The Bulletin

Number 8, Friday 11 June, 2021

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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 Aug 10 **Educational Support of students who have low vision**

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

Tuesday Oct 19 **Preparing your school for inclusion of a student who uses braille**

Providing practical support for school staff preparing to welcome and include a new student who will be learning to read using braille.

Tuesday Nov 23 **EXPO: Assistive Technology for students who are blind or partially sighted**

Showcasing and demonstrating assistive technologies that can promote inclusion and achievement for students who are blind or have low vision.

From the Manager

Source: Kim Foley, SVRC

It has been another very industrious time at SVRC during the extended lockdown. We have continued to respond to a large influx of requests for assistive technology and transcription resources. The Support Skills Program will be online over the next two weeks to ensure the program continues and the students remained connected with their teachers and peers. Unfortunately, the Dot Power session on June 15 has been postponed until term 3 during the uncertainty about when schools would return to onsite learning this term.

On Tuesday afternoon, at the Visiting Teacher Community of Practice, Deb Davidson and Di Bennett delivered presentations on the importance of touch typing skills for all students, and in particular for our students with a vision impairment. They discussed the importance of daily practice and initially emphasising accuracy over the number of words per minute. A number of software touch typing programs were showcased, including their advantages, disadvantages and age appropriateness. Efficient and accurate touch typing skills equip our students to complete curriculum tasks in a similar timeframe as their sighted peers.

SVRC and VDEI representatives have been invited to participate in the Visiting Teacher Service (VTS) Review alongside Visiting Teachers, Health and Wellbeing Support Service Managers and other relevant stakeholders. We look forward to participating in the working parties to research and map best practices across Australia and internationally. We value our partnership and the work VTs do every day to support blind and low vision students across the state.

For those in Victoria, we wish you and your families an enjoyable long weekend now that we will be out of lockdown.

Q&A: How do I use the braille font in MSWord and other apps

Question: How do I use the braille font in MSWord and other apps to write characters other than the lower case letters of the alphabet?

Answer: To produce braille (black on white), we use what is called braille ASCII which allows each of the 64 dot combinations available in braille to be created using the symbols on the computer keyboard and a braille font such as simbraille.

So to create the braille letter "a" using a braille font and computer keyboard type the letter a: ⠁.

The same follows for the rest of the letters of the alphabet, e.g. "b c d" ... ⠃ ⠉ ⠙.

For the contractions and other braille symbols, we use the numbers and other symbols available on the computer keyboard as shown in the diagram below.

	!	"	#	$	%	&	'	(	)	*	+	,	-	.	/
	(braille)	(braille)	(braille)	(braille)	(braille)	(braille)	(braille)	(braille)	(braille)	(braille)	(braille)	(braille)	(braille)	(braille)	(braille)
0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	:	;	<	=	>	?
(braille)	(braille)	(braille)	(braille)	(braille)	(braille)	(braille)	(braille)	(braille)	(braille)	(braille)	(braille)	(braille)	(braille)	(braille)	(braille)
@	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N	O
(braille)	(braille)	(braille)	(braille)	(braille)	(braille)	(braille)	(braille)	(braille)	(braille)	(braille)	(braille)	(braille)	(braille)	(braille)	(braille)
P	Q	R	S	T	U	V	W	X	Y	Z	[	\	]	^	_
(braille)	(braille)	(braille)	(braille)	(braille)	(braille)	(braille)	(braille)	(braille)	(braille)	(braille)	(braille)	(braille)	(braille)	(braille)	(braille)

So, you can see at the top left of this diagram, to make the contraction for "the" (dots 2,3,4,6) type the exclamation symbol using a braille font: ⠮

Here are some other examples:

- capital sign (dot 6) – comma (,): ⠠

- "for" contraction (dots 1,2,3,4,5,6) – equals (=): ⠿

- "st" contraction, used also as simple numeric fraction line, (dots 3,4) – forward slash (/): ⠌

- numeric indicator or number sign (dots 3,4,5,6) – hash (#): ⠼

If you'd like to use this method to create diagrams, use a braille font without the dot-markers. Ensure that the braille font size is set to 22 then print your document on swell paper before sending it through the PIAF machine.

☺ ⠎⠍⠊⠇⠑

Q&A: Using the Find function on the Polaris

Question: My student is trying to navigate a French dictionary which has been formatted as a Word document. He has been using the Find function on Polaris but he is finding it a bit tricky. For example, today he wanted to find the French word for the word "dress" but the Find function sent him through to "address" in all its many forms, before proceeding to the French equivalents. He tried " dress " with spaces either side but it then took him to words that had the word dress in the definition options (e.g. "I do like your dress: *J'aime beaucoup ta robe*."). He was able to extrapolate that the word for "dress" is "*robe"* from that definition, but he never actually reached the direct translation of the word "dress", despite trying for several minutes. Is there a particular way he should be navigating the dictionary or is the process is just always going to be a bit slow.

