Blueprint for Developing and Implementing a Plan for an Effective Transition to Unified English Braille (UEB)
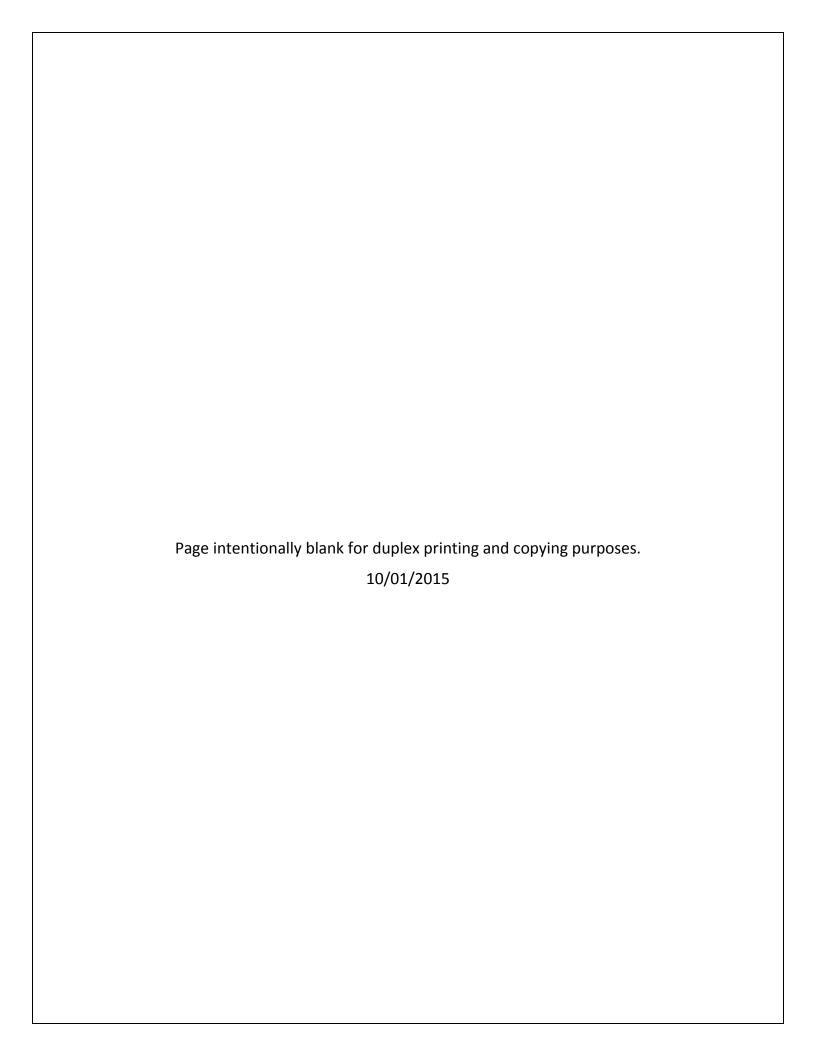
A product resulting from

Making the Move: Identifying Strategies and Resources for a Smooth Transition to Unified English Braille

Planned, Facilitated, and Developed by

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Blueprint for Developing and Implementing a Plan for an
Effective Transition to Unified English Braille

A product resulting from

Making the Move to UEB—A Facilitated Workshop
Sponsored by the New Hampshire Department of Education
Mary Nelle McLennan, M.A., Facilitator

Concord, New Hampshire
April 8, 2015

The following document was developed as a result of a full day facilitated work session on April 8, 2015, sponsored by the New Hampshire Department of Education. Much of the content of this document is derived from discussions and input of the participants in that work session. Supporting and extended content was drawn from a report that the Braille Authority of North America (BANA) produced for the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) as well as from other BANA resources and the facilitator's experience.

While this document is not inclusive of all considerations and steps that will be required to develop an effective plan for the transition to UEB, it provides a basic blueprint that can guide professionals in the crafting an effective transition plan.

About the Adoption and Implementation of Unified English Braille (UEB):

On November 2, 2012, the United States members of the Braille Authority of North America (BANA) voted to adopt Unified English Braille (UEB) to replace English Braille American Edition in the U.S. Based on extensive dialog and planning that involved more than 30 organizations as well as individual consumers, teachers, and transcribers, BANA established January 4, 2016, as the date by which the United States will implement UEB.

