

The Bulletin

Number 5, Monday 31st March 2014

**287 days till the SPEVI Conference in Melbourne
Monday 12th to Thursday 15th January 2015**

Professional Development & Activities for Term 1 & 2, 2014

Fliers for the SVRC Professional Learning programs are available can be downloaded from the SVRC website: www.svrc.vic.edu.au/PL.shtml.

Please note: the SVRC encourages attendance in person or via video link – please be in touch if you'd like to “virtually” attend any of these sessions.

Event	Date
Educational Support for Vision Impaired Students with Additional Impairments (max participants: 60)	Tuesday 6 May
Skill Power Workshops 1. 9.30-11.00 NVDA – staff from SVRC 2. 11.30-1.00 Victor Reader – Garry Stinchcombe, SVRC 3. 1.30-3.30 BrailleNote – Ramona Mandy, Humanware	Wednesday 7 May
Visiting Teacher MasterClass presented by Penny Rosenblum (Information coming soon)	Mon 12 & Tues 13 May
Skill Power Workshops 1. 9.30-11.00 Combining SmartView 360 with iPad and ReadIt Air – Tony Wu, Humanware 2. 11.30-1.00 MAGic – Pacific Vision 3. 1.30-3.30 Please request a session	Wednesday 21 May
**NEW – PE/Sport/Recreation Day – information coming soon	Date coming soon
Skill Power Workshops 1. 9.30-11.00 BrailleSense – Caz McGowan, Pacific Vision 2. 11.30-1.00 Braille Maths for Primary – Emily White, SVRC 3. 1.30-3.30 Please request a session	Wednesday 4 June
Dot Power	Tuesday 17 June
National Braille Music Camp – email romad@westnet.com.au	21-28 June

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Thanks for MSSD National Partnership Equipment

Here is some lovely feedback from a staff member whose school received a braille embosser and braille translation software for use with a braille student. This package of equipment was deployed on loan through the More Support for Students with Disabilities National Partnership for a student who was commencing secondary school. Here is her feedback:

“The Embosser Pro-50 has been fantastic and I am experiencing no problems. The Embosser Pro-50 is the best piece of technology I have ever used. It has made my job and life easy, producing copious amounts of work for a vision impaired student who has commenced year 7 this year. The training I received from Trevor Boyd (photo right), Quantum Technology, was also invaluable.”



Viewing the BrailleNote on a Smart Phone or iPad

The latest BrailleNote Apex upgrade has a wonderful new feature which will be particularly useful in schools and allow teachers to simply view students' work in “real time”!

The new option in its visual display settings is called “Wireless”. From the Apex's options menu:

- press V for visual display
- then press W for the new wireless option.

If you are connected to a wired or wireless network, the Apex will begin transmitting its visual display wirelessly for a mobile device on the same wireless network.

View the Apex's visual display by entering the IP address that the Apex provided you when activating the wireless visual display option using one of the following apps (iOS or Android):

- VNC Viewer: free from the App Store
- Remotix VNC & RDP: \$19.99 from the App Store
- Android VNC: Free on the GooglePlay Store



Ramona and Thanh (pictured right) had a great time working with this technology recently at Support Skills! This equipment was also made available through MSSD National Partnership.

Ozzie Dots as Sound Files

The inimitable Lea Nagel has recorded the entire collection of Ozzie Dots stories as sound files. This is a fantastic resource for those using the stories as a teaching resource for UEB contracted braille. Students can read along with the audio of the story for additional reading practice. If loaded to a DAISY player, it may also be possible to speed up or slow down the reading rate to suit the beginning reader.

Thanks Lea for this massive effort and thanks also to Andrew Chang for editing the files.

A Day in the Life of Support Skills: Group B

Fridays are always the best day of the week – kids arriving at the lockers and launching into animated conversations about school, camps, music and the hot topic of the moment; parents clumping the hallway as they catch up with other parents they know through sporting activities or parent groups. There is a buzz and an excitement – and a timetable produced in a suitable format so that each of us – students and staff – know what we will be doing during the day.

8.45am is assembly time – an important time where we hear what the students have been up to since we last met. Zac is playing basketball, footy, cricket and guitar; Holly loves reading and trumpet; Caleb has participated in the Weetbix Triathlon and has been practising drums; Emily loved her school camp at Phillip Island; Thien has moved to high school and is now coding his own computer game; and Danijela and her family enjoyed the recent earfilm, “To Sleep, To Dream”. This group of students have come from the Melbourne metropolitan area along with Barwon Heads, Kinglake and Ocean Grove.

