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June 9, 2015

TO: Chief School Administrators
Charter School Lead Persons
Directors of Special Education
Directors of Approved Private Schools for Students with Disabilities

FROM: Peggy McDonald, Director
Office of Special Education Programs

Daniel B. Frye, Executive Director
New Jersey Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired
Department of Human Services

SUBJECT: Transition to Unified English Braille Code

As you may be aware, the Braille Authority of North America (BANA) has adopted and will implement the general use of the Unified English Braille (UEB) code in the United States on January 4, 2016. The decision to adopt UEB in the United States was made by a decisive vote of the BANA Board on November 2, 2012. The purpose of this memorandum is to provide some background for the change and information schools need to know to ensure a smooth transition to the new code for students who use Braille.

The UEB is based on the current literary Braille code and was developed with input from Braille readers who considered a number of different factors. Those factors include keeping the general-purpose literary code as its base, allowing the addition of new symbols, providing flexibility for change as print changes, reducing the complexity of rules and allowing greater accuracy in back translation (Braille to print). 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. The ability of a Braille user to write in Braille for instant communication and collaboration with non-Braille readers is becoming more essential in our digital age. BANA will, however, maintain specialized codes, such as the Nemeth Code for Mathematics and Science Notation, 1972 Revision; the Music Braille Code 1997; and the IPA Braille Code 2008.

In order to facilitate the implementation of UEB, BANA, in collaboration with the New Jersey Department of Human Services' Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired (the Commission) and the New Jersey Department of Education (NJDOE) is working with the Braille community, as it builds and adapts the infrastructure necessary for a transition to UEB. In addition, the American Foundation for the Blind is currently offering a webinar entitled "A Brief Overview of UEB." The webinar is available on the Foundation's web site at: <http://www.afb.org/default.aspx>. For an overview of the changes from

the current literary Braille to UEB, click on the following link at:
<http://www.brailleauthority.org/ueb.html>.

The Commission is working with the Hadley School for the Blind, to provide training for all of the Commission's teachers of the vision-impaired, so that they may become proficient with the new changes to ensure that students who are blind or vision-impaired in your school district will be fully prepared to adjust to the changes in the UEB code.

School districts that educate students who use Braille should ensure that teachers, paraprofessionals, child study team members, parents and the students themselves are aware of the change in the Braille code. Additionally, at the next IEP meeting for each student who uses Braille, the IEP team should consider if additional instruction, materials, and/or technology will be needed to facilitate the student's use of the new code. If the district employs a teacher of the vision-impaired (TVI) who is not employed by the Commission, the district should ensure that the teacher is trained in UEB.

The American Printing House reports that orders for textbooks in subjects using literary Braille (social studies and language arts) not previously transcribed will be produced in UEB for the 2015-2016 school year. The National Federation of the Blind provides resources to its readers, such as the Recommended UEB Resources for NLS-Certified Transcribers and Proofreaders, the Instruction Manual for Braille Transcribing – UEB edition 2015 and the ABC's of UEB. The American Red Cross, which provides Braille transcription by trained volunteers in New Jersey, will offer Braille books in the UEB code for 2015-2016 following the Library of Congress standards.

The Commission and the NJDOE will continue to collaborate with other stakeholders, to provide the necessary information to educators and families regarding the change to UEB. If you have any questions or concerns, please call Ms. Christine Hinton, Interim Director of Blindness Education, at the Commission at 973-693-5024 or Ms. Perkie Cannon, NJDOE, at 908-788-1414.

PM/DBF

c: Members, State Board of Education
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