Answer from Di Bennett: I have just had a look at the dictionary on the new Polaris. Try the following:

- **Find: Space + F**

  Enter the word you are looking for e.g. "dress"

- Then use **Repeat Find**: **Enter + F** and it will move forward through the document until it comes to the word "dress" again.

- **Reverse Find**: **Backspace + F**

Remember, if you are in any application and need help, use **Space + H** and go through the help menu and focus on the function or action you are unsure of.

Does your Polaris feel a little slow or sluggish?
Closing down apps may help resolve this.

- Press F1 + F4 together to open the Task Manager

- Navigate through the list and press Space when you come to an app to select

- When all open apps are selected press Space + D to close

Print Disability Services Program 2021-2024

Source: https://www.dss.gov.au/disability-and-carers/programmes-services/for-people-with-disability/print-disability-services and Round Table on Information Access for People with a Print Disability

The Print Disability Services Program (PDSP) supports organisations to produce print material in alternative formats for people with print disability who are unable to read standard print with ease due to vision impairment, a physical disability or a learning disability.

The Federal Government is providing this service to produce alternative formats of printed and digital material, to meet the needs of people living with a print disability. The aim of this program is to improve access to printed materials for all Australians.

PDSP provides accessible information and materials that will assist people with a print disability to live independently, participate in education, gain employment and be active participants in their local community.

Organisations funded under the PDSP produce digital masters that can be converted to a number of alternative formats including braille, audio, large print, tactical graphics, e text (down-loadable format), easy English, accessible PDF, DAISY and MP3.

Digital masters of printed material are made available on Trove, an online database of Australian resources, developed by the National Library of Australia.

PDSP is free to eligible people and is available nationally. To access these services please contact the organisations below.

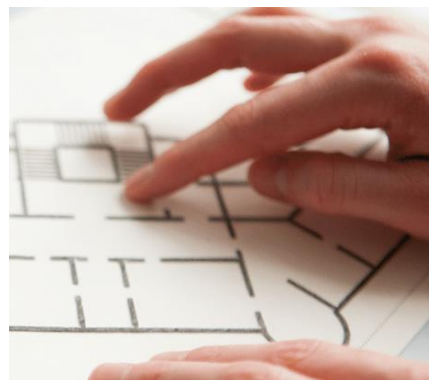**VisAbility** tel: 1800 847 466; email: access@visability.com.au; web: www.visability.com.au

Vision Australia tel: 1300 847 466; web: www.visionaustralia.org

A little About Tactile Graphics

Source: https://lighthouse-sf.org/2018/06/29/tactile-graphics/

Lighthouse identifies "10 things to know about tactile graphics" including how tactile graphics are perceived, their importance in education and best practice in providing tactile graphics. Here are some of our favourites, but check the link above for more!

- **To interpret and understand a tactile graphic, the reader must have some experience with the object or concept being pictured.** Background information and context are key. Take a map of a bus stop as an example — to interpret it you'd need to know enough about buses to know that they travel along streets. Building on an existing knowledge of a space or topic, a key identifies symbols or labels. Symbols and braille abbreviations are crucial when designing a tactile graphics, because they simplify information and make landmarks easy to identify and differentiate.

- **Build on students' own experiential knowledge and concrete understanding.** Beginner tactile learners benefit from exposure to maps of a place they know well, like their bedroom, so they can make connections between their mental map and the physical space that the map represents.

- **Reading and understanding tactile graphics is not as easy as it may look; do everything you can to make it easier.** Reading tactile graphics is not an inborn skill, it's a skill that needs to practiced. Tactile literacy comes with education, simplification and builds on existing knowledge.

Webinar – Technologies

Source: Laurie Kelly, Guide Dogs Victoria

Here at Guide Dogs, we know our services can have a significant impact on everyday functioning, independence, social participation and overall wellbeing for people with low vision or blindness.

In this free webinar, learn about the wide range of technologies available for people with low vision or blindness, and how they can improve independence, confidence and communication.

When you make a referral to Guide Dogs, you can open up the doors to multi-disciplinary holistic assessment including Assistive Technology, Orthoptics, Orientation and Mobility, Occupational Therapy, Access Consulting, Early Childhood and Support Coordination.

Join us online to find out more

We would love to see you at our upcoming online webinar – Technologies: Low Vision and Blindness.

You'll have the opportunity to find out more about our wide range of services and hear first-hand from one of our experienced specialists and from a Guide Dogs Client on how our services can make a difference in the lives of your patients.

Date: Tuesday 22 June

Time: 11 am – 11:45 am

Location: Online Via Zoom – Register in advance for this meeting by clicking this link.

After registering, you will receive a confirmation email containing a link to join the webinar on the day.

For further information, please contact Laurie Kelly on lauriek@guidedogsvictoria.com.au

And finally ...

Here's a couple of questions from SVRC's Biggest Morning Tea Music Trivia Quiz for you to ponder before you use your search engine of choice to find out the answers.

1. Which Australian band was started by the brothers Angus and Malcolm Young?

2. Which singer had a number one hit in 1978 with a song title that is also an Emily Bronte novel?

3. Which singer is the godmother to Elton John's sons?

4. What is the longest running musical on Broadway?