

The Bulletin

Statewide Vision Resource Centre

Number 11

Friday 17th July 2009

This issue was edited by Lyn Robinson, Resource Teacher, Statewide Vision Resource Centre.

Professional Development Activities for Term 3, 2009

Professional Development Event 2009	Date
Skill Power Workshops for Visiting Teachers, Teachers, Aides, Students etc 1. JAWS – 10.00am to 11.30am Lea Nagel, Senior Visiting Teacher 2. GTCalc (Talking Calculator Software) – 11.45am to 1.15pm Leanne Nagel <i>All orders for GTCalc made on the day will be offered at a discount price to students</i> 3. WYNN – 1.30pm to 3.00pm Trevor Boyd, Quantum Technology	Wednesday 22 July
New! Education Seminars 2009: Including students who are blind or have low vision in physical education programs. Presented by Vision Australia and the Statewide Vision Resource Centre, this is a hands-on workshop for PE teachers, Visiting Teachers and any other interested school staff.	Friday 14 August
Term 3 Visiting Teacher Professional Development Day	Friday 28 August
Literacy Numeracy Week Activity – Louis Braille Day	Monday 7 September

*All Skill Power days - **BYO laptop** and lunch. For a complete list of the Professional Development offered by the SVRC go to: <http://www.visiontech.svrc.vic.edu.au/PD2009.doc>

2009 SPEVI Day, Monday October 5

Our annual SPEVI day is first day next term and your counsellors are underway with planning. The theme this year, as chosen by a majority vote on last year's feedback forms, is **“FINDING THE BALANCE: Life skills, technology and education”**.

How do we as teachers know it all and teach all that is needed by our students? How do students with vision impairments juggle the core and expanded core curriculum? How do we and students utilize technology to assist in life, education and careers? We will again ask participants to contribute “Soap Box Topics” - we'll give you 3 minutes to present a topic, question, resource or idea to your colleagues. Please contact Marion Blaze if you can contribute (or know anyone who can contribute) a session around this theme. When we ask for registrations, we will also ask for any 3-minute “Soap Box Topics”. Any questions (or contributions!?) to Marion, ph 03 9841 0807 or marionblaze@svrc.vic.edu.au - put the date in your diary and stay tuned for more about SPEVI day soon.

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New from HumanWare: SmartView Versa and Versa +



SmartView Versa

The SmartView Versa redefines the handheld electronic magnifier. Available in two models; the Versa and the Versa+. The Versa is fully configurable to your requirements. Change the contrast mode and magnification to best match your vision. The auto focus lets you hold the Versa at the optimal distance from the object and your eyes. Rest the Versa on the page, use the writing stand or flip out the handle for optimal viewing.



SmartView Versa +

The SmartView Versa+ uniquely combines the traditional electronic magnifier with the features of MP3 and video players. Why carry two or more devices when all these functions are in the Versa+? Standard SD memory cards let you travel with your selected range of great music and movies.

Easily connect the Versa to any TV with the included video cable to significantly increase magnification and use all the features of the Versa. No need for another TV magnifier when you have a SmartView Versa. The Versa even lets you freeze an image and then save it on the SD card. Saved images can be transferred to your computer. Change the magnification and contrast mode when viewing saved images. Even pan around to see the whole image.

Features & benefits

At school

- Study using normal text books
- Write answers for tests and exams
- Enjoy your favourite music on the bus* (**Versa + only*)
- Show your friends how you can even watch a favourite movie* (**Versa + only*)
- Keep important references as saved images* (**Versa + only*)

Even more!

- Sit back and enjoy a 4.3" (10.9cm) widescreen
- Autofocus to make viewing easy
- Magnification of 5 to 15 times
- Light to carry around at only 200 grams
- Viewing modes:
 - Full colour
 - Black on white
 - White on black
 - Yellow on blue
 - Yellow on black
 - Rechargeable long life lithium battery

SmartView Versa is priced at \$1,280.00 (GST exempt) plus \$22.00 (GST inclusive) for freight.

SmartView Versa + is \$1,480.00 (GST exempt) plus \$22.00 (GST inclusive) for freight.

For further information contact:

Phil Hazell, National Sales Manager for HumanWare.

Phone: 02 9686 2600 Email: phil.hazell@humanware.com Web <http://www.humanware.com>

Victorian Education Excellence Awards

A glittering night of presentations took place in Melbourne to honour the outstanding contributions of educators in Victoria. Amongst those honoured was visiting teacher Jennifer Blake who was one of three finalists in the Lindsay Thompson Fellowship section of the awards.



