

Number 15, Friday 13 October, 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: Jane Barker and Kim Foley, Managers, SVRC

Term 4 is here, unbelievably, and as always the last term of the school year is jammed packed full of work yet to do, programs to arrange, reports to write and of course Christmas parties to plan.

Welcome home Space Campers! Early reports suggest the long awaited 2023 Space Camp was a tremendous success and we are looking forward to hearing all about it very soon. Parents woke every morning to a feast of photos and videos on the group's WhatsApp of their time in Los Angeles and daily Space Camp activities. During the camp, the students gained skills in global competencies i.e. creative innovation, collaboration, communication, managing information, problem solving, personal growth and wellbeing, and intercultural global citizenship. Our gratitude and thanks to Hilary Frost and Peter Davis for the time, energy and passion they have put into this trip to make it such a success for Amanda, Anita, Macy, Nathan, and Bai Yang. All five students are a credit to their parents, schools, and are outstanding Australian Ambassadors! Thank you to Di Bennett for adding an SVRC Space Camp logo to each of the t-shirts worn proudly by the students and teachers during their trip to space camp.

All term 1 SVRC professional learning opportunities in 2024 will be accessed via our website as On Demand due to the current teacher shortage. This arrangement will allow school staff to access the sessions when it is most convenient for them. During term 2, the Inclusion in Art, Physical Education, Maths and Braille Music will be presented onsite so attendees will have the opportunity to actively participate in the hands on activities. Please check the [SVRC website](#) for further details.

## **2023 SVRC Expo – Tuesday, November 21 – 1 to 4pm**

Source: SVRC

SVRC's access technology Expo is coming up this term. The Expo takes place at SVRC with some workshops available online. The Expo offers the opportunity for students, families and school staff to see and try special technologies, find out what's new or try something new. All the major Australian companies that specialise in blindness and low vision technologies will be there. If you come to SVRC, you get the best of both worlds. You can get hands on with all the technology and also participate in the workshops which will be broadcast for online participants.

Statewide Vision Resource Centre is in the grounds of Heatherwood School but because of building works on the school grounds, all parking is in the lower carpark of Manningham DISC Sports Centre at 360 Springvale Road Donvale.

Registration is essential, especially if you wish to participate in the online component of the day so that we can send you the Zoom link.

Registrations can be made through the [Eventbrite website](#).

## **Have your students considered the Online Support Skills Program?**

Source: SVRC

Support Skills is a program that helps students develop further skills in the Expanded Core Curriculum, while working alongside other students with vision impairments and teachers with vision impairments. The program is open to any eligible students in Victoria in years 4 to 10.

During Melbourne's long lockdowns, the program ran entirely online and since then we have had one online group. This is for students who cannot get to SVRC.

The online program can be very flexible. Students can participate once or twice a term. They can participate from school or from home. In either case, they do require supervision. The online day is shorter than onsite (9.15am to 2.30pm) and students can even opt to only do some sessions. If they are at school, this option allows them to attend critical sessions at school and some sessions online with us. Most sessions online are one-on-one but we do have group sessions, such as social skills, so students can interact with each other.

Our Support Skills teachers have become very resourceful and creative in delivering online sessions using tools such as online whiteboards, screen sharing and the students' own special devices for reading braille or Etext materials. We can even work through a braille maths chapter with the student having their braille at their end and the teacher using a pdf at our end. We use Zoom as our online platform, because it offers more accessible options for our students and teachers with vision impairments.

Please visit the [SVRC website](#) for more information and to express interest in the program for 2024.

You can even arrange to TRY the program online. This Term, our online group meet on Friday October 20 and November 17. Any student would be welcome to contact us, get the Zoom link and join for a couple of sessions on one of those dates.

## 2023 SVRC Writing Competition "Dear Future Me ..." – get your entries in!

Source: SVRC

Term 4 is the time to get your entries in to the SVRC writing competition. We already have eight entries including poems, letters, stories, and one rap with musical backing! (VTs, please call Marion if you'd like to know if your student's entry has been received.)

All Victorian students with vision impairments are invited to submit a story/article for the 2023 SVRC Writing Competition. You can send your story in whatever format you wish (braille, email, audio, graphics).

