

The Bulletin

Statewide Vision Resource Centre

Number 14

Friday 28 August 2009

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

Professional Development Activities for Term 3 and 4, 2009

Professional Development Event 2009	Date
Term 3 Visiting Teacher Professional Development Day	Friday 28 August
Literacy Numeracy Week Activity – Louis Braille Day	Monday 7 September
SPEVI Day	Monday 5 October
Educational Expo – Access Technology Options This day is suitable for teachers, aides, therapists, parents/care-givers, visiting teachers, students and members of the wider community. Come and explore a wide range of access technology is one location.	Friday 27 November
SVRC Christmas Morning Tea	Wednesday 2 December
Dot Power for 2010 Kinder and Prep Braille Readers and their Teachers, Aides & Parents	Monday 7 December

*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>

Scholarships for special education studies

The Department of Education and Early Childhood Education is currently offering scholarships for teachers wishing to undertake studies in Special Education. From the current edition of Shine magazine:

“Special education teachers are in high demand across the state. Classroom teachers who wish to further their studies in this area are encouraged to apply for a Special Education Program. The Special Education Scholarship Program provides scholarships for teachers to complete endorsed special education qualifications. At present 30 teachers are furthering their studies with the aid of a Special Education Scholarship.

Selection criteria for the Special Education Scholarship Program is currently being reviewed and will be available later in the year, when applications for the 2010 round of scholarships are called for.”

Shine: August 2009 Issue 7 <http://www.education.vic.gov.au/about/news/shine/default.htm>

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International Council for Education of People with Visual Impairment (ICEVI) Conference August 2010 – Call for Papers

A message from Jill Keeffe – Chairperson, Programme Committee

On behalf of the Programme Committee for the ICEVI 13th World Conference, it is my great pleasure to invite you to respond to this Call for Papers by submitting an Abstract no later than 31st October 2009.

The theme of the conference, "Achieving Education For All Children with Visual Impairment: Strategies and Challenges," reflects the rationale supporting the joint Global Campaign of ICEVI and The World Blind Union. This important campaign affirms the educational equity for all children who are blind or have low vision. The Global Campaign is further strengthened by the United Nation's Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. What we need today is to consolidate our strategies to address the challenges in ensuring this educational equity.

To support this overall theme, the Programme Committee is seeking high-quality presentations in the following forms:

- thought provoking papers reflecting innovative practice or research
- interactive workshops
- poster sessions
- video presentations

We look forward to receiving your abstract for consideration no later than 31st October 2009.

Find out more at <http://www.icevi.org/13thWC/index.htm>

Australian Story - My Name is Jack

My Name is Jack was shown on Australian Story on Monday 10th August. It deals with the topic of autism - the trials, tribulations and celebrations of a family and their journey together.

The program can be downloaded from the ABC website on <http://www.abc.net.au/austory/>

Highly recommended!

Missing Resources - Please Find and Return

Missing Brailers - From Deb

Perkins Brailers are available for short term loan only. Schools are now able to lease a unit from the SVRC at a cost of \$250 per year (pro rata). Dianne has been busy tracking down the 65 Perkins Brailers that we have on our books. It appears that at least 20 units have gone missing. This is an alarming loss of at least \$27,000 worth of equipment.

Can you all please check dusty cupboards, look under beds etc etc and try to locate our lost and lonely brailers? Your efforts will be acknowledged in a future episode of "Missing Brailers".

The following braille books have also gone missing if you have them could you please give Taryn a call on (03) 9841 0242

- There's a Dog in the Yard
- Don's Dragon
- Maria Goes to School
- Sally's Beans
- The Alphabet Book
- Ten in the Bed
- Five Little Speckled Frogs

Adding more spice to a braille literacy programme

Susan Leong

Susan Leong, a specialist teacher in Visual Impairment in Sydney, Australia, offers some tried and tested reading and writing activities to help engage a student's interest and promote a sense of fun when learning braille.

It is often maintained that we should introduce braille symbols to our students as they meet them in their reading. With this in mind it is helpful if we think about the vocabulary needed before class lessons so that we can identify and then teach the contractions that will be coming up. Teaching these contractions is best done on a one-to-one basis between student and braille teacher.

The following are ideas for reading and writing activities that could form the core of such one-to-one lessons. They are intended to be used in addition to the regular literacy classes students will be following in mainstream schools.

