

The Bulletin

Number 5, Friday 30 April, 2021

Inside this issue

Here's what you'll find:

- **From SVRC:** Dot Power 2021, Q & A: Is “the same” always best?, Teaching and Learning with Braille Music
- **From the field:** SPEVI Flexible Membership, Reaching all Learners, National Simultaneous Storytime 2021, Vision Australia’s Careers Sampler 2021, Futures Expo 2021, Tactile to Digital Part 1: Math Robot

PD events

The 2021 Professional Learning Calendar is now available on the SVRC website. Most professional learning will continue to be online. Events are now on Eventbrite.

Wednesday May 12 **Including students who are blind or have low vision in art**

Providing practical strategies that teachers can use in their art classes to promote inclusion and achievement for students who are blind or partially sighted.

From the Manager

It's great to be back for Term 2 after the school holidays, with some gorgeous weather in Victoria during the Easter break. I hope that you had a chance to relax and spend quality time away with family and friends. With the lifting of COVID-19 related restrictions in the workplace, all SVRC staff will be returning to working onsite for an increased amount of time. It is great to sit down at morning tea to enjoy energising conversations face to face rather than via a virtual platform.

Last Friday, the long awaited LEGO Braille Brick kits were delivered safely to Sarah Hayman. The kits are now available to loan through the tracking system for all students who use braille in DET schools. Many VTs have already completed the training that is required before the kits are dispatched. During SSP and Dot Power teaching sessions, trained staff will be trialling using the LEGO Braille Bricks as a learning tool. We look forward to hearing about how they are used in schools and the sharing of ideas.

A reminder that the next VTS Community of Practice is being held on Tuesday 4 May via ZOOM. The session will include an overview and features of Zoomtext, Fusion and Jaws software and how the different programs relate to students who are blind or have low vision. Additional time has been allocated for a Q & A session where you will have the opportunity to speak with experienced users of the software platforms.

On Thursday 20 May our resident Occupational Therapist students from Monash University will be facilitating the VTS Community of Practice on Relationships and Sexuality. Claire and Natalie are Occupational Therapy (Honours) students that have been working with the SVRC to create resources about teaching relationships and sexuality education (RSE) to students with vision impairments. They have created two handbooks, one for educators and one for parents, outlining accessible and appropriate delivery of RSE for our students. In the Community of Practice on May 20, Claire and Natalie will introduce you to these handbooks and go through the different topics and resources available to ensure students can engage fully in RSE when it is provided at their school. There will be time for discussion and questions about these handbooks and recommendations. An invitation will be emailed next week.

Dot Power 2021 – we're back on-site at SVRC

Dot Power is a program for students in Prep to Year 3 who use braille as their primary learning medium. The program is open to parents of pre-schoolers, too. It's always been a fun-filled day of braille and related activities with specialist teachers and adults who also read braille. It is also a great opportunity for teachers, family members and others to get involved and learn about braille and tactile graphics, and teaching with braille.

Generally, SVRC has run two Dot Power days in each of terms 2, 3 and 4 every year. This was disrupted in 2020 by COVID restrictions, but we did share some fun braille activities with our Dot Power families while they were learning remotely. The two days are for two different groups of students, so each student attends one day per term. Eligible students' families will receive invitations to the appropriate days for them.

This year we intend to have Dot Power on the following days:

Term 2

- May 11
- June 1

Term 3

- August 17 & 31

Term 4

- October 26
- And the Support Skills Try day on November 19



In term 4, it is our hope that the older Dot Power students will "graduate" to the Support Skills Program, which is for students from Year 4 to 10. So in term 4, they can attend the Support Skills try day.

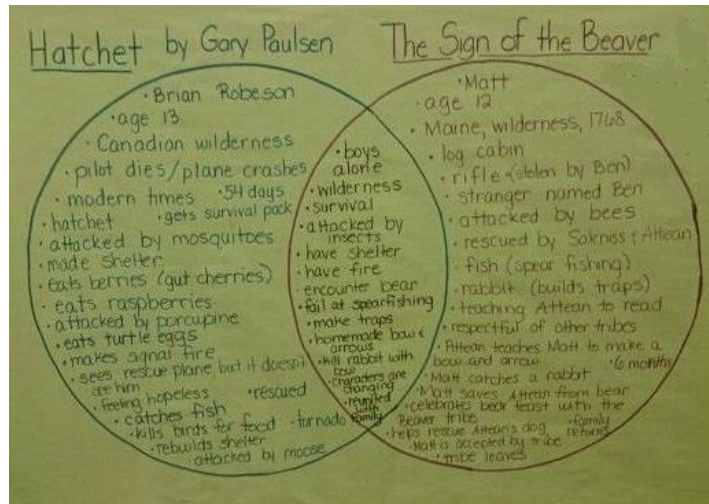
We have not finalised themes for Dot Power days this year as yet, but are thinking that in term 2 we will look at Braille Numbers and Maths and term 3 will choose a book from the Children's Book Council Australia's Book Week nominations (Yet to be announced). The CBCA Book Week theme this year is "Old worlds, new worlds, other worlds", so this could lead to some very imaginative explorations using braille. We might even look at some old braille technology or imagine something new!

