

# Board of Education Agenda Item

Item: \_\_\_\_\_ B. \_\_\_\_\_

Date: November 17, 2009

**Topic:** Final Review of the Advisory Board on Teacher Education and Licensure's Recommendation Regarding the Certification of Braille Instructors in Response to the Virginia General Assembly House Bill 2224

**Presenter:** Mrs. Patty S. Pitts, Assistant Superintendent for Teacher Education and Licensure

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## Origin:

Topic presented for information only (no board action required)

Board review required by  
 State or federal law or regulation  
 Board of Education regulation  
 Other: \_\_\_\_\_

Action requested at this meeting  Action requested at future meeting: \_\_\_\_\_ (date)

## Previous Review/Action:

No previous board review/action

Previous review/action  
date October 22, 2009  
action First Review

## Background Information:

The 2009 Virginia General Assembly enacted the following House Bill 2224, Chapter 202, regarding Braille certification:

*§ 1. That by December 31, 2009, the Advisory Board on Teacher Education and Licensure, in consultation with the Department for the Blind and Vision Impaired, shall make recommendations to the Board of Education and the Chairmen of the House Committee on Education and the Senate Committee on Education and Health regarding the certification of Braille instructors.*

In consultation with the Department for the Blind and Vision Impaired, the Advisory Board on Teacher Education and Licensure (ABTEL) began discussions regarding Braille instruction, certification, and licensure. On March 16, 2009, the Advisory Board received a presentation from Mrs. Anne Wescott, assistant superintendent, Division of Policy and Communications, Virginia

Department of Education, on the proposed Braille legislation. On April 20, 2009, ABTEL received additional background information from Mrs. Patty Pitts, assistant superintendent for teacher education and licensure, Virginia Department of Education, and Mr. Glen Slonneger, education services program director, Department for the Blind and Vision Impaired. During the April 20, 2009, meeting, the Advisory Board approved a committee to research the policy issues and make recommendations to the full Advisory Board.

ABTEL's committee on Braille convened July 8 and August 5, 2009. At the meeting on August 5, 2009, Dr. Edward C. Bell, director of the Professional Development and Research Institute on Blindness, Louisiana Technology University, and Mr. Michael Kasey, National Federation of the Blind, met with the committee to present information on The National Literary Braille Competency Test.

The Advisory Board on Teacher Education and Licensure met on September 20-21, 2009, to review the committee's report and make a recommendation to the Board of Education. The Advisory Board received the report of the committee including research on Braille instruction, authority regarding Braille instruction, licensure assessments, the current teacher work force with endorsements in visual impairments, Virginia's consortium to prepare teachers of visual impairments, requirements of other states, and available Braille assessments.

### **Summary of Major Elements:**

Attached is the Advisory Board on Teacher Education and Licensure's Report to the Board of Education on the 2009 Virginia General Assembly House Bill 2224 Regarding Braille Certification. On September 20-21, 2009, the Advisory Board on Teacher Education and Licensure unanimously approved the following recommendation to the Board of Education:

The Advisory Board unanimously recommends to the Board of Education that a reliable, valid, and legally defensible assessment available statewide (to be determined) demonstrating Braille proficiency prescribed by the Virginia Board of Education be required for individuals seeking an initial license with an endorsement in Special Education-Visual Impairments. [The Department of Education shall follow policies and procedures relative to the procurement of such an assessment.] Additionally, contingent upon available funding, opportunities for licensed teachers with the endorsement in Visual Impairments be afforded additional professional development in the teaching of Braille through the Virginia Department of Education and the Department for the Blind and Vision Impaired. The Advisory Board supports the Virginia Board of Education's efforts to include teachers of visual impairments in the *Standards of Quality* funding formula.

### **Superintendent's Recommendation:**

The Superintendent of Public Instruction recommends that the Board of Education approve the Advisory Board on Teacher Education and Licensure's recommendation on Braille certification in response to the 2009 Virginia General Assembly House Bill 2224.

**Impact on Resources:**

The cost for a Braille assessment, if prescribed by the Board of Education, would be incurred by the test taker seeking an initial license with an endorsement in visual impairments.

**Timetable for Further Review/Action:**

After final review by the Board of Education, the recommendation will be forwarded to the Chairmen of the House Committee on Education and the Senate Committee on Education and Health by December 31. Additional work will be required prior to recommending a reliable, valid, and legally defensible assessment for individuals seeking an initial Virginia license with an endorsement in Special Education-Visual Impairments. The Department of Education personnel must follow laws, policies, and procedures relative to the procurement of an assessment.

