

MAINE STATE LEGISLATURE

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DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
23 STATE HOUSE STATION
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SUSAN A. GENDRON
COMMISSIONER

A Report to the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs on the proposal to establish standards for the credentialing of Braille transcribers as directed in Resolve, Chapter 29, LD 749 – Resolve, Directing the Department of Education To Take Measures To Assist Blind and Visually Impaired Students.

Prepared by:

The Maine Department of Education

March 17, 2010

Provisions of the Resolve (Appendix A) aligned with activities of the Maine AIM Consortium. Maine applied for federal assistance and was selected to be a part of the National AIM Consortium. Below is a description of this organization and its goals.

The 15-state Accessible Instructional Materials (AIM) Consortium is working to improve academic outcomes for approximately 1.3 million K-12 students with print disabilities within the member States through the timely acquisition and delivery of high-quality educational materials in accessible formats (audio, Braille, eText, large print).

To help students who struggle to decode or extract meaning from print-based materials, such as textbooks, federal law (IDEA 2004) requires State and Local Education Agencies to adopt the National Instructional Materials Accessibility Standard (NIMAS) and to determine efficient approaches to provide core curricular materials in accessible, NIMAS-compliant formats. IDEA also requires the education agencies to provide these specialized formats to all students who are identified as print disabled, whether or not they qualify for NIMAS-derived materials.

The goals of the Consortium are to:

- Help States develop systems for identifying, acquiring, and using accessible instructional materials;
- Ensure that these systems employ high quality procedures and practices; and
- Produce related products and services that can be made available to all States, Outlying Areas, and Freely Associated States.

A major activity of the work, in Maine, focused on the capacity of technology and personnel to support production of Braille materials.

The Resolve provisions also aligned with the Maine Department of Education (MDOE) activities relating to data collection and services to students with sensory, low-incidence disabilities.

Participants included representatives from the Braille Capacity Work Group, Sensory, Low-Incidence Disabilities Work Group and the AIM Community of Practice. In addition to Maine personnel, we were fortunate to have participation from the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) and the Maine Deafblind Project, in collaboration with the New England Consortium of Deafblind Projects.

The Braille Capacity Work Group established the following subcommittees:

- Data Organization,
- Library of Congress Certification,
- Data / Resources,
- 0-20 (ages) Braille Resources, and
- Data Dissemination.

The results of these activities produced a comprehensive, state-wide resource list, (Appendix B) and school administrative units providing services for blind or visually impaired students and included types of equipment and school personnel capacity. It was determined that the resource list was beneficial to MDOE's Child Development Services early intervention services and special education

services, but also useful for institutions of higher education, adult delivery of services system as well as all agencies responsible for complying with the Americans with Disabilities Act and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act.

Again, pursuant to the Resolve provision relating to credentialing of Braille transcribers, national standards and selected State standards were researched. The Braille Capacity Working Group identified a model for the preparation of paraprofessionals developed by the State of Connecticut Board of Education and Services for the Blind, "Braille Class for Paraprofessionals." (Appendix C)

The Work Group contributed significantly to the MDOE's submission of legislation to the 124th Legislature. LD 1532, An Act To Align Education Laws with Certain Federal Laws, and, in particular, Section 2 of LD 1532, which reads as follows:

Sec. 2. 20-A MRSA §7201, sub-§5, as corrected by RR 2005, c. 2, §13, is amended to read:

5. Accessible instructional materials; visual impairment including blindness; Braille instruction. All students must have access to accessible instructional materials and may receive instruction in Braille reading and writing as part of their individualized family service plans or individualized education programs. A student may not be denied the opportunity of instruction in Braille reading and writing solely because the student has some remaining vision. If Braille is not provided to a child who is blind, the reason for not incorporating Braille in the individualized family service plan or individualized education program must be documented in the individualized family service plan or individualized education program. Accessible instructional materials and provisions for the accessibility of online learning programs for individuals with disabilities must be in alignment with the accessible instructional materials provisions of the federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004, Public Law 108-446, 118 Stat. 2647 and in alignment with the universal design provisions of the 1998 amendments to the federal Higher Education Act of 1965, 20 United States Code, Chapter 28 contained in the federal Higher Education Amendments of 1998, Public Law 105-244, 112 Stat. 1581.

