

Number 17, Friday 10 November, 2023

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PD events

Tuesday November 21 [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. This year's Expo will be a hybrid format event with both onsite and online attendance available.

On Demand PL

All of our professional learning workshops are now available on demand where participants can access all the videos and resources at a time that suits them. You can find links through the On Demand page, under Professional Learning, on our website.

Message from the Manager

Source: SVRC, Kim Foley and Jane Barker

Last Thursday afternoon, Karen Money, NEVR Regional Director visited SVRC. It was a wonderful opportunity for staff to highlight our student programs, assessment clinic processes, assistive technology resources, and transcription of braille and e-text services. Karen was extremely impressed with the dedication of staff in supporting the equity of resources and services for students who are blind or have low vision across the state.

SVRC also recently celebrated Children's Week. It was wonderful to hear some of the responses from our students on the theme of "Children have the right to relax, play and take part in activities they enjoy". These responses can be read in the corresponding article in this issue of the Bulletin.

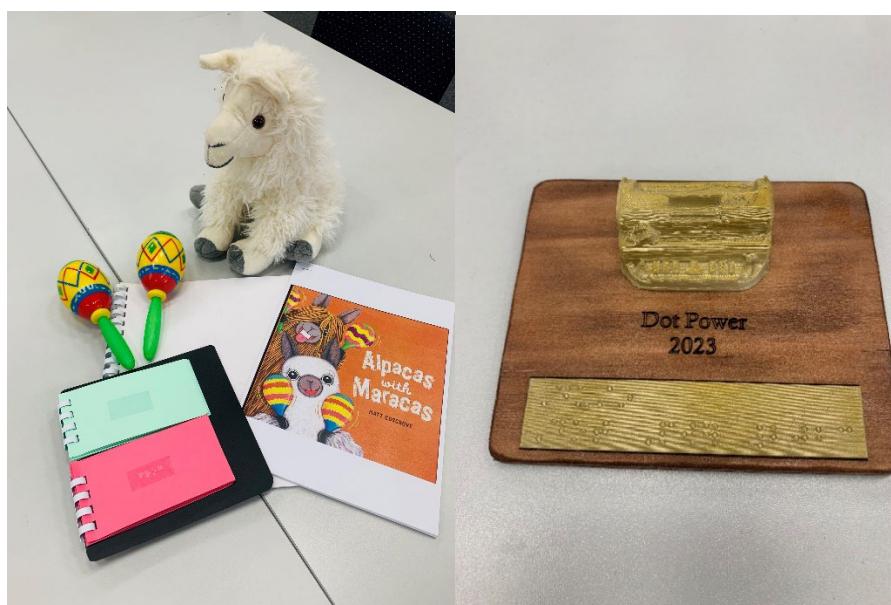
Dot Power with Alpacas and Maracas

Source: SVRC, Marion Blaze

October 31 wasn't just Halloween, it was Dot Power Day at SVRC! Our theme was rhyming words so we chose to read "Alpacas with Maracas" by Matt Cosgrove – a fabulous story with lots of rhyming words. We were joined by nine children, their families and school support staff for a day full of reading, matching, singing, playing maracas, writing braille and making friends. Thank you again to our wonderful transcription team for making tactile maracas, braille books with tactile illustrations and even a "flip" book where students could read a word and flip to the word that rhymed. And at the end of the day we had graduations! All the students in year 3 enjoyed their final Dot Power Day and received 3D printed mini Perkins Braille trophies (thank you to Michael Kelly and Sarah Hayman).

At Dot Power, we aim to model strategies that are useful in our students' classrooms, such as:

- Having a roll call before each activity, so that everyone knows who is in the room and where they are sitting
- Encouraging fluent left-to-right movement of fingers reading braille (still fingers cannot perceive braille)
- Encouraging two hands and as many fingers as possible reading braille
- Encouraging independence in all things, including putting paper in the brailier
- Using a child's name before addressing them
- Using non-slip mats under braille so that it sits still
- Providing breaks between braille reading to prevent tactile fatigue
- Providing the opportunity to read with a proficient adult reader of braille (Thank you, Jordie Howell for this and also singing and playing guitar at Dot Power).



