

The Bulletin

Number 10, Friday 19 June 2020

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PD events at SVRC online: 2020

You can register online. Click on the links to read more information and to register online. If you have any questions, please [contact us](#).

Tuesday Aug 11 [Educational support of students who have low vision](#)

Note: For upcoming professional learning at SVRC along with programs, registrations, visit the SVRC [professional learning page](#).

SVRC helpline

Please call SVRC if you have questions about our provisions or inclusion of students with vision impairments. (03 9841 0242)

SVRC support still by remote!

From: Marion Blazé (Acting Manager, SVRC)

In the last fortnight there have been lots of changes to SVRC – and not just to the building. The asbestos works continue. Over the Queen's Birthday weekend, all the asbestos was removed from the inside of SVRC and some from the eaves around the outside. The rest of the outside asbestos was removed last weekend. The contractors have been busy replacing our ceiling lining and insulation and are now working on the electrical replacements. Next week they will begin the task of moving all our furniture and equipment back into the building.



Picture shows shipping containers sitting in the carpark outside SVRC.



Pictures show an empty SVRC with a plastic floor sheet over the carpet, rollable scaffolding and partially open ceiling. It's a big space when it's empty!

Meanwhile, the amazing SVRC team have kept on meeting each other via Zoom, Webex and Microsoft Teams, producing alternative format materials from home, running EVAC through Telehealth, and Functional Vision Assessments via Zoom, running Support Skills via Zoom and posting Dot Power activities to families. Our temporary home in SVRC@home has become quite homely and we have discovered we like having windows!

On June 3, Charlie Roberts conducted a PL via Zoom on secondary maths for students who are blind or have low vision, from Ocean Grove PS. He ran the "sequel" on June 17. With 67 participants from all over Australia and New Zealand, this online PL has proven very popular.

On June 18, we hosted our fourth Community of Practice meeting for Visiting Teachers (Vision) via Zoom. Attended by up to 44 Visiting Teachers, these Zoom meetings have enabled VTs to discuss and learn about service provision all around Victoria, including from our Catholic colleagues. We hope to continue these meetings as a regular opportunity even after COVID restrictions are fully lifted.

SVRC staff have also been part of the Community of Practice meetings of SPEVI (South Pacific Educators of Vision Impaired) discussing provisions during COVID around Australia, New Zealand and the Pacific regions.

Now that students and teachers have returned to schools, please be aware that SVRC@house will still not be open every day during term or during school holidays. If you need to visit, please call or email first, to make sure someone is here to greet you.

The Support Skills crew have continued to provide amazing sessions for students with vision impairments based on areas of the Expanded Core Curriculum in their Zoom classrooms. I love the artwork that Michael Donnelly has inspired, all created with things you will find at home.



Picture 1 is a face. The background is a blue lid, the hair is a fluro green curly straw, the eyes are outlined in red with white centres and the mouth is a red silicone egg ring which has been squashed into an oblong shape.

Picture 2 is a mostly white circular plate with various utensils extending from the top half of the plate in a fan-like fashion. There are three yellow cups upside-down around the bottom of the plate at SE, S and SW positions.

Reminder – Applications for PSD extended

The following statement was in the "Message from the Secretary: Streamlining school requirements for Term 2" dated April 28, 2020. DET has extended the due date for applications for the Program for Students with Disabilities (PSD) to Term 4.

SPEVI (South Pacific Educators of Vision Impaired) online conference, January 2021

SPEVI is delighted to invite you to a truly historic and unique event for our organisation: the 2021 online SPEVI conference. This event will run 18-19 January 2021.

SPEVI is well known for its high-quality conferences that showcase the latest in research, assistive technology and ideas related to the education of people with vision impairment and additional disability. This online forum will allow you to learn from leading professionals as they explore current issues related to education and vision impairment and liaise digitally with parents, students and technology experts.

Our theme, Celebrating Change refers to events during 2020 that forced drastic changes in all aspects of our lives, particularly in the education sector where delivery of education and support services switched to a remote, often online environment. Our online conference will allow us to look back at a year of change and then forward to what we've learned and how our students can continue to receive the best possible educational experience in a changing environment.

Come join us in January for a memorable, entertaining and informative experience!

More information can be found on our website at this [link](#) and we encourage you to consider submitting an abstract through our Call for Papers process located at this [link](#).

Humanware Webinar Series

Humanware have developed a series of Webinars on their range of products to support students and teachers through this difficult time of online learning. Now might be a good time to brush up on your skills with the BrailleNote Touch, Victor Reader Stream or the Connect 12. You can open the recordings of the Webinars any time. Here is a link to the webinars:

http://support.humanware.com/en-canada/support/humanware_live_webinar_series

March 24th Webinar Summary with time stamps. Time stamps allow you to move the recording to the part you want.

