



Wyoming Department of Education

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Special Programs Unit/Deaf-Blind Project

Services for the Visually Impaired

Wyoming To Receive Additional Spots in the Texas Tech Grant Opportunity for Low-Incidence Disabilities!

The Wyoming Department of Education is aware of the frustrations that districts face in trying to obtain qualified personnel to work with students who are visually impaired, deaf-blind and/or deaf / hard of hearing. In order to build local capacity and meet "highly qualified instructor" in these disciplines, WDE has entered into a partnership with the Texas Tech University, Virginia Murray Sowell Center for Research and Education in Visual Impairments to offer teachers in Wyoming an opportunity through distance education to obtain their masters degree as a:

- Teacher for the Visually Impaired,
- Certified Orientation and Mobility Instructor,
- Deaf-Blind Educator
- Teacher for the Deaf

The course work is offered on-line and on site; weekends and in the summer. The grant will cover cost of the tuition, books and any on-site classes required including travel.

Last year, 14 applicants began the program and will be finishing up this December thus building local capacity.

**The deadline for applying is
October 15, 2009**

If you are interested in applying send a letter of intent and your resume to:

Joanne Whitson, Project Director, WDE, 215 W. Buffalo, Carbon Building Room 325, Rawlins, WY, 82301 or email the items to jwhits@educ.state.wy.us



Learn while at home and use the information to assist your current students reach their full potential!

Wyoming Department of Education, Deaf-Blind Project

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Special points of Interest:

Braille: A means for students to be active participants in accessing the curriculum. READ!

APH Quota Funds: A Means for Districts to Access Products / Materials for Students who are Visually Impaired or Multi-disabled

The American Printing House for the Blind is the world's largest company devoted solely to researching, developing, and manufacturing products for people who are blind or visually impaired. Founded in 1858, it is the oldest organization of its kind in the United States. Under the 1879 federal Act to Promote the Education of the Blind, APH is the official supplier of educational materials for visually impaired students in the U.S. who are working at less than college level. (APH.org) Students

who are legally blind are eligible to receive APH materials through quota funds at no cost to the district. Such materials are distributed free among all public institutions for students who are blind or visually impaired in the United States. Each institution receives a proportional share of materials based on the ratio of the number of its pupils and the total number of such pupils in the United States. This total is established by a annual census conducted by APH.

(See/Hear Newsletter, summer 1997. Durkell)

WDE conducts the annual APH Quota census each January through the consultants in the Special Programs Unit, Services for the Visually Impaired. Materials can be ordered from the consultant in your area or contact Leslie Bechtel Van Orman, 777-2567 for more information on how to place your order.

For a complete list and description of materials go to www.aph.org.

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Families Can Be Partners in Learning Braille

Debbie Siegel, Instructor, Hadley School for the Blind,
www.hadley.edu/default.asp

When a child and family member learn side by side, Braille becomes a positive family experience, and the child realizes that Braille plays an important role in family life.

Children do not need to be of school age for the family to learn Braille. Although a child will not be able to read a Braille book, he or she can follow along as mom or dad or a grandparent reads. Family members can create a Braille book collection once they know the Braille code and place Braille magnets on the refrigerator to create words. Braille can also be used to label toy bins, toys, puzzles, games and to attach a child's name to belongings.



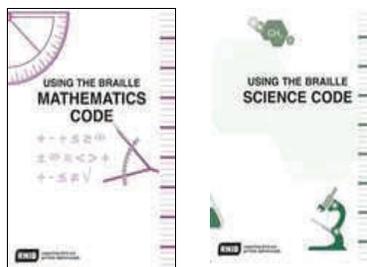
I am often asked by parents, "When is the best time for me to learn Braille?" My immediate response is to applaud the family member who wants to become a partner in learning the Braille code. Children benefit from a home environment that is rich in Braille and from family members who have a positive attitude toward learning Braille. When children are introduced to Braille at a young age, they have a much greater chance of becoming a capable and lifelong Braille reader. What can family members do to create this environment?

Parents and children can write Braille grocery lists together, play card games labeled with Braille or make a Braille recipe file. Parents can also Braille birthday cards for their child and tuck Braille "love notes" into a lunch box.

Learning Braille is an empowering experience for parents. Those who can read the Braille code are better advocates for their children at educational conferences and Individual Education Plan meetings. Parents can also participate in their children's schoolwork by ensuring homework is complete, helping with decoding words and proofreading assignments.

Siblings and grandparents can learn Braille as well. The Hadley School for the Blind offers two Braille courses for family members. "Introduction to Braille" teaches uncontracted Braille. This course, which covers the Braille alphabet and punctuation, is the first course for all students and is especially useful for family members with young children. "Contracted Braille" is our advanced course. Contracted Braille is the Braille code most often used in written material such as schoolwork, letters, magazines and books. For enrollment information, visit our Website at www.hadley.edu.

Family members who learn Braille convey that it is important to the family and a natural part of their lives. When Braille becomes a family experience, a lifelong love of reading is created.



For more information, visit the following resources:

Seedlings: www.seedlings.org

Check out the Rose Project for free Braille access to the *World Book Encyclopedia* and the Angel Program to receive two free Braille books.

Braille Institute:
www.Brailleinstitute.org/multisensory-books

Check out the free Children's Braille Special Collection.