The topic this year is "Dear Future Me ...". We would love you to contemplate what wisdom you would share with yourself in the future.

**IMPORTANT:** so that we can award prizes (and yes, there are prizes), please include with your entry – your name, age, school, Visiting Teacher, postal address, email address.

Get your entry in **by November 10** to:

Marion Blaze

Statewide Vision Resource Centre

PO Box 201

Nunawading 3131

Or email to [marion.blaze@education.vic.gov.au](mailto:marion.blaze@education.vic.gov.au)

Judging will take place in early November and prizes will be awarded in each age category at our Expo at SVRC on November 21, 2023.

## "Jack Changes the Game" – resources to teach online safety

Source: SVRC, Australian Federal Police, Think U Know

The Australian Federal Police have produced a children's book and resources to help parents, carers and teachers reduce the impact of crimes against children online. The book, available in braille from SVRC, is aimed at children in years 1 to 3. There is also a heap of resources on the [ThinkUKnow](http://ThinkUKnow) website including approaches like the "Share A.W.A.R.E." framework:

This is an acronym designed to help children work through steps in their thinking and deciding about whether or not to post.

**Appropriate:** You need to consider if what you are about to share is APPRIOPRIATE. Is the content suitable to be shared online? Is it illegal?

**Who:** WHO could see what you share? Are you sharing just to your real friends and family or could anyone see it?

**Accurate:** Is what you are about to share ACCURATE? Is it real and true or is it a rumor, fake or pretend?

**Respectful:** Is your post RESPECTFUL? Will someone be hurt or upset by what you share?

**Environment:** Thinks about the ENVIRONMENT of the post you are about to share. Is it a photo with background that may indicate your location, or your school or home address? Is it from a confidential or private conversation?



## Digital Microscope for short-term loan

Source: SVRC Technology Library

There is now a Digital Microscope available for short-term loan (12 weeks) for students from Department of Education schools. The microscope can be plugged into a laptop so students can view items on a larger screen. Perfect for Year 7 Science when students learn by "examining a variety of cells using a light microscope, **by digital technology** or by viewing a simulation". On the tracking system it is listed under "Microscope (digital)". Here's a photo of some sugar crystals taken with the new device!



## Ozzie Dots Sets 1-10 Supplementary Books: Phonics and the Prep (Foundation) Classroom

Source: SVRC

The resurgence of phonics instruction in the early school years through the use of the many and varied literacy programs including THRASS, Jolly Phonics, "decodable" readers etc offered the Ozzie Dots team the encouragement to write a range of supplementary books that introduce a number of the contractions that were previously introduced in Sets 11-20.

Introduction of the contractions for these digraphs, blends, double letter combinations etc supports the first aim of Ozzie Dots – to support the teaching and learning of fully contracted braille. Further, it highlights the link to and relevance of contracted braille in supporting literacy for touch readers.

**digraph:** letter combination that represents a single sound e.g. CH, EA, OU, SH, TH

**blend:** letter combination where each letter retains its individual sound e.g. AR, ST

**double letters:** there are contractions for BB, CC, FF and GG e.g. buBBle, fluFFy

A new collection of Ozzie Dots books, focusing on digraphs, blends, double letters etc, is under development. The books in this new collection are not intended to be introduced sequentially as per Ozzie Dots Sets 1-10; they are intended to be introduced during the early years of school, as relevant to the classroom environment, or as the need arises.

For example, if the class is working on EA or ST then the books in these collections should be considered.

For each contraction there are 4 or more titles to choose from including stories, rhymes, games or puzzles etc.

Some of the books have no additional contractions; all books have as few additional contractions as possible ... and most are taken from Set 1 and Set 2, commonly LIKE, CAN, THE, HAVE etc.

As for Ozzie Dots Sets 1-10, a print copy is available for every book and includes the text of the story, introductory note to assist the braille teacher to make the most of each book, the occurrence of other contractions, and a list of punctuation and other signs that appear in the book.

Where the contraction also represents a word or is part of a shortform (e.g. CHildreN, FirST) or wordsign (e.g. ENough, OUt), these contractions are presented in the supplementary books.