**Pictured above from left, Minister Pike with Lindsay Fellowship winner Louise Duncan, Professor Peter Dawkins and finalists Jennifer Blake and Birsin Reynolds.
Source: Shine, May 2009 Issue 04**

Getting Started: Using Visual Systems to Promote Communication

By Dolly Bhargava, Disability Specialist Speech Pathologist

Getting Started: Using Visual Systems to Promote Communication Booklet and DVD is a practical resource that has been written for parents. It discusses a range of visual systems which can be used at home to develop the child's communication skills. This resource was developed by Dolly Bhargava, a disability specialist speech pathologist with funding received by School for Parents from the Non Government Centre Support for Non School Organisations of Western Australia.

Communication is a process that is happening throughout the day. Having a communication difficulty can limit the child's ability to participate in everyday activities. When a child can't get their message across, they usually become frustrated. Whatever a child's age, it is important to address this frustration. Visual systems can provide the child with an effective method for communicating needs, wants, information, feelings and ideas.

The use of visual systems is not giving up on your child's verbal skills. Visual systems do not stop the child from learning to speak or producing speech. Visual systems can form the foundation of communication skills that may allow verbal communication at a later point but most importantly can be a great help during this transitional time. Parents spend most of their time with young children doing real life activities, so they are in the ideal position to develop the child's communication skills.

Available as a free download at <http://www.carsonst.wa.edu.au/>

To find out more about Dolly Bhargava visit <http://www.innovativeprogramming.net.au>

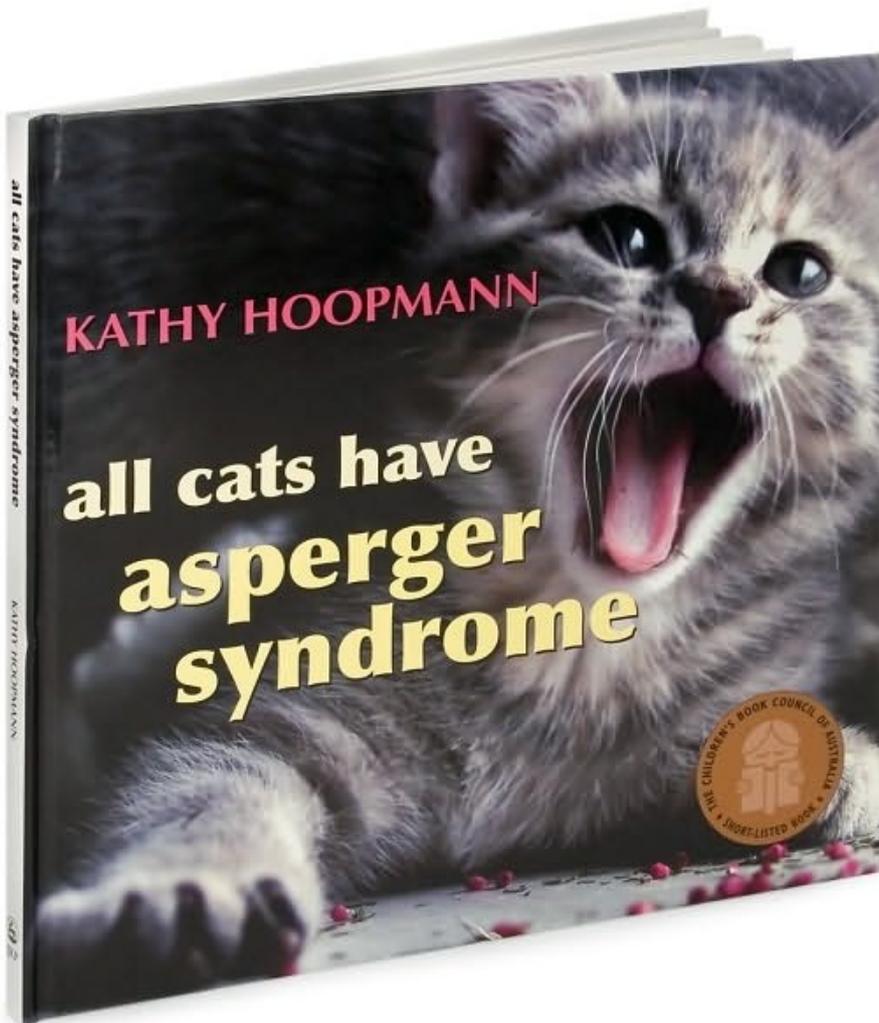
Autism Blog

I recently came across a blog written by Julie, the parent of a child with autism. She writes: “As a parent of a child with autism, I want to make a positive difference in our community and beyond. The primary goal (as of January 2009) of this blog is to provide tips and information to parents and teachers that might help a person with autism navigate this world.”