**ADVISORY BOARD ON TEACHER EDUCATION  
AND LICENSURE**

***REPORT TO THE BOARD OF EDUCATION  
ON THE  
2009 VIRGINIA GENERAL ASSEMBLY  
HOUSE BILL 2224 REGARDING BRAILLE CERTIFICATION***

**October 22, 2009, and November 17, 2009**

**Background**

The 2009 Virginia General Assembly enacted the following House Bill 2224 regarding Braille:

**VIRGINIA GENERAL ASSEMBLY, HOUSE BILL 2224**

**CHAPTER 202**

*An Act to direct the Advisory Board on Teacher Education and Licensure, in consultation with the Department for the Blind and Vision Impaired, to make recommendations regarding the certification of Braille instructors.*

[H 2224]

Approved March 27, 2009

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of Virginia:

*§ 1. That by December 31, 2009, the Advisory Board on Teacher Education and Licensure, in consultation with the Department for the Blind and Vision Impaired, shall make recommendations to the Board of Education and the Chairmen of the House Committee on Education and the Senate Committee on Education and Health regarding the certification of Braille instructors.*

In consultation with the Department for the Blind and Vision Impaired, the Advisory Board on Teacher Education and Licensure (ABTEL) began discussions regarding Braille instruction, certification, and licensure. On March 16, 2009, the Advisory Board received a presentation from Mrs. Anne Wescott, assistant superintendent, Division of Policy and Communications, Virginia Department of Education, on the proposed legislation on Braille. On April 20, 2009, ABTEL received additional background information from Mrs. Patty Pitts, assistant superintendent for teacher education and licensure, Virginia Department of Education, and Mr. Glen Slonneger, education services program director, Department for the Blind and Vision Impaired. During the meeting on April 20, 2009, the Advisory Board approved a committee to research the policy issues and make recommendations to the full Advisory Board. Refer to Attachment A for the composition of the committee.

ABTEL's committee on Braille convened July 8 and August 5, 2009. At the meeting on August 5, 2009, Dr. Edward C. Bell, director of the Professional Development and Research Institute on Blindness, Louisiana Technology University, and Mr. Michael Kasey, National Federation of the Blind, met with the committee to present information on The National Literary Braille Competency Test. The Advisory Board on Teacher Education and Licensure met on September 20-21, 2009, to review the committee's report and make a recommendation to the Board of Education. The Advisory Board received the report of the

committee including research on Braille instruction, authority regarding Braille instruction, licensure assessments, the current teacher work force with endorsements in visual impairments, Virginia's consortium to prepare teachers of visual impairments, requirements of other states, and available Braille assessments.

**Research:**

**Articles:**

*The Braille Literacy Crisis in America: Facing the Truth, Reversing the Trend, Empowering the Blind* [A Report to the Nation by the National Federation of the Blind Jernigan Institute]

[http://www.nfb.org/images/nfb/documents/word/The\\_Braille\\_Literacy\\_Crisis\\_In\\_America.doc](http://www.nfb.org/images/nfb/documents/word/The_Braille_Literacy_Crisis_In_America.doc)

*Keeping Our Promises: Braille Competency Test Now a Reality*, by Louis Walch

<http://www.nfb.org/images/nfb/Publications/bm/bm08/bm0807/bm080710.htm>

*A Fresh Look at Braille* by Jim Halliday, Closing the Gap, Inc.

<http://www.kurzweilededu.com/files/Dec%20Jan%20Fresh%20Look.pdf>

*Fewer Blind Americans Learning Braille*, MSNBC.com

<http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/29882719/>

**Documents:**

*What is Braille?*, Virginia's Braille Awareness Guide, Produced by the Virginia Department for the Visually Handicapped and the Virginia Department of Education

*Braille Instruction*, compiled by Teresa Blythe, Mid-South Regional Resource Center, University of Kentucky [This document provides information regarding other states' use of competency tests for Braille.]

National Certification in Literary Braille (NCLB)

Braille Training or Workshops Held by the Virginia Department for the Visually Impaired

**Authority Related to Braille Instruction and Preparation of Teachers**

Federal Special Education Regulations: 34 CFR Parts 300 and 301 Assistance to States for the Education of Children with Disabilities and Preschool Grants for Children With Disabilities; Final Rule

**§ 300.324 Development, review, and revision of IEP.**

...(iii) In the case of a child who is blind or visually impaired, provide for instruction in Braille and the use of Braille unless the IEP Team determines, after an evaluation of the child's reading and writing skills, needs, and appropriate reading and writing media (including an evaluation of the child's future needs for instruction in Braille or the use of Braille), that instruction in Braille or the use of Braille is not appropriate for the child;...

*Code of Virginia*

§ 22.1-217. Visually impaired children.

A. Special education for visually impaired children provided by a school division shall be established, maintained and operated jointly by the school board and the Virginia Department for the Blind and Vision Impaired subject to the regulations of the Board of Education. Braille instruction shall be included in the student's Individualized Education Plan (IEP), whenever appropriate. When developing the IEP for students with visual impairment, the presumption shall be that proficiency in literacy is essential for such student to achieve satisfactory educational progress. However, use of Braille shall not be required if other special education services are more appropriate to the student's educational needs, and the provision of other appropriate services shall not preclude Braille instruction.

B. The Virginia Department for the Blind and Vision Impaired shall prepare and deliver a program of special education services in addition to the special education provided in the public school system designed to meet the educational needs of visually impaired children between the ages of birth and twenty-one and may prepare and deliver such programs for such individuals of other ages. In the development of such a program, the Virginia Department for the Blind and Vision Impaired shall cooperate with the Board of Education and the school boards of the several school divisions. The Virginia Department for the Blind and Vision Impaired shall assist the Board of Education and the school boards of the several school divisions with in-service training in Braille for currently employed teachers of students who are blind and visually impaired.

C. As used in this section:

"Braille" means the system of reading and writing through touch and is commonly known as standard English Braille Grade 2.