At 9.20am students disperse to their individual or small group activities – some are learning to juggle in PE; some are creating art works in response to music; one is making herself lunch with Vision Australia’s OT, Jane; another, who is new to the program, is learning his way around the building with Darren from Guide Dogs Victoria; another is exploring a number of musical instruments in Music; and another is working on the BrailleNote with Ramona from Humanware (see photos on page 2). The bell rings at 10.10 and the students check their timetables to see what their next session will be: iPad, vision issues, technology, braille music, Victor Reader, organisational skills, braille, research skills, social skills. They may pull a computer apart and learn about the components, or perhaps try out the tandem bike! Really, anything can happen ... and commonly does! Here are a few photos from last Friday!



Make tactual pictures



Read a braille watch



Mysteries inside a computer



Explore tactual pictures



Happy friendship



Try a tandem



Share an iPod



Shoot hoops



Climb and chat

Term 1 Dot Power, 25 March 2014

Reflections from Marion Blazé

Things a blind child can do at Dot Power that they can't (usually) do at school:

- Share their brailled work with nine other blind children
- Trip over someone else's cane (!)
- Try four different ways to make a feely picture
- Take home their own bound book containing their own braille and tactile graphics
- Produce pictures on a Perkins brailier
- Throw a ball with a bell in it at a target using audio cues
- Balance bean bags on their head while balancing on one foot and one hand
- Hear other children reading braille
- Be the 'teacher' and instruct another child's movements from brailled instructions
- Match their own body positions with 3D models then 2D magnetic figures including the beanbags (blutack).

Ten children, including four new faces, two of whom were pre-schoolers, attended the Dot Power Day for Term 1, 2014. All of them want to come again, leaving with comments like

- "That was great!"
- "When is the next Dot Power Day?"
- "We had so much fun".

The theme for this Dot Power Day was kinaesthetic awareness and movement. There was plenty of fun as well as challenges. The day ended with all children holding and shaking a parachute, and taking turns to try to maintain their balance while sitting in the middle of the waving parachute.

Well done and thank you to Emily White for leading the day and creating so much fun and for Taryn and the braille production team for doing lots of last minute braille and tactile production. What a team!!

Photos show students making shapes with their bodies inside a hoop and with small-sized wooden models; drawing with a drawing kit and in the middle of the waving parachute.



Braille Day: Office Skills

Report from Deb Davidson, Visiting Teacher – SWVR

SWVR metro based visiting teachers for vision held a successful ‘Office Skills’ Braille Day on 24 March 2014.

Six students ranging from year 3 to year 8 worked on becoming proficient in the use of a variety of office equipment including paper clips, bulldog clips, staplers, staple removers, scissors, sticky tape, hole punches and sticky labels. Students made braille labels of their different subjects and labeled dividers in portable folder satchels.

After working hard with all the physical tools, it was time for students to hone their electronic organizational skills. Ramona Mandy from Humanware provided a master class in using and understanding KeyPlan on the BrailleNote to effectively and efficiently keep track of school work and holiday commitments. Students learnt how to move through the planner to set important appointments throughout the year. Knowing how to use the planner for short term and long term planning is a particularly important focus for those students who have recently transitioned to secondary college.

It was pleasing to hear from one visiting teacher about a student who later in the week applied her new labelling skills to label two brochures and a tag for her Pearl Camera, ‘just like we did at Braille Day’!

Visiting teachers from SWVR are grateful for the assistance provided on the day from Jane Harrison and Genievieve Duff from Vision Australia, Ramona Mandy from Humanware, and Education Support Staff, Christine, Hilary and Nicole.

Photos show students totally engaged in their office equipment session.



Art PD

Michael Donnelly, who has taught Art to students with vision impairments since 1999, is also an artist in his own right. Michael recently conducted another “state of the art” professional development day, with assistance from Emily White, this time at the National Gallery of Victoria International! Fifteen participants from regular and specialist settings had the opportunity to investigate options, strategies and issues related to working with and teaching Art to a student who is blind or has low vision.



Michael’s morning session focussed on setting up or adjusting the Art room to better accommodate students with vision impairments. He discussed the inclusive classroom including issues of access to the visual arts, specialist techniques, budget options and also provided opportunities for “hands-on” art making. The afternoon session offered participants the opportunity to explore works of art under blindfold, use of visual description, tactile diagrams and touch access.