For example, the contraction for CH:

- can be used in a word CHEese, sCHool, lunCH
- when standing alone, represents the word CHILD
- is used in the shortforms, children (CHn), much (mCH), such (sCH)

The new collection of books available immediately includes the following contractions and their shortforms/wordsigns):

- EN & enough
- ER
- FF
- GG
- IN within words (IN standing alone is introduced in Set 7)
- TH & this



Here is an example – TH – hot off the embosser!



Ozzie Dots **th** this book 5

Jethro is sick of his sore **throats** so he makes his mother's **thick** broth, using her secret recipe. Will the **broth** cure Jethro? A story such as this invites teacher and student to discuss recipes and other procedures. Recipe books, recipes on the internet, family recipes ... secret recipes ...

**This thick broth**

1. Jethro is sick.  
Jethro has a sore **throat**.  
Jethro sobs sadly.  
**This** is my **third** sore **throat** **this** month.

4. **The** **thick** broth did fix Jethro 's sore **throat**.

5. **Thumbs** up!  
**This** **thick** broth is **the** bomb!

2. I **will** make a **thick** broth.  
I **will** use Mum's secret method.

3. I **will** eat **this** **thick** broth.  
**This** **thick** broth **will** fix my sore **throat**!

**Braille Information**

The focus contraction **th** occurs 23 times at the beginning, in the middle and at the end of words.  
The focus contraction **this** occurs 6 times standing alone.

Below is a list of contractions that appear in this book.

Set	a	b	c	d	e
1	like 0	can 0	it 0	the 2	go 0
2	do 0	you 0	will 4	not 0	little 0

**Punctuation:** apostrophe, comma, exclamation mark, full stop

apostrophe ⠠⠨ (dot 3)

comma ⠠⠨⠠ (dot 2)

exclamation mark ⠠⠨⠠⠨ (dot 2,3,5)

full stop ⠠⠨⠠⠨⠠ (dots 2,5,6)

**Other braille signs:** capital indicator, numeric indicator

capital indicator ⠠⠨⠠⠨⠠ (dot 6)

numeric indicator ⠠⠨⠠⠨⠠⠨⠠ (dots 3,4,5,6)

Contractions as supplementary books that are coming soon include:

- AR
- BB
- CC
- CH & child children much such
- EA
- ED
- GH
- ING
- ONG
- OU & out
- OW
- SH & shall
- ST & still first must
- WH & which

The Ozzie Dots Team are keen for your feedback so if you have thoughts, suggestions, comments, requests to use these books with your student, OR you'd like to write books, please be in touch!

## Ozzie Dots Sets 1-10 Supplementary Books: TH EN GG IN (within words)

Source: SVRC

In the last issue of The Bulletin, we let you know of a new range of Ozzie Dots books that are under final construction.

**TH** (6 new books) and **EN** (6 new books) were released last fortnight. Today we are setting the following free for your use:

**IN within words** (6 new books)

**GG** (4 new books)

These new books are not intended to be introduced sequentially as per Ozzie Dots Sets 1-10. They are intended to be introduced during the early years of school, as relevant to the classroom environment, or as the need arises.

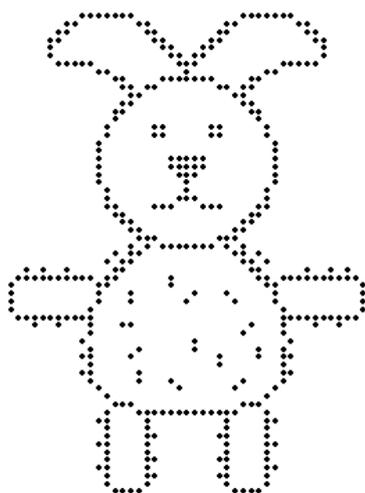
As for Ozzie Dots Sets 1-10, a print copy is available for every book and includes the text of the story, introductory note to assist the braille teacher to make the most of each book, the occurrence of other contractions, and a list of punctuation and other signs that appear in the book.

The Ozzie Dots Team are keen for your feedback so if you have thoughts, suggestions, comments, requests to use these books with your student, OR you'd like to write books, please be in touch!

Two VTs have kindly agreed to beta test the first few books.

If you'd like a copy of the print for these new books, so you can make a selection on behalf of your students, please be in touch!