"Program" means a modified program which provides special materials or services and may include the employment of itinerant teachers or resource room teachers for the visually impaired.

"Visually impaired" shall be defined by the Board of Education and the Virginia Department for the Blind and Vision Impaired.

(Code 1950, § 22-10.7; 1974, c. 480; 1978, c. 386; 1980, c. 559; 1990, c. 803; 1992, c. 755; 1995, c. [750](#); 1998, c. [852](#).)

Virginia State Special Education Regulations

*8VAC20-81-110. Individualized education program.*

- ...2. The IEP team also shall: (34 CFR 300.324(a))
- a. In the case of a child whose behavior impedes the child's learning or that of others, consider the use of positive behavioral interventions, strategies, and supports to address the behavior;
  - b. In the case of a child with limited English proficiency, consider the language needs of the child as those needs relate to the child's IEP;
  - c. In the case of a child who is blind or visually impaired, provide for instruction in Braille and the use of Braille unless the IEP team determines after an evaluation of the child's reading and writing skills, needs, and appropriate reading and writing media, including an evaluation of the child's future needs for instruction in Braille or the use of Braille, that instruction in Braille or the use of Braille is not appropriate for the child;
  - d. Consider the communication needs of the child;
  - e. Consider the child's needs for benchmarks or short-term objectives;
  - f. In the case of a child who is deaf or hard of hearing, consider the child's language and communication needs, opportunities for direct communications with peers and professional personnel in the child's language and communication mode, academic level, and full range of needs, including opportunities for direct instruction in the child's language and communication mode; and
  - g. Consider whether the child requires assistive technology devices and services...

Code of Virginia

**§ 22.1-298.1. Regulations governing licensure.**

- B. The Board of Education shall prescribe, by regulation, the requirements for the licensure of teachers and other school personnel required to hold a license...

Licensure Regulations for School Personnel (effective September 21, 2007)

**8VAC20-22-550. Special education visual impairments preK-12.**

Endorsement requirements. The candidate must have:

1. Graduated from an approved teacher preparation program in special education visual impairments preK-12; or
2. Completed a major in special education visual impairments or 27 semester hours in education of students with visual impairments, including at least one course in foundations/legal aspects of special education; characteristics of persons with visual impairments; psycho-educational assessment and assessment for visual impairment; language/literacy skill development; Braille reading and writing; behavior management; transition; consultation; anatomy, physiology, and diseases of the eye; and instructional programming and methods.

Regulations Governing the Review and Approval of Education Programs in Virginia (effective September 21, 2007)

**8VAC20-542-490. Special education visual impairments preK-12.**

The program in special education visual impairments preK-12 is designed to ensure through course work and field experiences in a variety of settings that the candidate has demonstrated the following competencies:

1. Understanding of the characteristics of individuals with disabilities, including...
2. Understanding of the foundation of the legal aspects associated with students with disabilities and students with visual impairments, including:...
3. Understanding of the foundation of assessment and evaluation with an emphasis on individuals with visual impairments, including:...

4. Understanding of service delivery, classroom and behavior management, and instruction, including:...
5. Understanding of consultation, case management, and collaboration including:...
6. Understanding of the foundations of Braille reading and writing, including:
  - a. Teaching reading and writing of grade 2 Braille on both a Braille writer and a "slate and stylus"; and
  - b. Knowledge of other codes, including Nemeth, music code, and computer Braille.
7. Understanding of anatomy, physiology, and diseases of the eye and the educational implications.
8. Understanding of the standards of professionalism.
9. Completion of supervised classroom experiences at the elementary and secondary levels with students who have visual impairments.

### **Licensure Assessments**

Currently, Virginia requires the following assessments for individuals seeking an initial license with an endorsement in Special Education-Visual Impairments. Virginia does not offer a separate endorsement in Braille.

#### **Virginia Communication and Literacy Assessment (effective January 1, 2006)**

The Virginia Communication and Literacy Assessment became effective January 1, 2006, for initial licensure unless an individual meets the exemption criteria. Refer to the following Web site for more information about the test content, test dates, costs, accommodations for individuals with disabilities, and registration:

[www.va.nesinc.com](http://www.va.nesinc.com).

On March 22, 2006, the Board of Education approved cut scores for the Virginia Communication and Literacy Assessment (VCLA). The cut scores for the VCLA are as follows:

Writing Sub Test: 235  
Reading Sub Test: 235  
**Composite Score: 470**

**ADVISORY BOARD ON TEACHER  
EDUCATION AND LICENSURE**

**Report to the Board of Education**

**Virginia Reading Assessment (VRA)**

Individuals seeking initial licensure with endorsements in the following areas must take the Virginia Reading Assessment for Elementary and Special Education Teachers (Test Code 001) unless the exemption criteria are met:

- Early/Primary prek-3**
- Elementary Education prek-6**
- Special Education-General Curriculum**
- Special Education-Hearing Impairments**
- Special Education-Visual Impairments**

The VRA became a requirement July 1, 2004. Individuals who take the VRA after July 1, 2006, will be required to meet a passing score established by the Virginia Board of Education. The Board of Education established cut scores for the Virginia Reading Assessments for elementary and special education teachers at 235 and for reading specialists at 245, effective July 1, 2006. For information regarding registration, test administration, fees, etc., please visit the Web site, [www.va.nesinc.com](http://www.va.nesinc.com).

