

The Bulletin

Number 19, Friday 4th December 2015

Professional Development 2016

The PD calendar including downloadable programs is available on the SVRC website.

Term 1 – 2016

- **Monday 8 February Educational Support for Blind Students** for class & subject teachers, integration teachers & aides, therapists, parents/care-givers & VTs who support students who use braille
- **Wednesday 17 February Skill Power Workshops**
- **Monday 22 February OR Tuesday 23 February Educational Support for Students with Low Vision** for class & subject teachers, integration teachers & aides, therapists, parents/care-givers & VTs who support students who have low vision
- **Monday 29 February New Visiting Teacher Orientation Day** from 9.30am
- **Tuesday 1 March Skill Power Workshops**
- **TBC Including Students with Vision Impairments in PE, Sport and Recreation Programs** with Emily White & Charlie Roberts
- **Wednesday 16 March Skill Power Workshops**
- **Saturday 19 March Family Futures Forum** to be held at Vision Australia
- **Monday 21 March Educational Support for VI Students with Additional Impairments** for teachers, aides, therapists, parents/care-givers & VTs

Term 2 - 2016

- **Tuesday 19 April Skill Power Workshops**
- **Wednesday 4 May Skill Power Workshops**
- **Wednesday 11 May Art4Kids with VI? – Including students with vision impairments in the school Art program** with Michael Donnelly at SVRC
- **Tuesday 17 May Skill Power Workshops**

PD in the West: Live & via Polycom

Visiting Teachers in South-Western Victoria Region will be co-presenting several of the SVRC PD days live and via video conference in Footscray and Ballarat. For further information about these alternative locations, please contact Myriam Ash (Footscray) or Wendy Morley (Ballarat).

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Vision Matters: Coloboma

By Marion Blazé

The word ‘coloboma’ comes from the Greek ‘Koloboma’ meaning defect. Coloboma is a hole or gap in one or more of the structures of the eye. It can affect the iris (as pictured in the right eye of the girl in the photograph), retina, choroid or optic disc. The condition is present from birth and is caused when a gap in the early formation of the eye’s structure, fails to close completely.



Coloboma can occur unilaterally (in one eye) or bilaterally (in both eyes). Iris coloboma is the most common, classically described as a ‘key hole iris’, and many children with iris coloboma have quite good vision and are not eligible for support. In severe cases, children can be blind from coloboma. Fewer than one in every 10,000 births are affected by coloboma and there is a strong hereditary factor in its incidence.

The implications of coloboma depend on the size of the gap and the structures of the eye/s affected. For example, if a small part of the iris is missing, vision may be normal, whereas if part of the retina or optic nerve are missing, vision will be poor and some visual field will be missing.

Some secondary vision conditions may be caused by coloboma, such as microphthalmia (small eyes), glaucoma (pressure in eyes) and nystagmus. Coloboma is also associated with some syndromes such as ‘CHARGE Association’ in which the ‘C’ stands for Coloboma.

Because of the way the eye forms, the gap is usually in the lower part of the eye. And because the image on the retina is inverted when it goes to the brain, any field loss is usually in the upper field. Some people with coloboma describe the field loss as like permanently wearing a peaked cap. This will have mobility implications, especially if there are overhanging branches or play equipment.

If the coloboma affects the retina and more, central vision (acuity) will be lowered by the improper development of the eye.

In Victoria we support 23 children with coloboma. Of these, 14 are in the partially sighted range, 7 are considered legally blind, and 2 totally blind. We know of 12 children with coloboma who have better vision and are not eligible for our support. We also support 4 children with CHARGE.

Social Skills and Self Advocacy

By Geoff Bowen, Psychologist, Statewide Vision Resource Centre

Note the following important goals for VI students in their development of social skills and self-advocacy skills:

Ask for help when you really need it and say no politely, and assertively when you don't need help.

Courtesy, politeness or having good manners are all about respecting others and yourself. Learn the manners that are appropriate for the group you are in.

Show interest in what other people say and have good chatting skills. Learn about what is fashionable and cool to kids your own age even if you are not interested in it. It can help you "blend" in.

Know as much as possible about your vision impairment and be able to answer questions quickly and simply about your vision. Learn to be relaxed and calm with questions about your VI. If the teasers learn you are not relaxed and calm about your VI they will tease you about it.

