

New e-Braille devices will help visually impaired pupils study better

MICHELLE JONES

NEW devices to convert printed text to Braille are being used successfully at two Western Cape schools.

The Athlone School for the Blind in Bellville South and the Pioneer School in Worcester have received the devices -

an e-Braille portable computer, a device for scanning and reading printed text, and a portable MP3 player so that blind users can listen to audio books.

Outgoing Western Cape Education MEC Donald Grant visited the Bellville South school yesterday to see how the devices are being used.

They were piloted last year, and the department has since expanded the use of the technology in the two schools.

Grant had the chance to sit down in front of a machine and learn how to use it.

Fletcher Fisher, Athlone's principal, said the machines each cost about R57 000.

"The cost benefit of this is huge, especially (compared with) the traditional cost of producing Braille books. This is the way to go."

He added that it would cost about R3 million to R4m to produce the books each pupil needed in their 12 years of schooling.

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Williams said pupils in

grades 1 to 3 had training in Braille and then came to him for training to use the machine.

On the cost of the machines Williams said: "This is expensive. We're not investing in something for now."

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HELP ON HAND:
Andiswa Qokoba from Athlone School for the blind works on one of the new devices.

PICTURE:
CINDY WAXA