**Teacher Work Force with the Endorsement in Special Education-Visual Impairments PreK-12**

As of April 8, 2009, 325 individuals held an active Virginia license with the Special Education-Visual Impairments (VI) endorsement. There were 318 inactive Virginia licenses with the Visual Impairments endorsement. The chart below provides the number of teachers with the Visual Impairments endorsement by age bracket and license (active or inactive):

**Teachers by Age Bracket with Visual Impairments Endorsement  
As of April 8, 2009**

Age Bracket	Active Licenses with the Visual Impairments Endorsement		Inactive Licenses with the Visual Impairments Endorsement	
Less than 30 years	18	5.5%	5	1.6%
30 to 34 years	14	4.3%	5	1.6%
35 to 39 years	18	5.5%	14	4.4%
40 to 44 years	40	12.3%	18	5.7%
45 to 49 years	44	13.5%	24	7.5%
50 to 54 years	56	17.2%	56	17.6%
55 to 59 years	90	27.7%	73	23.0%
60 to 64 years	35	10.8%	63	19.8%
65 years or more	10	3.1%	60	18.9%
<b>Totals</b>	<b>325</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>318</b>	<b>100%</b>

Note that 191 (59 percent) of the teachers with an active Visual Impairments endorsement are age 50 or older.

In the most recent Instructional Personnel Report (2008-09 school year), school divisions reported 67 teachers as teaching in a position where only the Visual Impairments endorsement was acceptable for the assignment and who were endorsed in Visual Impairments. School divisions reported two teachers who were assigned in a teaching position where only the Visual Impairments endorsement was acceptable and who held licenses but did not hold the Visual Impairments endorsement.

School divisions reported 20 individuals who are endorsed in Visual Impairments and who are teaching in an assignment where the VI endorsement, as well as other special education endorsements, is acceptable.

**Virginia Institutions of Higher Education Consortium: Visual Impairments Prek-12**

George Mason University, James Madison University, Norfolk State University, Old Dominion University, and Radford University offer the required coursework for the endorsement in Special Education-Visual Impairments Prek-12. The requirements include six semester hours Braille instruction, including Braille I and Braille II.

Information from 20 preparation visual impairment programs in the United States (from the U.S. Personnel Center, the National Association of State Directors of Special Education (NASDSE) database, April 2009) showed the following number of semester hours of coursework required in Braille:

<b>Number of Semester Hours of Braille</b>	<b>Number of Preparation Programs</b>
3	7
4	1
5	3
6	6 (including Virginia's consortium)
7	1
8	1
9	1

### **Braille Assessment Requirements in Other States**

The Mid-South Regional Resource Center conducted research in February 2009 to obtain national information on Braille assessment requirements in other states. The study reports, of the 23 states responding to the survey, Nebraska, Washington, Wisconsin, and West Virginia use the National Literacy Braille Competency Test. Arizona and Delaware require the National Library of Congress Braille Competency Test. Texas does require a Braille assessment administered by the Educational Testing Service.

### **Assessments in Braille**

The Advisory Board committee reviewed assessment options in Braille. Tests used for licensure purposes must be valid, reliable, and legally defensible assessments available statewide. The committee investigated and found the following information relative to current Braille assessments.

#### **National Certification in Literary Braille (NCLB)**

The National Blindness Professional Certification Board (NBPCB) [<http://www.nbpcb.org>] was created to certify qualified specialists in work with the blind. At present, the Certification Board offers two certifications - the National Orientation and Mobility Certification (NOMC), and the National Certification in Literary Braille (NCLB). Refer to Attachment B for additional information regarding the NCLB.

#### **National Evaluation Systems (Pearson)**

National Evaluation Systems (Pearson) does not have a Braille-only test at this time. The company offers content area tests for the Visually Impaired endorsement for multiple states. These tests have a Braille component, but also assess other areas. Among the states included are New York, Illinois, Oklahoma, Michigan, Colorado, and Arizona.

#### **Educational Testing Service (ETS)**

The Educational Testing Service administers a Braille-only test for the state of Texas. Information on the assessment may be accessed at the following Web site: [http://www.texas.ets.org/assets/pdf/testprep\\_manuals/182\\_183\\_visimpbraille\\_55101\\_web.pdf](http://www.texas.ets.org/assets/pdf/testprep_manuals/182_183_visimpbraille_55101_web.pdf) (Refer to page 49.) The state of Mississippi is also considering adopting this test for use in their state.

**Advisory Board on Teacher Education and Licensure's Recommendation**

The Advisory Board unanimously recommends to the Board of Education that a reliable, valid, and legally defensible assessment available statewide (to be determined) demonstrating Braille proficiency prescribed by the Virginia Board of Education be required for individuals seeking an initial license with an endorsement in Special Education-Visual Impairments. [The Department of Education shall follow policies and procedures relative to the procurement of such an assessment.] Additionally, contingent upon available funding, opportunities for licensed teachers with the endorsement in Visual Impairments be afforded additional professional development in the teaching of Braille through the Virginia Department of Education and the Department for the Blind and Vision Impaired. The Advisory Board supports the Virginia Board of Education's efforts to include teachers of visual impairments in the Standards of Quality funding formula.