Remember that if you want a friend you have to be a friend. Smile, be fun to be with and give back to your friend as much as you take.

Give things a go, particularly sport, and if you don't do well at something, for example a ball hits your head and you didn't see it coming, laugh and say: "I am as blind as a bat" or something similar. The more "cool", relaxed and open you are about your vision impairment the more relaxed other people will be.

Don't play the "I am blind/VI card" to get you out of trouble. Remember the boy who "cried wolf".

Stand up for yourself politely and assertively.

When faced with the prejudice and craziness of the world a good sense of humour and the ability to laugh at yourself and the world can be your best defence and survival tool.

Children's Mobility Service 15th Anniversary Celebration

Guide Dogs Victoria's CMS are inviting current students, past students, staff, VT's etc to join them in celebrating their 15th anniversary.

Date: 10th December 2015

Time: 6:30 – 8:30pm

Location: Guide Dogs Victoria, 2-6 Chandler Hwy, Kew 3101

Finger food and drinks (non-alcoholic) will be provided.

Please RSVP to: Client Services Admin by phoning 9854 4467 by 4th December.

Research: Successful School Experiences

The Cerebral Palsy Education Centre (CPEC) collaborated with Helen Bourke-Taylor (Australian Catholic University) to undertake a two-year study into successful school experiences for Victorian students with cerebral palsy in local school communities.

The qualitative study involved interviews with students, parents, principals, teachers and therapists to identify factors that support and enable successful school experiences.

The key findings are available in six Fact Sheets:

- Students belong and benefit from attending local schools
- Collaborative partnerships support students in local schools
- Classroom enablers help students succeed in local schools
- Communication is crucial to success for students in local schools
- School culture and attitude are key to student success
- Allied health practitioners are part of the home & school teams that support students' success

For example, from Snapshot of Factsheet 1:



curriculum for students with disabilities.

- Allied health experts are recognised as useful team members and essential experts.

For more, visit the CPEC website.

- Students with cerebral palsy, physical disabilities and complex communication needs can and do attend local schools.
- Students valued being like everyone else: Students with disabilities needed opportunities to learn alongside their peers, and peers valued having students with different abilities in class and the school community
- Student and family involvement is crucial for students to become involved and confident learners.
- Schools require assistance to build up expertise to support students
- School leadership is a cornerstone to creating and sustaining whole of school inclusive attitudes that celebrate diversity and difference in the school community
- With training and support, teachers and aides can adapt, modify and tailor the

Term 4's Dot Power Day

By Lea Nagel

Eight students aged between five and eight years old attended Dot Power Day this term for an intensive day of braille reading and writing combined with music and games. Parents and school staff who accompanied the children made great use of the opportunity to observe techniques to teach children who read braille, and to strengthen their networks.



Our themes for the day were Friendship (Social Skills) and the White Cane (Orientation and Mobility). These are both very important contributors to future employability and quality of life! Children who are not able to use their vision to learn by observation need to be directly taught and regularly reminded of Social Skills, and given many opportunities to practise their Orientation and Mobility Skills.



A small group of students practised identifying and reading braille contractions which they would find in the books for the day. We sang from a “do-braille” sheet which has lines of predictable contractions. This encourages smooth, even flow of the fingers over the braille.

The children read a play, “A little friend”, each taking a character and practising their part before recording it as if we were in a recording studio. They read another book, “How to be a friend”. This book gave instructions on making new friends, including smiling, asking questions, listening to the answer and asking another question that shows that you paid attention to the answer. The children took turns asking each other questions and enjoyed the interesting interactions that followed. They used the Perkins brailers to write a list of interesting questions that they might try out on new friends in the coming weeks. They played tunnel ball using a ball with bells inside, then passed a folded cane in the same way from child to child, calling each other's names when it was their turn.

The children learned a new song: “The Cane Song”, following the words on double-sided braille! They labelled their canes using Perkins brailers to write on the braille label, stuck the label on shapes cut from plastic, punched holes in the plastic and attached them to their canes. They then played a team game with their canes which encouraged planning, organisation, teamwork and quick unpack and pack-up of the cane. This skill is important as it allows children to keep up with their peers at transition times during the school day. Each child took a turn at timing other teams using the iPad with VoiceOver or the BrailleNote timer.