Please contact Marion Blaze for more information about Dot Power.
marion.blaze@education.vic.gov.au

Q & A: Is “the same” always best?

Question: We will be using Venn diagrams when comparing different books that we have read. Do you have a brailled version on file?

[Using Venn diagrams is one strategy used to teach students to compare and contrast books, characters, pets ... anything really. Draw two circles that overlap, like a Venn diagram. Label the outer area of the circles with the titles of the books to be compared. The area of crossover (middle area) is for the things that the books have in common and can be labelled “both books” or “same”. The example shown in the photograph (right) compares *Hatchet* and *The Sign of the Beaver*. From the Venn diagram, both books are about boys alone in the wilderness, survival etc. The differences are listed in the outer circles.]



Answer: Yes, blank Venn diagrams can easily be made using PictureBraille and Duxbury – we can email the file so you can emboss them at the school whenever needed.

However I'm wondering if the layout of a Venn diagram will offer your student enough room to make their notes in braille. You could achieve the same effect by dividing a braille page (horizontally or vertically) into three using a Perkins braille writer or a spur wheel.

Then the top (or left) third would be for one book and the bottom (or right) third would be for the other book and the middle strip for the overlap (similarities).

It is a small change to the “look” of the class worksheet, but will allow the student to work in the same way as their sighted peers ... and give them the space to make more notes as shown in the example below 😊

The Bee Tree by Patricia Polacco

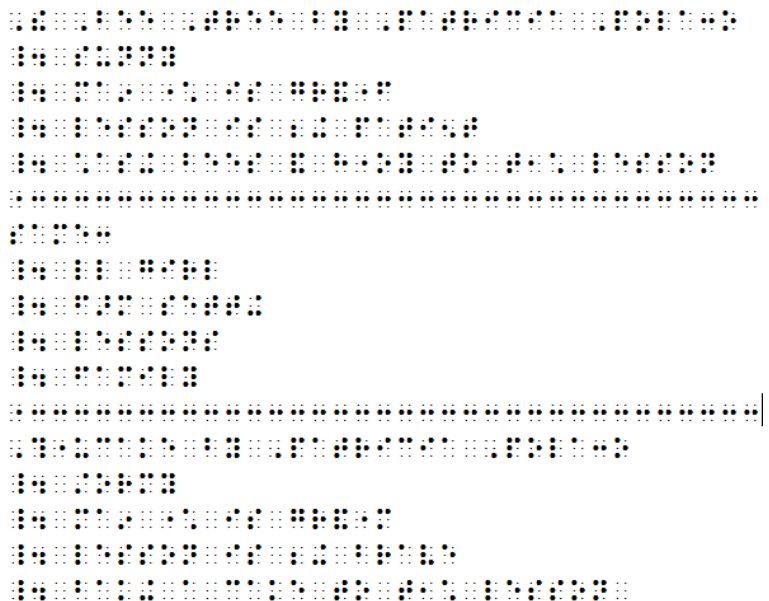
- sunny
- main character is grandfather
- lesson is being patient
- chasing bees and honey to teach lesson

same:

- little girl
- farm setting
- lessons
- family

Thundercake by Patricia Polacco

- stormy
- main character is grandmother
- lesson is being brave
- baking a cake to teach lesson



Teaching and Learning with Braille Music

From: Marion Blaze, Professional Learning, SVRC

"Wish I had this course when I first had to teach braille music!"