Comments from participants:

- I thoroughly enjoyed the whole experience. It was very informative as well as fun.
- Something about authenticity of experience having the workshop in a gallery setting. Loved it!
- Really useful to put myself in my student’s position – will influence my future planning.
- Interesting, engaging, enlightening; loved the use of a lot of mediums.
- The drawing and modelling activities were useful inspiration.

New Products: Prodigy and ReadIt Air

Source: Tony Wu, Humanware (who also presented at a recent VT professional development day)

Prodigi

Prodigi is the first personal vision assistant in the world that combines magnification, accurate text-to-speech and a portable tablet all in the one desktop unit.

By pushing one button you can start reading your document by having the text scrolled to you on the screen in Diamond Edge Text or you can listen to the text. The portable tablet allows you to magnify and read on the go.



ReadIt Air

The ReadIt Air is a compact, lightweight portable camera that works with the ReadIt Software. It enables instant access to printed documents, converting them to large print and accurate text-to-speech output.

ReadIt Air is for any computer-user who is blind or has low vision and wants near instant, easy and accurate access to printed documents.



March-April 2014 Edition of JVIB

The most recent edition of JVIB includes the following:

- Longitudinal Analysis of Factors Associated with Successful Outcomes for Transition-Age Youths with Visual Impairments by Elyse Connors, Amy Curtis, Robert Wall Emerson, and Benedict Dormitorio
- Using Constant Time Delay to Teach Braille Word Recognition by Jonathan Hooper, Sarah Ivy, and Deborah Hatton
- Tactile Sensitivity and Braille Reading in People with Early Blindness and Late Blindness by Kensuke Oshima, Tetsuya Arai, Shigeru Ichihara, and Yasushi Nakano
- Practice Perspectives: Adaptation of a Reading Program to Meet the Needs of Braille Readers by Jane N. Erin

SPEVI Blog Has a New Co-Editor

The new co-editor of the SPEVI Blog is Jodie (Jo) Hoger and she shares role with Karen Gilligan. Jodie writes: “I work as a Teacher Consultant (vision impairment) at the TAFE NSW Illawarra Institute. I support students who are blind or vision impaired and their teachers. I am also totally blind. I am passionate about access to information, access technology including both windows based and the use of Apple products using voiceover. I want to make a difference and create change in the post-secondary education and employment pathways of people who are blind or vision impaired.

The SPEVI blog is an opportunity for us to connect and share as a community. I encourage you to comment on our posts and if you have any news, ideas or highlights regarding the education of people who are blind or vision impaired, please email me at jodiehoger@gmail.com. I am a new blogger so please have patience as I learn the craft – smile.”

Physical Specifications for Braille

Source: ABA website – <http://brailleaustralia.org/about-braille/physical-specifications-for-braille/>

The specifications, as recommended by the Australian Braille Authority and revised in February 2014, define the size of braille dots and the distance between them on signage. While these standards allow for a range of dimensions, there should always be internal consistency on a sign with a maximum of 1% variation.

A braille character is composed of a combination of dots from a matrix of three rows and two columns, known as a cell (shown right).



Distance between dots

- horizontal or vertical distance from centre to centre of adjacent dots in the same cell = 2.3 mm – 2.5 mm
- horizontal distance from centre to centre of corresponding dots in adjacent cells = 6.0 mm – 7.0 mm
- vertical line spacing from centre to centre of nearest corresponding dots in adjacent lines = 10.0 mm – 11.0 mm

Dot size

- dot base diameter = 1.5 mm – 1.6 mm
- dot height = 0.6 mm – 0.9 mm
- spherical radius = 0.76 – 0.81 (please see link above for diagram)

Mozilla's \$25 Accessible Smartphone

Source: www.mediaaccess.org.au/latest_news/general/mozilla%E2%80%99s-25-accessible-smartphone

Soon there will be more choice in the accessible smartphone market, with not-for-profit technology organisation Mozilla launching its own mobile operating system and smartphone. With accessibility and affordability key considerations, it is hoped that these products will help bring down the cost of smartphones for people with disability.

Firefox OS will have inbuilt screen reader, speech controls, automatic focusing on new elements when switching pages or launching new applications, and a fully accessible 'settings' application. And like all Mozilla products, the operating system Firefox OS is open source, meaning that members of the development community can contribute to its improvement. The most basic model will include basic functions such as a music player, video player, web browser, FM radio, wireless connectivity, a camera and email. These will include all of Firefox OS's accessibility features that are being gradually introduced to the system.

