The BEE: Early Literacy and Movement for Young Blind Children

NFB Braille Reading Pals Club & NFB Early Explorers

September 2015

## What’s Buzzing with the National Federation of the Blind?

## Around the country kids are going back to school. This summer the National Federation of the Blind sponsored Braille Enrichment for Literacy and Learning or BELL programs in many states, as well as STEM programs at the NFB Jernigan Institute. Right now, plans for more STEM programs are in the works! It is an exciting time to be a blind child in the United States! Many more programs are in place and educational materials exist to make opportunities equal to those of their sighted peers than ever before. But blind children still need to get out and play, socialize, and engage in their communities! Enjoy extracurricular activities at school or church, as well as in the blindness community. Have a great school year!

## Literacy Hints from the Hive

## It's back to school time for many children, or for their older siblings. This means it's also time for back to school shopping. This can be a busy and stressful time for the whole family. It's exciting to pick out what is needed and to get the best deals, but also hard to remember everything. One great way for a child to practice some braille reading in a real-life setting is to bring a braille list to the store. This will help build reading speed and give a very practical use of braille. Both reading and writing the list are important skills. If your child is just learning to read and write, have him write only the first letter or first few letters of an item to make it easier. Also have him write just a few items that he is responsible for reading back to you at the store. Once you are home, your child can help unpack and mark the items he listed. If they are his supplies, he should have them labeled in braille so that he knows they are his in the classroom. Using braille lists at the store is a skill your child will use all of his life. He may use technology instead of hardcopy braille as he gets older, but it is still important to write a list to remember what to buy. Teaching this important skill now will also give him something to do during those long, stressful shopping trips! Enjoy!

## Travel Tales

## "Here, I'll take that and put it away." This is something I've heard far too often, as children willingly give up their canes to well-meaning relatives, paraprofessionals, and parents. Sometimes the children know where the cane is being put. Sometimes, they don't. When the child wants the cane again, they either have to wait for it, or go without. For a blind child to travel safely, they need their cane. It is an extension of their arm, a safety tool, and a very important part of their ability to travel safely and confidently in the world. They should always know where this important tool is so that they can use it effectively. When a blind child knows their classroom space, they may be able to move about it without their cane. But if they want their cane at any time, they should not have to wait passively while an aide, teacher, or another student finds it. This is also very important in the event of a fire drill. The blind child should be able to quickly retrieve her cane and walk from the building. If the school feels an aide or teacher should accompany her, they can do so, but the blind child should always have her cane in case she gets separated from this person, as well as for her safety and confidence.

## Knowing where her cane is at all times is not just important for school. She should also know at home, or if she is traveling at a relative's or friend's home as well. The child does not need to keep the cane with her at every second, but should know where it is being put. It is all about being in control of where it is and knowing where to retrieve it when it is needed again. Always knowing where it is will help your child know how important this travel tool is and make her responsible for it. Taking responsibility for travel at a young age will help make her a highly skilled traveler as an adult.

## A Taste of Honey

## *The Book With No Pictures* By B.J. Novak

## Available from National Braille Press, $15

## The title of this book intrigued me. As a blind person, I've always made my own pictures in my mind as I've read, but when I read to my three sighted kids they love vivid pictures in their books. So I wondered what would make a book without pictures fun for sighted kids. The answer is the wonderfully goofy text which the reader is asked to read! I love that there is a great book like this, sold at bookstores everywhere, showing kids that there is humor in words, not just pictures! Also, there is humor in getting whoever is reading to you to do funny things, which gives young children a power they don't ordinarily have. This is a great addition to your print/braille collection. It will also be a great book for your child to read to younger siblings or cousins in the future.

## Buzzes and Tweets

Follow [@NFB\_Voice](https://nfb.org/sites/all/modules/civicrm/extern/url.php?u=3730&qid=568205) on Twitter to get news and information from the NFB.

Follow [@BrailleLiteracy](https://nfb.org/sites/all/modules/civicrm/extern/url.php?u=3731&qid=568205) on Twitter to get timely Braille news, information, and tips.

Like the [National Federation of the Blind on Facebook](https://nfb.org/sites/all/modules/civicrm/extern/url.php?u=3732&qid=568205) to stay current with all of the new things happening at the NFB Jernigan Institute.

## Books for Busy Bees

If you are looking to grow your child’s Braille library, check out the [Braille storybook resources webpage](https://nfb.org/sites/all/modules/civicrm/extern/url.php?u=3733&qid=568205) for information on free books, lending libraries, and Braille book retailers.

[**The NFB Braille Reading Pals Club**](https://nfb.org/sites/all/modules/civicrm/extern/url.php?u=3734&qid=568205) **and** [**NFB Early Explorers**](https://nfb.org/sites/all/modules/civicrm/extern/url.php?u=3735&qid=568205) programs are sponsored in part by the National Organization of Parents of Blind Children and the American Action Fund for Blind Children and Adults. For more information please contact:

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