We finished our fabulous, interactive, stimulating day with one last sing-through of The Cane Song, arranged by the children. They were able to take home a quickly edited version of the day's recordings on CD.

Ed: Please see the website for the program, braille and audio files from the day.

Braille Day in SWVR

From Jane Jensen, Manager, Visiting Teacher Service Charlie Roberts enthralled us in teaching strategies for calculation, firstly using fingers and then transferring those skills to The Abacus – The Japanese Soroban. The Cranmer Abacus (pictured right) is an adapted Japanese Abacus (Soroban) used to teach blind learners strategies for calculation – it is the equivalent of the ‘paper and pencil’ method used by sighted learners (but much faster!). The Soroban Abacus is taught in many Asian countries and used routinely for rapid calculation to a high level – typically the winners of the world mental arithmetic competitions are abacus users.



In his session which comprised of blind and legally blind students from Prep to Year 9 and ES staff, Charlie engaged this group in the teaching of this new skill. ES staff were keen to continue developing their new learning with students they support. The rest of the day was focused on functional living skills including knife handling, chopping, slicing, and other areas of the expanded core curriculum. Well done to the Braille Day team.

Brendan's a Kickstarter in 2016

By Brendan, SEVR

Next year, 2016, I have been selected to be a part of the Kickstart Program in Auckland, New Zealand. This program involves living with 9 other vision impaired 18 to 25 year olds in a shared house for 12 months and learning the independent living skills to do with running a household. We will be rostered for different duties around the house each week – cooking, shopping, cleaning, washing ... the lot! The program aims to improve leadership skills and the confidence of all involved.

We will also be improving our study skills and doing career planning throughout the year. Apparently recreation skills are included as well, confidence building activities like rock-climbing, abseiling, bush walking and maybe even bungee jumping!

I am in the process of organising everything to get myself and Warren, my guide dog, over to New Zealand early in February. It's going to be a life-changing experience and I can't wait!

Bite Size BrailleNote Apex Tutorials

And whilst on the subject of the BrailleNote, Ramona Mandy from Humanware sent a reminder about the series of video tutorials known as the Bite Size BrailleNote Apex Tutorials – which are absolutely great!

They are short videos that can give you tips and training on how to use many different functions of the BrailleNote Apex.

Visit: the Humanware website.

Spelling – Who says it makes sense?

Spelling Checker

Eye halve a spelling chequer
 It came with my pea sea
 It plainly marques four my revue
 Miss steaks eye kin knot sea.

Eye strike a quay and type a word
 And weight four it two say
 Weather eye am wrong oar write
 It shows me strait a weigh.

As soon as a mist ache is maid
 It nose bee fore two long
 And eye can put the error rite
 It's rare lea ever wrong.

Eye have run this poem threw it
 I am shore your pleased two no
 It's letter perfect awl the weigh
 My chequer tolled me sew.

The SVRC Tech Tips Competition Results 2015

Judging for this year's competition was a tricky task for the panel members who had to compare print, audio and video entries which ranged from sewing machine workarounds for students with low vision to playing games on the BrailleNote! In the end, there was no clear winner.

The results were as follows:

- Ben – commended
- Bodhi – commended
- Caleb – highly commended
- Claudia – highly commended
- Daniella – highly commended
- Henry – highly commended
- Jessica – highly commended
- Lilly – commended
- Matthew – commended
- Riley – commended
- Rory– highly commended
- Samantha – commended
- Will – commended
- Zac – commended
- Zeynep – commended

The competition was again supported by both **Bolinda Audio** and **Vision Australia** with donated audio books for prizes (and there might even be some chocolate as well)!!!

Thanks to the students who entered and to the Visiting Teachers who again supported and encouraged the students. Certificates and prizes can be collected from SVRC.

Tetris Guide

Grade 2 student Rory's contribution to the SVRC 2015 competition is a Guide to Tetris on the BrailleNote.

What Is Tetris?

Tetris is a picture based game where you move pieces together with other pieces. When the pieces get to the bottom, they form lines. Throughout the game the lines and speed of pieces will get harder and faster.

