

The Bulletin

Statewide Vision Resource Centre

Number 18

Friday 6th November 2009

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

Professional Development Activities for Term 4, 2009

Professional Development Event 2009	Date
Educational Expo – Access Technology Options: suitable for teachers, aides, therapists, parents/care-givers, visiting teachers, students and members of the wider community	Friday 27 November
SVRC Christmas Morning Tea	Wednesday 2 December
Transition Day - to support the transition of services for students with vision impairments from Vision Australia to DEECD. This activity is open to regional personnel, principals, integration coordinators, classroom teachers and interested school personnel.	Friday 4 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>

Access Technology Expo

The date for our Access Technology Expo is drawing near. As anyone who has been to previous Expos will attest, this is a fantastic day to come along to the Statewide Vision Resource Centre in Donvale and sample the latest in accessible technology for people who are vision impaired or blind.

Mingle with the throngs of students, parents, school staff and the just plain curious as stall holders from near and far display their wares. See computer technology which enlarges or talks, electronic magnifier units, talking calculators, games, talking book technology, optical equipment, braille technology, audio books, sports equipment and more

Companies and groups at the Expo will include: Australian Independence Products, Humanware, European Eyewear, Bolinda, Quantum, Pacific Vision, Vision Australia Library, Soundbooks, Blind Sports Victoria and Guide Dogs Victoria.

When: Friday, 27th November 2009, 10.00am - 2.30pm

Where: Statewide Vision Resource Centre, 370 Springvale Road, Donvale

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Thank you – Angel Flights

Report by Marion Blazé, Education Officer

In 2008 & 9, the Statewide Vision Resource Centre was facing a dilemma. We received referrals from no fewer than 6 children in schools in and around Mildura. Three of these were in the one refugee family from Afghanistan. In consultation with the VT up there, we knew it was going to be a challenge (to put it mildly!) to bring them down to the Educational Vision Assessment Clinic in an effort to establish their eligibility and set up appropriate support for them. Enter ‘Angel Flights’. This charity provides flights for remotely placed people who cannot otherwise get to medical appointments. Volunteer pilots, usually in small aircraft, will fly patients and a family member to such appointments.

It took a lot of paperwork and liaison between the Mildura VT, teachers in the schools, interpreters for the Afghani family and one boy and his mother who are both hearing impaired, and Angel Flights, but the visual status of all six children is now clear. Four are receiving regular VT support and are eligible for Equipment Grant funding, which will make a huge difference to their education. One was found to be ineligible for support, but also under-corrected – so with a better prescription, should be able to access his school curriculum. The sixth student appeared to be ineligible on the medical information received, so a flight was not arranged. He was visited at his school and strategies put in place which will hopefully assist him and his teachers.

Our huge thanks go to Angel Flights and the wonderful coordinators and pilots who provide this extraordinary service. It was not all smooth ‘sailing’. We had one flight postponed because of fog, another which had to incorporate an overnight stay in Melbourne because pilots were not available for the return flight on the same day, we provided the ‘Earth Angels’ to transport families from airport to clinic and back, and yet another family came on a commercial flight (paid for by Angel Flights) because a volunteer pilot was not available.

Special thanks also go to Hector Maclean and Geoff Bowen for all their paperwork and Gill Hogan (VT in Mildura) for chasing families and schools up there for information and helping me on my return visit.

To take a look at the fantastic Angel Flight service, go to www.angelflight.org.au where there are articles and pictures.

Tactile Street Sign a first for Melbourne

Melbourne City Council has installed a braille street sign on the corner of Swantson Street and Collins Street in Melbourne. The tactile sign has been placed vertically on the traffic light pole, close to the crossing button, to make it accessible. The tactile sign begins with a directional arrow followed by the street name and the street numbers. The arrow indicates the direction of the street and also the direction of the street numbering.

Blind Citizens Australia (BCA) is asking for feedback about the sign as Jessica Zammitt from BCA writes: “I am really pleased to let you know that the City of Melbourne has launched the first accessible raised tactile and Braille street sign specifically for people who are blind or vision impaired. The first Victorian accessible street sign has been installed on the corner of Swanston and Collins Streets near the Melbourne Town Hall. This is a prototype sign and Council are wanting feedback from the blind and vision impaired community to determine if this is something that the blind and vision impaired community want, need and support. At this stage, Council is viewing this as a pilot only so we need as much support as necessary.”