Below is an image of Peggy's "raggy toy to snuggle"!



## National Simultaneous Storytime 2024

Source: ALIA

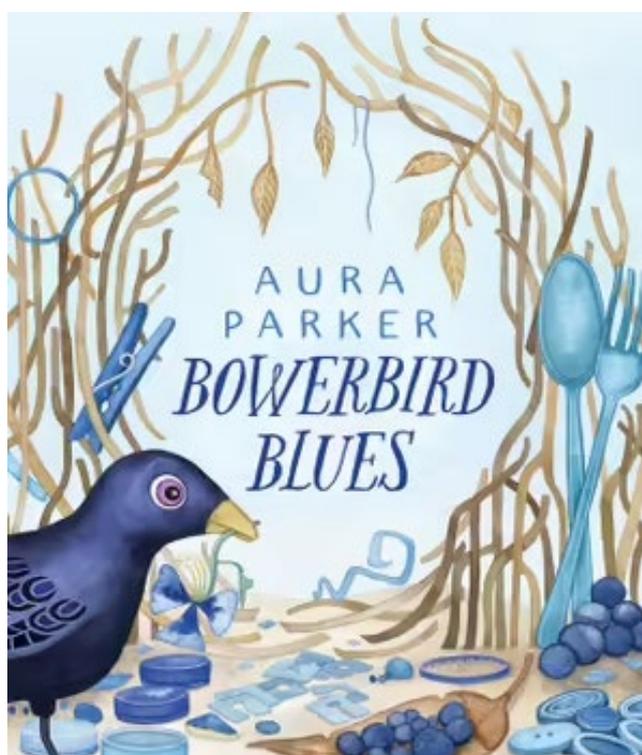
Every year, the Australian Library and Information Association runs "National Simultaneous Storytime". 2023 was their most successful NSS day with over 2 million kids reading the same book at the same time! Save the date for Wednesday 22 May 2024 at 12:00pm as we simultaneously read all across Australia. And the book chosen for 2024 is *Bowerbird Blues* By Aura Parker.

SVRC will be producing this book in braille for any child to request.

National Simultaneous Storytime 2024! Registrations are open now!

Registration for NSS 2024 is free and open to all. Register your school, school library, public library, childcare centre, community group, or even your family home. All registrations receive an electronic version of the book on Monday, 20 May 2024, along with a range of exclusive resources. Head over to the [NSS website](#) to register and start planning your events! Get excited – it's going to be another big year!

For enquiries please contact us at [events@alia.org.au](mailto:events@alia.org.au) or call 02 6215 8222.



## Sound Matters – music program for students with vision impairments

Source: Melbourne Recital Centre

Melbourne Recital Centre is welcoming interest in their [Sound Matters](#) program for 2024. A current stream exists for late primary/early secondary students who are blind or have low vision, but next year we hope to introduce a series for 6-10 year olds. Sound Matters provides an interactive and engaging musical learning environment and was developed in partnership with Vision Australia. This free school-holiday series includes 4 x 60-minute sessions throughout the year. Please register your interest in being involved via the form by Friday 3 November.

## Special Christmas Concert with Jordie Howell

Source: Jordie Howell

Calling all musicians, especially if you read braille music!

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](mailto:jordina.howell@gmail.com)

## (In)visible Libraries – November 30 to December 2, 2023

**Imagine you were standing in the middle of a library but couldn't see or read any of the books ...**

Immerse yourself in how libraries are made visible for those who are blind or visually impaired with (In)visible Libraries, an event illuminating the extraordinary languages of poetry and braille.

Over 3 days, drop in and explore poetry books in print and braille, hear from our (In)visible Libraries poets in residence for a daily poetry reading from 12.30-1.15pm and contribute to growing the accessibility of the State Collection for blind communities.

Or book in a spot and sit with artists and [State Library fellows](#) Leisa Shelton and Marisa Sposaro, read your favourite poem, and watch as it is transcribed into braille and typed print.

Your poem will then be bound alongside other publicly curated prose into a hand sewn book and added to the Library's Collection, increasing the accessibility of these works.

Places are strictly limited for the transcribed poetry activity, so book your ticket now.