Julie describes a book she has read to her son called “All Cats Have Asperger’s Syndrome” by Kathy Hoopmann. The book uses delightful pictures of cats at play to look at the topic of autism in a light hearted way.

Julie’s blog <http://www.autism-blog.net/2008/01/my-sons-reaction-to-all-cats-have.html>

The book is available at many online bookstores including Amazon <http://www.amazon.com> , or Book in Hand: an autism specialist bookshop at <http://www.bookinhand.com.au/>



Lensshopper.com

Lensshopper.com provides an online guide to buying lenses online. The site also has general eye care information and interactive diagram of the anatomy of the eye.

<http://www.lensshopper.com/eye-anatomy.asp>

A Boy's Best Friend

Zac from Bendigo gave a talk to a group of about 80 people about his experiences with Guide Dogs Victoria ... apparently he stole the show! He told a few jokes had them all laughing then got his picture on the front page of the local paper. What a star!



The picture above shows Zac with one of Guide Dogs Victoria's ambassadors.
Picture by Brendan McCarthy – Bendigo Advertiser.

Free Online Window-Eyes Training

From Ramona Mandy

Top Ten Things You and Your Student Should Know About Window-Eyes

GW Micro, the makers of the screen reader Window-Eyes, recently conducted online training on this topic. They also recorded this training session, (audio only, not visuals) and put it on their website for downloading or streaming. This training will be helpful for teachers and students working with Window-Eyes to learn some of the basics.

This special, free online training is designed for teachers who need to get up and running quickly with Window-Eyes. Worksheets are provided to help you retain the information that is taught during the class. We know your time is valuable, so this class is approximately one hour long but packs a lot in. This training will provide you with some of the fundamentals to get you and your student started using Window-Eyes.

The session can be found at:

http://www.gwmicro.com/Audio_Video_Archive/Presentations/

Also, GW Micro have put up related worksheets at:

<http://www.gwmicro.com/teachers>

Call for Abstracts: 8th National Deafblind Conference

Deafblindness in Australia New Ideas, Directions & Solutions
28-30 April 2010,
Jasper Hotel Melbourne

Able Australia Services is proud to host the 8th National Deafblind Conference in April 2010, on behalf of the Australian Deafblind Council (ADBC).

The Conference will present the latest news, research and developments relating to deafblindness from local and overseas sources. A trade Exhibition will also showcase the latest in technology, services and products from around Australia. We are anticipating between 200-300 participants including people with deafblindness and their families, Government officials, medical and allied health professionals as well as representatives from deafblind and disability groups. An extensive social program is being developed to provide excellent networking opportunities amongst all Conference participants. For more information on the 8th National Deafblind Conference please go to www.ableaustralia.org.au. (Please note, this site is regularly being updated)

If you are interested in, and able to commit to a speaking session at the Conference, then we invite you to submit an abstract (or summary of a paper) for consideration for presentation. However, if you believe there is someone else in your organisation that would be more suitable, we would be grateful if you could pass this information onto this person.

Deaf Blindness Resources

Also from Able Australia Services is a new resource for teaching students about Deaf Blindness. Entitled “deafblind education program: a teacher’s guide”, this resource folder contains simulation activities for school students and a DVD which answers some of the questions students might have about deafblindness. We have a copy at the SVRC if you would like to check out this resource next time you are in the centre; please see Lyn or go to the Able Australia website to learn more about deafblindness: <http://www.ableaustralia.org.au/>

NAPLAN

A note to Visiting Teachers from Deb

If your schools and students no longer require their Braille copies of the NAPLAN, please consider “donating” them to the SVRC. This year's NAPLAN assessment materials may be required for students next year for practice of the layout and style of this form of testing. We'll try to build up a little collection that you will be able to borrow as you need them.

Thanks in advance!

Word7

Ever wondered where the commands from Word 2003 have gone? People using the new version of MSWord, Word7, may be mystified by the new layout. The menu headings we have all come to know and love have been replaced by a “tab” layout. The Microsoft website has a document called a “Word Ribbon Mapping Workbook” which lists where to find the things you need. What a relief, I can stop pulling my hair out!

