

**NO NEED FOR TUTOR**

# New tech helps blind pupil

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A DEVICE that converts text into Braille, and vice versa, has given a visually impaired pupil more independence and let him transfer from a school for the blind to a mainstream school.

Pieter-Jans Dürr, 14, of Malmesbury, has retinitis pigmentosa. After attending the Pioneer School for the Blind in Worcester he was recently able to start attending Swartland High School in his home town.

Education MEC Donald Grant, who visited Pieter-Jans at his new school yesterday, said eBrailleNote Apex computers had made it possible for blind pupils to read electronic text using an electromechanical display

that raised dots against a flat surface. Pupils at Pioneer and the Athlone School for the Blind started using the devices last year, and Swartland is the first mainstream school to get one.

"The device also allows learners to type text in Braille, listen to the text via computer-generated speech and to read and listen to electronic text in various formats, including PDF and Word files," Grant said.

Pieter-Jans's teachers could follow what he was typing on an external monitor and print it for marking.

Pieter-Jans, who said he hoped to study drama and was also interested in starting a band, previously had a tutor who accompanied him to classes.

"She went with me to all my classes and took notes. That was a great

help for me. It's easier for me (now). I can do my homework on my own and no one has to read anything for me."

He said while people might think it would be difficult for him in a mainstream school, having many friends at the school had helped him to integrate.

Principal Dirk Marais said the school was planning to start its own radio station and Pieter-Jans would be the presenter.

"The other pupils would be able to send him their (music) requests via e-mail."

The Western Cape Education Department will be monitoring the success of the programme and will consider rolling it out to other mainstream schools.

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**INTEGRATED**

Technology has enabled Pieter-Jans Dürr to transfer from a school for the blind to a mainstream school

PICTURE: JASON BOUD