

The Bulletin

Number 3, Friday 6th March, 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 Apr 28 **Teaching and learning with Braille music**

Providing practical strategies for music teachers to promote inclusion and achievement for students who are blind.

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.

International Women's Day

From: Kim Foley, Manager, SVRC

The theme for International Women's Day (IWD) 2021 is "Women in Leadership: Achieving an equal future in a COVID-19 world". This theme celebrates the tremendous efforts by women and girls around the world in shaping a more equal future. One such woman was Matilda Aston. The following is an excerpt of a short biography, written by Nikki Henningham of The University of Melbourne, and gives a taste of Matilda's remarkable efforts in shaping the future for all students who are blind or have low vision.

Tilly Aston, "Australia's Own Helen Keller" was a blind writer and teacher who founded the Victorian Association of Braille Writers and later went on to establish and become secretary of the Association for the Advancement of the Blind (*Australia's Own Helen Keller*). She is remembered for her activism on behalf of sight impaired people in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

She was adamant that the blind had the ability to run their own affairs. In order to make education accessible to the vision impaired, she established the Victorian Association of Braille Writers in 1894. The Association established training programs for sighted volunteers to learn and transcribe braille. To store and make this material accessible, Victoria's first braille library was established. On 8 December 1895 she arranged a meeting at which the Association for the Advancement of the Blind was formed, with the aim of "the improvement of the blind in every possible way".

In 1913 Aston completed her teacher training and became head of the Victorian Education Department's School for the Blind, the first blind woman to do so.

See [The Encyclopaedia of Women and Leadership in Twentieth Century Australia](#) for the full story.

Below is a photo of SVRC's celebration to mark International Women's Day for staff and visitors this week. Thank you Taryn for organizing the morning tea for everyone. It was greatly appreciated!



Support Skills Leaders Shine

From Marion Blazé, Acting Leading Teacher, SVRC

Every Friday, when students attend SVRC for the Support Skills Program, two students are nominated to be 'SSP Leaders' for the day. This gives them the opportunity to help others, suggest improvements to the program and model good leadership to other students. So far, the chosen students have excelled at being helpful leaders! Micah and Sam were our leaders last Friday (February 26). The first photo shows Micah demonstrating how he plays his bagpipes at school. The second shows Sam, being very considerate at lunchtime. He noticed a student new to the program, who was on his own, and invited him to play ball, which they enjoyed together for the rest of the break. Both Sam and Micah have leadership positions in their own schools and told other students about how they went about applying for and being chosen for these positions. Well done, Sam and Micah!!



Support to schools for VCE Special Examination Arrangements

Applications for Special Examination Arrangements need to be made to the VCAA through the student's school using the VCAA's Special Provision Online (SPO) system by the closing date. The last day for schools to submit Special Examination Arrangements applications for the 2021 external assessments is April 1, 2021.

Please contact Marion Blazé for information re VCE support: marion.blaze@education.vic.gov.au

Information regarding eligibility and procedures can be found on the [VCAA website](http://www.vcaa.vic.gov.au).

SVRC's professional learning programs are making a difference!

From: Marion Blazé, Acting Leading Teacher, SVRC

SVRC has conducted four major professional learning days, so far in 2021:

Feb 2 – Introduction for new Visiting Teachers (Vision)

Feb 9 – Educational support for teachers of students who are blind

Feb 16 – Educational support for teachers of students who have low vision

Feb 23 – Educational support for teachers of students who have vision and additional impairments.

All have been well attended (online) and very well received.

We have clear evidence of the difference these days have made at the "chalk-face". Several parents and VTs have told us that strategies suggested are already being implemented in classrooms around Victoria!

Thank you, thank you – to the magnificent SVRC team, and invited guests who make these days possible:

- Michael, Naomi and Sarah on technology, communication and administration
- Kim, Elise, Di, Deb, Sam, Geoff, Danny (GDV), Thien and Louis for presenting and/or helping prepare presentations
- All the Victorian VTs who encouraged their schools to register and participated with them online.

Inclusive Schools Program

From: Ned Brewer Maiga, Hawthorn Football Club

Hawthorn Football Clubs inclusive schools program is designed for all students and aims to give kids a better understand of disability as well as learn more about the importance of empathy and resilience, all while having fun learning blind footy!

This is a two part session where students will be in the classroom learning about visual impairment and AFL Blind. Students will be given visual simulators representing different eye conditions and will then head outside to play Footy with the simulators on, giving students an experience of the difficulties of visual impairment.

The session will be run on Mondays & Tuesdays by Ned Brewer Maiga who is visually impaired himself and vice captain of Hawthorn Football Club's Blind AFL Team.

These sessions are free of charge! All equipment will be provided and times and dates are all flexible to your school's wishes. If this is of interest to your school, book in a day!

Contact Ned for further enquiries, nedb@hawthornfc.com.au

Book recommendation

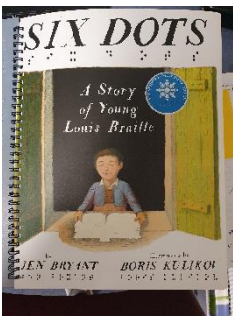
From: Olivia (student) and Ange (VT)

Six Dots: A Story of Young Louis Braille, by Jen Bryant, Illustrated by Boris Kulikov

An inspiring picture-book biography of Louis Braille – a blind boy so determined to read that he invented his own alphabet.

Louis Braille was just five years old when he lost his sight. He was a clever boy, determined to live like everyone else, and what he wanted more than anything was to be able to read. Even at the school for the blind in Paris, there were no books for him. And so he invented his own alphabet – a whole new system for writing that could be read by touch. A system so ingenious that it is still used by the blind community today.

Award-winning writer Jen Bryant tells Braille's inspiring story with a lively and accessible text, filled with the sounds, the smells, and the touch of Louis's world. Boris Kulikov's inspired paintings help readers to understand what Louis lost, and what he was determined to gain back through books. An author's note and additional resources at the end of the book complement the simple story and offer more information for parents and teachers.



LEGO Braille Bricks

From: Vision Australia

LEGO® Braille Bricks will be launched in Australia in early 2021 by Vision Australia, in partnership with the LEGO® Foundation.

For the first VT Community of Practice in 2021 which will be held on Thursday 25 March from 3.00 pm -4.00 pm Vision Australia will be introducing LEGO braille bricks. In term two, SVRC will be distributing the braille bricks kits to every eligible child in government schools who are currently learning braille via a request on the tracking system. A separate reminder will be emailed to Victorian VTs this week. We will also be welcoming teachers from Tasmania who will joining the session on the day.



Tandem bike available for loan

If you feel like getting active (with a sighted guide), our adult-sized tandem bike is available. Please contact us if you are interested. You will need to provide transport of the bike to and from Donvale. It's available for request through the tracking system, or feel free to contact Sarah via email vision.tech.library@education.vic.gov.au.



And finally ...

To continue with the bike theme, a short joke.

Question: What's the hardest thing about learning to ride a tandem bike?

Answer: The footpath!