As of the implementation date in 2016, UEB, Nemeth, Music, and the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) will be the official codes for use in the United States. BANA is providing guidance on how to incorporate the Nemeth Code into UEB context with the intent that the Nemeth Code will continue to be integral to braille in the United States. The document *Provisional Guidance for Transcription Using the Nemeth Code within UEB Contexts* is available as PDF and BRF files on the BANA website at
www.brailleauthority.org/ueb.html.

Outline of Blueprint Document

Step 1. Establish a Knowledgeable, Balanced UEB Implementation Team

1.1 Establish the Scope of the Plan to Be Developed and the Personnel Needed

1.1.1 Determine if the plan being developed is for instructional programs only or if it will address the transition for adult students in rehabilitation programs as well

1.1.2 Recruit and involve personnel that reflect the agreed-upon scope of the plan to be developed

1.2 Establish Team Procedures, Processes, and Participants

1.2.1 Establish team meeting logistics and practices

1.2.2 Choose team members responsible for developing the plan

1.3 Establish Team Communication Channels

1.3.1 Establish channels for communication among team members

1.3.2 Establish channels to gather feedback and communicate progress

Step 2. Assess Impact and Infrastructure

2.1 Assess the Impact of the Implementation of UEB

2.1.1 Assess and document the transition's impact on the instruction and learning of students who read braille

2.1.2 Assess and document the transition's impact on the provision of instructional materials

2.1.3 Assess and document the transition's impact on formal assessments

2.2 Evaluate Current Infrastructures

2.2.1 Identify current infrastructures for delivering instruction and educational materials and evaluate their efficacy for supporting the transition to UEB

2.2.2 Identify current infrastructures for delivering educational materials and evaluate their efficacy for supporting the transition to UEB

2.2.3 Identify current infrastructures for supporting and providing formal assessments and evaluate their efficacy for supporting the transition to UEB

2.3 Identify Strategies to Make Needed Changes to Current Infrastructures

Step 3. Construct a Plan for the Transition to UEB

3.1   Develop a Plan and a Timeline for the Transition of Instruction

3.2   Develop a Plan and Timeline for the Transition of Instructional Materials

    3.2.1 Evaluate fiscal resources

    3.2.2 Evaluate transcription, production, and delivery resources and requirements

3.3   Develop a Plan and a Timeline for the Transition of Assessments

    3.3.1 Address Code Issues Associated with Assessment

    3.3.2 Address General Assessment Issues as Distinct from Code Issues

3.4   Develop a Plan and a Timeline for UEB Training for Educational Personnel

    3.4.1 Develop Training for Vision Program Personnel

    3.4.2 Establish training for transcribers and paraprofessionals

Step 4. Finalize and Implement the Transition Plan

4.1   Garner Approval of Plan

4.2   Implement the Plan!

Step 5. Ensure Communication of the Plan

5.1   Establish effective communication about code change

5.2   Involve parents and families

5.3   Involve students

Step 6. Monitor and Refine the Transition Plan and the Implementation of UEB

6.1   Monitor Effectiveness and Diagnose Weaknesses of the Plan and the Implementation

6.2   Revise or Refine the Plan as Well as the Implementation

Step 1. Establish a Knowledgeable, Balanced UEB Implementation Team

1.1 Establish the Scope of the Plan to Be Developed and the Personnel Needed

1.1.1 Determine if the plan being developed is for instructional programs only or if it will address the transition for adult students in rehabilitation programs as well

1.1.2 Recruit and involve personnel that reflect the agreed-upon scope of the plan to be developed

1.2 Establish Team Procedures, Processes, and Participants

1.2.1 Establish team meeting logistics and practices

- Determine method(s) of meeting (e.g., face-to-face, conference calls, online meetings using web-hosted services such as GoToMeeting)
- Establish regular meetings of the team or committee
- Identify and ensure requirements for participation of full team
- Distribute meeting agenda in timely fashion prior to meetings
- Distribute minutes of meetings in timely fashion

1.2.2 Choose team members responsible for developing the plan

- Determine roles of transition team members, including a facilitator, a secretary, and a timekeeper
- Identify leaders of team responsible for developing the plan
- Ensure that team members recognize the many details that are involved in the education of students who are blind or visually impaired
- Include at least one TVI serving elementary students, one TVI serving middle school students, and one TVI serving high school students
- Include representative from State Department of Education
- Include a representative from state and private agencies for people who are blind if within the agreed-upon scope of the plan
- Consider including a representative from general education administration or special education administration