## **ATTACHMENTS**

**Attachment A**

**Advisory Board on Teacher Education and Licensure  
Committee on Braille**

ABTEL Members

Tracey Dingus, Chair of ABTEL  
Carole Grove, Chair of the Teacher Education Committee  
Angela Turley, Member  
Dawn Rees-Blakeman, Member

Department for the Blind and Vision Impaired Representative

Glen Slonneger, Education Services Program Director

Department of Education Staff Resources

**Division of Teacher Education and Licensure**

Patty S. Pitts, Assistant Superintendent for Teacher Education and Licensure  
JoAnne Y. Carver, Director of Teacher Education  
James W. Lanham, III, Director of Licensure

**Division of Special Education and Student Services**

H. Douglas Cox, Assistant Superintendent for Special Education  
and Student Services  
John Eisenberg, Director of Instructional Support and Related Services  
Karen Trump, Special Education Coordinator

**Division of Policy**

Anne D. Wescott, Assistant Superintendent for Policy and Communications

## **Attachment B**

### **National Certification in Literary Braille (NCLB) Candidate Guidelines**

#### **SOURCE:**

[http://www.nbpcb.org/downloads/NCLBCertification/NCLB\\_Candidate\\_Guidelines.d](http://www.nbpcb.org/downloads/NCLBCertification/NCLB_Candidate_Guidelines.d)

[oc](#)

Revised 03/2008

#### **1.0 Overview**

The National Blindness Professional Certification Board (NBPCB) has established rigorous standards for certifying competent professionals who wish to demonstrate their knowledge and proficiency in reading and writing the literary Braille code. Successful applicants who earn the designation, National Certification in Literary Braille (NCLB), associated with the National Literary Braille Competency Test (NLBCT) are entitled to all rights and responsibilities therein as long as he or she maintains active certification status and upholds the NBPCB Code of Professional Ethics.

The National Literary Braille Competency Test (NLBCT) is used to measure the level of a person's ability to read and write contracted literary Braille. Although the test can be taken by anyone, it is intended primarily for teachers of Braille and future teachers of Braille. The test has been revised and thoroughly pilot tested, and is now ready for public release.

#### **1.1 History**

The original Braille competency test was maintained and administered by the National Library Service for the Blind and Physically Handicapped (NLS) of the Library of Congress. It was developed in response to a recommendation of the Committee on Joint Organizational Effort (JOE), which was made up of representatives from the American Council of the Blind, the American Foundation for the Blind, the Association for Education and Rehabilitation of the Blind and Visually Impaired, the Blinded Veterans Association, the Canadian Council of the Blind, the Canadian National Institute for the Blind, the National Federation of the Blind, and The National Library Service for the Blind and Physically Handicapped (NLS) of the Library of Congress. The promotion of Braille literacy, and thus the development of the test, was born out of the committee's concern that teachers of blind children and adults should have sufficient knowledge and skills in Braille.

In 2005, the National Federation of the Blind (NFB) was asked to take over leading the development of the test. The NFB, along with a steering committee of experts in the field, including members of the National Blindness Professional Certification Board (NBPCB),

has reviewed, updated, and revised the test to meet today's needs in the field. The target population of individuals who will take the test is now seen as including pre and in-service teachers who teach or will teach Braille reading and writing to children and adults, and other individuals interested in demonstrating their knowledge/proficiency in reading and writing the Braille literary code as defined in the 1994 version of the *English Braille American Edition* (EBAE) Revised in 2002.

In March, 2007, it was decided that the National Blindness Professional Certification Board (NBPCB) should lead in the final stages of test development. The revised test is now in finished form, and is administered solely under the direction of the NBPCB.

*Important note: The test materials were only slightly modified to reflect changes in purpose and target population. The test has not been substantially changed from its earlier version administered by the NLS. However, those who take the test now have the advantage of becoming candidates to receive the National Certification in Literary Braille (NCLB).*

### **1.2 Structure of the Test**

The NLBCT is a written examination that tests an applicant's ability to read, write, and understand literary Braille. The examination consists of four sections:

1. Braille writing using a Braille writer
2. Braille writing using a slate and stylus
3. Proofreading, identifying Braille errors
4. Multiple choice questions, correct usage and rules

(See Section 4.0 for more details.)

### **1.3 Important Terminology**

**CBMR:** Consumer Based Model of Rehabilitation refers to the collective knowledge, experiences, and attitudes of the organized blind who have achieved economic, social, and community integration.

**CBP:** Certified Blindness Professional, as determined by the National Blindness Professional Certification Board (NBPCB).

**JOE:** Joint Organizational Effort. The committee that worked collaboratively in the development and testing of the NLBCT.

**NBPCB:** The National Blindness Professional Certification Board, which is the body responsible for all certification activities, policies, and decisions.

NCLB: National Certification in Literary Braille. The professional credential awarded to successful applicants who receive a passing score on all four sections of the NLBCT. This certification attests that the candidate has successfully demonstrated the capacity to effectively read, write, and understand literary Braille.

NLBCT: National Literary Braille Competency Test is used to measure the level of a person's ability to read and write contracted literary Braille. Although the test can be taken by anyone, it is intended primarily for teachers of Braille and future teachers of Braille.

