The BEE: Early Literacy and Movement for Young Blind Children

NFB Braille Reading Pals Club & NFB Early Explorers

December 2015

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

## It is hard to believe, but it is that time of year once again! That busy, exciting, holiday time as the year draws to a close. The National Federation of the Blind has just celebrated its 75th birthday, and many exciting programs are moving forward as the movement continues to grow.

## For young children at this time of year, one of the most important programs is the Santa letter program. It is a fun way to encourage Braille literacy. Parents can visit [www.nfb.org/santa-letters](http://www.nfb.org/santa-letters) between November 16 and December 18 to fill out a request form. Beginning November 30, the Braille letters from Santa will start going out to boys and girls across the country. They will also receive some other fun Christmastime activities. A print copy of the letter and activities is enclosed for Mom and Dad. This is an exciting way to encourage your child to read Braille! If Santa isn't a part of your holiday, read on to find some other ways to bring Braille into your holiday traditions. Enjoy this joyous season as you continue to help your child live the life he wants!

## Literacy Hints from the Hive

## You've probably heard the song, or sung it yourself, “Santa Claus is Comin’ to Town”. “He's making a list and checking it twice” is a line from the song. Lists are a part of this busy time of year. They are also a great way to practice reading and writing Braille in a new way! Even very new Braille readers can be part of the list making and checking off process! If your child doesn’t know whole words in Braille, just use the first letter of each word. Your child can help make to-do lists, gifts to buy, people to buy for, and lists of food to cook. The possibilities are endless.

## Have your child help make a list of items to be purchased at the grocery store. The entire list could be overwhelming, but a few items could be very manageable and helpful. For example, her list could be for all of the dairy items you need. If she knows more Braille, work on spelling the words and names for the items on the list. By her reading this information in the store in a timely manner, she will be building her reading speed and confidence without even realizing it.

## Use index cards for lists, and you can check things off by having your child punch a small hole with her stylus. When the list is complete, put the card in your recycling bin!

## Reading and writing Braille helps blind children become better at spelling and grammar than those who depend solely on audio books. So keep making those lists, check them twice, and enjoy your holidays!

## Travel Tales

## During this time of year we tend to be out and about more often than other times of year. With shopping, pictures with Santa, and visiting loved ones, it will most likely be inevitable that your child will need to use a public restroom. With fears about germs and time constraints, it's easy to rush your child through public restrooms. However, she needs to learn to navigate her way around the restroom for herself so that she can function in them independently. Public restrooms are places she will frequent throughout her life, so teaching her about them now will ensure healthy, safe use of them in the future.

## When using a public restroom, your child will need to understand that sometimes there is a line. Using her cane to find the line, and then using the cane at the heel of the person in front her so that she knows when the line is moving is an important skill to learn. There will be listening cues for her to pay attention to, such as the flush of a toilet, which will signal that someone is coming out of a stall. Using her cane to check if stall doors are open or closed is another way of knowing when you are able to use the facility. Once in the stall, the cane can be hung on a hook inside or leaned against the wall.

## After the stall is used, the cane can be used to find the sinks. It is important to use cues to figure out what to do about drying her hands before she washes them. Are there hot air blowers or paper towels, or both? Where are the towels located? It's easier to get this information before her hands are cold and wet. Canes are also great for locating trash cans, unless the trash happens to be a hole in the middle of the counter. Even then, sometimes there is a container underneath which can be located with the cane and then the hole can be found with a hand.

## It’s a good idea to show your child entrances to bathrooms, including Braille and print signs. Some bathrooms have signs which are very high above them and the entrance is an opening which is like a maze that winds around. This means that sometimes the best way to find out which bathroom is which is to ask. Sometimes your child will get great hints by using her other senses. People walking in wearing perfume, wearing high heels, or talking on a cell phone will give her the information she needs. Remember that it is easier to explore and learn many of these skills at a young age so they become a natural habit as a child becomes older. It is embarrassing not to know something socially appropriate, such as how to use a public restroom, when a child is out with friends as a teenager. So put your germ phobias aside and take a few extra minutes to help your child learn these lessons.

## A Taste of Honey

## No matter what holiday you celebrate at this time of year, you will probably find an occasion to give a gift to someone. This means packaging it in some way. Wrapping gifts is a fun and important skill for blind children to learn. From picking a gift bag, cutting wrapping paper, and wrapping a present, blind children should know how to package a gift appropriately.

## Gift bags are a wonderful way to package presents. They are quick, simple, and decorative. But not all gift bags are alike. There are gift bags for every occasion. Some are plain, some are very holiday-specific, and some are more appropriate for girls or boys. If you use gift bags, help your child understand the different types. Help her get involved in choosing appropriate bags for the gift and person you have bought a present for. Also, make her aware that when you put the item in the bag, you wrap it in colored tissue paper so that the present is covered. This will ensure that the person receiving the gift is surprised.

## If you like to wrap gifts, help your child understand the different types of paper. There are rolls, flat wrap, foil wrap, and so on. Make her a part of choosing the type of paper for the gifts you wrap. Help her learn to measure and cut the paper. Scissors work well, especially if you fold the paper and cut along the crease. Paper cutters that people use for scrapbooking can also be an easy solution to make a straight cut. Teach your child to pull the paper snugly over the box before taping it. Folding corners into triangles before bringing them up to tape makes neat tight corners which will create a nice looking package. Having your child involved will make it fun for you both and will create cherished memories as well.

## Buzzes and Tweets

## The last quarter make-and-take book that was sent out in late October was *Little Blue Truck* by Alice Schertle. This information is provided so that parents can get a copy of the print book to read along with their child.

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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