State Library of Victoria

328 Swanston St Create Quarter Melbourne

Email: [inquiries@slv.vic.gov.au](mailto:inquiries@slv.vic.gov.au)

Phone: 03 8664 7000 (Switchboard)

This is a free event, but booking is essential. To book visit the [Eventbrite](#) page.

## **Saints Blind Auskick starting October 19 for 6 weeks**

Source: Saints Blind Auskick

Don't miss this great Auskick program run by Shannon Jones.

Saints Blind Auskick is a free interactive program aimed for children aged 5 – 13 years of age.

Offering children with partial, low or no vision the opportunity to have a go at AFL Blind Football.

This 5-6 week program will be delivered by Shannon Jones, captain and member of our St Kilda Blind Team. Offering fun and engaging activities throughout the program, Saints Blind Auskick looks to develop a pathway for young blind children who wish to play in the Victorian Blind Football League one day.

Starting Session: Thursday 19th October

Final Session: Thursday 23rd November

Venue: RSEA Park Basketball Court, 32/60 Linton St, Moorabbin

Time: 6:30pm – 7:30pm

Cost: Free

To register, fill out the [Saints Blind Auskick form](#).

## **VBCA Junior Blind Blast 2023/24 – Expression of Interest**

Source: VBCA

The Victorian Blind Cricket Association (VBCA) is seeking your input as we develop our Junior Blind Blast program for the upcoming season. Please complete the following [short survey](#) to let us know that you are interested in participating and/or volunteering.

The Junior Blind Blast is the blind and low-vision variant of [Woolworths Cricket Blast](#) and is for kids of all abilities who are aged 5-14 years. The program will run on Saturday mornings at Fawkner Park (South Yarra). Each session runs for 60-90 minutes.

## **Seeing Eye Dogs Youth Program**

Source: SED

The Seeing Eye Dogs youth program introduces participants between the ages of 12 – 18 years old to the difference between long cane use and a Seeing Eye Dog as a mobility aid.

The youth program participants will focus on:

- orientation, mobility and navigation skills
- improving social skills
- learning what is required to work with and care for a Seeing Eye Dog.

Participants are encouraged to plan travel routes, focus on travelling independently as a group, and increase ability to use travel applications while building leadership and problem-solving skills. They will work alongside expert Seeing Eye Dogs instructors and their orientation and mobility specialist of their choice.

The program involves:

- online sessions via Zoom
- orientation and mobility (O&M) sessions
- the youth program residential camp twice a year.

The youth program will commence in January 2024 and applications are now open. For more information visit [The Seeing Eye Dogs website](#).

## **My Time Program in Warrandyte**

Source: My Time

MyTime offers free support groups for parents and carers of children under 18 who have disability, chronic medical condition or other additional needs including developmental delay.

A MyTime group is starting in Warrandyte in Term 4, meeting fortnightly on Friday afternoons. More information can be obtained by emailing Sue Batcheler [suzanneb@mytimevic.com.au](mailto:suzanneb@mytimevic.com.au) or by visiting the [My Time website](#).

## **Resources to support students with language difficulties**

Source: Department of Education Victoria

Did you know that about one in fifteen Australian students has Developmental Language Disorder (DLD)? DLD is the formal diagnosis of a language difficulty that is significant and persistent. Information and resources can be found on the [Victorian Government website](#).

## **Scholarships to support students**

Source: Department of Education Victoria

Scholarships are available for eligible students in Grade 4 to Year 11, and for Year 12 students planning to do tertiary studies in 2024.

### **Student scholarships**

The Department of Education administers a number of scholarships that are available to eligible students who are enrolled in Grade 4 to Year 12 in 2023.

Applicants for these scholarships will be evaluated on their:

- participation in school activities
- community involvement
- academic achievement

Scholarships are either one-off payments or cover the duration of the student's course or annual study.

Many of these scholarships have specific eligibility criteria so please refer to individual applications for more information. Applications are open and close on Thursday 1 February 2024.

For more information and a list of available scholarships, refer to the 2024 Student scholarships for Grade 4 – Year 12 [fact sheet](#).

For information on how to apply, refer to [Student scholarships](#) webpage.

## **And Finally ...**

Did you know that on average humans spend 10% of the time awake blinking.