

Spanish Braille Resources for Children & Their Families

Hi everyone. In November of 2005 I participated on a panel at the NFB of California's Braille Symposium. Part of the focus was on early childhood Braille literacy. I was asked to comment on Foreign Language Braille from a parent's perspective since we use Lithuanian Braille. Both my boys attend Lithuanian Saturday School & thanks to my wife's efforts they have full access to the curriculum (www.nfb.org/nfb/NewsBot.asp?MODE=VIEW&ID=61&SnID=44365653).

Since locally Spanish is by far the most common foreign language, in preparing for my presentation, I did some additional research, made some calls, sent around some emails, surfed the web a bit & I have come up with the following leads which I thought some of you might be interested in looking into. Please feel free to share this info with any interested parent or educator.

(Forgive me if the following seems a little fragmented, but I use PowerPoint for my presentations & I am cutting & pasting...) If anyone feels any of the info is incorrect, please let me know.

Early Foreign Language Braille Exposure for Toddlers & Preschoolers via Toys:

You can buy popular toys & add your own Braille letter labels to them to make them accessible & give your child a playful head start on the Braille alphabet, QWERTY keyboard layout, & time/clock concepts

Check out the following alphabet, number, &/or QWERTY keyboard layout toys which are available at: www.spanishtoy.com

- Spanish Baby Smartronic Speak & Teach Phone
- Alfabeto Manzanitas Spanish Alphabet Toy Vtech Spanish Toy
- Aprendo el Alfabeto: Spanish Alphabet Learning Toy

Some more bilingual Spanish toys by The Learning Journey (www.tlji.com) are available at: www.sb-kids.com

- Chatterbox Teaching Telephone
- PC Schoolhouse
- Telly the Teaching Time Clock

Don't stop with these websites, rather explore a toy store or do a Google or EBay search to find many more toy options. It is really incredibly easy to make these toys accessible by adding braille letter/number labels.

Where to get Braille labels:

- 1) Talk to your VI teacher
- 2) Order from: www.americanthermoform.com / (800) 331-3676; "Brailabels": 12 sheets/Pkg \$14.15 (Each package of Brailabels contains 12 single 8.5 x 11 in. sheets)
- 3) Order from APH (www.aph.org)
- 4) Ask for scraps from your local Braille Production facility

Following websites discuss Spanish Braille Basics:

<http://fbraille.com.uy/alfabeto>

http://members.tripod.com/DE_VISU/brlesp01.html

http://members.tripod.com/DE_VISU/brlest.html

Braille is Beautiful: Beginning Braille for Parents Workshops

The NFB offers workshops to teach parents Braille (www.nfbcal.org/nfbc/journalss2003/brailleisbeautiful.html).

These are now offered in Spanish as well as in English. Contact Nancy Burns, President of NFB of California (www.nfbcal.org) (email: nfbcal@sbcglobal.net).

I participated in one such workshop several years ago. I am totally serious when I say that the parents who attended learned the Basics of BRAILLE in 4 hours.

Goal: to teach Braille to parents of blind children

Everyone leaves knowing the Braille alphabet!

Every parent left able to Braille a secret message to their child *using a slate & stylus!*

Quite a moving & empowering experience!

American Foundation for the Blind (www.afb.org)

The AFB offers a packet for parents to promote early braille literacy called "Connecting the Dots."

This packet is available in Spanish & is called "Conectando los Puntos"

The packet suggests activities & resources & includes:

- Sources for braille children's books
- Suggestions for making braille books with young children
- An overview of the braille code in Spanish & English
- Reportedly includes a Spanish braille card & illustrates both Spanish & English braille codes
- Other info that parents & teachers of young children can use

To receive either "Conectando los Puntos" or "Connecting the Dots"

Phone: (404) 525-2303 or 800-232-5463 or e-mail: literacy@afb.net or afbinfo@afb.net

(I have not actually seen this yet, but am patiently waiting for the packet I requested by email back in October...)

Seedlings (www.seedlings.org)

I contacted Seedlings in late October & at that time they had 4 preschool books in English & Spanish (& braille, of course)

#856 Let's Play--Vamos A Jugar, \$5.00

#914 Mi Amor Por Ti--My Love for You, \$6.00

#918 My Colors--Mis Colores, \$6.00

#926 My Food-Mi Comida \$6.00

National Braille Press's "ReadBooks! Program" **(www.nbp.org/ic/nbp/readbooks)**

ReadBooks! is a national children's braille literacy program to encourage families with blind children to read print/braille books together.

Teachers & parents can order a Braille Book Bag for their children by filling out the contact form (www.nbp.org/ic/nbp/readbooks/request.html) or calling 888-965-8965 ext. 34.

Each bag contains:

- An age-appropriate print/braille book for 3 age groups, birth-3, 4-5, & 6-7
- Books are available in English or Spanish
- A braille primer for sighted parents entitled [Just Enough to Know Better](#)
- A colorful print/braille place mat
- Print/braille bookmarks
- [Because Books Matter](#), a guide for parents on why and how to read books with their young blind child (This guide is also available separately for free in Spanish: www.nbp.org/ic/nbp/BBMS.html)
- A gift coupon redeemable for another print/braille book or braille/large print playing cards
- Print/braille magnetic letter

Bookshare.org (www.bookshare.org)

They now offer over 2639 ebooks for children! (Oh how I love this amazing service!)

The number of books for kids increases weekly!

The \$25 sign up fee & \$50 annual subscription fee is one of the best investments you can make for your child, especially when you consider you have open access to all this Braille formatted material!

