

# WISCONSIN BRAILLE

Volume 18, Issue 1

Winter 2017

**The MORE that you READ, the more things you will KNOW. The MORE that you LEARN, the more place you'll GO. --Dr. Seuss**

---

## **Options for Braille Transcribers and Teachers**

Wisconsin Braille is dedicated, among other things, to developing braille literacy among children dependent on braille. In the last few years the braille community has experienced a huge change in the code. Wisconsin, along with the rest of the braille reading community, has been working hard to keep up with those changes by offering courses designed to help educators, transcribers and others make the transition to UEB. In this newsletter we share three articles regarding this process. Two are from educators who have taken courses in UEB and one is from an instructor offering such a course. We hope you enjoy reading these pieces and that they help you get a further understanding of what the transition to UEB is all about.

---

## **Worried About Learning UEB?**

By Leanette Dieck

I consider myself a newer braille learner. I never imagined that I would learn even the basics of braille, let alone be able to read it. I'll admit that learning braille was the scariest part of going back to school to become a vision teacher. Looking back, I am so glad I pushed into those fears and continued with my dream because braille is amazing and it does so much for so many! As a newer braille learner, I was nervous about learning the changes brought by Unified English Braille (UEB). This new braille code is in our communities and in our schools. It is important that the VI community learn these changes so we can transition along with our new braille code. Fortunately, teachers and braille users have many options to learn the changes brought by UEB.

One of those options is a braille course offered by Hadley Institute for the Blind and Visually Impaired. Hadley offers many courses for people who

have vision impairments, their families and professionals. If you already have a good knowledge of EBAE or SEB, then you might want to take "Transitioning to Unified English Braille." This is a course that I chose to take to practice my own UEB skills. I was already familiar with the general rules and contraction changes, but this familiarity is not necessary for this course. "Transitioning to Unified English Braille" can be taken in the comfort of your home or office and as your particular schedule allows. This course is composed of six lessons, each with readings and assignments that you would submit to your instructor for feedback. Along with the feedback from assignments, a student will also receive supplementary materials that provide additional practice and new ways to organize the information. Considering the typical arbitrary readings generally offered in braille, these materials were entertaining and enjoyable. As an added bonus, courses at Hadley are offered at a low cost.

Since this was a distance course, I was surprised to receive personal attention from my instructor. She graded my assignments and gave me personal tips and suggestions to help me better understand any rules that I didn't get on the first try. The manual clearly explained each of the rules and provided tons of examples and practice exercises. Try the exercises, correct your own work and submit an assignment to your instructor for a grade. Are you still worried about learning UEB? Don't be. You can do it!

---

**For the Love of Braille**  
by Alison McKee

I have loved braille since I was a child. In 1958 I was given a braille alphabet card. I cherished it. My mother, after I begged her to, dug around in our attic and found an old slate-and-stylus she had saved from her days of working at Perkins School for the Blind. Even though I had no braille paper, I loved the challenge of trying to copy my alphabet card onto binder paper. The holes I made enchanted me. Fast forward 15 years or so and I was a certified transcriber working as a vision teacher in Minnesota. I had no braillist to assist me in my work so I think of those days as mostly transcribing with a little time for teaching.

When I retired, from being a TVI in 2013, I felt as though my braille days were over. The thought of being a substitute vision teacher intrigued me, so I realized I had better become deeply familiar with UEB because I knew it was more than simply the "retirement of contractions." After a few emails were sent, I found myself enrolled in Viterbo University's UEB class, being taught by Julie Sumwalt.

In September of 2016 I began my twelve week, two credit, UEB class. Instruction was totally online. Before starting the class we had to download Perky Duck and add the SimBrl font to our computers so that we could braille on our computers. Once those tasks were accomplished we were on our way.

Our lessons were provided as video lessons and supplemented with print materials, online reference material and email support. Each lesson required that we transcribe from print to braille and braille to print. Although there were twelve lessons to complete, I was only able to finish ten. I received my credits for the work I accomplished.

I had a great time learning about UEB during the twelve weeks of the class. I will admit that the lessons were not a breeze to get through. At the outset, lessons were rather easy and straightforward. That being said, I didn't ever complete an entire lesson with a 100%. As the lessons went on, I found them to be both more interesting and more difficult. (At one point my husband was coming home and making jokes about whether or not I would be able to come up for air and spend time over dinner with him!)