Children's Week: Children have the right to relax, play and take part in activities they enjoy

Source: Ange, VT Inner East

October 21-29 was Children's week, a national celebration that recognises the talents, skills, achievements and rights of children. The theme for Children's Week 2023 was "Children have the right to relax, play and to take part in activities they enjoy" based on Article 31 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Students listened to the "Children of Australian" song and choose a corresponding question to respond to.

Here are some of their responses:

Why is it important to celebrate Children's Week?

I think it is important to celebrate Children's Week because it is a week to recognize children and their rights. Us children need our rights to be recognized more because they matter too. This year the theme for Children's Week was our rights to relax, play and take part in the activities that we enjoy doing. This is important because we need to be able to take part in things that we love doing and enjoy. Overall Children's Week is very important, and we should celebrate to recognize all kids around the world.

By Anvesha – Year 6

Do you agree with the theme, if so, why?

I agree with the theme, "Children have the right to relax, play and take part in activities they enjoy" because children need to relax and not just do schoolwork. Schoolwork impacts students and makes them feel stressed and depressed. The park is a public place for people to relax or hang out, especially for children. Therefore, students have the right to hang out in the park and not to be enclosed in their room stressing out about tests. What I usually do is play tennis with my friends in the nearby tennis court. We always have so much fun and joy that we lose track of time. I usually relax by cleaning (because I find it therapeutic) or chatting with my friends on a call.

By Hiroshi – Year 7

Do you agree with the theme, if so, why?

It is important for children to be able to relax and take part in activities they enjoy. Many children like doing a range of activities whether it be playing videogames, kicking a ball around or even just catching up with your mates. These days, life has become more fast-paced, and many children are still trying to figure out how to balance their play. Too often, children are getting stressed over their assignments or upcoming tests. Too often, children are burning themselves out and becoming too tired to catch up with friends or do other activities that they enjoy. All this stress could be doing more harm than good. Research shows that experiencing too much stress can impact the immune system's ability to keep the body healthy, therefore increasing your chance of getting sick. Note: I am not saying that you should completely ditch your studies and party every night, but you should still take some time to relax and enjoy yourself. Even though I am currently studying for my exams, I still have been able to balance my work and my free time. This just takes time and I encourage you to keep trying your best.

By Jake – Year 10

Update on Using Gmail on the Braille Sense

Source: SVRC, Di Bennett

For all BrailleSense users wanting to use Gmail accounts on their devices, you can now do so after the Department of Education have whitelisted the braille notetakers as a trusted device. If you require assistance in setting up Gmail accounts on the BrailleSense please contact Di Bennett at di.bennett@education.vic.gov.au.

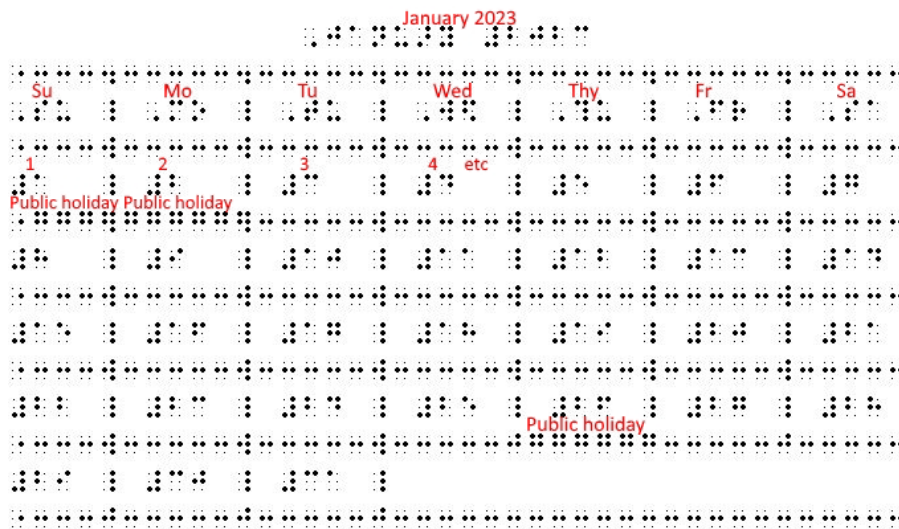
A Zoom meeting can be set up to go through the process of setting up the device with Gmail.