I searched under the "Spanish language" option & 270 titles came up.

I combined this searched with "children" & 20 titles appeared.

To search for Spanish children's books, go to "Advanced Search" & select language "Spanish" & then check off "Children" -> They offer Clifford and even the Harry Potter series in Spanish!

These ebooks can be:

- 1) downloaded into Duxbury & embossed
- 2) transferred as Braille files to a BrailleNote or similar electronic note taker or
- 3) you can ask your VI teacher to emboss them or
- 4) you can follow the webpage instructions to order a Braille copy from the Braille Institute

*Bookshare has a special request by email system. I imagine that one could request that a specific Spanish book be added to the "wish list" they maintain.

Organización Nacional de Ciegos de España (ONCE)

"National Organization of the Blind of Spain"

While I did not personally contact them, the website describes that they provide Braille materials for many European countries

Reportedly offer several magazines in braille for young people in various languages

Sell books in Spanish braille for children & adult beginners

Contact them for prices in US dollars

Office Hours: 8am-3pm their time (9 hours later than California)

WebPage: www.once.es (when you get to the main page, click on the "English" link to see the English version of the webpage)

e-mail: soi@once.es

One VI teacher gave me some great advice: Use the "Contact Us" Feature on the websites you visit (The vast majority of times that I have tried this, I have been successful in getting useful info, though Bookshare did fail me here; they read my email but never bothered to respond).

Web-Braille (NLS) (www.loc.gov/nls/braille)

Has at least 125 braille books in Spanish.

Personal commentary: Web-Braille needs to devise an easier way to search by topic! It would be really neat if you could say search by "Childrens books" as you can on Bookshare.

For Spanish I suggest using the "Contact Us" Feature or Contact your local library for the blind.

I contacted the Braille Institute in Los Angeles and they generated a list of children's books in Spanish & mailed it to me. The Braille Institute also sent me the following email: "Our library has eight books in Spanish for grades 1-4 and one book for preschool to grade 2. In addition, our library can interlibrary loan 30 braille books from our Multistate East Center in Spanish. Please call our library to order these books."

California State Library (www.lib.state.ca.us/html/welcome.html) has some books in Spanish ->use the "Contact Us" Feature. Also check out your local State Library holdings.

I didn't search the **American Printing House for the Blind (www.aph.org)** website, but wouldn't be surprised if they had some books or resources.

Someone also suggested contacting www.tsbvi.edu.

Kids may enjoy this Spanish Print to Braille Translation website:
www.fbraille.com.uy/alfabeto/alfabeto-online.php

There is an English Print to Braille Translation website:
<http://pbskids.org/arthur/print/braille/index.html>

Louis Braille Biography in Spanish: <http://fbraille.com.uy/louisb>

Google has neat translation features.

Go to the Google Main Page: www.google.com

Click on "more" link & then scroll down to bottom of the page to "Google Tools" & click on the "Translate" link. "Presto," you can now translate text or any webpage into Spanish! (or visa versa)

You can copy and import the Spanish text into Duxbury & you have instant Spanish Braille (Please note: Translations are NOT perfect, but this is a cool feature never-the-less)

For the really motivated, you could look into private-agencies (such as ONCE) or Government organizations in countries that speak Spanish & see if their Braille lending libraries will serve foreigners (foreigners would in this case be those of us that live in the US).

Bottom Line: What is the most reliable way to get Braille books in foreign languages?

Step 1) Get some print/picture books in the desired language (You can purchase Spanish children's books from many websites on line; Barnes & Noble, Borders, & Target have an increasing number of Spanish children's book options, etc.)

Step 2) Roll up your sleeves

Step 3) Sit down with Braille labels or Braille paper & a Perkins Braille & start Brailleing away → that is what my wife does so that my boys can read children's stories in Lithuanian.

For the technologically inclined, type away on your desktop or laptop using the language option that is include with Windows XP & then convert to Braille using Duxbury or potentially Braille 2000. Duxbury has LOTS of language options available, even Lithuanian!

Other Thoughts

Try to find your child a pen- (Braille)-pal → perhaps one who wants to improve their English

Personal Opinion: Parents & Grandparents should just read stories to their children. While ideally the books should be Brailled, the child will still enjoy the joys of reading even if it is not feasible to have Brailled materials early on.

At home & in our Lithuanian preschool setting, many of the books that we "read in Lithuanian" are actually popular books that are written in English & translated "on the spot" for the kids to enjoy. They hear the stories, they hear the language. Once they are old enough to read on their own, the Braille component becomes more critical.

** Several of the Braille Production Groups I mentioned above expressed to me that they are not sure how much of a demand there is for Spanish Braille. They obviously need to make decisions based on their resources. I suggest that if there is a strong interest in increasing the volume of Spanish Braille materials for children, you need to make this known & then it would need to be backed up with purchases of these materials.

An important additional consideration. Several individuals pointed out that Spanish Braille & Spanish terminologies vary between Spanish-speaking countries & that that can be an issue when seeking out Spanish Braille for children. Having studied Spanish & lived in &/or traveled to several Spanish-speaking countries, this is indeed true. Each of you has to make a decision with respect to how much of an impact that may have on your situation. My personal feeling about this is that while there may be differences, the benefits of exposure will often outweigh the other issues. While not quite the same, I would not have much of an issue in exposing my kids to Australian or British Braille stories if that was all that was readily available; fortunately that is not the case.

I realize that these are a lot of random thoughts thrown together, but hopefully someone may find them useful.

Best wishes for the New Year!

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