Many members of the Work Group continue their contributions with their participation in the AIM Community of Practice. Recommendations from this group to MDOE were presented to the Maine Advisory Council on the Education of Children with Disabilities (MACECD). The Council recommended to the Commissioner the adoption of policies relating to print disability and timeliness of acquisition of materials for students. The Council also encouraged the development of a statewide capacity, which was the third recommendation of the Community of Practice (see Appendix D).

In addition to the research relating to credentialing of Braille transcribers, particularly paraprofessionals, the MDOE is collaborating with the agencies who have participated in the AIM Community of Practice to develop support for Maine personnel so they might be able to receive national certification.

The MDOE will also be drafting legislation to create and support a statewide Maine AIM resource to support a locally based system with a centralized resource for training and technical assistance. Title 20-A, MRSA, Section 7001.2-B. Intermediate Educational Unit is the statutory reference which would be used as the basis for this statewide resource and also to enhance the delivery of services for low incidence disability populations within the state.

The MDOE will also collaborate with Child Development Services , Maine schools and the Maine Department of Labor (MDOL), Division for the Blind and Visually Impaired (DBVI) to review data regarding identification of people with visual impairments. Data indicates that the Maine visual impairment identification rate is below the national average (Appendix E)

APPENDIX A

Resolve, Chapter 29, LD 749

Resolve, Directing the Department of Education To Take Measures To Assist Blind and Visually Impaired Students

Sec. 1 Braille transcriber and assistant. Resolved: That, in order to ensure that blind and visually impaired students are provided with assistance from professionals trained to transcribe and produce Braille documents for students, the Department of Education, referred to in this resolve as “the department,” shall develop a proposal to establish standards for the credentialing of Braille transcribers and assistants. The department shall investigate the training required for Braille transcribers in other states in order to ensure comparable training for such a position; and be it further

Sec. 2 Provide for employment. Resolved: That the department may consider the employment of Braille transcribers and assistants who are receiving training in Braille as an approved special education cost; and be it further

Sec. 3 Report. Resolved: That the department shall present its proposal to the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs no later than December 3, 2009. After receipt and review of the report, the Joint Standing Committee may report out legislation to the Second Regular Session of the 124th Legislature.

APPENDIX B

Augusta Schools - K student

Blazie

Ed tech just learning Braille

Needs all kinds of training

Topsham

Woodside School

Romeo 50 embosser

Producing for 3 years

PC, Duxbury (newest version) – un-contracted Braille only

(Gardiner Ed tech. for a 6th grader – ends June 2009 **May go to Augusta System**

Juliet Pro 60

Duxbury

Braille production for 5 years

Braille: classroom worksheets for science (which uses Nemeth code), social studies, language arts and health

Produces: maps, diagrams and graphs for various subjects.

Scans, formats, and translates into Braille using the Duxbury program

Not Nemeth)

Lawrence High School – H.S. Senior

Duxbury

Juliet embosser and Blazie embosser

Producing for 4 years

Types of production: literary Braille, graphs, maps

Need help with downloading from Bookshare /RFBD

Old Orchard Beach High School

Romeo 25

Producing for 6 years

Duxbury, scientific notebook (but not used very often),

Majority of it is literary

Graphics are typically done by hand, if needed

Cape Elizabeth Middle School

Duxbury

Romeo embosser

Producing for 6 years

Producing literary Braille for middle school
Cape is able to produce simple graphics.
Needs use of Scientific Notebook

York Schools – ends June 2009

Romeo embosser

Producing for 15 years

Uses Scientific Notebook,

Producing Nemeth and literary including graphics for high school student)

Presque Isle H.S.