NLS: National Library Service for the Blind and Physically Handicapped is the sector of the library of Congress which formerly administered the NLBCT.

EBAE: English Braille American Edition, the only reference allowed to be used during the NLBCT.

## **2.0 Preparation and Eligibility**

There are no prerequisites for taking the National Literary Braille Competency Test. Interested individuals can make application to the NBPCB to sit for the test. It is presumed that applicants have received adequate preparation in learning to read and write literary—sometimes called contracted—Braille. This section contains the relevant information covered by the test and tips for test preparation. Please direct all further inquiries to the NBPCB office.

The test covers contracted literary Braille. The official reference of the test is the 1994 edition of EBAE Revised in 2002, available for purchase from APH. Not all of EBAE is covered in the test. The following are helpful preparations:

- Taking the sample test which is available to download from the NBPCB Web site <http://www.nbpcb.org/pages/downloaddocuments.php>
- Studying a literary Braille instruction manual
- Taking a college course in Braille
- Taking the Library of Congress course in Braille transcribing through lesson fifteen
- Reading recently published literary Braille
- Writing literary Braille using both a Braille writer and a slate and stylus

## **3.0 Application Process**

All individuals wishing to demonstrate their proficiency in the literary Braille code may submit an application to the National Blindness Professional Certification Board. No application will be processed until the NBPCB has received the full application and fee. In addition, the applicant must submit a signed NBPCB Code of Professional Ethics Agreement form before the exam will be administered. This may be brought to the testing site with the applicant, faxed to (318) 257-2259, or mailed to NBPCB, NCLB Application, 101 S Trenton St, Ruston, LA 71270.

### **3.1 Application**

Candidates may apply online at [www.nbpcb.org/nclb/application](http://www.nbpcb.org/nclb/application) or contact the NBPCB office at (318) 257-4554 for a paper application.

Allow up to three weeks for online applications, and up to six weeks for paper applications to be processed.

### **3.2 Registration**

After your application has been processed, you will be contacted by the NBPCB to confirm your testing date, time, location, and any other relevant information related to taking the exam.

### **3.3 Test Locations and Dates**

The test will be held at a minimum of two (2) locations annually. In addition, the test may be convened by arrangement when all of the following are present:

- An appropriate number of applicants will be present to take the exam
- At least two (2) NBPCB appointed test administrative staff are available
- An acceptable test site can be procured

For current information regarding testing locations and dates, check the Web page, [www.nbpcb.org/announcements](http://www.nbpcb.org/announcements), or contact the NBPCB office.

### **3.4 Accommodations**

Any candidate who has a disability that prevents them from taking the test under standard testing conditions, may request reasonable modifications. This is possible if the candidate submits proper documentation well ahead of time. All documentation and specific requests must be received by the NBPCB office at least 30 business days prior to the testing date.

Please be aware that the NBPCB makes its best effort to provide as many accessibility options as possible; however, the test is currently limited to print (18-pt) and Braille.

#### **3.4.1 Pre-approved Accommodations**

The use of the following items have been pre-approved for blind or visually impaired candidates, and do not require additional documentation:

- Hand-held magnifier
- Closed Circuit Television (CCTV)
- Felt-tip marker

### **3.5 Code of Professional Ethics**

At the time of application, candidates are expected to be familiar with the NBPCB code of professional ethics. The candidate is expected to have read, understood, and be willing to abide by the Code of Professional Ethics. The applicant and a witness must sign the NBPCB Code of Professional Ethics Agreement form. Both the Code of Professional Ethics and Agreement form are available from the NBPCB office or Web page.

### **3.6 Fees**

A \$250.00 application fee must be submitted with the application before an examination date will be set. (See Section 8.0-8.3 for information on payment).

### **4.0 Examination Process**

The test consists of four (4) sections. The instructions, test passages, and questions, will be provided to all candidates in print (18-pt.) and a combination of contracted and uncontracted Braille.

Up to six (6) hours is allowed to take the entire test. Two sections will be presented in the morning session and two sections will be presented in the afternoon session. There will be a 10-minute break between the two morning sections and a 10-minute break between the two afternoon sections. There will also be a one-hour lunch break.

The four sections of the test are outlined in the table below:

SECTION:	TIME:	DESCRIPTION:
1. Braille writer	Two (2) hours	Contains passages that candidates will Braille using a Braille writer.
2. Slate and Stylus	One (1) hour	Contains passages that candidates will Braille using a slate and stylus.
3. Proofreading	Two (2) hours	Contains Braille passages with embedded errors which candidates must identify.
4. Multiple Choice	One (1) hour	Contains approximately 40 multiple choice questions.

The only reference that candidates may use during the test is a copy of *English Braille, American Edition, 1994* (EBAE), which is provided by the Test Administrator in print or Braille. This reference may be used during the entire test. Please note that candidates must use the copy of EBAE provided and may not use their own personal copy during the test.

Different versions of the examination will be administered to ensure integrity and confidentiality during each testing cycle. However, each version will entail the following components:

- Candidates will have a maximum of six (6) hours to complete the examination.