Scheduled to go on sale later this year, these US\$25 smartphones will largely be targeted at people in developing countries. However they are likely to help drive down the price of smartphones globally and remove price as a barrier to accessible communications technology.

Switching to NVDA from JAWS

Source: www.blindbargains.com/bargains.php?cat_id=21

If you're a JAWS user that is considering switching to NVDA, but is concerned about the learning curve of switching to a new screen reader, there is now a new guide on how to make the switch. The guide covers a number of topics including: voices for NVDA, cursors and their functions, forms mode, and scripts. The guide will not teach you how to use NVDA, but it gives you tips on how to transition from JAWS. Visit: <http://community.nvda-project.org/wiki/SwitchingFromJawsToNVDA>

Sabriye Tenberken: Working Internationally for People with VI

Source: <http://knowledge.wharton.upenn.edu/article/sabriye-tenberken/>

Sabriye Tenberken and Paul Kronenberg are co-founders of a school for blind teenagers in Tibet. Tenberken, who was born in Germany and has been blind since the age of 12, attended the University of Bonn and studied, among other things, the cultures of Central Asia. From there, she traveled around China, Nepal — where she met Kronenberg — and Tibet, where they started their school, Braille Without Borders.

Tenberken and Kronenberg were also members of an expedition that led blind children up a 23,000-foot mountain next to Mt. Everest. The trek was featured in an award winning documentary, Blindsight. And in 2009, they started an educational and training institute in Kerala, India, called Kanthari International, whose goal is to help disadvantaged people become social entrepreneurs.

We watch Sabriye and Paul with interest – Sabriye also features in one of our Ozzie Dots books!

Beep Kickball for People with Vision Impairments

Visit: www.youtube.com/watch?v=Aseqxa83XZ4&feature=youtu.be

This video describes the equipment and skills needed to play Beep Kickball. Beep Kickball is played under blindfold and is an exciting great game for students of all abilities.

Inclusive Learning Technologies Conference 2014

Spectronics is presenting The **Inclusive Learning Technologies Conference 2014** on Queensland's Gold Coast, from 20th to 23rd May this year. This conference offers four days of full-on immersion in the world of technologies to support diverse learners.

Here are just some of the topics on the programme:

- iPad MasterClass: Using iPads to Support Students with Autism in Primary School Years
- iPad MasterClass: Using iPads to Support Students Struggling with Literacy in Secondary/Post-Secondary Settings
- Texthelp Read&Write Gold: Version 11 Software, iOS apps and for Google Docs
- Introduction to Proloquo2Go 4 and Proloquo4Text Hands on
- Proloquo2Go, Customisation strategies
- Create and Publish Accessible MultiTouch Books for the iPad and Mac!
- Crick apps (Clicker and WriteOnline): Supporting Students Struggling with Literacy from K-12
- Assistive Technology and App Supports for Demonstrating Writing Competency
- 5 Steps to Successful Implementation of AAC apps in Classrooms
- Technology and Autism: A Practical Approach
- Enhancing Performing Arts Education using Technology
- Encouraging Students with Very High Needs to Express Themselves using Different Technologies
- Music and the Lost Learner (Part One)
- You've Got Technology: Now What? (Part One)
- Selecting AAC apps: Strategies and Resources
- Successfully using Dragon Speech Recognition in Education
- Teaching Beginning and Struggling Readers: Putting Theory into Practice with ReadingDoctor apps!
- Using iPads with Hearing Impaired Students
- Using an iPad and Pictello to Increase Social Interaction
- Hashtags, Retweets, Tweetchats and More: Welcome to the Wonderful World of Twitter
- A Journey with Texthelp Read&Write 10 GOLD
- Accessibility out of the box
- Keynote Address: Applying the Research Knowledge Base to Improve Outcomes for Students who Struggle in Reading and Learning
- Keynote Address: Integrating Language and Literacy Instruction: Strategies for Effective AAC Learning

For more information go to: www.spectronics.com.au/conference

VIBE Ski Club News: Annual BBQ

Information provided by Peggy Soo

Come and join us for a fun day out! Meet some new friends and catch up with old friends!

When: Sunday 6th April from 11:30am – 2pm

Where: Eric Raven Reserve, High St, Glen Iris (Mel 59 K9)

Parking: available off the road and you can see the playground from there.