My UEB course has given me a greater understanding of just what our new code is about. It is so much more than a "retirement of contractions." It is a code that more fully brings print clarity to the braille reader. The learning curve was steep because, while I was learning how to make braille more informative to its readers, I had more symbols and rules to absorb. If I can just retain all I have learned, my renewed skills will soon get a workout. I have a sub job. After all of these years, I still love braille and I love teaching it to children!

---

### **UEB Online Class**

WCBVI (Wisconsin Center for the Blind and Visually Impaired) will be offering its UEB (Unified English Braille) online class again this summer, May 29 through August 25, 2017. Each of the 12 sessions includes a video of about 30-60 minutes, optional self-corrected drills and a homework assignment of 50 items to read, transcribe or answer. Assignments are submitted via email attachments.

The class is targeted for vision professionals in Wisconsin transitioning from EBAE (English Braille American Edition) to UEB. This includes vision teachers, paraprofessionals, transcribers and proofreaders. Prerequisites are

a strong foundation in EBAE and basic computer skills. Software programs needed are Perky Duck, Word 2007 or later, and Adobe Reader. Perky Duck and Adobe Reader are available as free downloads.

The class is free. Two optional graduate credits, with a payment of \$220.00, are available through Viterbo University for vision teacher licensure. An additional two- to three-page paper is required to obtain credit. All participants who complete the course receive a certificate of completion.

This will be the fifth running of the class. The participants in the previous classes have been largely vision teachers and paraprofessionals, with one transcriber-to-be. So far, there have been a total of 69 registrants (with a few repeats). Seventeen people have finished the course and received a certificate of participation and/or credit towards professional development requirements.

---

*[The following article, which will appear in two parts, was first published in Future Reflections, Volume 35 Number 1, Winter 2016. This magazine is a magazine for parents and teachers of blind children published by American Action Fund for Blind Children and Adults in partnership with the National Organization of Parents of Blind Children.]*

## **If Braille Were Print**

by Erin Jepsen

*From the Editor: Erin Jepsen is a low-vision homeschooling mother of four elementary-age children, one blind, one low vision, and two sighted. She is passionate about education for all kids and about teaching Braille. She and her family live in Idaho.*

Chatting with a friend today about a refreshable Braille display got me thinking again about the absurdities that I've seen firsthand in my daughter's classes. I've seen a silly attitude about Braille in both a local public school and in a state virtual academy. I've also heard about it from friends around the country who support one another online.



This problem comes, I think, from society's general perception that Braille is complicated, difficult, and specialized. My daughter's TVIs work endlessly to provide peer enrichment, to normalize Braille, to minimize errors, and to add Braille in spaces within the school. I have tried to do the same at home. Still, in spite of our best efforts, misperceptions remain in attitudes about Braille and print.

To address some of these misperceptions for the non-Braille-reading public, I want to try an experiment. I want to reframe some of the things that students commonly hear when they are being taught Braille by imagining that they are being said to a sighted print reader. I'd like to say these things about the reading method that nearly everyone in my area uses: English print.

### **The Challenges of Print**

Imagine a typical first- or second-grader of average intelligence who is learning to read. Keep in mind the material this learner will need to read in eighth grade. In twelfth grade. In college. On the job. Running a household.

*1. It makes sense that you're having a hard time with this. It is hard to learn print.*

As your hypothetical classroom teacher, I don't actually read this print stuff. Your aide took a two-week training course, and we have a reference chart here, but I really don't know how print works. It just looks like a bunch of squiggles on the paper. It uses a round symbol for both a zero and the letter *o*, and I'm not sure how to tell you which one is which. There is also special shorthand stuff, like spelling *with* as *w/*, and I don't know how to teach you all that.

Reading a book with writing on both sides of the page is hard for me. It doesn't matter that it's normal for you; I say it's hard, because for me, it is.

You have a special print teacher, and you'll see her for an hour or two per week. Surely that's all the extra help you'll need.

*2. I'm not aware of any techniques for reading print at a usable speed.*

As far as I know, print readers only read one letter at a time. I don't know any adults who read printed books. I saw someone do it once on TV, and it looked like magic. I've heard that people who read print well are either geniuses or flukes.

3. *I'm sorry, but your book is loaded with typos.*

The books we're giving you were transcribed by unqualified volunteers, so there are at least two typos or misprints or misspelled words for every thirty words. Just remember you're lucky to have print books at all.

Every other kid in your class gets information from illustrations, but we're going to skip those for you. They're cute, but probably they're not important.