2024 Braille Calendar

Source: SVRC, Transcription

The braille calendar for the year of 2024 is now available! With a month to a braille page, the calendar lists term dates and public holidays for easy reference.

Below is last year's January, as an example! The month of the year is indicated at the top of the page; the days of the week are indicated in the top row; and public holidays are indicated by a double braille line beneath the number.



The 2024 calendar features minibeasts as the illustrations at the bottom of each page and as a bonus activity, there is a minibeast word-search (and solutions) at the end of the calendar. Eligible students, VTs and family members can request copies of the calendar using the request form. For all others, we are happy to provide the braille file for you to emboss in your local area – so send us an email!

Big thanks to Team-Calendar – Sherryl, Taryn and Garry – for this great resource.

New to the Library: The Midnight Ghosts (Usborne Spinechillers Book 1) by Emma Fischel

Source: SVRC, Deb Lewis

The following book has been slightly adapted to be enjoyed either as an illustrated or text-based etext. The introduction and list of main characters (see below) have been added to the beginning of the book.

When Sally and Ant are invited to stay for a week in a strange old mansion, they are surprised by the other houseguests and by a strange series of spooky events that unfold. Can they get to the bottom of the haunting? Can they use the clues to solve the mystery? Will they survive?

Main characters

Anthony (Ant) – invited to stay at Twelve Bells End for a week; younger brother of Sally

Sally – invited to stay at Twelve Bells End for a week; sister of Ant

Max – lives at Twelve Bells End; cousin of Ant and Sally

Melrose Midnight – twelfth Lord Midnight

Magnolia Midnight – wife of Melrose

Magnus Midnight – child of Melrose and Magnolia (now an adult)

Maurice Midnight – the disinherited younger twin brother of Melrose

Mervin Midnight – a houseguest; distant cousin of Sally and Ant; a midnight accident victim; rides a unicycle

Posy Tutu – a houseguest; Aunt of Sally and Ant; former ballerina and now soccer fanatic

Juster Chuckle – a houseguest; a midnight accident victim; only speaks sentences backwards

Mrs Mopps – the housekeeper (but who is she really?)

The Story Begins ...

The letter

Ant and Sally read through the letter with some trepidation. There was no getting out of it now. They really were going to stay at Twelve Bells End. It was a pity they couldn't remember more about the house or cousin Max. But everything they had heard led them to think that this could be a very strange week.

"You never know, it might be fun," said Ant uncertainly ...



... If you are interested in continuing to read this thriller, please be in touch!

3D printed models that you can talk to

Source: Monash University

Are you or your students interested in exploring 3D printed models that you can talk to?

Monash University is conducting a study to enhance the use of 3D printed models used to access the curriculum. We are inviting educators and students under 15 years old to participate in exploring Beesly, an educational insect. We have developed an app that adds audio labels to Beesly, enriching the learning experience. You are invited to engage with Beesly and provide valuable feedback. The session will last no more than an hour, and parents and teachers are welcome to join with minors. We will request consent for audio-visual recording, which will focus on hands and avoid capturing faces. Please contact Ruth Nagassa at Ruth.Nagassa@monash.edu for more information or to register your interest.

Sound Matters – Melbourne Recital Centre

Source: Melbourne Recital Centre

Is your child interested in exploring music through free interactive sessions?

Just a reminder that Melbourne Recital Centre is welcoming interest in their [Sound Matters](#) music program for 2024. This school-holiday series will include 4 x 60-minute sessions throughout the year for 6-10 year olds. Please register your interest in being involved via the [registration form](#) by Friday 3 November.

Explorers United

Source: Explorers United

Darren Moyle, Paula Foote and Marnie Roth are independent Orientation and Mobility trainers who are especially excited to be able to come together as "Explorers United" for group O&M programs. Our aim is to allow young people with a shared lived experience of blindness or low vision to get together on a regular basis and learn together in a fun, practical way.

If you have any questions at all, please reach out to any of us.

