



Anne Gelles at the Mike during the 2006 Braille Bee.

The CSB Braille Bee

The CSB (California School for the Blind) Braille Bee is an annual event held in February. Our first Braille Bee held in 1998 had twelve contestants. Since then, the Braille Bee has grown to include four levels and over forty participants. This year we initiated a teacher-level competition enjoyed by all students. Students study a designated number of braille contractions for six weeks before the big day. Easier contractions such as *gd* for good, *td* for today, *ll* for little, *bl* for blind and *brl* for braille are assigned to beginner level students. Harder contractions such as *tgr* for together, *alt* for altogether, *nec* for necessary, *yrvs* for yourselves and *imm* for immediate are assigned to intermediate level students. The most difficult braille contractions are assigned to level three and four students, which are our advanced level participants.

Advanced braille students help out by manning the microphone, introducing the guest speaker or judging the beginner, intermediate and teacher levels. Each level is made up of two parts. During the first rounds (4-6 rotations), students are required to read the braille contraction brailled on a flash card. Students who make no mistakes during this round compete in the next round in which the remaining competitors are given a word brailled out as you would see it in print. Their job is to tell the audience how to braille the given word in braille. There are 189 braille contractions and over five hundred rules to govern their use. The winner for each level receives a ribbon and trophy and lunch out with the teacher or administrator of his/her choice. Second and third place winners for each level received ribbons for the first time this year.