Duxbury

Romeo Pro embosser

Producing for 2 year

Literary Braille, tests, worksheets, maps, graphics

- needs more info on downloading from Bookshare, RFB&D
- More features of Duxbury & Scientific Notebook

Lewiston School System

Romeo embosser

2 producers for 7 and 10 years

All types of production – Literary, Scientific Notebook, Nemeth, music

Graphs, maps, etc.

George Stevens Academy.

Duxbury

Romeo Pro 50 embosser

Producing for 10 years

Literary, graphs, maps, etc., **Needs more on Nemeth production and quicktac pro**

Bangor Schools

Juliette embosser

Duxbury

Producer for- 10 years

Literary Maps, Graphs

Gray-New Gloucester School

Romeo 25 - Producing for 4 years - Scientific Notebook, Quick TAC ,Literary, Nemeth, some graphics, If student moves to SAD 17 – school staff will need all new training

APPENDIX C

BRaille CLASS FOR PARAPROFESSIONALS

Lori Cornelius
Jeanette Haines

State of Connecticut Board of Education and
Services for the Blind

HISTORY OF CONNECTICUT PLAN

- Pilot project began in 1999
- Survey presented to paraprofessionals
- Issues motivating the establishment of organized braille instruction
- Obstacles

SURVEY PRESENTED TO PARAPROFESSIONALS

Paraprofessional Questionnaire

We are looking at developing advanced training programs for paraprofessionals working with our students who read Braille. Please include any additional comments or questions you have.

1. Your name and the town in which you work:
2. Age/grade of the student you assist:
3. Is this child functioning on grade level? Are there any additional disabilities?
4. How long have you worked with this student? Have you worked with other students who read Braille before your present assignment?

5. What specific topics would you like to see addressed in an in-service program?
6. How far would you be willing to travel for an in-service program?
7. Does your school system allow you paid time for professional development?
8. Would you be willing to attend programs offered on Saturday?

Please rate your proficiency (as you see it) in the following areas:

	1	2	3	4	5
Literary Braille:					
Nemeth Code:					
Tactile Graphics:					
Technology:					

Proficient

List specific technology that you feel you have adequate knowledge of:

List specific technology that you feel you need training in:

MOTIVATING ISSUES

- Standardization of training
- Identifies paras with (or without) the aptitude for learning braille and related skills
- Peer support

MOTIVATING ISSUES

- Motivation to improve skills
- Identifies paraprofessional as braille specialist
 - Recognition of achievement
 - Reduces turnover rate
 - Improves pay

OBSTACLES

- Getting release time
- Cost of materials
- Number and location of candidates
- Job title—defining the role without misinterpreting the job

PUTTING TOGETHER A PLAN

LOGISTICS

- Regionalize classes to limit travel
- Team teachers to facilitate class
- Getting district support
- Identify instructional tools

REQUIRED BOOKS FOR CLASS

- Braille Codes and Calculations
by Mary Ellen Pesavento
- Learning Nemeth Code
by Ruth Craig

ADDITIONAL RESOURCE BOOKS

Available from APH:

- Instruction Manual for Braille Transcribing
- Nemeth Braille Code for Mathematics and Science Notation 1972 Revision

ADDITIONAL PRACTICE BOOKS

Available from Exceptional Teaching Aids:

- Dot Writing by Janet Wise, revised and updated by Mary Ellen Pesavento
- Literary Braille Practice Sentences
by D.Q. Joseph

Why do we use Braille Codes and Calculations?

- Individualize instruction
- Self-correcting exercises
- Integrates literary and Nemeth
- Modification of materials
- Small achievable goals

Certificate of Achievement
Presented to:

For successfully completing
Program for Literary and Nemeth Braille Codes
Preparation of Braille Materials

LEVEL ONE

June, 2006

Signature of teacher

CLASS CONSTRUCTION

SCHEDULING

- Once a month meetings
- 2 hour sessions
- Maintain flexibility

CLASS CONTENT

- Uninterrupted practice time
- Q & A
- Group instruction
- Taking tests
- Discussion of additional topics