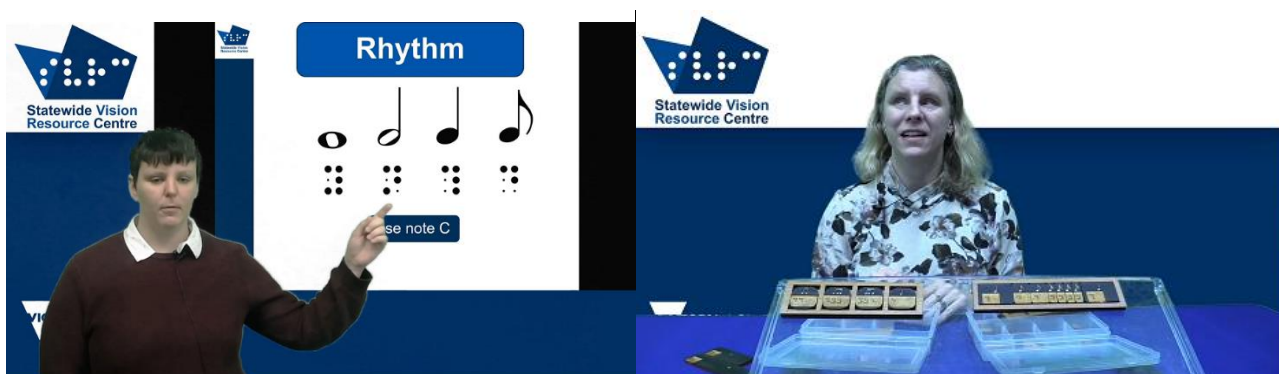
"I was very impressed with the presentation. I did struggle to grasp the concept of the octave. Practice will be the key ... sorry for the pun."

– Comments from participants.

Hats off to Emma Hall and Jordie Howell for presenting a wonderful online PL on Thursday 28 April, all about braille music: how it works and how it can change lives. Thank you, also to Michael Kelly for running all the NEW technology. For the first time, this online PL was broadcast through Vimeo, which produced a much clearer image at the participant end.

After an introduction to why we teach braille music, Emma explained the code, giving participants the opportunity to try transcribing some music. Then Jordie demonstrated how she uses braille music in her teaching and her career. We had 13 participants from all over including Victoria, NSW, ACT and Queensland.

If you'd like a very quick look at braille music, look at the ABC series 'What is Music?' which included our own Lea Nagel, Jordie Howell and our Dot Power students in the episode on music notation. You can find it here: <https://iview.abc.net.au/show/what-is-music>



SPEVI Flexible Membership

Source: SPEVI email list from Phia Damsma and Frances Gentle, Co-Presidents

SPEVI has implemented the following changes to its membership:

1. Flexible joining date

SPEVI's online membership system now enables the biennial (two-year) period of membership to commence from each member's date of joining. This replaces the fixed membership renewal date in May and will ensure that regardless of when anyone joins, the registration fee covers a full two year membership period. All current members will receive an automatic reminder notice when renewal payment is due.

2. Membership category 2 – Qualified Specialist Teacher (Vision Impairment)

For anyone newly joining, the Category 2 membership fee has been reduced from \$150AU to **\$110 AU**. This fee reduction is a result of the reduced administration time involved with SPEVI's online membership system.

Applicants for Category 2 membership must include an academic transcript (or other evidence) of their studies in vision impairment (VI) education when submitting their membership application.

Category 2 members are no longer required to submit an annual log of their professional learning in VI education. This change recognises the responsibility of members to manage their own professional learning records in order to meet the different teacher renewal requirements of regulatory authorities and jurisdictions.

3. Membership category 3 – Associate Member

Associate membership has been expanded to include retired professionals in VI education, in recognition of their contribution to the field.

For further information, please visit the [SPEVI website](http://www.svrc.vic.edu.au)

Reaching all Learners

From: Apple

Following up from our very successful virtual series Reaching All Learners last year we are running these sessions again for Victorian Teachers and Support staff. The Reaching All Learners program is designed to explore the powerful assistive features built-in to iPad that can complement each learners' vision, hearing, motor skills and learning needs

This year we are running 3 different sessions over the following dates:

Session 1 – 29th April – 3:30 to 5:00pm

Session 2 – 2nd June – 3:30 to 5:00pm

Session 3 – 28th July – 3:30 to 5:00pm

[Register here](#)

Additionally we will also be running specific sessions for students with Vision and Cognitive challenges:

Reaching All Learners: Supporting Students with Vision Impairments

More students are coming to school with a varying array of abilities. And teachers are exploring new ways to not only support these learners, but to also personalize every student's learning experience. Join us to learn about tools and resources from Apple that allow all students with vision impairments to explore, communicate, and create in new and powerful ways.

This session will be delivered by an Apple Professional Learning Specialist and is a follow on from Apple's 'Reaching All Learners - Session 1.' It is suggested participants have already attended this workshop. Please bring an iPad with the latest operating system for an interactive, hands on session.

Register on the ARC Link here:

<https://arc.educationapps.vic.gov.au/eventhub/providers/Apple/events/2924/details>

Reaching All Learners: Supporting Students with Cognitive Challenges

More students are coming to school with a varying array of abilities. And teachers are exploring new ways to not only support these learners, but to also personalize every student's learning experience. Join us to learn about tools and resources from Apple that allow all students with cognitive needs to explore, communicate, and create in new and powerful ways.