- Structuring a programme of one-to-one lessons – what works for me.
- Daily, individual lessons of at least 30 minutes in length.
- Astute timetabling. Schedule lessons at times outside of regular class activities (or other vital/favourite lessons) so that students don't feel they are missing out.
- Keep a record of contractions as the student learns them. Encourage the student to keep their own record.
- Inform the class teacher and caregivers etc of the student's progress. Ideally encourage caregivers to learn the contractions at the same time.
- Record mistakes and re-teach contractions if necessary

Some useful materials

- A quiet workspace with adequate space, furniture and ventilation/heating
- Perkins Braille
- Braille paper, binding machine and binders
- Braille cubes (blocks with moveable parts containing raised dots - RNIB has a keyring version)
- Braillette board (the RNIB version has a plastic case with four rows of ten cells in the base, and 150 steel rivets which can be inserted into the cells to form braille letters.)
- Magnets and paperclips
- Sorting trays

Initial lesson: Introducing a braille contraction

Show the new contraction to the student on a braille cube or braillette board. Discuss the configuration of the contraction by its dot numbers, its phonemic analysis and its spelling. Ask the student to read words containing the new contraction from a "Contraction Wheel" (description to follow).

The student can braille a simple one-sentence rule about the contraction eg "The DO contraction can only be used in the middle of a word" followed by a list of words from the Contraction Wheel.

The student can also braille dictated sentence/paragraphs/ short stories using these same words and read the page aloud. Try to make the sentences relate to some classroom unit of work, or to something personal to the student i.e. a hobby, friend etc.

The Contraction Wheel

Cut a circular piece of braille paper with a diameter of 15 cm. Attach this to the centre of a regular sheet of braille paper with a paper fastener so that it can be rotated. Glue a final contraction onto the regular piece at the edge of the circle. Glue the beginning of words around the edge of the circle. The student "turns the wheel" to make different words with the final contraction. For example NESS can have these letters brailled around the wheel: good, like, fair, weak, kind, blind, happy, tender, gentle, forgive, careless.

Follow up lesson - choose from the following activities

- **Sorting trays and small flashcards**

Place one example of each of the newly taught contractions to be sorted in each compartment as an example to follow. Then ask the student to sort the remaining contractions against the clock. The student's time can be shown on a tactile graph with rewards and privileges given for improvement.

- **Fishing game**

Braille words containing contractions onto fish shaped pieces of paper and attach a paper clip. The student uses a magnetic "fishing rod" (make your own!) to catch the fish. She can keep the fish if she can read the word and put it into a sentence. If not the fish swims free!

- **Posting box and flashcards**

Take a shoebox and cut slits into the top. The slits need to be large enough to allow flashcards to be passed through. Add a strip of braille paper along the top of the posting box with the braille contractions that are to be sorted spaced out along it. The student matches each flashcard to its contraction on the braille strip and "posts" it into the adjacent slit.

- **Mini flip books**

Create mini books with sheets folded in half featuring contractions. The student will flip the pages to make new words. For example braille ENCE onto the last page of your book. On the preceding pages add: f, p, sci, def, off, evid, sent, comm, differ, depend, independ.

- **Pocket Storybooks (palm size)**

Divide a braille sheet into eight equal rectangles. Dictate a short story, or set of dictionary meanings, to the student, one sentence at a time. The student brailles one sentence per rectangle or "page". After all the sentences have been written, including a title page, separate the pages and staple to form a small book. Here are some examples:

ITY Mini Dictionary

abiliTY ability - being able to do something
 cITY city - place where people live, bigger than a town
 majorITY majority - the greater number; more than half
 personalITY personality - character or identity of a person
 pITY pity - to feel sorry for someone else
 quantITY quantity - an amount or number of
 SimilarITY similarity - likeness, having a resemblance

These strategies have proven to be highly successful in fostering my student's literacy skills. Yet even more satisfying was the student's resulting love of reading and one memorable comment made while on our way to our workspace: "this is my most favourite part of the whole day!" I hope the ideas might help you spice up your braille literacy classes and make learning braille the highlight of your student's days. I'd love to hear your own suggestions too!

Susan Leong, Specialist Teacher Sueleong2004@hotmail.com

Thanks to Susan for writing down these wonderful ideas for teaching braille. If you have any tried and true ideas for teaching braille please let me know lynrobin@svrc.vic.edu.au

From: It's Vision Time Issue 12 Term 3 2009

Paralympic Youth Games

The first ever Australian Paralympic Youth Games will be held in Melbourne from Monday 5 October until Sunday 11 October 2009 and will be staged in and around the Albert Park sports precinct created by the Melbourne Sports & Aquatic Centre, as well as at other major Melbourne sporting facilities.