3:16 – 10:36 – Working with Zoom

10:40 – 23:00 – New HW Buddy app available on iOS not yet on the Google Playstore

24:00 – 35:40 – Using Google Classroom attaching completed work

35:40 – 42:00 – Sharing Folders on Google Drive

42:00 -1:13 – Q & A from webinar

The next Humanware Webinar will be held on June 26th at 9am and will be covering handling many types of documents with special technology.

Then on July 24th at 9am the webinar will be a co-operation between the students, the teacher and the parents.

Online learning tips

From Renee Williamson (Support Skills Teacher)

Organise your learning space considering the following:

- Good lighting.
- Comfort of your work area – avoid sitting in bed with your device, this is not good for your posture and is not safe from the perspective of heat transferred from your device to your bedding.
- Quiet workspace with limited distractions.
- Safety with electronics and cables.

Planning your day

- Write a to-do list of tasks to complete.
- Take regular breaks from your device.
- Walk around outside, get some fresh air.

The online work

- Stay in contact with your teacher, education support staff and VT.
- Make sure you have access to the materials needed to complete tasks set by your teachers.
- Request materials from SVRC via your visiting teacher or you can email Deb Lewis.
debra.lewis@education.vic.gov.au

Wellbeing tips

From Kira Young (Support Skills Volunteer extraordinaire)

Isolation and social distancing can be hard to deal with, it is normal to feel scared, anxious, frustrated and bored. Here are some tips for looking after your wellbeing that may help during this time.

Stay connected – There are so many ways to keep in contact with people nowadays, whether that be through FaceTime, Skype, WhatsApp, messages, phone calls, social media, etc. Organise calls or group chats with your friends and family to keep in contact and feel less alone. Sometimes just hearing someone's voice can lift your spirits.

Virtual Catch ups – You may not be able to catch up with friends face to face, but you could still have your catch up over video chats, whether that be doing schoolwork together, having lunch or playing a game. There are so many things you can do. It is also a great time to talk to people you may not have had spoken to in a while. A lot of people are feeling bored or worried so they'll probably love hearing from you.

Breathing Techniques and Meditation – if you are feeling particularly stressed or anxious during this time, meditation and breathing exercises may be something you would like to try. There are plenty of apps and YouTube videos you could use.

Take a break from the news – While it is important to stay informed, make sure you limit how often you check the news, Try looking at pages that give key facts as they come about. If you are unsure of something that is said ask someone to explain it to you. The ABC has a key facts page

with people who update the page live and will answer any questions you have if the information is available.

Listen to a book, or podcast – There are plenty of places to get audio books and podcasts for whatever interests you. My personal favourites are Audible for books and the Apple podcast app for podcasts. You can listen to these while you are relaxing, doing chores or if you need some background noise while you study.

Start a new hobby – This is the perfect time to start a new hobby. It can be learning a new musical instrument, a craft, a sport, etc. There are plenty of online resources to help you to start learning this skill. Check out the Duolingo app and learn a new language.

Clean environment, clear mind – Making sure your room is tidy can help you feel calm while in your room. Doing a quick 15-minute tidy up every day will help keep your room clean, avoid it turning into a big task and enable you to tick something off your to-do list each day.

These are skills we can practice all the time to help us feel and do our best, and perhaps you will take some new habits to add to your daily routine once everything is back to normal. This is a scary time for everyone, so if you feel unsure or worried, reach out to someone you trust whether it be a friend, family member or other trusted adults. Speak to them and tell them how you are feeling. Make sure that you are kind to yourself and your family during this time as well. If you are having a not so productive day or you are lacking motivation that is okay, tomorrow is another day and you can try again. I look forward to seeing all of you again soon.

Hummingbirds see more colours than humans

From National Geographic

Scientists have long known that birds probably have better color vision than humans do. Like most primates, humans are trichromatic—that is, our eyes have three types of color-sensitive receptors or cones: blue, green, and red. But birds have four color cones, meaning they are tetrachromatic.

With our three color cones, we can see the colors of the rainbow—red, orange, yellow, green, blue, indigo, and violet—the so-called spectral hues. We can also see one pure nonspectral (meaning, not in the rainbow) color, purple, because it stimulates our red and blue cones simultaneously.

Birds' four color cones theoretically let them discriminate a broader range of colors, including the ultraviolet spectrum, which includes colors such as UV-green and UV-red. But so far, researchers have made few investigations into what birds can actually see.

Mary Stoddard, a Princeton University evolutionary biologist, and colleagues carried out a series of field experiments with wild broad-tailed hummingbirds near the Rocky Mountain Biological Laboratory in Colorado. The remarkable results revealed the birds could discern spectral-colored feeders from feeders in nonspectral colors.