TOOLS FOR THE TEACHER

- Homework Checklists
- Quizzes and Tests
- Guidelines
- Reporting to Districts

HOMEWORK CHECKLISTS

Braille Codes and Calculations Homework Assignments Checklist

Student	Assignments	Date	Comments
	Lesson 1 p. 6-8 Words Flashcards		
	Lesson 2 p. 17 Sentences		
	Lesson 3 p. 21 Sentences		

QUIZZES AND TESTS

- Quiz 1 -- available on CD
- REMOVE TESTS!!!
- Rules for Test-Taking

CLASS GUIDELINES

- Tests -- 5 levels
- Maximum of 3 years
- Testing procedures
- Individualizing the program

REPORTING TO THE DISTRICT

- Recognition for the paraprofessional
- Documentation of achievement
- Keeping the focus on the student who reads braille

Date:
Paraprofessional:
Braille Instructors:

Lesson	Date	Skill
1		16 letters of the alphabet, alphabet list contractions
2		Capitalization, punctuation, remaining letters of the alphabet
3		Punctuation, literary numbers, some whole-word contractions
Exam 1		
4		Ch, sh, th, wh, ou, st; worksheet preparation

FINAL THOUGHTS

- Maintain database of successful participants
- Encourage paraprofessionals to be self-advocates
- Make it work for your situation!

Available on the CD

- Braille class certificates
- Class guidelines
- Homework checklist
- Paraprofessional questionnaire
- Quiz 1
- Registration form
- Report to the district
- Required text and additional resources
- Sample letter to sped directors

APPENDIX D

Maine's AIM Community of Practice

RECOMMENDATIONS

M A C E C D

In order to meet the NIMAS requirement (34 CFR 300.172) of IDEA 2004 to assure access to high quality instructional materials in a timely manner for students who need them for the purpose of accessing the general curriculum, the Maine AIM Project Community of Practice recommends to the Maine Department of Education the following:

Define Timely Manner as:

School Administrative Units (SAUs) will provide print instructional materials in accessible specialized formats (i.e. Braille, audio, digital, large print) to children who are blind or have other print disabilities in a timely manner. Timely manner means that SAUs will ensure that children with print disabilities have access to specialized instructional materials at the same time as students without print disabilities. This includes providing an alternative accommodation in any isolated instance where specialized instructional materials are not available to allow the student access to the same instructional materials as other students.

Define Print Disability as:

"A condition related to blindness, visual impairment, specific learning disability or other physical condition in which the student needs an alternative or specialized format (i.e., Braille, Large Print, Audio, Digital text) in order to access and gain information from conventional printed materials."

Create and Support a Statewide Maine Accessible Instructional Materials (AIM) Resource:

The AIM CoP expects that this statewide resource closely align implementation with Maine's Learning Technology Initiative, the Maine International Center of Digital Learning as Maine as well as the Division for the Blind and Visually Impaired Instructional Materials Center to assure accessible instructional materials are available to all students who need them.

The Community of Practice envisions a locally focused service delivery system, supported by statewide technical assistance that will help schools working with students with print disabilities to identify, select, acquire and use AIM. Local resources may include, school and community librarians, curriculum coordinators, technology coordinators, principals and teachers knowledgeable in the use of accessible instructional materials and assistive technology as tools to facilitate learning.