The event will be the first of its kind in the Oceania - Asian region and will specifically provide national and international standard competition for Australia's young and aspiring athletes in a range of sports. In addition, the Australian Paralympic Youth Games are likely to attract a significant number of youth athletes from around the world. Interest has already been received from New Zealand, the United States of America and Great Britain, with other countries throughout the Oceania region and into Asia also being invited to attend.

For further information please contact Peter Stewart on (03) 9583 4555, 0418 349 672 or peter_stewart@me.com.

Website: <http://www.wsv.org.au/events/australian-paralympic-youth-games.html>

Blind Tennis Program

From Australian Tennis Magazine Issue July 2009

A 6 week blind tennis program was recently held at Melbourne Park giving those with no or low vision a chance to experience the sport. Run in conjunction with Blind Sports Victoria and Tennis Seniors Victoria, the program caters for people with varying levels of visual impairment by using modified equipment such as mini nets and low compression balls. It was a fantastic opportunity to play a sport that many people with a visual impairment or blindness simply couldn't imagine playing.

'Being around other people who understand what it is like to not have great vision and who don't care is liberating' said Daniel Piekarski who attended 4 of the 6 sessions. 'The program was a real opportunity for people to understand that they could do things they might not have thought that they could do. It provides the ability for people like me to realize that there are ways to make sports accessible to us'.

Future programs are planned for later in the year as well as a mini circuit round robin tournament for interested participants. For further information about any of these special programs visit <http://www.tennis.com.au/Vic> or phone (03) 8420 8420

Free Disability Family Day

Do you care for a child with a disability or chronic medical condition? The Golden Plains Parent Support Group was established two years ago and provides families opportunities to get together on a regular basis and enjoy free of charge family activities and parent / carer social gatherings.

The Golden Plains Parent Support Group is presenting a free Family Fun Day on Sunday 25th October 2009 at Lethbridge.

- **Thomas Train Rides**
- **Jumping Castle**
- **Balloon Sculpting**
- **Animal Farm**
- **Sack Races**
- **Face Painting**
- **Hair colouring**

Families **MUST** Register by phoning Kaylene 52817553 or Sue 52651168 by Monday 19th October

Jaws tips and useful information

The check for updates option in the Jaws help menu has been enhanced not only allowing you to download the latest updates to the Jaws program itself: but it now allows you to check on and download the latest training material for Jaws. This is a great way to expand your knowledge of using Jaws for Windows with popular applications.

Some of the training material now available via the check for updates option, includes:

- Introduction to Windows Vista with Jaws
- Office 2007 with Jaws
- Column and row titles in Excel
- Creating forms in Excel
- Laptop keystrokes with Jaws
- What's new in Jaws 10
- Basic training in Jaws 10

Source: JAWS BYTES E-Update 12

Windows training websites for people with vision impairments

The following websites have tips and course materials for people with vision impairment. Many of the instructional materials are free some charge a fee for short courses. Trainers use podcasts, blogs and online chats to deliver their curriculum.

Cantor Access

From the Cantor Access website: To drive Windows from the keyboard, it is more important to internalize techniques than it is to memorize hotkeys. Once these techniques have been mastered, it is possible to perform almost all tasks in Windows® — perhaps 98% — without a mouse. A detailed descriptions of these techniques, is available from Keyboard Access Tips which can be purchased from the website.

Windows Keyboard Access FAQ http://www.cantoraccess.com/resources/faq_keyboard.shtml

Access Technology Institute

With a straightforward, easy-to-understand training style, the courses of ATI appeal to beginners and professionals. Rather than addressing Windows via keystrokes and simplistic memorized commands, ATI offers a robust and complete immersion into Windows, screen reading technology, the Internet. ATI has a free windows XP tutorial which is available as an MP3 file from

<http://www.accesstechnologyinstitute.com/Access/index.html>

Preparing Materials for Low Vision Readers

When you prepare materials for readers with low vision, you can enhance reading performance by observing a few simple rules.

1. Employ fonts without serifs (APHont, Verdana, Arial, Helvetica).
2. Employ fonts with a fixed width (APHont, Verdana, Arial, Helvetica).
3. Use bold letters whenever possible.
4. Use APHont, Verdana, Arial, or Helvetica as the default font in electronic media.
5. Be sure to provide good contrast between the background color and the print color. (Black on white is good, but for many readers white on black or yellow on black is better.)
6. As a general rule use print two sizes above the minimum print size a student can read

Fancy fonts and italics may look attractive to you. For the reader with low vision, however, they can be confusing and sometimes impossible to read. When preparing materials for readers with low vision, a simple rule of thumb is: the simpler, the bolder, the better.

