



Wisconsin Center for the Blind and Visually Impaired

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Background Information and Links regarding the Adoption of the Unified English Braille Code

1. International Perspective

International Council on English Braille Unified English Braille Project Project Status

In April 2004, the International Council on English Braille (ICEB) General Assembly declared Unified English Braille (UEB) to be substantially complete and that it could be recognized as an international standard and considered for adoption by individual countries. The original UEBC Research Project and its subcommittees were disbanded and replaced by a new project charged with oversight over UEB, including its further development.

Subsequently, after official adoption in five countries, the ICEB Executive, at its July 2010 meeting, determined that the development phase was complete and replaced the development project with a UEB Maintenance Committee.

Some of the documents pertinent to the research phase of the project, as listed in [UEBC Research Project Information](#) -- especially the final committee reports presented at the 2004 General Assembly -- are useful as background information as to how UEB was developed and why certain decisions were made. However, the documents listed on this page provide the most up-to-date information about UEB and in particular, the Rulebook should be considered definitive. Use link below to read the full document:

<http://www.iceb.org/ueb.html>

2. North American Perspective provided by the Braille Authority of North America (BANA)

Considerations and Impact of Adopting Unified English Braille in the United States

This document contains information about the anticipated impact if UEB were to be adopted as an accepted code for use in the United States. It includes sections on the potential impact of UEB on individuals, organizations, production, and equipment and software. Each section begins with a short introduction describing the anticipated challenges and then boxed text that includes a bulleted list of required support to address the need. Use link below to read the full document:

<http://www.brailleauthority.org/ueb/considerations.html>

3. BANA Implementation Date for UEB is Announced

Press Release ~ November 2013 ~ For Immediate Release

BANA Affirms Date for Implementation of UEB

The Braille Authority of North America (BANA), at its November 8–10 meeting in Louisville, Kentucky, affirmed January 4, 2016, as the date by which the United States will implement the general use of UEB. This action was based on a year of dialogue and planning that included the UEB Transition Forum, held on October 16, 2013. The forum, which involved 48 delegates representing 31 organizations from the braille community, was structured to help organizations craft the steps and timetable through which the United States will make an effective transition to Unified English Braille. Use link below to read the full document.

<http://www.brailleauthority.org/pressreleases/pr-2013-11-26.html>

Timeline/Planning/Considerations for Wisconsin

The experience of other nations in the ICEB (Australia, New Zealand, Canada, Nigeria, South Africa, and the United Kingdom) who 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. Wisconsin (WI) will replicate and build on the success of other countries.

Factors to Consider:

- Training of Transcribers (Braillists)
- Training of Teachers of the Visually Impaired
- Timing and funds for local school districts to obtain educational materials (including textbooks) in UEB.
- Timing set for testing organizations to transcribe testing materials into UEB (PALS, WKCE, Smarter Balance, Explore, Plan, ACT)
- Addition of UEB into DPI Content Guidelines for Training program approval and review (Silver Lake College still needed , UW Platteville)
- Addition of UEB material to the Wisconsin Braille Refresher Course and Wisconsin Braille Competency Exam (WBCE) for teacher of the visually impaired licensure.

As mentioned previously, the experience of nations who have previously made the transition to UEB were considered. This research leads WI-DPI to recommend that teachers in WI teach primary students (pre-kindergarten, kindergarten, 1st and 2nd grade) using UEB materials in the fall of 2015. Although the full implementation date is January 4, 2016, it is not educationally feasible to change braille systems/code mid-school year. Additionally, any student who is adventitiously blind (becoming blind in their later youth, and learning braille as a result of the sudden onset of their blindness/visual impairment) will also be taught using UEB. It was discussed that most older, academic braille-reading students will need some additional instruction in the UEB code, but that their learning will likely be somewhat quicker and more intuitive due to their previous braille literacy experiences.

With this in mind, the following is the timeline for Wisconsin:

- ◆ Jan. 2014 – Sept. 2014 – Create training materials
- ◆ July 2014 – Offer 2 - one day “Introduction to UEB” workshops for Teachers of the Visually Impaired (July 17 – Stevens Point and July 23, - WSBVI, Janesville (recorded and available at <http://www.wcbvi.k12.wi.us/outreach/professional-development>)
- ◆ Sept. 2014 – Dec. 2010 – Train Braille Transcribers and Vision Teacher Leaders (trainings will be every other week and will be recorded and available at <http://www.wcbvi.k12.wi.us/outreach/professional-development>.
*** (Jan. 2015 is when braillists and braille organizations will begin receiving orders for braille materials and textbooks for the 2015 – 2016 school year.)
- ◆ Feb. 2015 – May. 2015 – Teachers of the Visually Impaired trainings – online
- ◆ June 29 – July 1 – Intensive UEB Course. Instructor: Cindy Laurent, AFB – Midstate Technical College, Stevens Point, WI (*This event is currently being finalized, information will be forthcoming.)
- ◆ Sept. 2015 – Brailled books on the desks of Pre-kindergarten, kindergarten, 1st and 2nd grade will be UEB.
- ◆ January 4, 2016 – All newly transcribed books will be transcribed in UEB format.

National Organizations for needed Communication:

Smarter Balance

EXPLORE, PLAN, ACT Publisher

American Printing House for the Blind (APH)

Association of Education and Rehabilitation for the Blind and Visually Impaired (AER)

National Library Service for the Blind and Physically Handicapped (NLS)

National Braille Association (NBA)

Braille Authority of North America (BANA)

Wisconsin Organizations for needed Communication:

DPI – Including Advisory Council on Blind and Visual Impairment

WCBVI

CESAs

Oshkosh Correctional Institution’s Braille Program

Audio & Braille Literacy Enhancement (ABLE) - Milwaukee

Blind Library & Transcribing Services (BLTS) – Madison

Phoenix Braille

Vision Forward

WI Council of the Blind and Visually Impaired

WisBraille

Madison Metropolitan School District Braillists

Milwaukee Public Schools Braillists

Racine School District Braillists

CESA 7 Braillists

Any other school districts who have independently hired braillists, or educational assistants who are producing braille.