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- Include stakeholder representatives from consumer advocacy groups such as the National Federation of the Blind (NFB) and American Council of the Blind (ACB); include stakeholder representatives of parents of children who are blind or visually impaired.
- Engage an independent facilitator to lead group on its mission, if necessary or helpful

  Considerations:

    - Are stakeholder representatives to implementation team knowledgeable about the issues involved in the education of students who read braille and the work of TVIs?
    - Are stakeholder representatives willing to serve as a conduit of information *to* and *from* the groups they represent?

1.3   Establish Team Communication Channels

1.3.1 Establish channels for communication among team members

- Investigate remote meeting technology and processes
- Investigate electronic communication vehicles such as listservs and web-based applications for sharing files (e.g., Dropbox or Google Docs)
- Develop and communicate meeting agenda(s) prior to meeting(s)
- Distribute detailed minutes in a timely manner following each meeting
- Consider including a list of assignments or a "To Do" list at the end of the minutes of each meeting

1.3.2 Establish channels to gather feedback and communicate progress

- Identify stakeholders—including TVIs and professionals—impacted by the transition to UEB
- Determine and communicate how progress of the transition will be monitored and evaluated
- Determine realistic methods of communicating with professionals and stakeholders who are not on the plan development team
- Ensure communication channels and accessible materials are effective and appropriate for representatives of stakeholder groups

Reality Check: Identify and address the dependencies that must be in place before the UEB Transition Team can be formalized and move into action.

Step 2. Assess Impact and Infrastructure

2.1 Assess the Impact of the Implementation of UEB

2.1.1 Assess and document the transition's impact on the instruction and learning of students who read braille

- Address transition of experienced braille readers as well as instruction for new braille readers
- Consider impact on the full school-age population
- Consider impact of individual student rates and styles of learning on instructional approach to UEB
- Include age-appropriate UEB transition goals for full school-aged population
- Determine approach for math instruction and transcription

    Examples of questions to explore:

    - *What materials will be available to teach UEB to new braille learners?*
    - *How will we introduce UEB to students who currently use EBAE?*
    - *Will there be a simple curriculum for instructing older students in code changes?*
    - *Will general education textbooks and curricular materials be available in UEB?*

    Considerations:

    - Some states plan to start UEB instruction in the early grades and transition over a period of years
    - Some states are choosing a more rapid transition pace, (e.g., all instruction and materials transitioned to UEB in two to four years)
    - Some states plan to follow their textbook adoption cycles, although this raises practical issues

2.1.2 Assess and document the transition's impact on the provision of instructional materials

- Determine nature of materials needed to provide code instruction
- Determine code(s) to be used for general instruction
- Review and reference APH policy regarding codes used in textbooks available with Federal Quota Funds
- Consider other state plans and schedules for developing transcription capacity or other sources of textbooks

2.1.3 Assess and document the transition's impact on formal assessments

- Involve state personnel responsible for formal assessments
- Review and reference APH policy regarding codes used in transcription of assessment materials in braille
- Review options that various states are considering for production and administration of assessments

Considerations: The following excerpt concerning strategies for addressing the transition of codes used in statewide assessments is from the CCSSO document titled Transition to UEB in the United States.

- *"The option of offering assessments in more than one code. During the transition time, there will be students using EBAE while others are learning UEB. Depending on a state's implementation plan, statewide assessments may need to be offered in two codes for a limited time—perhaps a few years. This is an additional expense that states will need to consider in their budgets. Educators and administrators must work closely together through the transition to ensure that IEPs reflect the codes students are using for instruction, and that grade level tests are ordered early in the year so that assessments can be prepared in the proper codes.*

- *Offering assessments in several formats. Some states are offering their 2016 assessments on paper rather than online while they continue to address and explore accessibility issues. While the ultimate goal may be to have all assessments online, it is often more feasible to continue to have tests available as paper-only for subjects like mathematics. This will allow for test items that include maps, charts, graphs, and other material that is difficult for students with visual impairments to access on a single line refreshable display or with computerized speech output.*