Please contact Darren, Paula or Marnie for information about:

- Explorers United Youth – flyer for the programs for 2023/4 for young people 14-24
- Explorers United Kids – flyer for the programs for 2023/4 for children aged 7-14 years
- January program for Kids – Get on it – Bus
- January program for Youth – Going Loopy
- Explorers United Adults – in case you are in contact with any school leavers or older who might be interested in week day programs.

Further details of the April, June/July, and September/October programs will be available closer to the dates.

While we rely on NDIS funding to be able to run these programs, we welcome a conversation about the inclusion of children who aren't eligible for NDIS. We don't want anyone to miss out!

For more information contact:

Marnie Roth via phone on 0423 783 760 or visit the [Confident Steps website](#)

Darren Moyle via phone on 0424 860 836 or visit the [Going Places website](#)

Paula Foote via phone on 0417366 843 or visit the [Paula Foote website](#)

All Abilities Program at Camberwell Hockey Club

Source: Camberwell Hockey Club

Camberwell Hockey Club are launching an All-Abilities Program! The program is a come and try approach to field hockey and is open to anyone aged between 10-18 years old. Our aim is to help provide participants with the opportunity to:

- Increase in confidence
- Further develop social skills in a small group environment
- Increase general motor skills and coordination
- Create an understanding in the sport of hockey
- Above all, to have fun!

The clinic is \$60 for six weeks, running from Saturday 3 February 2024 to Saturday 9 March 2024 between 10am-11am at Camberwell Hockey Club (15 Carinda Road, Canterbury).

Note that the pitch is fully accessible, and our coaches will be trained especially for the clinic. Parents/carers are more than welcome to attend. Our canteen will be open during the sessions.

Anyone who is interested can register via the [Camberwell Hockey Club website](#).

Circus 1903 with Tactile Tour and Up Coming Audio Described Entertainment

Source: Arts Centre Melbourne and Vitae Vertas

January 10 and 12 2024, the Arts Centre Melbourne is showing "Circus 1903" – Family friendly magic and circus entertainment from the producers of the Illusionists and the puppeteers of War Horse.

An edge-of-your-seat, magical experience for young and old this summer. With audio description and a tactile tour one hour before the show!

For more information visit the [Arts Centre Melbourne website](#).

Coming up in 2023

24 November: "How do I let you die?" autobiographical theatre 7.30pm Arts House audio described and tactile tour 1 hour before show start.

2 December: "Genesis" community arts live dance and entertainment 6pm Arts House describer guides and tactile tour.

23 Nov to 7 Dec "The Other Film Festival" is back! TOFF's 2023 screening program is titled "Resistance", exploring the concept of Deaf and Disabled artists and communities living and making work in resistance to an ableist society. Resistance is on ACMI's Cinema 3 streaming platform from Thursday, 23 November – Thursday, 7 December. All films are free! Films are captioned and audio described. The full program will be released with a TOFF eNews edition soon. The "red carpet" event on Thursday 6 Dec 2.30pm is hosted with live and fabulous fashion descriptions.

For more information visit the [Vitae Vertas website](#) or email Nilgun at nilgun@vitaeveritas.com.au.

Special Christmas Concert with Jordie Howell

Source: Jordie Howell

Come and join us on Thursday 14 December for festive fun around the theme of Christmas. We invite children who love to sing to perform at a sparkly Christmas concert in a gallery space featuring an exhibition of drawings and paintings made by children. We will have a very special Christmas tree with origami decorations made by the hands of blind and vision impaired adults. We will bring an awareness of braille music and the work of Louis Braille through song and festivity. A rehearsal will take place at SVRC several days prior to the concert.

Where: Victorian Artists Society, 430 Albert Street, East Melbourne.

When: Thursday 14 December, 10 am for rehearsal followed by our concert.

Lunch will be provided.

Please contact Jordie Howell for rehearsal and concert details and to register your child's interest via phone: 0402 308 484 or email at jordina.howell@gmail.com

And Finally ...

Did you know that a fingerprint has 40 unique characteristics, but an iris has 256, a reason retina scans are increasingly being used for security purposes.