

The Bulletin

Number 5, Friday 27 March 2020

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PD events at SVRC POSTPONED: 2020

You can still register online for these activities, but we will look into either providing them later or as online modules. We will contact registrants when we have a clearer idea of when/if/how the activities will run. Click on the links to read more information and to register online. If you have any questions, please [contact us](#).

Tuesday April 21 [Teaching and learning with braille music](#) POSTPONED

Providing practical strategies that music teachers can use to promote inclusion and achievement for students who are blind. \$46

Wednesday May 13 [Including students who are blind or have low vision in art](#) POSTPONED

Providing practical strategies that teachers can use in their art classes to promote inclusion and achievement for students who are blind or partially sighted. \$92

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

News from SVRC and COVID 19

From: Marion Blazé (Acting Manager, SVRC)

So much is changing every day! I started writing this for the Bulletin, last week, and have had to change it almost each day, as things progress with the COVID 19 emergency.

In the two weeks before the end of term, SVRC postponed two professional learning activities and cancelled two Support Skills days. And we have cancelled Educational Vision Assessment Clinics and school visits.

The health and safety of our staff, students, their teachers and families has to be our top priority. We are also doing our bit to "flatten the curve". With our stakeholders spread far and wide, and many having compromised immunity, we don't want to risk any activities that could spread this virus.

Last Friday and today, the Support Skills team met via "Zoom", with increasing numbers of people logging in from home. Zoom is like Skype but is better for larger numbers of participants, and is more accessible for use by people who use key strokes. **Special thanks to Elise Lonsdale** (SSP Tech trainer) who allowed us to use her Zoom account for our first meeting and showed us the ropes. SVRC has acquired a Zoom subscription for future meetings, PD sessions and even SSP sessions. We've been having "morning tea" together by Zoom each morning at 11am to keep in touch with people working at home. If you want to try it, you can use it free for 40 minutes at a time.

SVRC will be closed on April 6 and 7 for some cabinet work. We anticipate being closed for most of the school holidays. Please call, or better still email, if you need us for anything. We will hopefully still be producing and distributing materials. If your students are working at home, we will need you to provide address information for materials (street address or home email). Please send information via email, so we can pick it up on-site or at home.

SVRC's supports to you will continue, but differently! If or when schools are closed, we will be looking at creative ways to extend our support via online learning platforms and continue our materials production.

We have been in touch with our VCE students who use braille and tactile diagrams, to ensure they will continue to have access to electronic materials, hard-copy braille, and hard-copy tactile diagrams. Technology is being placed in homes to ensure provision of materials.

Special thanks to our technician, Michael Kelly, who has been working creatively and tirelessly to ensure everyone has the technology they need to continue their work from home.

Thanks also to the amazingly positive and creative team here at SVRC who are working so hard to make things happen in completely new ways.

Guide Dogs Victoria has made the decision to cease face to face contact with clients and any involvement in events. Clients have been notified and GDV support will continue in some form.

Vision Australia has closed its physical library at Kooyong, but will continue providing library services and distributing materials to clients. All Vision Australia offices remain open, but in-line with the national shutdown of non-essential services and more stringent social distancing guidelines, Vision Australia will only deliver services via face-to-face appointments where there is a critical need. This includes Vision Australia Seeing Eye Dogs. Where possible, Vision Australia will be providing services via its telehealth service.

Blind Citizens Australia are running daily Happy Hour virtual peer support sessions, open to all Australians who are blind or have low vision. They start next Monday March 30.

Support Skills - Term 1, 2020

Report by Lea Nagel

We have unfortunately had to cancel the last two Support Skills sessions for Term 1 due to the COVID-19 state of emergency. We did not take this decision lightly, because we know how much the families and students value the program. We have also cancelled our Arts Big Day Out, as the NGV and Arts Centre have closed for now. We will keep families and visiting teachers informed of further cancellations which may happen next term. Here's hoping that the state of emergency doesn't last for too long!

Image shows the Support Skills staff meeting by "Zoom" last week so that several staff members could work from home.



Term 1 began really well this year, with everyone making extra effort to include new students to the program. We enjoyed some Drama sessions, exploring play-writing and improvisation. Our Art sessions delved into the Street Art styles of Keith Haring & Jean-Michel Basquiat. Students drew line drawings onto Swell Paper, then used the PIAF to make the lines tactual. Some of them added colour to their art work. We were joined by Ned from last year's AFL Blind premiership team, Hawthorn. Ned contributed to our PE and other sessions, and it was great to hear him speak about work and sport options. Students learnt about shopping online and careers, and we hosted a launch for the Code Jumper coding system.