4. *Technology, schmechnology!*

First of all, nobody like you uses computers or knows how to type at your age. You have plenty of time to learn that stuff later. Your job someday probably won't require a computer. If it does, someone can give you a quick training course. For now, we're going to print your books using a dot-matrix printer. The school bought it in 1989 for our last print reader, and they don't want to buy anything new.

We're going to get you a special display screen, though. It hooks up to an iPad. It displays three words per screen. To get to the next screen, you just press this little button over here. Cool, right?

5. *Reading is overrated.*

Nobody these days needs to read print or write with a pencil anyway. You can just listen to audiobooks. It's a lot less work than reading, and you can dictate anything you want to write. Technology is amazing these days for people like you.

---

**The Braille Corner**  
**UEB: Grade 1 Mode**

Dear Ms. Perkins,

UEB talks about modes. What is a mode? Is grade 1 mode uncontracted braille?

Confused,  
Grady Wong







Rule #8. Don't treat me like I'm stupid or a child. Blind doesn't mean brain damaged, so don't speak slowly or use small words. Do I really have to explain this?

Rule #9. Don't enter or leave my area without saying so. Otherwise I won't even know if you're there. It's just common courtesy.

Rule #10. Don't make sounds to help or guide me. It's just silly and rude, and believe me, you'll be the one who looks stupid and ends up embarrassed, not me.

Rule #11. Don't be weird. Seriously, other than having my eyes closed all the time, I'm just like you, only smarter.

INFINITY: There are NO second chances. Violate my trust and I'll never trust you again. Betrayal is unforgivable.

My former student, who recommended this book to me, said his favorite part of the book was "the rules." The book jacket says this book "sheds light on the metaphorical blind spots that are a part of life, whether you're visually impaired or not."

I feel blindness is portrayed in this book in a wonderfully positive way.

---

Please Join Us  
For Our Next Annual Board Meeting  
at the  
**The Docking Station**  
**1111 N. Broadway**  
**Green Bay, WI 54301**  
**April 1, 2017**  
From 10:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.

Officers and Directors are to be elected at this meeting. Below is a slate of nominations.

**Wisconsin Braille Board 2017-2019**

New Board Officers [nominees for two-year terms expiring in 2019]

President: Dennis Helwig

Secretary: Cindy Collins

Continuing Officers [terms expiring in 2018]

Vice-President: Sandy Adams

Treasurer: Mary Ann Damm

New Board Directors [nominees for two-year terms expiring in 2019]

Leanette Dieck  
Faith Kelley  
Kurt Pamperin  
Vicki Warren  
(1 open position)

Continuing Board Directors [terms expiring in 2018]  
Kevin Jones  
Angela Memmel  
Alison McKee  
Katie Watson  
(1 open position)

---

## **Getting Answers to Your Transcribing Questions**

by Julie Sumwalt

Ask an Expert is an online forum from National Braille Association (NBA) for getting help with braille transcription questions. There are ten focus areas:

- Braille Formats Course
- Braille Formats/Textbook
- Computer-Assisted Transcription
- Distance Learning Braille Course
- Foreign Language
- Literary Braille
- Mathematics, Science, and Computer Notation
- Music Braille
- Professional Resources
- Tactile Graphics

A top expert in the field will answer your question as quickly as possible.

The forum is open to NBA members at [www.nationalbraille.org](http://www.nationalbraille.org). Regular membership is \$50 a year, with other tiered options available. Membership also includes a subscription to the quarterly *Bulletin*, which has articles focusing on many of the same fields listed above, and a discount in the NBA store, where reference materials and workshop printouts can be found.

---

If you are interested in joining Wisconsin Braille, or have not paid your membership this year, please be sure to complete the membership form at the back of this newsletter and mail it to the address listed.

---

The WISCONSIN BRAILLE newsletter is published three times a year.

Deadlines are: Spring/Summer – April 15, Fall – August 15, Winter – December 15

---

The purpose of WISCONSIN BRAILLE INC. is to advance communication and coordinate the efforts of all persons concerned with the availability, quality, and distribution of brailled materials in the state of Wisconsin thereby encouraging braille literacy.

---

The purpose of this newsletter is to disperse information. WISCONSIN BRAILLE INC. does not endorse or vouch for the reliability of any of the persons, organizations, or products appearing in this publication.

---

This version of the Wisconsin Braille newsletter was prepared by the members of the OSCI Braille Program. It has not been proofread. Readers are encouraged to report noted errors to: Wisconsin Braille Newsletter, Editor, 5745 Bittersweet Place, Madison, WI 53705.