Resolution 2020-03

Regarding Braille Instruction and the Albuquerque Public Schools

WHEREAS, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) requires that Albuquerque Public Schools provide a free appropriate public education to children with disabilities; and

WHEREAS, the IDEA regulations at 34 CFR Section 300.324(a)(2)(iii) require Albuquerque Public Schools to “provide for instruction in Braille and the use of Braille unless the IEP Team determines, after an evaluation of the child’s reading and writing skills, needs, and appropriate reading and writing media (including an evaluation of the child’s future needs for instruction in Braille or the use of Braille), that instruction in Braille or the use of Braille is not appropriate for the child;” and

WHEREAS, this provision creates a presumption that Braille is the appropriate learning media for all blind and visually impaired children unless Braille is shown to be inappropriate; and

WHEREAS, any evaluation of the child’s Braille needs must utilize a recognized learning media assessment, such as the National Reading Media Assessment (NRMA); and

WHEREAS, the use of Braille is essential for the development of literacy skills and is necessary for the successful inclusion of blind or visually impaired children in the classroom; and

WHEREAS, Albuquerque Public Schools once had one of the finest programs of Braille instruction in the nation, but has allowed that program to decline and cease being the model that it once was; and

WHEREAS, Albuquerque Public Schools has an insufficient number of qualified “Teachers of the Visually Impaired” and frequently fails to provide children who are blind or visually impaired with appropriate Braille instruction; and

WHEREAS, the pandemic has resulted in students being educated remotely, denying children who are blind or visually impaired necessary access to Braille instruction and Braille materials, further exacerbating the problem of inadequate Braille instruction:

WHEREAS, there are many outstanding teaching professionals who work for the Albuquerque Public Schools and who are eager to assist the district to once again become a national model for the instruction of children who are blind or visually impaired:

Now, therefore, BE IT RESOLVED by the National Federation of the Blind of New Mexico assembled in virtual convention this 29th day of August, 2020, that the National Federation of the Blind of New Mexico commends those teaching professionals working for Albuquerque Public Schools who are providing appropriate Braille instruction; calls upon Albuquerque Public Schools to immediately affirm the vital importance of Braille in the instruction of children who are blind or visually impaired; and calls upon Albuquerque Public Schools to immediately begin to invest adequate financial and personnel resources to ensure that appropriate Braille instruction is available to all blind and visually impaired children.