- ◆ *Potential for sharing of resources with other states. The implementation of UEB creates the opportunity for close communication with other states so that materials can be shared. A number of states indicated that they are exploring the options available from APH as well as other vendors so that there is as little duplication of effort as possible.*
- ◆ *Surveying districts and schools to ascertain readiness for testing requirements. For states that are part of testing consortia or have specific technology requirements, administrators should start now collecting information from districts and individual teachers about the technology students are using. Students and staff will need to learn to use the technology prior to the assessment period so that they are truly being assessed on content knowledge and not on their ability to use specific devices. Information can be gathered by survey."*

2.2 Evaluate Current Infrastructures

Examples of questions to explore as you examine current infrastructures:

- ◆ *How will IEPs indicate code or codes the student is using or learning?*
- ◆ *Will our current IEP forms need to be altered?*
- ◆ *Will our current process for requesting textbooks still work after the transition to UEB?*
- ◆ *Can we develop funding and a process for ordering textbooks from additional vendors?*

2.2.1 Identify current infrastructures for delivering instruction and educational materials and evaluate their efficacy for supporting the transition to UEB

- • Determine if current infrastructures will support:
  - ‣ Documenting and communicating the instructional plan for each individual student's transition to UEB (e.g., code instruction reflected on IEP)
  - ‣ Delivery of instruction in UEB
  - ‣ Assessment of student progress in mastery of UEB

2.2.2 Identify current infrastructures for delivering educational materials and evaluate their efficacy for supporting the transition to UEB

- Determine if current infrastructures will support:
  ‣ Timely delivery of textbooks in UEB
  ‣ Timely delivery of in-school class materials in UEB

2.2.3 Identify current infrastructures for supporting and providing formal assessments and evaluate their efficacy for supporting the transition to UEB

- Involve assessment personnel from State Department of Education
- Determine if current infrastructures will support and provide appropriate state assessments, including:
  ‣ Determination of appropriate code for each student's assessments on an annual basis through the transition
  ‣ Procurement of formal assessment materials in appropriate code(s) for individual students
  ‣ Appropriate administration of tests in the code used for instruction

2.3 Identify Strategies to Make Needed Changes to Current Infrastructures

- Review results of infrastructure assessment and identify the factors that require alteration or revision
- Brainstorm and identify strategies to improve each piece of the infrastructure that requires modification
- Seek input and approval of appropriate supervising entities
- Construct action plans and identify leaders to implement the necessary modifications to the current infrastructure
- Identify a mechanism to include agreed-upon modifications into the final transition plan

Step 3. Construct a Plan for the Transition to UEB

3.1 Develop a Plan and a Timeline for the Transition of Instruction

> **Reality Check:** Identify and address the dependencies that must be in place before you can **develop a workable plan for effective instruction** in UEB.

3.1.1 Research and determine sequence and schedule for implementing UEB instruction statewide

- Address UEB transition of experienced braille readers as well as instruction for new braille readers, including learners who are newly blinded and being introduced to braille
- Evaluate and document state capacity and other procurement considerations

3.1.2 Customize the approach and timeframes of the transition plan to match the needs of your learners and the resources available

- Include age-appropriate goals for all school-aged populations
- Plan for individual student rates and styles of learning
- Review and reference APH policy regarding codes used in textbooks available with Federal Quota Funds

  CONSIDERATIONS:

  - Timelines vary from state to state and are customized to match their respective range of systems and infrastructures
  - Some states plan to start using UEB in the early grades and transition all instruction over a period of years
  - Some states are choosing a more rapid transition pace, (e.g., all instruction and materials transitioned to UEB in two to four years)
  - Some states plan to follow their textbook adoption cycles, although this poses practical issues

> **Reality Check:** Identify and address the dependencies that must be in place before teachers can **deliver effective instruction in UEB**. Weave the results into your final plan.

3.2 Develop a Plan and Timeline for the Transition of Instructional Materials

3.2.1 *Evaluate fiscal resources*

- Determine the fiscal resources *required*
- Determine the fiscal resources *available*, for state as well as for local systems

3.2.2 *Evaluate transcription, production, and delivery resources and requirements*

- Determine transcription resources *required*
- Determine transcription resources *available*
- Review and reference APH policy regarding codes used in textbooks available with Federal Quota Funds
- Consider advocacy or grant writing to seek funding of transcription of textbooks in UEB

  ESSENTIAL CONSIDERATION:

  - Transition of educational materials MUST follow the transition plan that is determined to be most effective for the students' instruction–NOT the other way around!

