

**Georgia Department of Education  
Twin Towers East  
Atlanta, Georgia 30334  
(404) 656-2084 FAX (404) 651-8507**

November 7, 1995

**MEMORANDUM**

TO: Superintendent  
Curriculum Directors  
Special Education Directors

FROM: Calvin C. Gill  
Deputy State Superintendent of Schools

SUBJECT: Braille Legislation

This memorandum will advise you of legislation passed by the General Assembly which impact services to students with visual impairments in Georgia's schools. Attached is information about House Bill 492 with a summary of the specific requirements of the legislation and a list of Instruments for Assessing Learning Media.

Students who are legally blind must be assessed to identify need for Braille instruction by March 1, 1996. The IEP must address the results of the assessment and decisions made about Braille instruction>

Staff development activities regarding the evaluation process and other requirements of House Bill 492 are being planned and will be provided in the near future. If you have any questions, please contact Ms. Marie Amerson at (912) 751-6096.

CCG:rt

Attachment

cc: Mrs. Linda Schrenko  
RESA Directors  
GLRS Directors

## Blind Persons' Literacy Rights and Education Act

House Bill 492 passed in 1994 by the General Assembly of Georgia amended Title 30 of the Official Code of Georgia Annotated to include a new chapter designated as Chapter 7, the "Blind Persons' Literacy Rights and Education Act." The act requires that students identified as blind be evaluated for appropriate learning media and instruction in Braille provided to those for whom a tactile medium is appropriate.

It has been determined that many of the requirements of the act can be incorporated within current special education procedures. The following information is an interpretation of the act and its relation to current special education rules.

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| <p>1. <b>Eligible Students</b> – The act defines<br/>Students to covered as those who are meet the definition of legal blindness: OR<br/>Students who are eligible for special education AND who have a medically indicated expectation of visual deterioration.</p> <p>1. <b>Procedure Requirements</b> – The act requires formal evaluation of the students to determine appropriate learning media.</p> <p>Documentation of evaluation and related instructional activities will be included as part of the IEP process. Compliance with theses requirements will be determined during a local system or state-operated school program review.</p> | <p>1. Current regulation defines students with visual impairments who are eligible for special education.</p> <p>1. Formal evaluation procedures to determine appropriate learning media must be a part of the IEP process for students who are legally blind. This provision of instruction related to learning media must be addressed in the annual goals and short-term objectives. Information must be addressed in the IEP to insure documentation of the evaluation and resulting instructional activities. A sample IEP will be developed to assist school system in documenting compliance with procedural requirements.</p> <p>Documentation of assessment for learning media will also become a component of the annual January registration of students submitted to the LEA Resource Center. The effective date is January 1997.</p> |
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In summary, the IEP of any student who meets the criteria of legal blindness must specify:

<u>REQUIREMENT</u>	<u>SECTION OF IEP</u>
* Results obtained from an evaluation Conducted for the purpose of determining the need for Braille skills;	Present Level of Performance

IEPs of those students for whom Braille instruction is indicated must also include:

<u>REQUIREMENT</u>	<u>SECTION OF IEP</u>
* How instruction in Braille will be implemented through integration with other classroom activities;	Annual Goals and Short Term Objectives
* Date of initiation and duration of Braille instruction	Specific Special Education and Related Services to be Provided
* Frequency and duration of each Braille instructional session;	Specific Special Education and Related Services to be Provided
* Competency level to be achieved in Braille reading and writing;	Annual Goals and Short Term Objectives
* Objective assessment measures to determine student competency in Braille reading and writing;	Short Term Objectives

IEPs of those students for whom Braille instruction is not indicate must also include:

* Documentation in the minutes of the meeting that the absence of Braille instruction will not impair the student's ability to read and write effectively.	Mintues of IEP Meeting
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A list of appropriate evaluation instruments currently available is attached. The evaluation should be completed by a teacher certified in the area of visual impairments. The evaluation must consider at least the following areas: appropriate medical assessments including a current eye report from an optometrist or ophthalmologist; low vision evaluation for students who are not totally blind; functional vision assessment,

and educational assessments which may include cognitive levels, achievements, and reading skills.

## **INSTRUMENTS FOR ASSESSING LEARNING IN MEDIA**

A useful instrument for evaluating a student for the need for Braille instruction is Learning Media Assessment of Students with Visual Impairments (LMA) by Koenig and Holbrook. This resource guide gives an objective process for systematically selecting learning and literacy media for students with visual impairments.

The LMA gathers information about:

- The efficiency with which a student gathers information from various sensory channels
- The types of general learning media the student uses, or will use, to accomplish learning tasks
- The literacy media the student will use for reading and writing

General learning media includes both instructional material (such as pictures, rulers, worksheets) and instructional methods (such as demonstrations, modeling, prompting).

Another instrument is the Functional Vision and Media Assessment by Sanford and Burnett. This functional vision and media assessment is designed for students who are pre-academic or academic in Grades K-12. It is primarily for students with visual impairments and not for those who are blind. It includes the followings:

- General student data
- Eye report information
- Cumulative folder review
- Interviews with parent, classroom teachers, student
- Classroom observation
- Functional vision observation
- Report form for sharing results of the assessment

The American Printing House for the Blind (APH) publishes in Print and Braille Literacy: Selecting Appropriate Learning Media by Caton. The publication includes personal comments about literacy by blind and visually impaired persons. It also contains the following.

- Basic principles of literacy
- Assessment and evaluation
- Guidelines for decision making in selection of learning media
- References
- Statistical data

Tools for Selecting Appropriate Learning Media, also published by APH is an extension of Print and Braille Literacy: Selecting Appropriate Learning Media. The manual, edited by Hilda Caton, is designed to help making decisions about students' use of braille, print, or both as their primary reading medium/media. Appendices contain checklists and questionnaires about each stage of the assessment process and lists assessment instruments and references for further information.

Instruments for Assessing Learning Media  
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Koenig, Alan and Cay Holbrook. Learning Media Assessment of Students with Visual Impairments.  
Texas School for the Blind, 110 West 45<sup>th</sup> Street, Austin, TX 78756. Copyright 1993 (\$20.)

Sanford, LaRhea and Rebecca Burnett. Functional Vision and Media Assessment. Consultants  
for the Visually Impaired. P.O. Box 8594, Hermitage, TN 37076. Copyright 1993. (\$39. /set)

Canton, Hilda (Editor). Print and Braille Literacy: Selecting Appropriate Learning Media.  
American Printing House for the Blind, P.O. Box 6085 Louisville, KY 40206-0085. Copyright  
1991 (\$3.50)

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House for the Blind, P.O. Box 6085 Louisville, KY 40206-0085. Copyright 1994 (\$17.)