We also welcomed new staff member Di Bennett to the SSP team in week 4.

Several students are becoming proficient in Braille Music Editor, and have been enjoying braille music and braille maths sessions.

In Daily Living Skills presented by Vision Australia Occupational Therapists, we made delicious meals such as pizza and nachos, which students could practise again while making a meal for the family. Our Orientation and Mobility sessions presented by staff from Guide Dogs Victoria engaged the students in mapping and marking locations, then following directions to find objects.

Of course everyone had at least one tech session each time they came in. The students really enjoyed discovering cool things that they can do with their tech! Many oohs and aahs came from the tech rooms!

Code Jumper at SVRC

On February 28th, the SVRC Support Skills Program hosted the launch of Code Jumper in Australia. As a "thank you" for hosting this event, SVRC now has its full Code Jumper kit for use with our Support Skills Students. With the cancellation of Support Skills sessions, our teaching staff will be able to skill up on Code Jumper for future SSP sessions.



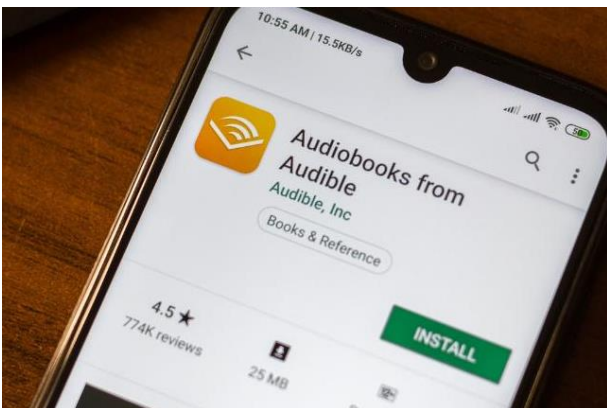
Digital book subscription

Modern Teaching Aids is advertising Wushka, a collection of digital books. This could be an excellent way to engage students in reading while they are at home. The books can be viewed on computer or iPad, and the narration can be played by clicking or tapping the play button.

Happy reading!

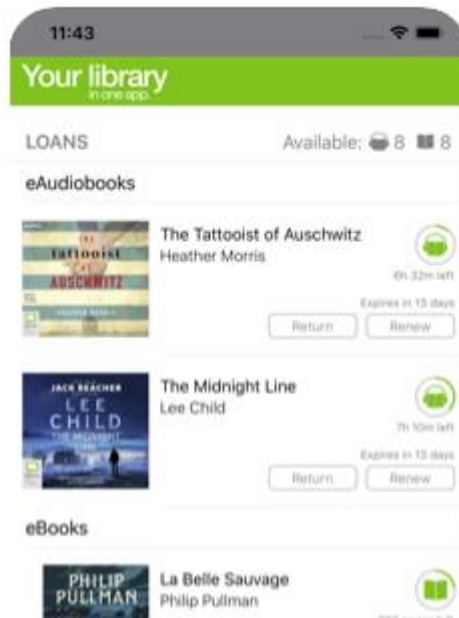
Audible is FREE!!

Audible is now offering free audio books for kids stuck at home in the current crisis. To find out how to subscribe, go to <https://edition.cnn.com/2020/03/21/us/audible-for-kids-coronavirus-trnd/index.html>



Borrowbox for reading at home

Don't forget about Borrowbox which is available through all public libraries in Victoria. Install the Borrowbox app, select the library where you are a member, enter the library ID/barcode and a PIN (which you obtain from your library), and then you can download eBooks or eAudiobooks and reserve titles.



Some happy and some very sad news

Emily White gave birth to a little girl!! Edith Alexandra Saunders White was born at 11:28 am on Tuesday, March 24, weighing 3.8kgs.



Charlie Robert's mother passed away on March 19. (Charlie is a teacher on Support Skills)

Odette Budge's father passed away on March 15. (Odette is a Visiting Teacher with Catholic Education)

Huey Springer, Support Skills student in Group E, passed away unexpectedly on February 26. A number of us were able to attend Huey's funeral. This was a very sad but also joyous celebration of the short life of a young man with such a positive and funny personality. RIP Huey, you will be so sadly missed by your family and friends.



And finally...

All the crew at SVRC wish everyone good health in the time ahead. We are all facing new and unsettling challenges. SVRC will try to continue sending out a Bulletin, but nothing is guaranteed just now. Please contact us with information to share and we'll do our best!!