This session will be delivered by an Apple Professional Learning Specialist and is a follow on from Apple's 'Reaching All Learners - Session 1.' It is suggested participants have already attended this workshop. Please bring an iPad with the latest operating system for an interactive, hands on session.

Register on the ARC Link here:

<https://arc.educationapps.vic.gov.au/eventhub/providers/Apple/events/2925/details>

National Simultaneous Storytime 2021

Give Me Some Space! by [Philip Bunting](#) is the official story chosen for ALIA National Simultaneous Storytime 2021, to be celebrated all across Australia and New Zealand!

Your students who are blind or have low vision can also join in. SVRC is producing the book in braille with tactile illustrations. Please request it in time to read it on May 19, 2021. If you register for the event, you will also be sent a pdf version of the book. Students with low vision can access this and enlarge it on their device.

Una dreams of a life in Space. Life on Earth is just so so-so. But how will she get there? And will she complete her mission to discover life in Space? And did she remember to feed Neil the goldfish?

This book even took off to the International Space Station in 2020! The launch took place on 3rd October 2020, from NASA's Wallops Flight Facility in Virginia. As well as this book, other items on board the rocket included a crop of radishes that will grow in the station's plant habitat, and a new space toilet! Let's hope there was some space loo roll on board too, otherwise *Give Me Some Space!* might meet a premature and grizzly end, at the grizzly end of an astronaut.

This year NSS takes place on Wednesday 19 May 2021 at 11:00am and the book will be read from the International Space Station. We would love it if you could join us by sharing *Give Me Some Space* written and illustrated by Philip Bunting. Everyone can join NSS, it doesn't matter whether you are at home, a school, a public library or even a university library! Help us get #1MillionKidsReading!

For more information and to register your event visit: alia.org.au/nss.

Also, if you go to Scholastic Australia, click on the "Scholastic in the Community" page and go to "NSS 2021" to find an eMagazine, information about the author, space facts and lots of exciting resources.

<https://www.scholastic.com.au/>



Vision Australia's Careers Sampler 2021, Saturday 8 May

This annual event is open to children and young people who have blindness or low vision, their parents/carers, and the teachers and professionals who support them. It is an opportunity to meet mentors in a variety of employment roles, and to find out more about why and how they do what they do. They'll hear a keynote speaker (Dr Theresa Ruig) and panel discussion, as well as have the opportunity to talk with mentors in small group discussions.

This year we are hosting participants in Sydney at Burwood RSL, and at our Vision Australia offices in Kooyong (Melbourne), Coorparoo (Brisbane), Canberra, Maroochydore and Perth! Please find the registration form within this link: [Careers Sampler 2021 - Registration form](#)

We are also seeking expressions of interest from potential mentors. Information is included in this link: [Vision Australia's Careers Sampler 2021 - Mentors' expressions of interest form](#)

Futures Expo 2021

Post school options for students with a disability

Wednesday May 12 2021, 1:00 pm to 5:00 pm

Heatherwood School, 370-380 Springvale Road, Donvale

Enquiries: 9842 8319

Enter from Manningham DISC Parking Lot

Meet service providers for information on:

- TAFE
- Accommodation
- Employment Services
- Day Programs
- Recreation
- Supported Employment
- NDIS

Sponsored by Gateway LLEN



Tactile to Digital Part 1: Math Robot

From: Diane Brauner via Perkins eLearning

Math fact drills with a twist: APH's Math Robot app and it's humorous robot jokes! Students will laugh along with the "know-it-all" math robot and may even enjoy practicing math fact drills!

Before introducing your student to the app, take a few minutes to use this app to teach critical tech skills. The power of a touch screen device is the ability to - you guessed it - touch the screen! When students touch the screen, they KNOW exactly where they are physically on the screen and they can develop a mental map of the screen's layout. If the student simply right/left swipes around the screen, the student misses the whole chunk of critical information. Swiping around the screen does not provide information of where the screen reader cursor is on the screen; the student does not know physically where the cursor is, the spatial relationships between items on the screen and the student cannot develop a mental layout of the screen. Students need to develop these critical tech skills early on to become efficient, tech savvy power users. Example: In the Math Robot app, where is the Delete button? If swiping right, all the student knows is that Delete button is between the number 9 and the zero. If the student is dragging his/her finger on the screen, the student knows the Delete button is in the bottom left corner. At any time, the tech savvy student can simply move his finger to the bottom right corner to Delete a number; while the right swiping student would have to swipe right numerous times to reach the Delete button. ...

Read more at [Perkins eLearning](#)

And finally ...

Did you know that the Braille Music Code is used in countries all across the world including Australia, Finland and Japan!