3.3 Develop a Plan and a Timeline for the Transition of Assessments

3.3.1 *Address Code Issues Associated with Assessment*

- Ensure that assessments are transcribed using the same code in which instruction has been provided
- Establish the practice of including the code to be used for assessment as part of the IEP
- If necessary, ensure that the state provides assessments in more than one code during implementation phase.
- Possibly share resources between districts and between states
- Possibly survey districts within the state to ascertain readiness for testing requirements

3.3.2 Address General Assessment Issues as Distinct from Code Issues

CONSIDERATIONS—General Assessment Issues for Braille Readers:

- ◆ In general, states are moving from paper tests to computer-based assessments
- ◆ The code used for a student's assessments must match the code of that student's current instruction
- ◆ Recognize that assessments will likely need to be offered in more than one format
- ◆ Refreshable braille devices driven by screen reader translation software have varying amounts of accuracy
- ◆ Test platform should be designed according to standards—not geared for specific devices
- ◆ Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.0, priority AA, found at this website: http://www.w3.org/TR/WCAG20/

3.4 Develop a Plan and a Timeline for UEB Training for Educational Personnel

3.4.1 Develop Training for Vision Program Personnel

- Identify and engage sources for training in UEB
- Identify staff to be trained; establish training opportunities for veteran TVIs and O&M Specialists familiar with EBAE
- Arrange face-to-face training in UEB; locate the training at a central site
- Consider additional regional trainings
- Review and communicate resources for trainings listed on UEB page of BANA website at http://www.brailleauthority.org/ueb.html

Considerations:

- ◆ Possible need for UEB refresher trainings as instruction becomes more involved, especially with math, science, and technical material
- ◆ How to address need for some knowledge of EBAE by new teachers who are coming out of university programs where only UEB is taught

Reality Check: Identify and address the dependencies that must be in place before training of TVIs can be considered complete or sufficient to meet professional standards.

3.4.2 Establish training for transcribers and paraprofessionals

- Identify individuals to be trained
- Determine depth and detail of training
- Identify trainers and training resources
- Review and communicate resources for trainings listed on UEB page of BANA website at http://www.brailleauthority.org/ueb.html

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Step 4. Finalize and Implement the Transition Plan

4.1 Garner Approval of Plan

- Seek and incorporate input of stakeholders before finalizing the plan
- Present proposed plan to appropriate parties for approval
- Distribute the plan widely to all educational personnel and administration throughout the state

4.2 Implement the Plan!

- Now the *REAL* work begins!

Step 5. Ensure Communication of the Plan

5.1 Establish effective communication about code change

- Identify audiences with whom to communicate
- Identify what needs to be communicated to each respective audience
- Determine methods of communication with each audience
- Determine the "who, how, and when" by which the team will communicate with its various audiences

5.2 Involve parents and families

- Establish communication channels with parents and families about change to UEB
- Provide information to families about UEB and the reasons behind its development and adoption
- Provide information to families regarding the transition plan and the implementation of UEB
- Consider offering parent and family training
  - ‣ Determine depth and detail of training for parents and families
  - ‣ Identify venues and channels for training for parents and families, including channels for those who may not have access to online resources
  - ‣ Identify responsible party or parties for training for parents and families

5.3 Involve students

- Provide information to students about UEB and the reasons behind its development and adoption
- Provide information to students regarding the transition plan and the implementation of UEB
- Involve students in explaining UEB to families and even in training them in UEB
- Involve students in communicating UEB implementation to the community at large

Step 6. Monitor and Refine the Transition Plan and the Implementation of UEB

6.1 Monitor Effectiveness and Diagnose Weaknesses of the Plan and the Implementation

- Establish processes for measuring progress at regular intervals
- Identify problems in the plan or in the implementation of the plan
- Identify steps that have gotten off-track or delayed

6.2 Revise or Refine the Plan as Well as the Implementation

- Use feedback to adjust plans that are off-track
- Identify and implement corrective actions to get plan back on track
- Evaluate effectiveness of corrective actions; make adjustments as necessary
- Review and evaluate the transition process itself to discover possible ways to improve the plan and the implementation

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Appendix: Initial Galvanizing Activity

Envisioning the Ideal Transition Plan

The appendix presents the April workshop participants' responses to a set of "group think" activities designed to focus their thinking on the factors and steps involved in implementing Unified English Braille (UEB). The bullet points listed from this process are brief statements that the participants wrote on individual "sticky notes," which were organized into strands by topic as they are presented here.