National Braille Press: www.nbp.org
Check out the free ReadBooks Program and the Children's Book Club.
National Library Service for the Blind and Physically Handicapped (NLS)
www.loc.gov/nls

Braille Bookstore:
www.Braillebookstore.com/view.php?C=Introducing%20Braille

Check out the magnetic letters, labels, toys and games.



If you are not sure that your student / child should be a Braille Learner, a Learning Media Assessment, LMA, must be conducted by a Teacher for the Visually Impaired. For more information on the LMA contact Leslie Bechtel Van Orman, 777-2567 or lanor@educ.state.wy.us.

What is Braille?

Braille is a system of touch reading and writing in which raised dots represent the letters of the alphabet. Braille also contains equivalents for punctuation marks and provides symbols to show letter groupings.

Braille is read by moving the hand or hands from left to right along each line. Both hands are usually involved in the reading process, and reading is generally done with the index fingers. The average reading speed is about 125 words per minute, but greater speeds of up to 200 words per minute are possible.

By using Braille, students review and study the written word. They can become aware of different conventions such as spelling, punctuation, paragraphing, and footnotes.

Most of all, students have access to a wide range of reading materials—educational and recreational reading and practical manuals. Equally important are the contracts, regulations, insurance policies, directories, appliance instructions, and cookbooks that are part of daily adult life. Also through Braille,

students can pursue hobbies and cultural enrichment with such materials as music scores, hymnals, playing cards, scrabble boards, and other games.



The History of Braille:

Various other methods had been attempted over the years to enable blind people to read, many of them raised versions of print letters. It is generally accepted that the Braille system has succeeded because it is based on a rational sequence of signs devised for the fingertips, rather than imitating signs devised for the eyes. In addition, Braille can be written by blind people and can be used for any notation that follows an accepted sequence, such as numerals, musical notes, or chemical tables.

The system of embossed writing invented by Louis Braille gradually came to be accepted throughout the world as the fundamental form of written communication for blind individuals, and it remains basically as he invented it.

Braille has undergone continuing modification, particularly the addition of contractions representing groups of letters or whole words that appear frequently in a language. The use of contractions permits faster Braille reading and helps reduce the size of Braille books, making them less cumbersome.

Several groups have been established over the last century to modify and standardize the Braille code. A major goal is to develop easily understood contractions without making the code too complex.

The official Braille code, entitled *English Braille, American Edition*, was published by the former Braille Authority, now the Braille Authority of North America (BANA). BANA represents many agencies and consumer groups and has been responsible for updating and interpreting the basic literary Braille code and the specialized codes for music, mathematics, textbook format, and other codes in the United States and Canada. Other countries have similar authorities. (NLS Fact Sheet, May 2006)

Learning Media Assessment & Functional Vision Assessments Offered by WDE

One of the first questions that should be asked regarding a student with a visual impairment is: "What is the student's learning medium going to be?" Many teachers assume that a student will be able to access the curriculum through the use of adapted materials and mediums such as auditory or enlargement and forget about Braille all together. With the new IDEA laws in effect, 300.324 of the Federal Registry states, " (iii) In the case of a child who is blind or visually impaired, provide for instruction in Braille and the use of Braille unless the IEP Team determines, after an evaluation of the child's reading and writing skills, needs and appropriate reading and writing media, (including an evaluation of the child's future needs for instruction in Braille

or the use of Braille) that instruction in Braille or the use of Braille is not appropriate for that child." Teachers and parents may be uncertain as to whether a child should learn Braille, rely on large print, auditory modalities or use regular print for accessing reading material. The purpose of the Learning Media Assessment, LMA, is to determine the most effective medium for accessing instruction and teaching methods. A certified teacher of students with visual impairments completes this assessment. The LMA covers both general learning media and literacy media. One of the first areas to be examined is the student's ability to use his / her vision. This can be determined through a Functional Vision Assessment, FVA. This is of special importance when program-

ming for students with visual impairments. Successfully educating these students depends upon access to accurate, current information about each child's use of his/her vision. The FVA complements information available from an ophthalmologist or optometrist regarding medical diagnosis, care, prognosis, and health of the visual system.

In order to assist districts with performing these mandatory assessments, WDE is offering Low Vision Assessment/ Functional Vision Assessment and Learning Media Assessment as part of the Wyoming First Step Diagnostic Clinic. To attend the First Step Diagnostic Clinic contact Joanne Whitson, 877-875-9467, jwhits@educ.state.wy.us.

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Finding Answers Together

HEADS UP!

WDE and the Deaf-Blind Project
will be sponsoring a Literacy
Workshop for students with
multiple disabilities in
January 2010—
Stay tuned for more
Information.

WDE welcomes Barbara Engelbrecht

Barb has joined the ranks of consultants for the Special Programs Unit, Services for the Visually Impaired. She brings to WDE a wide experience of working with students who are disabled. She has taught for 24 years in a variety of positions. For 10 years, she taught in Harding County S.D. as an elementary teacher. Then moved to Thermopolis and worked as the teacher for the deaf/hard of hearing and Child Find Coordinator. When the need arose for a TVI, due to an influx of students with visual impairments, the district asked her become certified. Barb enrolled in the Stephen F. Austin program and earned her master's degree in Special Education/ Visual Impairments and a certification in O&M. She then worked for HSCSD#1, as the TVI, O&M, TOD/HH and Child Find Coordinator. Barb started with WDE, Special Programs Unit, Services for the Visually Impaired on August 3.

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