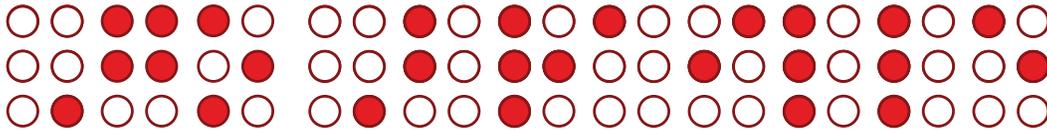


# GoBraille



## THE GAME CHANGER APP TO TEACH AND REINFORCE BRAILLE

**Betsy Flener, Ed.D**  
Assistive Technology Specialist  
Low Vision Education Specialist  
**Green River Regional  
Educational Cooperative**  
[Betsy.flener@grrec.ky.gov](mailto:Betsy.flener@grrec.ky.gov)

**Joni Nygard, MS CCC-SLP**  
AAC Consultant  
Vice President  
**Attainment Company**  
[Joni@AttainmentCompany.com](mailto:Joni@AttainmentCompany.com)

**Getting In Touch With Literacy 2019**  
**Thursday November 14, 2019**  
**3:30 pm - 4:30 pm**  
**Ravenna B Room**

# Historical Perspective

For almost two hundred years, the blind have utilized a system to read that was developed by Louis Braille at the age of fifteen. This system containing various configurations of one to six dots, have enabled countless numbers of children and adults with blindness and low vision to become literate. Braille is to the blind what print is to the sighted. Without braille, those with blindness would not be able to develop skills that enable them to become gainfully employed.

However, our country and others are experiencing a "braille crisis." In fact, in 2009, the National Federation of the Blind (NFB) Jernigan Institute noted that fewer than 10% of those who are legally blind and fewer than 40% who are functionally blind are braille readers. Also, over 70 percent of adults today who are blind are unemployed and as many as 50 percent of students who are blind drop out of high school (NFB, 2009). Recent reports from the American Printing House for the Blind show the decline in the production of braille materials.

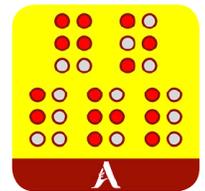
Various reasons for this crisis are cited. These include the shortage of teachers who are competent in braille, negative attitudes about braille among the sighted, historical emphasis of teaching print (NFB, 2009), and the increasing uses of speech generating devices (NBP, 2010). In addressing the braille literacy crisis, the National Federation for the Blind (NFB, 2009) made several recommendations including advancing the use of braille in current and emerging technologies and researching new methods for teaching and learning braille.

## Braille Revival...a fresh approach

**GoBraille** is an exciting app with tactile overlays developed by Dr. Betsy Flener and Joni Nygard manufactured by the Attainment Company. It was developed with the idea that students should learn braille in an engaging way, one that mirrors reading instruction for typically developing sighted peers. With GoBraille, sighted students can sit alongside the blind student and learn the same words and word fragments in print. In the past, typical braille instruction has mostly included programming that removed the blind student from instruction with their sighted peers.

**GoBraille** includes over 80 interactive tactile overlays that teach and reinforce braille contractions. It is the second major commercial product to encompass tactile overlays for literacy with auditory output on the iPad. **TactileTalk Toolkit**, the first product by the same authors, and winner of the 2015 National Braille Press Louis Braille Touch of Genius Competition focused on communication and skills that are considered pre-cursors to braille.

The first few pages of the app allow students to build tactile discrimination skills by finding the group of dots that form a different letter or by finding a specific braille letter in a row. The app then introduces a few whole word contractions and beginning primer level sight words. The practice section of the app encompasses two levels. Part 1 introduces contractions and sight words up to an approximate first to second grade level. Part 2 introduces sight words from an approximate second to third-fourth grade level. Various activities in the app keep students actively engaged including: matching braille words and contractions on the overlays, forming their own words with various contractions, making their own sentences with various short words, reading sentences and paragraphs on the overlays and reading a short story.



Example 1 - Find the Letter



Example 2 - Learn and Match Whole Word Sign

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## Notes