Participants were asked to independently identify essential characteristics of an effective UEB transition plan. This activity was designed to help frame participants' thinking about the work of developing a workable and effective UEB transition plan. They were asked to consider the end product to be developed and to articulate the factors, characteristics, and components that an ideal transition plan would include.

PLEASE NOTE: The following entries are the participants' responses, which are represented in the words of the rough notes that the participants authored. This is NOT a complete framework for the planning process, but is their initial thinking on what a plan should include.

THE QUESTION: Envision the ideal UEB transition plan. What would it include? What would it take into consideration? What factors must it address? What is essential for it to succeed?

PARTICIPANTS' RESPONSES:

Timeframes

- Plan would have a timeline with activities from today through implementation in January 2016 and beyond.
- Designate a start date for implementation

Team Process and Procedures

- Establish UEB Implementation Committee or Team
- Collaboration
- Clearly stated procedures
- Standardized procedure statewide
- Consider state protocol
- Further meetings on the progress of the transition
- Ensure there is an effective communication mechanism

Communication

- Collaboration statewide
- State document distributed to <u>all</u> Superintendents and Special Ed Directors
- Ensure DOE support (state point-person)
- Further meetings on the progress of the transition
- Ensure there is an effective communication mechanism

Resources

- Compose assessment and checklists
- Include technology

Training:

TVI training

- Regional training
- Training for new teachers who may not know EBAE ("old code")
- Training for veteran teachers who only know EBAE ("old code")

Teaching the code to students

- Plan considers individual student rates of learning
- Plan addresses transition of experienced braille readers as well as instruction for new braille readers
- Plan includes age-appropriate goals for full school-aged population

Parent Training

Factors to Consider for Establishing an Effective Transition Plan

- Need informative sessions, including an overview of UEB
- Funding, especially for training TVIs
- Availability of participants
- Time and Desire of Transition Team Members
  - ‣ Time commitment required;
  - ‣ How many meetings involved
  - ‣ Central location; use of technology, e.g., SKYPE, to minimize travel and maximize participation
- DOE endorsement and support
- Timeframe involved
- Access to expertise

- Plans developed by other states
- Identify stakeholders and way to garner their involvement

Steps in Establishing the Plan

- Establish Team Procedures and Processes…organize duties, meetings, timeframe, agenda
- Choose team members responsible for developing the plan
  - ▸ Ensure that team members recognize the many details that are involved in the education of students who are blind or visually impaired
  - ▸ Include one TVI serving elementary students, one TVI serving middle school students, and one TVI serving high school students
  - ▸ Determine roles of transition team members, including a facilitator, a secretary, and a timekeeper
  - ▸ Choose leaders of team responsible for developing the plan
  - ▸ Assign roles of transition team members
  - ▸ Recruit volunteers
  - ▸ Engage a facilitator to lead group on its mission
- Have implementation team meet at least three times a year
- Establish channels for communication
  - ▸ Establish remote meeting technology and process
  - ▸ Communicate meeting agenda prior to meeting(s)
- Establish channels to gather feedback
  - ▸ Identify stakeholders
  - ▸ Ensure that stakeholder representatives to implementation team:
    - ◆ *Are knowledgeable about the issues involved in the education of students who read braille and the work of the TVI*
    - ◆ *Apprise the group they represent of the work of the transition team*
    - ◆ *Report out to the group (I assume this refers to the implementation team)*
- Review plans developed by other states
- Ensure that the plan fits capacities and resources available

- Stakeholders include (but not limited to….)
  - Students
  - TVIs
  - Parents
  - Administrators
  - Private agencies
  - NHAB
  - DOE
  - NFB
  - ACB
  - NAPVI
  - PIC (sic)
  - MICE (sic)
  - NHAIM
  - Talking Book/NLS Library
  - VR Services
  - Former students

Additional information and resources are available on the BANA website at
www.brailleauthority.org.

This document was developed by Mary Nelle McLennan, M.A.,

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