for TVIs transitioning students from EBAE to UEB: www.pathstoliteracy.org/strategies/ueb-lesson-1-eliminated-ebae-part-word-contractions-no-longer-used-ueb

Example of UEB Training

Unified English Braille Online Training (UEBOT)

- Sign up today at <http://uebot.niu.edu>
- Follow UEBOT on Facebook: www.facebook.com/UEBOT1
- U.S. Department of Education Braille Training Grant presented by Northern Illinois University
- Free online UEB online training for those transitioning from EBAE to UEB
- Free certificate of completion and 10 free CEUs
- One month Massive Open Online Course (MOOC)
- To be offered continuously every month for 4 years

Hadley School for the Blind

- UEB Transition at Hadley
- www.hadley.edu/UEBTransition.asp

Illinois UEB Transition Plan Committee Members

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