Please send your feedback to Jessica at jessica.zammit@bca.org.au This information will be passed on to the City of Melbourne to support the greater roll out of accessible signage.

2009 Behaviour Schools Conference - "Celebrating Success & Looking Forward"

The Conference will focus on how Behaviour Settings can improve outcomes for students. The program has been designed to encourage aspiring leaders to look at leadership capabilities and pathways for future development.

The following Office of Schools Priority Areas will be addressed:

- Student Engagement and Retention
- Literacy and Numeracy
- Aboriginal Education
- Connected Learning/ICT and Quality Teaching

Colleen DeVeyrac, keynote speaker, graduated from the University of Calgary with a Bachelor of Education, specialising in Adolescent Studies and a Bachelor of Physical Education. She subsequently graduated from the Queensland University of Technology with a Master of Learning Innovation.

Colleen has been working with youth for over 20 years and specifically teaching youth at risk for over 10 years. In Canada, Colleen worked as a Primary and a Secondary Teacher, Director of a Federal Government Internship Program for At Risk Youth and the Deputy Principal of an alternative high school.

In Queensland, she has created and co-ordinated the POWER Program (an alternative early intervention program) and was employed as an Advisory Visiting Teacher for Behaviour and Learning Engagement. She has been trained in Restorative Justice Practices and Managing Young Children's Program (MYCP).

Colleen has been presenting workshops on Proactive Strategies for Challenging Children to schools, childcare centres and parents across New Zealand, Australia and Canada. Colleen is deeply committed to helping people formulate innovative and dynamic plans to reduce stress and to help challenging children and youth recognize their full potential.

Conference website at www.behaviourschoolsconference.com.au

New employment pathways program

Vision Australia Enterprises is giving young people who are blind or have low vision the opportunity to gain valuable workplace skills through its new Employment Pathways Program.

Kevin Murfitt, Chair of the Vision Australia Board, says "The Board is very excited about the Employment Pathways Program initiatives. The key to achieving successful employment for people who are blind or vision impaired is to be able to develop and show their talents in the workplace."

Based in Kensington, it will give participants the opportunity to develop career skills either at Vision Australia or externally with the intended result of obtaining long-term employment. Norm Richards, Production Manager, Enterprises says "We are very excited about this new endeavour and pleased to be working in partnership with Holmesglen Institute of TAFE as our Registered Training Organisation.

This program presents an excellent opportunity for motivated young people who are blind or have low vision to develop personally and professionally. Interns will focus on either Administration, Process Manufacturing or Warehouse Distribution. On completion they will receive national accreditation. The initial internships will be funded by the Victorian Government's Youth Guarantee Program, which is aimed at young people who are blind or have low vision with VCE-level education or less. For further information regarding eligibility or application details, contact

Carolyn Cannata, Training & Compliance Coordinator, Enterprises, on carolyn.cannata@visionaustralia.org

That's a good idea!

There are many small portable devices available from Officeworks and other similar stores, which could prove useful for students. The following are a couple of examples. Voice recorders can be used by students to record notes and classes as MP3 files. The files can then be reviewed on the device or uploaded to the student's computer. Denise has also found a digital pen which records your handwriting and converts it to text on the computer. Please let us know if you have found any other handy devices which students have found useful.

Sony ICDBX700 Digital Voice Recorder



- Cost: \$99.00

Features

- Lightweight and compact voice recorder with large LCD screen and front operation buttons.
- Record hours of uninterrupted audio on 1GB of built-in memory in MP3 format.
- Record Time - Long Play: 288 Hours, Short Play: 48 Hours, & High Quality: 18 Hours.
- Store up to 495 recorded files in 5 folders.
- Features a large sized built-in microphone
Digital pitch control function allows fast/slow play during transcription.
- Includes headphones, carry pouch & 2 x AAA batteries.

IntelliPen Digital Pen and USB Flash

Features:

- Small, portable, compact and completely wireless, the IntelliPen Digital Pen and USB Flash Drive is ideal for home, school and at work.
- Write, sketch and draw freely anywhere, using regular paper, while the device simultaneously captures and stores all hand written text and drawings.
- Upload your stored data to a PC via a standard USB port.
- Once information is uploaded, handwritten notes can then be transferred into text using the handwriting recognition software.
- Notes and drawings can be edited and shared via email and messaging applications.
- 1GB capacity allows you to store hundreds of pages of handwritten notes, images, music and videos onto the IntelliPen just like a regular USB drive.
- Cost: \$149.00