How To Get To Tetris

Ever wanted to play Tetris on the BrailleNote?

Well, you can!

Follow the steps to find the hidden tetris game on the BrailleNote.

Please note: BrailleNote Classic may not have this game.

1. From the main menu, press u for utilities.
2. Press k for key management
3. Press e for enter new product key.
4. Type playtime in grade 1 braille with no capitals followed by enter.

Commands You'll Need

Use the thumb keys for these commands:

Move falling piece right: Outer right.

Move falling piece left: Outer left.

Move board view down: Inner right.

Move board view up: Inner left.

Rotate falling piece clockwise: Inner left with outer right.

Rotate falling piece anticlockwise: Outer left with inner right.

Move board view to falling piece: Outer left with outer right.

Move board view to top of piece stack: Inner left with inner right.

Drop falling piece: outer left with inner left.

View current score: Space with r.

View high score: Space with i.

View other commands in game: Space with h.

Simple game!

It can crash, but it's unlikely on your first go.

Ed: Slightly edited by Lea Nagel

SVRC YouTube Channel

And whilst on online resources, SVRC has a YouTube channel with a growing number of resources to assist in the teaching of technology for students with vision impairments including:

- Making OS X easier to see for users with low vision
- Using Pearl and OpenBook
- Learning the international DeafBlind alphabet

Some of the videos have over 5,000 views! Please suggest other topics if you can't find what you are looking for! Visit: <https://www.youtube.com/user/SVRCAus>

2015 National Disability Awards

Source: ozbrl listserv

The winners of the 2015 National Disability Awards have been announced in recognition of the International Day of People with Disability on 3 December 2015. Congratulations to the Royal Institute for Deaf and Blind Children, winner of the Award for Excellence in Accessible Technology. RIDBC were acknowledged for UEB Online, a free online braille training course already being used across 55 different countries. UEB Online is located at www.uebonline.org.

Congratulations also to 14 year old Connor McLeod, winner of the Award for Emerging Leaders in Disability Awareness. Connor successfully petitioned the Reserve Bank to introduce tactile banknotes in Australia.

Goalball Report 2015 Nationals & Local League

By Caleb, who played for Victoria in October 2015

In about April some time Goalball in Melbourne season started back up for 6 months. Over that period of time players of Goalball Victoria such as Juniors, Youth and Men's also started their way to maybe becoming a famous athlete for Goalball. Juniors would start the day on Saturday and warm up then play 2 games.



In a couple of months' time Juniors were selected for the 2015 National Championships. Only the best, the ones that did the job well at Junior League from Melbourne would get selected, which was myself and some other kids my age. We had 4 players in our team.

We flew to Brisbane for the Nationals. We stayed at Ipswich a bit of a way out of Brisbane. We played our first game in the morning versing NSW losing to them. Then we played WA and won by 1 point, it was a draw with 20 seconds to go and one of our players scored a quick goal. Then the next day we played NSW and lost again, we then played QLD winning 9-4. Then the next day we played WA and lost. Then we played QLD once again and won so later on that day we had to play QLD for a bronze medal which we won 6-4. Overall our team did a really good job.



I totally think we need some more Juniors so come along next year ask your parents about it and come along and you might get to go to the 2016 Nationals.

Ed: The photo (first) shows Caleb in training, wearing blackout goggles, knee and elbow protectors in front of the goals; and (second) Caleb (centre), with team mates Thien (right) and Thanh, who all played for Victoria in October.

SVRC: New Facebook Presence

The SVRC has a closed Facebook Group of approximately 200 members focussing on the interests of educators and families of Victorian students with vision impairments.

We now also have a publicly visible Facebook page. We plan to let you know about upcoming events, give out tech tips and tricks and more!

If you'd like to LIKE our page, visit: www.facebook.com/statewidevisionresourcecentre.

News

- **Madhavie Amarasinghe** from Kurrung Primary School recently completed the SVRC Braille Course by Correspondence! Congratulations Madhavie! Your certificate is in the mail!

Finally

Editor Deb Lewis would like to thank everyone for their contribution to this issue of The Bulletin, and in particular Myriam Ash, Leona Holloway, Sue Matthews, Glen Morrow, Lea Nagel, Emily White and Lisa Zarb.