- The examination instructions will be available in print and Braille
- The examination content will be available in print and a mixture of contracted and uncontracted Braille
- The examination will occur in a well-lighted and quiet location
- There will be a scheduled break between each test section
- All examinations will be directly proctored by NBPCB staff
- All examinations will be scored by a panel of qualified test scorers

**4.1 Equipment Candidates Should and Should Not Bring to the Test Site**

The following table lists what candidates should and should not bring to the test site:

CANDIDATES SHOULD BRING:	CANDIDATES SHOULD NOT BRING:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A Braille writer capable of making 40-cell lines</li> <li>• A slate and stylus</li> <li>• A Braille eraser</li> <li>• Pens</li> <li>• Pencils (optional)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Laptop computers</li> <li>• Electronic notetakers</li> <li>• Refreshable Braille displays</li> <li>• Cellphones</li> <li>• Notes or references</li> </ul>

*Note: Any notes, equipment, or paraphernalia not directly related to the test must be left outside the testing area. Any questions about acceptable equipment or accommodations, should be addressed to the NBPCB office in writing at least 30 business days prior to the test date. See also sections 3.4 and 3.4.1 for more details.*

**4.2 Stopping or Canceling the Exam**

The examination can be stopped by the Test Administrator or the applicant for the following reasons:

- The time limit is exceeded
- The test administrator deems that successful completion is impossible or unlikely
- Testing facility conditions deteriorate to the point that it prevents normal performance or evaluation
- The applicant does not want to continue
- The Test Administrator feels that the applicant is overly stressed or overwhelmed to the point that it affects performance
- The test administrator has evidence or adequate suspicion that the applicant is cheating or otherwise manipulating the test
- There is a fault in necessary equipment used during the test.

If the test is stopped or canceled for any of the above reasons, the applicant may choose to reschedule the exam within six months of the initial test, or 18 months of the initial application date, whichever comes first. Retesting fees will be assessed accordingly (see

Section 8.1). If the test is stopped or canceled for any reason that is outside the control of the applicant, the exam may be rescheduled within the indicated time frame at no additional cost to the applicant.

### **4.3 Grading of Examinations**

Test results are solely based on individual performance. The following is a list of areas covered throughout the test with their respective percentage weights:

- Basic knowledge including letters and numbers      1%
- Contractions      68%
- Common punctuation and composition      26%
- Formatting      5%

*Important note: Candidates should be advised that grading is based on accuracy. Speed is not currently being tested except to the extent that the applicant completes the test within the given time frame.*

#### **4.3.1 Reporting of Examination Scores**

All examination scores will be turned into the NBPCB office by the test administrator. The NBPCB office will then determine successful/unsuccessful test completion, and scores will be mailed to the candidate within 30 days of completing all sections of the examination. Candidates will receive scores for each of the four test sections, as well as an indication of overall performance. The NBPCB will also send score reports to up to three other institutions designated by the candidate.

Candidates who successfully pass all sections of the test are eligible to receive the National Certification in Literary Braille (NCLB), and will receive an NCLB identification number and an original copy of the NCLB certificate. If the applicant fails to pass any section of the examination, he/she will be mailed a letter detailing which sections were failed and guidelines for retesting.

### **5.0 Retesting Procedures**

If an applicant does not pass the certification examination on the first attempt, he/she should retake the examination in part or in full. The following guidelines apply to applicants who must retest:

- If the candidate fails only one section, then that section may be retaken.
- Any single section of the test that is failed must be retaken within six months of the initial test, or 18 months from the application date, whichever comes first.
- If the candidate fails more than one section, then all sections of the test must be retaken.
- A fee will apply each time a test or test section is re-taken.

- If any section of the examination is failed three (3) times, the applicant cannot apply for certification again until additional NBPCB approved training is received.

The candidate will be notified of examination scores within sixty (60) days of taking the examination. If the candidate is notified that one or more sections of the test are failed, he or she must contact the NBPCB office to schedule a time to retake the examination. The NBPCB office will provide the applicant with a re-examination place and date after the appropriate fees are paid. Scores for the retesting will be mailed to the applicant within sixty (60) days after completion of the exam. All examination procedures will be the same as the original examination (see Section 4.0).

### **6.0 Code of Professional Ethics and Grievance Procedures**

All Certified Blindness Professionals (CBPs), working at all professional levels, shall treat persons who are blind or partially blind with dignity and respect and will provide the best possible training and related vocational rehabilitation services which can be offered, based upon the most current techniques and training principles available at the time.

The National Blindness Professional Certification Board's (NBPCB) Code of Professional Ethics is a public statement of the values and principles used to promote and maintain high standards of behavior among those specialists in work with the blind who become Certified Blindness Professionals (including NCLB) through the NBPCB certification processes. The NBPCB is committed to furthering the ability of persons who are blind or partially blind to function competently, independently, and successfully not only in their own environments but also as fully integrated and participating citizens in the broader society. It is the ongoing objective of CBPs to act in an ethical manner.

#### **6.1 Abiding by the Code**

All individuals who earn the National Certification in Literary Braille (NCLB) are obliged to conduct themselves in a manner consistent with the NBPCB Code of Professional Ethics. As part of the NCLB application process, individuals must read, understand, and be willing to abide by the Code of Professional Ethics. An agreement form will be included with the application packet which must be signed by the individual seeking NCLB designation and witnessed by a second person. The code of professional ethics and agreement form are also available for download from the NBPCB Web page.