Find the Word Ribbon Mapping Workbook for Word7 at:

<http://office.microsoft.com/en-us/templates/TC102128591033.aspx>

On Demand Testing

The Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority (VCAA) is making a range of online tests available to schools. Schools will be able to download assessments in the areas of Mathematics and English for students to complete at a later date on a computer. From the VCAA website:

On Demand assessment is an online resource for teachers to use when, where and how they choose. It puts teachers in the driving seat as they control the entire process from test selection, to analysis and use of the assessment data the program will produce. It is optional, time saving and able to be administered to a single student and/or a whole class. It offers a number of advantages including the capacity for automatic marking and computer generated reports.

This resource:

- provides access to a range of computer-based assessments that are easy to administer to individuals or groups of students
- has choices of tests across a range of learning areas and levels
- includes assessment tasks that can be marked by the computer, providing immediate results
- provides the option to offer the tests in printed form to students
- offers feedback in the form of class and individual student reports.

Tests are designed to link to the outcomes of the Victorian Essential Learning Standards (VELS). Both general skills tests and topic specific assessments are available.

Possible uses of the assessment system include:

- Pre and post testing of students around a topic
- Assessing new intake or late arrival students
- Identifying strengths or weaknesses of individual students
- Corroborating teacher judgements
- Assisting in forward planning of teaching programs

More information about On Demand Testing is available from

<http://www.vcaa.vic.edu.au/prep10/ondemand/types.html>

Audio Book Radio Station

There is now an Audio Book Radio station which broadcasts free to air 24/7 called Audio Book Radio. This internet radio website is dedicated to broadcasting stories, drama, poetry and interviews.

The benefits of listening to audio book radio includes:

- You can listen from work or home or while travelling.
- Non-music entertainment
- Listen to popular audio books narrated by professional actors
- View the week's programme schedule to see the great variety of choice on offer.

This service might be of interest to those students with a BrailleNote (BN mPower). You will need to select the "winamp player" link.

The Audio Book Radio website can be found at: <http://www.audiobookradio.net/>

Audio Book Radio Store

You can also buy your choice of Audio Books at a reasonable price from The Audio Book Radio Store. The store has over 8000 titles available of which nearly 900 are juvenile titles.

Download direct to your computer, iPod or BrailleNote from the Audio Book Radio Store at

<http://www.abrstore.net/>

June JVIB

The June 2009 issue of the *Journal of Visual Impairment & Blindness (JVIB)* is now available online!

In this month's issue of *JVIB*, the year-long celebration of Louis Braille's Bicentennial continues with an essay on the need for braille standards in university preparation programs. Authors Frances Mary D'Andrea, Sandra Lewis, and L. Penny Rosenblum emphatically state: "Braille is the key to literacy for children and adults who are blind or visually impaired and, as such, it is incumbent on educators who teach people with visual impairments to be competent in the braille code." This article is available for free for all to read, so you are encourage to read it from the JVIB website.

Also included in this month's edition:

Factors Affecting the Successful Employment of Transition-Age Youths with Visual Impairments
Michele Capella McDonnall and Adele Crudden

Collaborative Outcome Measurement: Development of the Nationally Standardized Minimum Data Set

Barry C. Stephens, Corinne Kirchner, Alberta L. Orr, Dawn Suvino, and Priscilla Rogers

A Three-phase Qualitative Study of Dual-Certified Vision Education Professionals in the Southwestern United States

Nora Griffin-Shirley, Rona L. Poggrund, Derrick W. Smith, and Lee Duemer

The Need for a Uniform Method of Recording and Reporting Functional Vision Assessments

Rona Shaw, Joanne Russotti, Judy Strauss-Schwartz, Helen Vail, and Ronda Kahn

Orientation and Mobility with Persons Who Are Deaf-Blind: An Initial Examination of Single-Subject Design Research

Amy T. Parker

Plus Editor's Page; Louis Braille Celebration, The Need for Braille Standards in University Preparation Programs--Frances Mary D'Andrea, Sandra Lewis, and L. Penny Rosenblum; Book Review, "Assistive Technology for Students Who Are Blind or Visually Impaired: A Guide to Assessment", by Ike Presley and Frances Mary D'Andrea--Reviewed by Karyl Loux;

