Assistive Technology for Beginning Braille Readers
Introductions

Who am I?

Who are you?

(picture from the movie Pretty in Pink of two characters in a computer lab)
What technology means to me...

FAMILY

LOVE

CONNECTION

What technology means to our students...

ACCESS

VOICE

EMPOWERMENT

(picture of two hands with tattoos of the words joy and strength)
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A SYSTEMS ANALYSIS OF THE BEGINNING BRAILLE READER’S ENVIRONMENT

THE TEAM

THE TASK

THE TOOLS
The Team
THE BRAILLE READER’S INSTRUCTIONAL TEAM

**Parents**
Home environment, bedtime stories, first experiences of reading

**The student**
Strengths, struggles
Motivation, preferences

**Classroom teachers & teaching assistants**
Typically new to working with a braille reader
Content experts

**TVI**
Experience with braille, reading instruction, AT?
Materials expert

**Peers**
Sources of support & partnership
The Task
COMPONENTS OF READING

Phonemic Awareness
Ability to manipulate segments/phonemes

Phonics
Sound+Symbols correspondence

Fluency
Reading Rate

Vocabulary
Knowledge of words & their meanings

Comprehension
Constructing meaning from text

*Braille Contractions
200+symbols
Rules of usage
Discrimination
BOOKS on BRAILLE READING INSTRUCTION

Beginning with Braille
Reading Connections
I-M-Able, Braille Literacy: A Functional Approach
Enough to Know Better
Guidelines & Games for Teaching Efficient Braille Reading
Instructional Strategies for Braille Literacy
RESOURCES for BRAILLE READING INSTRUCTION

Braille Fundamentals, Un’s the One
Building on Patterns
Mangold Basic Braille Program
Read Naturally
Wilson Reading System

The same curriculum used by the classroom teacher!
CONSIDERATIONS FOR BRAILLE READING INSTRUCTION

Explicit vs. incidental methods
Introduction of contractions
Guided reading integration

Paths to Literacy
The Tools
THE ROLE OF ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY IN BEGINNING BRAILLE READING

For most people, technology makes things easier. For people with disabilities, technology makes things possible.

~ Mary Pat Radabaugh, IBM
Remember your TEAM & your TASK when choosing your TOOLS

Students and their devices do NOT exist in a vacuum
Support is one of the key factors of progress
Consider ease of use, learning curve of device
Consider experience & engagement of team (& lack thereof)
Consider strengths and struggles the student brings to both the task and the tool
(Picture of a Perkins Braillewriter with a Daredevil action figure on top)
Perkins SMART Brailler

Auditory input
Visual input
Tactual input
*USB port for saving items

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pl5qV2NdF0M
Discussion Points

What are some advantages/disadvantages of this tool?
Which members of the team would it support?
What’s an example of a task using this tool?
Logan Braille Coach

Endlessly customizable braille flashcards
Can be adapted to any level of student
Headphone jack for private use
Perfect for an independent activity
Easy to use by adults and children alike!
Additional tags can be purchased
Best kept secret!!
Discussion Points

What are some advantages/disadvantages of this tool?
Which members of the team would it support?
What’s an example of a task using this tool?
Mountbatten Braillewriter...aka *Braille Whisperer*

- Tactual, auditory, & visual feedback (through amazing app!)
- Keyboard for non braille users to type messages and/or classwork
- Nemeth, music, & more!
- Easy to press keys for little fingers
- Many beginning notetaker functions

* Intro Video
* Cute Video
* Mimic Video
Discussion Points

What are some advantages/disadvantages of this tool?
Which members of the team would it support?
What’s an example of a task using this tool?
Refreshable Braille Displays

Must either be paired with phones, tablets, or computers using screen reader software

Example: Braille Study Mode with JAWS screen reader

Modular, mainstream

Multiple advantages to starting young!

Examples include VarioUltra, HIMS Edge, Focus 40-->ElBraille, Brailliant, and more
Discussion Points

What are some advantages/disadvantages of this tool?
Which members of the team would it support?
What’s an example of a task using this tool?
Braille Notetakers

Proprietary-made specifically for braille users
Stand-alone device with multiple capabilities
Examples include Pronto, BrailleSense Polaris, Braillenote Touch, APH Braille Plus and more
Some have visual input, some do not

Student Review
Discussion Points

What are some advantages/disadvantages?
Which members of the team does this device support?
What’s an example of a task using this device?
Stay in Touch!

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