#### **6.2 Grievance**

Any allegation of a violation of the Code of Professional Ethics shall be submitted in writing to the President (or his/her designee) for action. Where there is incontrovertible evidence of a violation of the Code by a current certificant which is not supported by written allegation, the Board has the authority to proceed with prosecution of the issue as though a complaint had been filed.

Within ten (10) days of the receipt of a written allegation of violation of the Code of Professional Ethics, the President (or his/her designee) shall name a three-member panel to review the allegation and shall furnish each member with a written copy of the complaint. The three (3) reviewers may be members of the NBPCB Board of Directors or the NCLB committee. The President shall name one of the three appointees as chairperson of the review panel.

Within twenty (20) days of receipt of the written allegation, the Chairperson of the review panel shall report the findings and recommendations of the panel to the President (or his/her designee) in writing, and the President shall notify the respondent in writing of the findings and recommendations of the panel.

### **6.3 Disciplinary Procedures**

Any intentional violation of any section of the Code of Professional Ethics shall be prima facia evidence of a CBP's affirmative decision to choose voluntarily to relinquish NBPCB certification and to forfeit all rights or privileges which inure to a person by reason of holding NCLB certification. Where the finding of the panel has been either to recommend suspension or revocation of certification, the respondent may request that the entire NBPCB Board review the decision of the panel (see Section 7.0). This request must be in writing and submitted to the President within ten (10) days of receipt by the respondent of the panel's adverse decision.

Where a CBP's certification has been revoked, the respondent may apply for re-certification after one full year has elapsed following the final revocation. It will be the responsibility of the respondent to demonstrate to the Board that a good faith effort has been made to correct the acts or practices giving rise to the revocation. A written request for re-instatement of certification must be submitted directly to the President, and the Board shall determine whether or not to reinstate certification. The respondent may not simply apply for certification through the usual certification application process.

### **7.0 Appealing Certification Decisions**

Eligibility criteria for certification are established by the Board of Directors of the NBPCB, and the decisions of the board are binding. Unsuccessful candidates will receive a written denial of certification. A process of appeal upon written submission is available to any denied candidate who feels that the eligibility criteria have been inaccurately, inconsistently, or unfairly applied.

The process of appeal does NOT permit:

- Additional time to acquire education, employment experience or supervision required for certification.
- Additional time to submit the documentation required for certification.

### **7.1 The Appeal Process**

There is one level of appeal in the event of denial of initial certification or recertification. This structure assures:

- A review of the relevant facts
- An independent evaluation of the materials presented
- Fair and consistent application of eligibility criteria

The appellant must send to the NBPCB Board a written request for appeal, by certified mail postmarked within thirty (30) days of official receipt of the letter of denial. The request for appeal must include in a single packet: a signed statement of the grounds for appeal and all relevant documentation in support thereof. Only documentation included with the first appeal request will be considered.

The decision will be made by majority vote of the NBPCB Board. All documentation will be reviewed and discussed by each member of the NBPCB Board before an appeal is voted on. The majority decision of the board is binding.

### **8.0 Fees and Payment**

Following is a list of the applicable fees for certification and acceptable methods of payment. Applications will not be processed if the appropriate fee is not paid in full at the time the application is submitted.

#### **8.1 Fees**

Application Fee – \$250.00

Retest Fee – \$250.00

Single Section – \$75.00 (each section)

Certificate Replacement Fee – \$20.00

#### **8.2 Payment Information**

All fees can be paid online by credit card or PayPal account. Fees may alternatively be paid by personal check, bank draft, or money order. All payments should be made out to:

**NBPCB**

NCLB Application

101 South Trenton Street

Ruston, LA 71270

### **8.3 Non-Sufficient Funds (NSF) Policy**

A fee of \$25.00 will be charged for any returned check due to NSF. Fees must then be paid by bank draft or money order. No services will be provided by NBPCB until the application fee is paid in full.

### **8.4 Refund Policy**

If for some reason the applicant does not wish to take the exam after submitting his or her application, \$150 of the total application fee will be refunded upon the applicant's request. If a test date has already been scheduled, the \$150 will only be refunded if applicants cancel 30 days prior to taking the examination. All other fees are non-refundable.

### **9.0 Recertification Program**

The National Blindness Professional Certification Board (NBPCB) recognizes the need for blindness professionals to continue their education and training in order to remain current on innovations and policies in the field. Individuals who successfully achieve NCLB certification will retain valid certification status for five (5) years from the date printed on the original certificate. Once the initial certification has lapsed, the individual must reapply to the NBPCB for recertification in order to maintain active NCLB certification. The NBPCB Recertification Program is designed to ensure that certificants maintain their competence in reading and writing literary Braille. At the end of the five year period, an individual holding certification can only be recertified by successfully completing a new version of the NLBCT examination. More information will be available soon. You may also contact the NBPCB office or visit the Web page at <http://www.nbpcb.org/nclb/recertification> to see if this information has been updated.

### **10.0 Contact Information**

Please direct all applications and inquiries to:

NBPCB Coordinator  
101 S Trenton  
Ruston, LA  
Ph: (318) 257-4554  
Fax: (318) 257-2295  
[Braille@nbpcb.org](mailto:Braille@nbpcb.org)  
[www.nbpcb.org](http://www.nbpcb.org)