JVIB website: <http://www.jvib.org>

100 Web Tools for Learning with a disability

This site has information about assistive technology for people with disabilities including:

- text to speech software
- voice control for computers
- tools for those with language disorders
- audio books
- special joysticks, keyboards etc

100 Web Tools for learning with a disability can be found at:

http://www.collegedegree.com/library/college-life/100_web_tools_for_learning_with_disability

Carer Payment Changes

The Australian Government's new eligibility and assessment process for Carer Payment (care receiver under 16 years) is underway. In a major change from the previous process, the carer completes the Disability Care Load Assessment (child) based on their perception of the support and care load (rather than on the severity of the disability of the child cared for). Separately, treating health professionals complete the assessment for the Child.

The Disability Assessment Tool (currently used for the Carer Allowance will be reviewed during the coming year). Both forms are completed independently of each other and will be examined by Centrelink's Carer Special Assessment Team. This new approach is expected to enable around 19,000 carers of children with disability to qualify for the first time.

The Disability Care Load Assessment (child) form is very broad. Many applicants will not need to answer every question, only those that apply to their situation. Apart from the comprehensive range of questions, there is an opportunity for the carer to explain in their own words the effects of the caring load as they perceive it. Centrelink is considering publishing guidance notes for carers who may need someone to assist them to apply. If a carer is rejected by Centrelink, the application will be reviewed by the Carer Special Assessment Team in the first instance.

While some 'deficit' language remains, NDS considers the overall tone of the Disability Care Load Assessment (child) is much improved on previous forms. FaHCSIA and Centrelink will seek feedback from carers about the new process so that changes may be made before 1 July 2010.

Carers who think they may be eligible for Carer Payment (caring for a child under 16 years) can phone Centrelink on 13 2717 or visit their nearest Centrelink Customer Service Centre-more details are at http://www.centrelink.gov.au/internet/internet.nsf/individuals/carers_changes.htm

Blind Citizens Australia (BCA) State Advisory Committee – Victoria

- Do you have an interest in working on issues affecting people who are blind or vision impaired in Victoria?
- Do you want to obtain some experience in leadership, event management, public speaking, campaign skills or build on your advocacy skills?
- Can you commit a few hours a month (day or evening)?

So far this year, this has included work to improve audible announcements on trams and trains, identifying issues affecting people who are deafblind, producing BCA's brochures in the 10 most commonly used languages, undertaking work to remedy the unfair compensation provisions affecting people on DSP and DSP (Blind), continued lobbying for accessible voting, working towards the rollout of the new public transport ticketing system and a lot more.

The BCA are seeking individuals to join the State Advisory Committee (this will replace the Victorian coordinating committee) to help lend a hand to these projects and are specifically seeking:

- a person representing older people, aged 60+
- a youth perspective (18-35 years)
- culturally and linguistically diverse background
- indigenous background
- dual disability
- parent of a child who is blind or vision impaired
- a carer or a representative from a BCA special interest branch

Please ring Jessica Zammit on (03) 9654 1400 or visit the BCA website at <http://www.bca.org.au>

Aide Needed

Do you know anyone who would like to work as an aide? An aide is needed for emergency replacement work at Peter Lalor S.C.

Please contact Mark Thompson at Peter Lalor S.C. (03) 9464 0122. Braille skills required.

Staff and Student News

Gillian Hogan's wonderful work as a VT for Vision in the Mildura area has been recognised by a Vision Australia award. Gillian was presented with a Certificate of Appreciation at a ceremony in May this year, in recognition of her support of people who are blind or have low vision to help them to participate fully in every part of the life they choose.

Well done Gillian!

Michael is enjoying a few days in California touring around San Francisco, Las Vegas, and Yosemite National Park before heading over to New York for the second part of his trip. We are not expecting him back any time soon!

News of former students from Deb...

Nathan (former Space Camper): is now second in charge of a store from a large supermarket chain.

Patrick (former space Camper): has almost completed his mechanics course and has just bought a house!

Finally

Thanks to Karen Goodall, Deb Lewis, Jeni Blake, Dianne Skillern, Marion Blazè and Tim Crowe-Mai for contributing to this edition of The Bulletin. Many thanks to our proof readers, collators and mailers for helping get this Bulletin out to our readers.

Don't forget, we appreciate your input.

If you have something you would like included in "The Bulletin", please contact:

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To read The Bulletin online: <http://www.svrc.vic.edu.au/bulletins2009.html>