Adapted from Fred's Head newsletter. To read more and download a large print font go to:

<http://www.fredshead.info/2005/09/fonts-for-low-vision-readers.html>

Blind cricket programme

The Victorian Blind Cricket Association in conjunction with Cricket Victoria, the State Vision Resource Centre and the Visiting Teacher Services invite all vision impaired students in years 4 to 12 to attend a Blind Cricket come and try and coaching clinic day.

When: Friday 9th October 2009 from 10:30 am to 2:30 pm

Where: Victorian Blind Cricket Associations grounds, 454 Glenferrie Road Kooyong
(at the rear of Vision Australia).

Cost: There is no cost to participants to attend this programme and a sausage sizzle lunch and a soft drink will be provided to all students attending the day.

Attendees will learn the art of blind cricket through a range of activities and games designed to enhance team work and the individuals hand eye / hand ear coordination skills.

Blind Cricket in Victoria is an open aged mixed gender sport with players receiving advantages / handicaps depending on age and level of vision enabling the participation of all players regardless of age, gender or vision levels.

If you would like to attend this day please RSVP via your Visiting Teacher by Friday 11th September 2009.

For more information phone Alf O'Neil, President, Victorian Blind Cricket Association on (03) 9386 2167.

Skin cell work brings sight hopes

Scientists have transformed human skin cells into early versions of the eye cells that generate vision. The research raises the future prospect of restoring sight to the blind with stem cell treatments. A US team used as raw material for the study human skin cells that were genetically "reprogrammed" to possess the same properties as embryonic stem cells.

Known as induced pluripotent stem (iPS) cells, they have the potential to develop into virtually every kind of tissue in the body. Stem cells extracted from immature embryos have the same ability. By exposing the iPS cells to a specific cocktail of chemicals, the scientists caused them to grow into partially developed retina cells - the light-sensitive cells at the back of the eye which transmit nerve signals to the brain. Similar results were achieved when the same technique was applied to genuine embryonic stem cells.

Although the work is at a very early stage, it paves the way to treatments that allow retinas to be repaired with cells grown from a patient's own skin.

In the more immediate future scientists could use the cultivated cells to study genetically-linked eye disorders, or screen new drugs for retina conditions.

Study leader Dr David Gamm, from the University of Wisconsin-Madison, said: "This is an important step forward for us, as it not only confirms that multiple retinal cells can be derived from human iPS cells.. but also shows how similar the process is to normal human retinal development."

Source: http://www.google.com/hostednews/ukpress/article/ALeqM5hODVUTpMzbi6T_bmIJilb2OCkGbQ

Visiting Teacher needed for 2010

A visiting teacher (vision) is needed for an independent school in the Hawthorn area. Please contact Deb Lewis if you are this person. Phone (03) 9841 0242 or email deblewis@svrc.vic.edu.au

SEAS Applications close Friday 9 October 5:00pm

Information booklet available from <http://www.vtac.edu.au/publications.html>

Vision Australia Further Education Bursaries

Applications for Vision Australia's Further Education Bursaries are now open
To apply:

- * Complete an application form www.visionaustralia.org/bursary
- * Have an adaptive technology assessment with a Vision Australia consultant
- * Provide some documentary evidence (outlined on the application form)

Applications close in October. For more information contact: Max Bini, Tertiary Education Consultant, Phone: 1300 84 74 66 Email: max.bini@visionaustralia.org

Staff and Student News

Student Sporting Achievements

Nominated for the Victorian State Blind Cricked Training Squad for the upcoming National Championships in Sydney in January 2010 are some familiar names:

- Daniel (EMR VT Sally)
- Lindsay (former EMR VT student)
- Dean (former EMR VT student)

Eastern Region's student, Daniel, has also featured as the Junior Sportstar of the Week in a recent edition of Leader newspapers. The article reads:

Daniel Puts Body on Line

A Tecoma teenager has been selected to represent Victoria in a fast and bruising sport. Blind Upwey student Daniel has been selected in the open age Victorian Goalball Association's squad, which will play in the national championships next month.

Goalball, played by blind and vision-impaired people, is fast-paced and relies on hearing. Daniel only started playing the sport a few months ago, after friends pressured him to join up. He said the game involved two teams scoring goals into large nets at either end of a court. The ball has valves inside so you can hear it coming through.

Daniel said the sport could get fast and furious. The 15-year old was born with X-linked Retinoschisis, a hereditary eye disease causing permanent retinal detachment and subsequent vision loss. He lost all vision in his left eye, but still has some in his right eye.

Earlier this year, Daniel was also named the Victorian Blind Cricket Association's Rookie of the year.

Well done Daniel!

Finally

Thanks to Marion Blazé, Deb Lewis, Kym Gribble and Annette Godfrey-Magee 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>