



**Arizona State Schools for the Deaf and the Blind
Office of Superintendent Annette Reichman**

For Immediate Release

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**ARIZONA STATE SCHOOLS FOR THE DEAF AND THE BLIND STUDENT TAKES
HOME NATIONAL AWARD AT THE 2016 BRAILLE CHALLENGE**

ASDB Superintendent Annette Reichman congratulates ASDB student Joey Parra on his second place finish in the national competition

Phoenix, Ariz., August 2, 2016—Arizona State Schools for the Deaf and the Blind (ASDB) Superintendent Annette Reichman congratulates student Joey Parra on his second place victory at the [Braille Institute's 2016 Braille Challenge®](#) National Finals on June 18, 2016 in Los Angeles. Parra is one of 1100 blind or visually impaired students who competed in the 2016 Braille Challenge. He attends the Arizona School for the Blind on ASDB's Tucson campus.

“It is with great pride that, on behalf of the Arizona State Schools for the Deaf and the Blind, I congratulate Joey Parra on earning second-place at the 2016 Braille Challenge National Finals,” Superintendent Reichman said. “It is always exciting to celebrate an ASDB student’s hard work, determination and success. Joey epitomizes how empowering braille literacy can be.”

Joey Parra, 12, Tucson resident was thrilled with his second-place national victory at the 2016 Braille Challenge® in the Sophomore division (grades 5-6). In 2014, Parra, who was just 10-years-old at the time, placed second in nationals in the Freshman division (grades 3-4). For the past three years, Parra has also finished first or second in Arizona’s Regional Braille Challenge. When Parra isn’t triumphing at braille competitions he enjoys watching the Walking Dead, playing video games, and swimming.

Parra reflected on how his preparation ultimately led to success.

“I practiced with a preliminary speed and accuracy test downloaded from the Braille Challenge website to my victor reader; I practiced for a month once a day,” Parra said. “My experience with the Braille Finals was that some of the tests were harder than others but, overall, it was a fun experience. I really liked it a lot and I had a lot of fun being there, and I had my family there to support me and cheer me on.”

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The Braille Challenge® is an academic competition that encourages students who are blind or visually impaired to challenge themselves and celebrate braille literacy. This two-stage contest challenges students to excel in a variety of literacy categories including reading comprehension, braille speed and accuracy, proofreading, spelling, and tactile chart and graph literacy.

Any visually impaired student who reads braille was eligible to participate in the regional challenge events which were held from January through the end of March throughout the U.S. and Canada. Each contestant receives a brailled certificate of appreciation and feedback on their performance. The top-scoring 50 contestants were invited to Los Angeles last June for a two-day competition.

Lisa Yencarelli, Director of Blind Programs at ASDB, commented on the importance of the Braille Challenge.

“The Braille Challenge is an academic competition like no other. It allows students to showcase their skills and provides motivation to continue learning,” Yencarelli said. “The Braille Challenge is a wonderful event that brings students together to not only compete but also celebrate braille literacy.”

The Braille Challenge® is a national competitive event program of [Braille Institute](#). Braille Institute is a nonprofit organization whose mission is to eliminate barriers to a fulfilling life caused by blindness and severe sight loss. Each year, Braille Institute serves more than 75,000 people. Its rich history of empowering individuals who are blind or with significant vision loss dates back nearly a century.

Advances in technology have not replaced the need for blind individuals to learn to read braille, a code created by Louis Braille in 1824. Numerous studies in the field of visual impairment show a strong correlation between braille literacy and successful employment for adults who are blind.

For more information on Joey Parra, Braille Institute’s 2016 Braille Challenge second-place national winner, please contact Ryan Ducharme at (602) 771-1092 or by email at Ryan.Ducharme@asdb.az.gov

The [Arizona State Schools for the Deaf and the Blind \(ASDB\)](#) was founded in 1912 – the year of Arizona’s statehood. ASDB serves over 2,000 children who are blind, visually impaired, deaf, hard-of-hearing, multiply sensory disabled and deaf-blind from birth to age 21. ASDB operates two schools for the deaf, one school for the blind, a birth to age 3 Early Childhood and Family Education Program and five regional cooperatives. ASDB is dedicated to empowering students with the educational opportunities necessary to succeed in college, career and life.



Joey Parra, 2016 Braille Challenge Sophomore Division second place winner, poses for a portrait at the Braille Institute's 2016 Braille Challenge National Finals in Los Angeles on June 18, 2016. (Photograph courtesy of Grace Parra)