Read more at <https://www.nationalgeographic.com/animals/2020/06/hummingbirds-see-colors-outside-rainbow/>

Polaris Corner

From Di Bennett (Support Skills Teacher)

Alert: New update available! Software version 3.4.

This upgrade adds direct access to Google Drive via the Word Processor, Notepad, Media player and Excel Viewer, which will enable you to open and save files directly from/to Google Drive.

Here are some changes included in the upgrade:

- Typing mode command changed with new upgrade: Backspace + Space + Enter + M
- Spell check current word – Backspace + K
- Word wrap in word processor improved.
- After the upgrade is completed, please press Backspace-Space-Enter-F to recover default apps, so that the Polaris is using the most current versions of the applications.

Did you know that the Polaris can run the Zoom meeting app that SSP is using for our program? To install you need to do 3 things:

- have your Polaris connected to the internet
- have a Gmail account
- download the Zoom meeting app from the Google Play Store.

HW Buddy App – iOS only

HW Buddy app available only on iOS for now, is a useful tool for owners and users of all HumanWare products and Visiting Teachers and support staff to have on hand to become more familiar with the functionality of their products and support students in the use of HumanWare products.

The app includes the following features all fully accessible if using voice over:

- How to Guides – lists for all low vision and blindness products including BrailleNote Touch+, Braille displays, Reveal 16 & 16i, Connect 12, Explore 5 & 8, Victor Steam & Trek, Embossers.
- Favorites – you can bookmark your favorite page from any product for quick easy access.
- News – takes you to their website for product updates and news.
- Support – links you to sales and support for your region/country of choice.
- Search – search using keywords to get quick access to documents.
- Videos – links to HumanWare YouTube channel.

Duxbury files to make your own tactile graph paper

It's becoming harder to source tactile graph paper for maths and science students, so why not make your own? You might find just what you need at

<http://www.duxburysystems.org/downloads/gp/index.htm>

Retirements

From Marion Blazé (Acting Manager, SVRC)

Graham and Bev Sheil, European Eyewear

After nearly 50 years of operating European Eyewear, Graham and Bev Sheil have chosen to retire from working life. This decision has not come lightly, but they feel that now is the time for them to settle back and enjoy the fruits of their labours. As a result, Brett and Leanne Sheil will be taking over control of the business, and will be restructuring operations to phase out their eyewear division and focus solely on magnifier and VTP offerings. The handover of the business and subsequent changes will begin immediately and is planned to be completed by September 2020.

Graham and Bev founded European Eyewear in 1972, and since then established a strong ongoing relationship with Eschenbach Optik of Germany that continues to this day. Through this relationship, European Eyewear has become Australia's biggest supplier of quality magnifiers, as well as a major supplier of eyewear. While they are sad to be stepping back, Graham and Bev are proud of what the business has achieved and they are confident that Brett and Leanne will continue to drive the business forward into the future. We'll miss you at our Expo, Graham! Hope I'll still see you at a Jazz Festival or two.

Trevor Boyd – Quantum RLV

Many of us know Trevor as the friendly face of Quantum RLV in Victoria. Prior to being with Quantum, Trevor was at RVIB. He must be one of the most generous people with his time and expertise. Trevor's support to our teachers, students and schools has been exemplary. We will miss Trevor's depth of knowledge about all things technological, and his willingness to respond to our needs so immediately. Trevor is leaving Quantum and moving to a new phase of his life. Hope we can still catch up at an SVRC Christmas morning tea!

Annette Godfrey-Magee – officially retiring on July 13, 2020

As some will remember, we had a mini celebration of Annette's amazing career at our Christmas morning tea in 2019. Well, she has announced her official retirement date and will leave DET on July 14, 2020. Annette's retirement from the field marks the end of an era. Having worked with Annette since 1980, I can sincerely say that she has been a professional and personal inspiration to me and many others. There are many who quote her words of wisdom on topics such as career education for students with vision impairments and cortical vision impairment. Annette's career spanned the roles of Visiting Teacher, Teacher on Support Skills and Dot Power, advocate for students and families, initiator of a support group for parents, and finally Education Officer with the Educational Vision Assessment Clinic. The latter will remain a strong legacy to Annette's professionalism, knowledge and tenacity in establishing EVAC as a state of the art process introducing families to the support available to them in Victorian schools. Please don't be stranger, Annette. We will greatly miss you.

SVRC News

Farewell to Sarah Kelly (Transcriber) and Jeni Blake (Education Officer with EVAC), both of whom leave SVRC at the end of this term.

Sarah has been an amazing transcriber of literary, music and maths braille. She's the genuine "quiet achiever" and does some amazing work transcribing braille for our students.

Jeni has been working on our EVAC team this year, and we have valued her skills and tenacity in supporting students with vision impairments coming through EVAC.

And finally ...

Stay safe and well in this increasingly online world, and enjoy the school holidays where ever you are.