

# The Bulletin

## Statewide Vision Resource Centre

Number 2

Monday 20<sup>th</sup> February 2012

This issue was edited by Deb Lewis, Statewide Vision Resource Centre.

### Professional Development Activities for Term 1, 2012

<b>New Visiting Teacher – Orientation Day</b> – 9.30am to 3.00pm <b>Please contact us if you are a new VT or knows someone who is! This program will go ahead if there is interest!</b>	Mon 27 Feb
<b>Educational Support for Students with Low Vision</b> – repeated on 5 March This day is designed for class and subject teachers, integration teachers and aides, therapists, parents/care-givers and VTs who support students who have low vision (max participants: 60) – see issue 1 for flier	Tuesday 28 February
<b>Educational Support for Students with Low Vision</b> – repeated from 28 Feb This day is designed for class and subject teachers, integration teachers and aides, therapists, parents/care-givers and VTs who support students who have low vision (max participants: 60) – see issue 1 for flier	Monday 5 March
<b>Proposed: Professional Reading Group</b> – 3.30pm (see below for information)	Wed 7 March
<b>Visiting Teacher Professional Learning Day</b> – Term 1 – see issue 1 for flier	Tue 13 Mar
<b>Dot Power</b> – Day of literacy-based activities for braille readers from pre-school to grade 3	Tues 20 Mar

The program for 2012 is available at: <http://www.svrc.vic.edu.au/Acalendar2012.doc>

### 2012 National Year of Reading

Source: <http://www.love2read.org.au/index.cfm>

Nearly half the population struggles without the literacy skills to meet the most basic demands of everyday life and work. There are 46% of Australians who can't read newspapers; follow a recipe; make sense of timetables, or understand the instructions on a medicine bottle.

Australian libraries and library associations are behind a campaign to turn 2012 into the National Year of Reading, linking together all the great things that are already happening around books, reading and literacy, and giving them an extra boost, with inspirational programs and events taking place across the country.

And the Statewide Vision Resource Centre through its fortnightly newsletter, The Bulletin, will endeavour to bring you news and information about reading each issue.

### Inside This Issue

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## Braille Reading Speed

Teacher of the Vision Impaired in Washington USA, Dr Denise Robinson, has a great blog including lots of ideas and teaching materials related to teaching students with vision impairments. She writes:

So many people ask, “How fast should my child be reading?” Here are the national standards as presented by Jerry Johns, a leading reading specialist in the country.

Jerry Johns: Silent Reading Rates for Students in Grades K-12 who understand the material

Grade	WPM	Grade	WPM
1	<81	7	175-185
2	82-108	8	186-197
3	109-130	9	198-209
4	131-147	10	210-224
5	148-161	11	225-240
6	162-174	12	241-255+

Source: <https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/ccc?key=0AmOnk1wHTSbmdEdPWjBSRTBuaU1HSFhmN0dJQU13UUE>

I use these same standards for my blind and low vision students. If you set high standards then children will meet those standards. I have taken on beginner students and told them how fast they would be reading braille in a couple months, even in middle and high school. At the end of the 2 months, as their fingers would fly across the page reading braille, as I timed them, at the end I would ask, “So did you really think you would be able to read that fast?” They would reply, “Of course, you told me I would be able to.” So tell them, they can, and they will.

Tricks to use:

- Time them every week, so they see their progress
- Have them reread the same material to get flow and fluency
- Have them braille the material first using contractions, then read what they wrote

Lessons, articles and video to help you: <http://www.yourtechvision.com/content/fast-braille-reading>

## Program for Students with Disabilities – 2012 Annual Round Application & Funding Allocation Processes

Source: DEECD Communication S013-2012

Applications for students entering a government school for the first time in 2012, including Preps beginning in 2012, must be received by Wednesday 29 February 2012. After this date, applications for 2012 funding will only be considered for:

- students transferring from other school systems that provided individual support for the student’s additional learning needs (applications for this group of students must be submitted within ten weeks of their enrolment date)
- students with a seriously deteriorating medical or behavioural condition.

The Program for Students with Disabilities Guidelines 2012 detail necessary application processes and requirements, and are available at:

[www.education.vic.gov.au/healthwellbeing/wellbeing/disability/handbook/default.htm](http://www.education.vic.gov.au/healthwellbeing/wellbeing/disability/handbook/default.htm)

## Legacy Junior Public Speaking 2012

Source: DEECD Communication S025-2012 Legacy Junior Public Speaking Award 2012

The Legacy Junior Public Speaking Award aims to improve the oral communication and public speaking skills of secondary students aged 12-14 years. Entrants give a five-minute prepared speech on a topic of the student's choosing on the ideals of voluntary service, social justice, caring, personal effort, personal sacrifice and/or mateship. Entrants also give a two-minute impromptu speech with five minutes preparation time.

For more information about the award, contact Mrs Lisa Bennett, Melbourne Legacy:

Tel: 8626 0500

Email: [lisa.bennett@legacymelb.com.au](mailto:lisa.bennett@legacymelb.com.au)

Legacy website <http://www.legacy.com.au/resources>

## Onkyo Braille Essay Contest 2012

Applications are now open for the 2012 Onkyo Braille Essay Contest, a Project sponsored by the Onkyo Corporation Ltd. and The Braille Mainichi Newspaper in Japan, in collaboration with the World Blind Union-Asia Pacific WBUAP. There are two age group categories (14 to 25 years; 26 years and above) and a cash prize for the best entries.

