

Early Braille Writing Project

Project Information

Welcome to the Early Braille Writing Project (EBWP). EBWP is a collaborative effort by the Provincial Resource Centre for the Visually Impaired (PRCVI) and SET-BC to make technology available to support early literacy for students who read braille in British Columbia. A set of Mountbatten Electronic Brailleurs (MB Braille - Whisperer and Learning System models) is available for short-term loan to students meeting the following criteria:

- The student must be currently registered with PRCVI.
- **The student must be enrolled in an early primary grade level – kindergarten, grade one, grade two, or grade three.**
- The student must be receiving direct service from a qualified teacher of students with visual impairments. Devices will not be loaned on behalf of the student to resource/learning support teachers, classroom teachers, educational assistants, etc.

The purpose of the EBWP is to make the MB Braille available to students who read and write braille as a **transitional device** between a foundational solution (i.e., the manual Perkins braillewriter) and more advanced solutions (e.g., braille notetaker). EBWP devices are not intended for use as the student's primary, long-term assistive technology solution. **For students in grades four and beyond, as well as those students in K-3 who will benefit from longer term use of the MB Braille, teachers and school-based teams are referred to SET-BC.**

In addition to providing the device and basic training and support, PRCVI will also host regular videoconferences with participating teachers to establish a profesional community of practice around the use of the MB Braille with primary-aged students.

Loan Term

The duration of the loan period for the EBWP is one academic year. All MB Brailleurs, including all peripheral components, must be returned at the end of each academic year. Regular maintenance and cleaning must be completed each summer to keep the devices in working condition. It is the responsibility of the teacher of students with visual impairments to ensure that the device is returned to PRCVI **in the original shipping container** before the end of each school year.

Documentation

Documentation for the EBWP is a two-step process.

- 1) The teacher of students with visual impairment submits an order through the PRCVI online catalogue. <https://library.prcvi.org/list?q=Mountbatten&fq=src%3Acatalogue&p=1> . The teacher is then sent the Student Request Form. She or he completes and submits it to PRCVI.
- 2) If the student meets EBWP criteria and there are devices available, the teacher of students with visual impairments is asked to complete the *Administration Form* and return to PRCVI – signed by the School District Special Education Administrator or designate or the designated authority of an Independent School. Once all forms have been returned, PRCVI ships the device to the address indicated on the Student Request Form.

Renewal

It is not possible to renew an EBWP loan directly. All devices must be returned to PRCVI at the end of each school year, or earlier should the student no longer require the device. If a device is required for the next school year, the teacher of students with visual impairments will submit a Request for Renewal form (available on the PRCVI website). Renewals will be processed in the following priority sequence:

- All Year One student requests (i.e., students who have never received a device through the EBWP) received before June 7 will be prioritized.
- If devices remain following the fulfillment of Year One requests, any Year Two requests (with Request for Renewal form) received before June 7 will be filled. Selections will be made on a first-come, first-served basis according to the date the request is received through the PRCVI library catalogue.
- If devices remain following the fulfillment of Year One and Two requests, any Year Three requests (with Request for Renewal form) received before June 7 will be filled. Selections will be made on a first-come, first-served basis according to the date the request is received through the PRCVI library catalogue.

According to the sequence outlined above, students who have not previously been loaned an EBWP device receive top priority. Therefore, teachers should not assume, for example, that an EBWP device used in grade one will be available for the student's use in grade two.

Repair and Troubleshooting

If the device malfunctions or is damaged during the school year, please return it to PRCVI using the return courier slip included with the original shipment of the device. **Please retain the original shipping container as this is required for returning the device to PRCVI.** If there is sufficient time to complete the repair and ship the device, the MB Braille will be returned to the student prior to the end of the school year. At this time, there is not a sufficient number of devices to provide a temporary replacement while the device is undergoing repairs.

Teachers with technical questions or those requiring training and other set-up support should contact their PRCVI Outreach Coordinator. EBWP support can be integrated into regular outreach visits from PRCVI.

Professional Community of Practice

The PRCVI outreach team, in addition to providing basic training and support, will host regular videoconferences with teachers participating in the EBWP. These sessions will provide teachers with an opportunity to learn more advanced features of the MB Braille, as well as share tips and strategies of their own. This will also be an opportunity for shared troubleshooting, all with the aim of creating a professional community of practice around the use of the MB Braille. **Teachers with students using an MB Braille (but not obtained through EBWP) are welcome to join.** These teachers should contact Adam (see below).

Any questions regarding the Early Braille Writing Project should be directed to Adam Wilton, PRCVI Program Manager (awilton@prcvi.org; 604-269-2205).

All completed forms should be directed to registration@prcvi.org or fax (604-261-0778).