Website: www.officeworks.com.au

Review of sensory program 'Tacpac'

By Louise Bradshaw

Rationale

"Tacpac is an activity resource for helping students with sensory/neurological impairment, developmental delay, profound and multiple learning difficulties, tactile defensiveness, and limited or pre-verbal communication. It provides a structured, emotionally safe framework for the students to make contact with their own bodies, their environment and other people, and develop a relationship with these. The giving partner ensures that each tactile experience is well

organised and sensitively offered and adjusted to suit the receiving partner's responses." (From Tacpac package)

Tacpac was mentioned by a Vision Support Teacher working in New Zealand, during the Sydney Vision Conference earlier this year. Working with multi-impaired students within Special Schools and Support Classes presents challenges to many of us. Being creative and effective is an ongoing concern.

The program consists of 3 music CD's with corresponding activity cards that describe the tactile experience and the equipment to be used with each piece of music. E.g. Fanning with fans, squashing with sponges, flicking with little mops, rolling with paint rollers etc...

The Tacpac program provides a seeing, (for those with some vision) hearing and touching sensory experience.

The verbal introduction of this program was received by teachers, aides and helpers with scepticism. I don't think I would have been a great used car salesman! I obviously didn't sell the idea verbally.

After the first session, the most opposed and sceptical helper was amazed at the response of her student (blind, very severe 6 year old). She couldn't believe how her muscles and persona had relaxed and felt that she had 'lapped up' the sensory experiences. She commented with "that was the best thing she has done at school".

Other students visibly responded with relaxed muscle tension, giggles, smiles, offering hands and feet for more. One little girl was so relaxed by the end that she fell asleep.

If anyone is interested in reading more about Tacpac or ordering it to trial, (I think it cost around \$120 – from memory), you can go to www.tacpac.co.uk

You can contact Louise by email at louise.bradshaw@det.nsw.edu.au

Source: It's Vision Time Issue 13, 2009

Qualification in vision impairment through Renwick Centre

If you would like information about post graduate courses in vision impairment, for example the highly regarded Master of Special Education, visit www.ridbc.org.au/renwick.

Fortunately succession planning is alive and well - we currently have three Eastern Metropolitan Region Visiting Teachers studying through Renwick and they say they are really enjoying the challenge! We hope to have more Visiting Teachers sign up in 2010 and we are very happy to offer support to your endeavours!

For further information, please contact Jill Watson, the Centre Secretary who can send the 2010 Student Handbook as a pdf file and also answer any further questions.

Tel: (02) 9872-0303 or Fax: (02) 9873-1614

Email: jill.watson@ridbc.org.au

Web: www.ridbc.org.au/renwick

Renwick course 2010: Braille for beginners Module 1

This course provides an introduction to braille for those who wish to learn the Braille alphabet, numbers and some simple Braille contractions. The content is presented in a series of self-paced lessons, using a printed training guide, a CD and accompanying online materials. Course participants may progress to Module 2 if they wish to become proficient in contracted (Grade 2) Braille.

Braille for Beginners Module 1

When: Commences March 2010 via distance learning

Presented by: [Frances Gentle](#), Lecturer in Vision Impairment, RIDBC Renwick Centre

Where: Your own home via distance learning!

Course Code: RC10C103V

Fee: \$150

Register for Course:

http://www.ridbc.org.au/renwick/courses/continuinged_register.asp?RC10C103V

Update on Vision Australia's therapy services to children in government schools from 2010: A message from Sharon Muldoon

Vision Australia remains committed to providing ongoing therapy services to children in government regular and specialist schools from 2010. Schools and parents are able to decide which organisation provides services to their child. Vision Australia will continue to provide Orientation and Mobility, Occupational Therapy, Orthoptics, Physiotherapy (metropolitan area only), and Adaptive Technology assessments. Students and their families also have access to equipment online, Paediatric Counselling, Low Vision Clinics, and Library services. Those therapy and assessment services currently provided at the Burwood Education Centre will transfer to Glenferrie Road, Kooyong at the end of the year. The Felix Library will also be relocated to Glenferrie Road, Kooyong, and will continue to provide services to children aged 0 to 8 years.

All services will continue to be provided as required either in specialist facilities at Glenferrie Road Kooyong, in children's homes, in schools, and in community facilities.

For further information - please contact Vision Australia on 1300 847 466.

