

In 1991, House bill 2277, the “Braille Bill” was passed into law by the Texas State Legislature. One provision of the bill, now Chapter 506, is “each person assisting in the development of a functionally blind student’s individualized education program shall receive information describing the benefits of Braille instruction.” Hence, the following is provided.

BENEFITS OF BRAILLE INSTRUCTION

Knowledge comes to the functionally blind student through the application of special teaching methods as well as the utilization of special equipment and media. Learning tools must be adapted since their acquisition of knowledge is reliant, almost exclusively, upon the senses of touch and hearing. With the 3 R’s as the mainstay of our educational system, methods of touch reading, writing and arithmetic become essential as literacy media.

Braille, the most widely used touch process, offers a number of advantages to the functionally blind. Providing both a reading and writing system, it affords a tool for major communication and day-to-day functions. Moreover, Braille allows for the literacy skill independence and control requisite to autonomous growth and development not only in the educational realm, but also in the arenas of work and leisure.

Braille instruction allows reading and writing skills to be developed; access to “written” materials in the classroom; training in correct written language usage; and the capability of reading independently for purposes of study or pleasure at any time or place without additional equipment.

Concurrent with its advantages, however, Braille does pose special considerations. Reading speed is slower; materials are costly, often not readily available, space consuming and impose portability and storage problems; contractions and multiple cell usage contribute to symbol confusion, ambiguity and difficulty with spelling; and great demand is placed on memory, sequencing and synthesizing skills.

Disadvantages notwithstanding, Braille remains the premier literacy avenue for the functionally blind with advances in technology rapidly address deficits and thereby enhancing touch system efficiency.