



Pennsylvania - Delaware Chapter
Association for the Education and Rehabilitation
of the Blind and Visually Impaired

www.penn-delaer.org

Hello Pennsylvania Professionals Serving Those with Visual Impairments,

The Penn-Del AER Chapter needs service providers and families to complete the [PA UEB Feedback Survey](#) from the Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE), Bureau of Special Education regarding Pennsylvania's Unified English Braille (UEB) Implementation plan, by September 18, 2015.

It is very important that as many Pennsylvanians as possible respond to this PDE survey to insure that our voices are heard and our input considered. District and intermediate unit special education directors as well as program supervisors have already received this request to respond. Penn-Del AER has compiled critical resources for your ease of access. This will help you prepare to make informed decisions and provide insightful and thoughtful comments.

- Link to complete survey regarding implementation plan: [PA UEB Feedback Survey](#)
- The following 4 documents are posted directly to the Penn-Del AER website:
<http://www.penn-delaer.org/PennDelAER/News.html>
 - CCSSO Unified English Braille Implementation Guide
 - PennLink Unified English Braille Transition
 - PA Unified English Braille Implementation Plan, July 2015 Draft:
 - NFB Resolution: Braille Code, as forwarded from the Council of Schools for the Blind (COSB)
- PaTTAN – Posts the draft implementation plan and survey:
<http://www.pattan.net/category/Resources/Misc.%20Materials/Browse/Single/?id=55acce78150ba0d3368b4571>
- PaTTAN AIM Center: <http://www.pattan.net/category/Resources/AIM%20Center/>
- BANA and UEB: <http://www.brailleauthority.org/>
- APH Textbook Production: <http://www.aph.org/atic/>
- APH State Assessment Production: <http://www.aph.org/pr/20140724Policies-Regarding-UEB-Transition-at-APH.html>

Please consider my overview of the implementation plan before you complete the survey.

- The proposed progression, over the next 5 years, to integrate UEB into curriculum material and state and local level testing begins with professional development opportunities and with access to UEB resources.
- As the skills and knowledge of those professionals teaching and preparing braille material are actualized, the introduction of UEB will focus on students in grades K-3 for 2016-2017.

- Curriculum and state and local assessments for English Language Arts (ELA) and all other nontechnical content will be provided in UEB over the next four years.
- The implementation of curriculum and state and local assessments in math and science areas provides the option for UEB only **or** UEB with Nemeth Code to be provided through 2018-2019.
- Lastly, the proposal suggests that by 2019-2020, UEB will be the **only** braille code produced for curriculum and state and local assessments in Pennsylvania.

Tying this all together for you --- the CCSSO-BANA Unified English Braille Implementation Guidelines address the braille preparation and instruction in mathematics with the following:

- UEB is a complete, general purpose code; symbols for math are a part of the code. It is completely different from Nemeth code.
- The US voted to keep Nemeth code as an official code along with UEB, a unique position internationally.
- Some states plan to use UEB solely for 'nontechnical' materials and continue to use Nemeth code for math and science.
- Some states plan to use both UEB and Nemeth for math and science materials.
- Some states plan to gradually move to UEB for all subjects.

The survey questions ask for your considerations regarding the feasibility, advantages, and disadvantages of this implementation plan. If you are not comfortable and feel that you cannot fully respond to each section that is okay. Transitioning to something new takes us all outside of our comfort zones which can be hard and uncomfortable. Provide what you can, even if the response is "I do not know" or "I do not have an opinion". Your input really matters. As you prepare to respond to these questions, consider:

- If you have concerns to fully phase out Nemeth Code in production and instruction; or
- If PA does offer the option to individualize/customize math and science books indefinitely (to provide either UEB only or UEB with Nemeth code options for all students) --- can the production of both options be reasonably sustained?
Appreciably, the option to provide UEB or UEB with Nemeth Code for technical content areas impacts the availability of textbook and other instructional materials at your local level as well as state level.

While I recognize that this message contains a great deal of material and raises many questions it is also apparent to me that this is the time and mechanism to have input into this critical area of instruction for our students and the professionals who instruct them. **Please take the time to respond to the survey by September 18, 2015.** Thanks, in advance, for your cooperation and continued commitment.

Respectfully,

Vince McVeigh, President
Penn-Del AER