2009 National Ushers and DeafBlind Camp

Able Australia Recreation Program and Victorian Usher and DeafBlind Club and the Vision and Hearing Support Club are hosting this camp on Phillip Island for people with deafblindness from 20 to 22 November.

Places are limited, so people wishing to attend the camp should contact Emely McCord at Able Australia as soon as possible.

Voice phone 1300 225 369, TTY 03 9882 6786, or email emely.mccord@ableaustralia.org.au

Volunteers are needed so people wishing to assist, please contact John Finch to request an application form by emailing jfinch2@vtown.com.au or phone 03 9439 2570 or post to PO Box 1213 Camberwell, Victoria, 3124.

Source: ABF/NDS Update October 2009

Australian Braille Book of the Year Award

Vision Australia has announced the re-establishment of this award. Through the sponsorship of Copyright Agency Limited (CAL), Vision Australia has produced eighty Australian adult titles in braille, which are available to be borrowed from the Vision Australia Information Library Service's general collection. The Australian Braille Book of the Year Award aims to encourage and develop braille literacy among people with print disability; promote understanding of alternative format needs within the Australian publishing industry; and increase dissemination and reading of Australian content by transcribing Australian literature into formats accessible to people with print disability. All braille users registered with the library service are encouraged to vote for one of the 80 titles in the running. The winning book will be the one with the highest numbers of votes, culminating in an awards event in 2010.

For more information, go to <http://www.visionaustralia.org/info.aspx?page=2172>

Source: ABF/NDS Update October 2009

Vision Australia's Dickinson Literary Award

This writing competition aims to highlight the creativity of people who are blind or have low vision and promote their cultural contribution. Awards will be given for fiction and non-fiction pieces

from adults, young adults (under 25) and youth (under 16). There is also an all-ages award for the best biographical piece on living with blindness or low vision. First prize for each category is \$500 worth of products from Vision Australia's Equipment Solutions. Entries opened on 1 October and close 31 December 2009.

For further information, visit <http://www.visionaustralia.org/info.aspx?page=1964>
Source: ABF/NDS Update October 2009

25th National Braille Music Camp - dates for your diaries

The dates of the 25th National Braille Music Camp for 2010 have been announced!
The Camp will begin on Saturday 26 June 2010 and will end on Saturday 3 July 2010.
Start practising now!

National peak body for aboriginal people with disability

The Aboriginal Disability Network (ADN) has received Australian Government support to form a national advocacy peak body to represent Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with disability, their families and carers.

More information is available at <http://www.pwd.org.au/adnsw/> or email adnsw@pwd.org.au

Source: ABF/NDS Update October 2009

Graph paper generator

This is the same site I mentioned in the Bulletin a few weeks ago for producing bold line paper, but after a request from a Visiting Teacher I also found that it generates very good bold line graph paper as well. You can design the line thickness, the size of the grid and the colour of the line to suit your students' needs.

Generate your own green line graph paper online and print to a colour printer or photocopier at:
<http://incompetech.com/graphpaper/plain/>

I have preset a 1cm squared green line grid – don't forget to change the line thickness and grid size to suit your student's requirements.

Louis Braille celebration websites

The following two websites celebrate the life and achievements of Louis Braille and the braille system.

“Louis Braille Celebrating 200 years of Braille” is a website where you can learn about Louis's life, check out the Louis Braille Traveling Exhibit, glimpse some of the celebrations being planned around the world, enjoy some fun and games with braille and shop at the Braille Bicentennial Boutique for gifts and mementos. You can also browse the award-winning biography, Louis Braille: A Touch of Genius.

http://www.nbp.org/ic/nbp/louis/global_events.html

The Royal Institute for Deaf and Blind Children (RIDBC), also has a website to mark the bicentenary of Louis Braille's birth. It has produced and collected a range of resources about Braille: facts, info, videos, trivia, games and quizzes, links to Braille events and workshops and some reading lists. The information is geared towards the general public to provide an overview of the history of Braille and an introduction to the Braille code.

To find out more, go to <http://www.ridbcenwickcentre.com/louisbraille/>

Source: ABF/NDS Update October 2009

Staff and Student News

More braille correspondence course graduates:

Congratulations to Lyndell Webster from Rutherglen High School who has recently completed the Braille Correspondence Course. If you are interested in doing the SVRC Braille Correspondence Course please give Zhi a call on (03) 9841 0242.