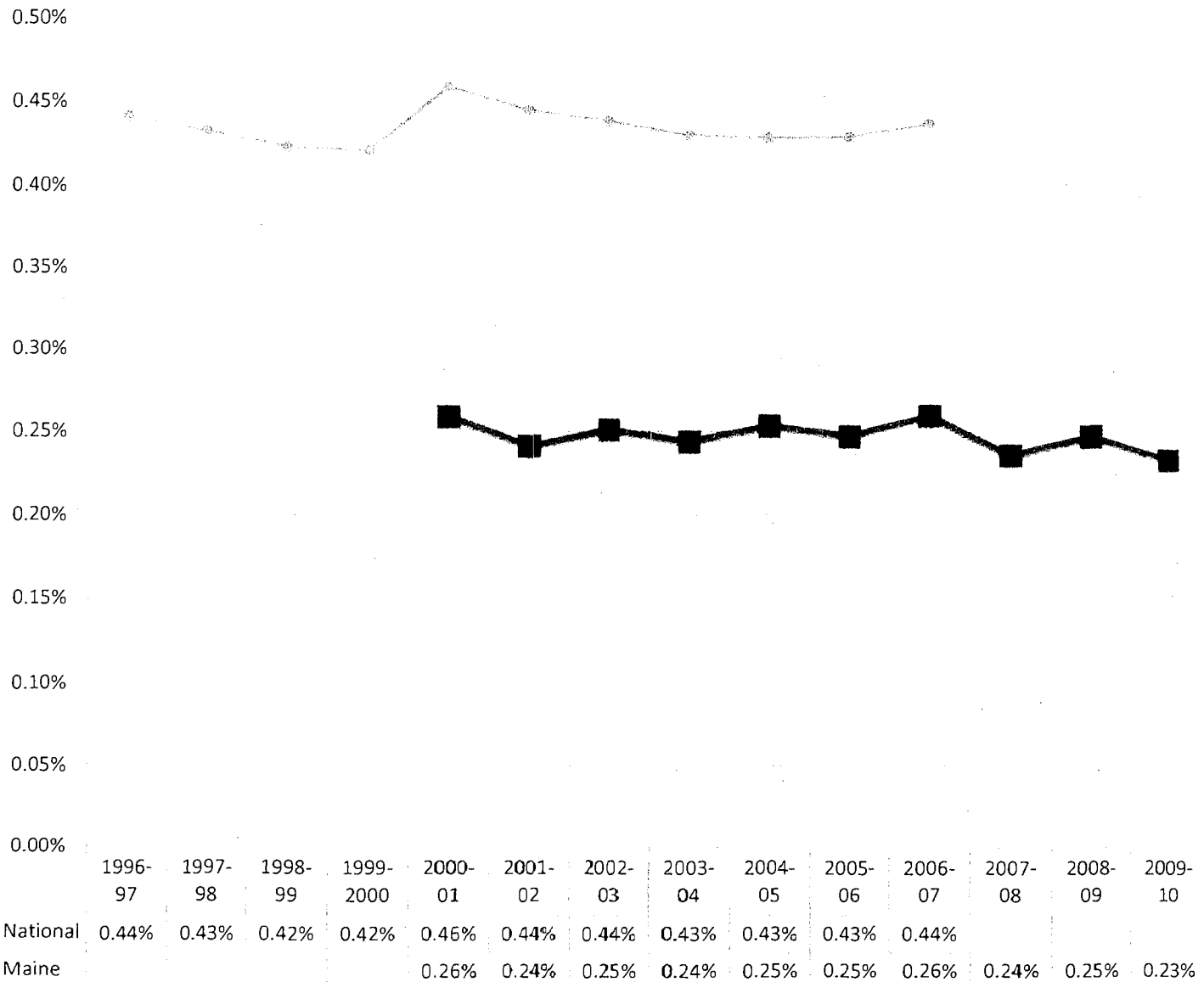
This locally based system would be provided training and technical assistance by a centralized resource. The purpose of this centralized resource is to build capacity in School Administrative Units.

Creation of a “center for accessible instructional materials” with the following functions with the ability to:

- build capacity in SAUs to provide services and resources in the selection, acquisition and use of AIM to students with print disabilities and their families;
- provide and maintain a web-based resource that includes updated technical information, location of services and service providers, and the ability to search and order AIM
- maintain the local capacity through on-going professional development and training regarding AIM to educators, students and families;
- develop and maintain regular outreach to professional education organizations, family organizations, advocacy groups, pre-service training programs and others regarding the identification, selection, acquisition and use of AIM;
- develop strategies to effectively coordinate with existing services;
- identify and disseminate resources developed by national and international entities.

APPENDIX E

Comparison of National and Maine Visual Impairment Identification Rates as a Percentage of Children Served



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