Cost: \$5 per family or \$2 per individual to cover food. BYO Drinks.

For catering (including dietary requirements), please RSVP to Louise by Monday 31st March or on (03) 8802 8570 email info@vibeskiclub.org.au

New Funding Opportunity for Emerging Young Leaders in the Disability Field

From Phia Damsma, SPEVI List

Grants are now open for emerging young leaders in the disability sector to attend the 7th session of the Conference of States Parties (COSP) to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) in New York from 10-12 June 2014. This is a unique professional opportunity and young delegates will be provided with training and mentoring to build their capacity to participate at the UN. These grants will provide an important opportunity for the next generation of young disability rights advocates to represent the Australian disability sector at the UN.

This program:

1. Begins with a training workshop in Sydney on 22 May 2014. The workshop topics include:
What is the COSP? What is the role of civil society at the COSP?
What will I do at the COSP?
What will I need to prepare for the COSP?
2. The delegates will fly to New York where they will network with some of the key players in the international disability movement, learn about strategic advocacy and its application to domestic advocacy and visit important UN organisations.
3. Go on to attend the civil society forum and the Conference of States Parties from 10 – 12 June 2014 at the UN.
4. When the delegates come back there will be a post-event debrief in late June to help incorporate learning into disability advocacy at the national level.

Who are we looking for?

We are looking for young emerging leaders in the disability sector. Preferably, the young applicant will be between 18-30 years of age. DPOs and DAOs are strongly encouraged to nominate young persons with a disability.

How much funding is provided?

The Commission will provide grants for the young delegates to attend the training workshop, the COSP and the post-event debrief. Applicants are required to submit a budget including a breakdown of costs such as food, accommodation and flights. Successful delegates are encouraged to raise some funds from sponsorship.

More information about grants can be found here:

www.humanrights.gov.au/disability-international-participation-funding-program-faq.

For the Kitchen

One of our Support Skills' mums brought the Safety Food Peeler (top) and Kiddies Food Kutter in to show us. The normally metal part of the peeler is made from plastic – safer for little hands!

The knives are made of thicker metal with a serrated edge – also safer for little hands! Not available in shops, these items can be purchased from

www.kiddiesfoodkutter.com.au



Earfilm: “To Sleep, To Dream” Review

By Deb Lewis

“To Sleep, To Dream” is a departure from the traditional cinema/theatre experience in that it has no visual imagery. Viewers wear blindfolds allowing the narrator and the 3D soundscape to tell the story and the viewer to create the imagery.

As an audience member, I was completely engaged. I’d even say that it was the shortest 90 minutes I’ve ever spent. The soundscape and the presentation of the aural images allowed me to create my own visual landscape. The sounds were not overly explained or interpreted – the sound images were allowed to stand by themselves as representations of the world of ‘To Sleep, To Dream’.

As an artform, the earfilm is a cinema/theatre performance that is totally available without sight and can therefore be experienced in totality without assistance and completely independently by audience members who are blind or have low vision. It does not need to be adapted or made accessible via audio description (which I must say is also a fantastic service) – it has intrinsic accessibility by having no visual input.

I spoke to a year 7 student who attended “To Sleep, To Dream” with her family. She commented: “The earfilm was pretty cool. My family got to experience how I have to watch TV because they wore blindfolds. Pretty much like the sound you’d hear in your dreams. The sounds came from everywhere round the room. It was pretty freaky when it went silent. I loved it.”

The World Via Your Finger!?

It really is a case of “What’ll they think of next?”

FingerReader is a natty finger-worn device (ring) which can scan printed text and read it out loud as you point at it. Currently in the development phase, the scanning is very slow – but it may create opportunities in the future!

Visit: <http://fluid.media.mit.edu/projects/fingerreader>

Shortcut Everything is another fairly astonishing finger-worn device (ring) which makes use of gesture and finger-movement to control the environment. The video shows users sending texts, controlling home appliances, paying bills etc etc.

Visit: <https://www.kickstarter.com/projects/1761670738/ring-shortcut-everything>

For Sale: BrailleNote

Ruskin Park Primary School has a 2-3 year old BrailleNote Apex 32 for sale for \$3,000. Contact: Sharyn Carroll on (03) 9723 3886.

Finally

Editors Deb Lewis and Lyn Robinson would like to thank everyone for their contribution to this issue of The Bulletin, and in particular Tammy Axleson, Frances Gentle, Rachel Johnson, Mike Steer and Emily White.