Archery club

Declan from Southern Region is enjoying his new sport, archery, at the Phoenix Archery Club which operates out of the Cranbourne's Casey Leisure Centre. According to Jeni Blake, his VT, Declan uses his sighting scope very well and loves to do archery. Anyone interested in joining the Phoenix Archery Club on Sunday mornings at the Casey Leisure Centre can call Hans Wright on 5975 9027.

SVRC writing competition update

To date we have had seven students enter the SVRC writing competition. Ingrid, Kylie, Luke, Kira, Mathew, Nick and Ben have been quick off the mark to get their entries in. Winners will be announced at the Access Technology EXPO on Friday 27 November. So if you know of a student who would like to send their story to us please encourage them to do so.

Thanks to the Visiting Teachers who have already encouraged their students to enter.

Ten pin bowling day

Jeni Blake is organising an end of year activity for students at Mentone Ten Pin Bowl on Wednesday 9th December. Suitable for all ages and abilities, everyone welcome.

More details to come in future editions of the Bulletin.

Jeni Blake can be contacted on 0428 134 660.

Blind cricket report by Jeni Blake

An enthusiastic group of students met at Vision Australia Kooyong for the Blind cricket day. They came from all areas of Melbourne. Richard "Richie" from Werribee, Brendan from Thornbury, Daniel from Upwey, Nikita from Chelsea and Declan from Seaford.

Michelle and Regan from Cricket Victoria taught the students the ball handling skills required to hit the stumps and batting skills. Amy and Peter from the Victorian Blind Cricket team taught us the rules and game. Rod from the board, and Alf the President told the students all about the club and cooked a BBQ for the students.

Daniel kept us entertained with his Space camp stories from which he had recently returned. Unfortunately, Brendan had to retire injured but was a most enthusiastic player with great skills. Richie was a star with his fielding and bowling and we named him after Richie Bernaud, the English legend.

So, the afternoon saw a spirited match where VT's Heidi and Jeni had to team up after Daniel who has been playing Blind cricket for a year, bowled Jeni for a duck and Nikita ran her out. So with lots of determination and a competitive spirit we bowled, fielded and batted to have a wonderful afternoon and all went home exhausted.

We were very thankful that the legendary Garry Stinchcombe was busy with support skills program and unable to attend as we had plenty of young talent on the day. The club kindly gave all the students a blind cricket ball to use back in their schools. Many thanks to the Blind Cricket Association for their organization and hope we can do it again. It was a first time experience for all

the participants except Daniel and it is easy to see why it is so popular. The club is keen to get blind cricket for young players going and has scheduled training sessions.

Contact VBCA for more details on 9822 7713 or 0411 705 111.

Website www.vbca.org.au

Finally

Thanks to everyone for their ideas for this Bulletin especially Deb Lewis, Marion Blazé, Jeni Blake, Carolyn Cannata, Margaret Verick, Kym Gribble and the fabulous proof reading of Dianne Skillern and Leanne Terry. A quick reminder that Support Skills starts next year at the SVRC, an updated Expression of Interest form is located at the end of this Bulletin.

Don't forget we appreciate your input, chances are if you have found a solution to a problem or have an event coming up other people would love to hear about it.

So if you have something you would like included in "The Bulletin" please contact, Lyn Robinson lynrobin@svrc.vic.edu.au

To Read the Bulletin Online: <http://www.svrc.vic.edu.au/bulletins2009.html>



**EXPRESSION OF INTEREST
SUPPORT SKILLS PROGRAM
YEAR 2010**

Statewide Vision Resource Centre
PO Box 201
Nunawading 3131
Tel: (+613) 9841 0242
Fax: (+613) 9841 0878
Email: svrc@svrc.vic.edu.au

Referred by: _____ Date: _____

Student's name: _____ DOB: _____

Name of parents / guardians: _____

Telephone: (H) _____ (W) _____

Address: _____

Student's school: _____

Grade / year level 2010: _____

Reading medium: Print / Braille Print Size _____ Uncontracted braille / Contracted braille

Independent reader: Yes / No

Vision impairment: _____

Visual acuities: Right eye: _____ Left eye: _____

Any additional disabilities / medical issues: _____

Visiting teacher: _____ Telephone: _____

Please indicate your priority areas for 2010 – number in order of preference:

Career Options Daily Living Skills Library & Research Skills Music

Orientation & Mobility Sport & Recreation Social & Communication Vision Issues

Braille Braille Technology Braille Music Braille Maths Other

Comments:

Please forward to: Deb Lewis, Manager, Statewide Vision Resource Centre