Topics (750-1000 words):

- Changing What It Means to be Blind with Braille and Mobility Aids.
- How Braille and Audio Devices are Helping Me to Lead a Normal Life.
- The Challenges

Please send your entry in braille to Blind Citizens Australia as the best five entries from each country are accepted into the contest. Applications close on Monday 30 April 2012.

Please contact Robyn Gaile for further information: [robyn.gaile@bca.org.au](mailto:robyn.gaile@bca.org.au)

Robyn Gaile, Executive Officer

Blind Citizens Australia

Level 3, 247-251 Flinders Lane

Melbourne Vic 3000

## SPEVI Competition: Win Accessible Wii Game!

A new Wii game called "The Explorer and the Mystery of the Diamond Scarab" is the first Nintendo Wii game in the world that was especially designed to allow children who are blind, have low vision and are fully sighted to play together on an equal level.

To enter, visit the SPEVI website, go to the page "Competition". Send ideas for an inclusive play activity for your chance to win. This Wii competition ends 15 March 2012.

More information about the game can be found on the Competition page, as well as in the Links List on the SPEVI website <http://www.spevi.net>.

## Identify Colours and Paper Money on iPhone

VisionHunt software for the iPhone and Nokia identifies paper money, colours and light sources. For further information visit: <http://www.visionhunt.com>.

## **Renwick Continuing Professional Education 2012**

The Renwick Centre conducts a wide range of well-regarded activities for those supporting students who are vision impaired, hearing impaired or deafblind. Below is a brief summary of courses which will be offered from the Renwick Centre 361-365 North Rocks Road, North Rocks, NSW.

### ***Paediatric Vision Forum***

**When:** Friday 18<sup>th</sup> March 2012

**Course description:** Information exchange regarding childhood eye and vision care

**Intended audience:** Orthoptists, orthoptic students, nurses and educators supporting children

**Fee:** \$150

### ***Low Vision Forum***

**When:** Friday 1<sup>st</sup> June 2012

**Course description:** Information exchange regarding paediatric eye care and education

**Intended audience:** Orthoptists, orthoptic students, nurses and educators supporting and working with children who are blind or have vision impairment and staff who produce dual media resources

**Fee:** \$150

### ***Vision Surveillance for the Nursing Profession***

**When:** Friday 3<sup>rd</sup> August 2012

**Course description:** This day will present a focus on early identification of eye and vision problems in children aged 0-5 years, through the practice of vision surveillance and vision screening. Current surveillance and screening protocols will be discussed in the broad context of identification of eye and vision conditions.

**Intended audience:** Presenters will include paediatric orthoptists and allied health professionals experienced in early childhood, early intervention, community health and clinical care.

**Fee:** \$50

### ***FlashSonar & the Elements of Perceptual Mobility***

**When:** Thursday 1<sup>st</sup> (half day) OR Friday 2<sup>nd</sup> March (full day) 2012

**Presenter:** Dan Kish

**Course Description:** This is an immersive, fun, hands on, experiential workshop, involving observation and application of a range of perceptual strategies of self-direction in different environments throughout the community

**Fee:** \$100 Thursday 1<sup>st</sup> March 12-4pm or \$150 Friday 2<sup>nd</sup> March 9am-4pm

### ***Improving the Outcomes of VI Students in Mainstream Schools***

**When:** 22nd February or 7th August 2012, 9.00am to 4.00pm

**Course description:** Gain a deeper understanding of the characteristics, expectations, and needs of students with vision impairments

**Presenters:** Staff from RIDBC Children's Services and RIDBC Renwick Centre

**Fee:** \$150 (\$40 with RIDBC school support)

Register online at [http://www.ridbc.org.au/renwick/courses/cpe\\_list.php](http://www.ridbc.org.au/renwick/courses/cpe_list.php)

### ***For Further Information***

For further information about the courses being offered and to enrol, visit:

[http://www.ridbc.org.au/renwick/courses/cpe\\_list.php](http://www.ridbc.org.au/renwick/courses/cpe_list.php)

**Email:** [trudy.smith@ridbc.org.au](mailto:trudy.smith@ridbc.org.au)

**Phone:** (02) 9872 0302

## Braille Comes Unbound From the Book: How Technology Can Stop a Literary Crisis

Adapted from Saabira Chaudhuri guardian.co.uk 14 February 2012

Until recently, technology, especially that which converts text to audio, has been hastening the demise of braille, which educators say is a bad thing. Students who can read braille tend on average to acquire higher literacy rates and fare better professionally later on. But Apple's push into the field – coupled with increasingly affordable braille displays – has the potential to bring braille back in a big way.

The iPhone has a built-in screen reader called VoiceOver that works with all native applications. It tells Fleet what her finger is touching, allowing her to download the restaurant menu and read it, access her email, and do anything else she needs to with the phone, either by converting text into braille on the separate display or by reading out loud to her.

Anne Taylor, director of access technology for the National Federation of the Blind, says. "Apple has set the bar very high," she said. "No other mobile OS provider, such as Google or Microsoft, has made braille available on their mobile platform."

Apple's iPad, iPhone 4, iPhone 3GS, and third generation iPod Touch already support more than 30 Bluetooth wireless braille displays. "Ebooks can be a game changer if they're properly designed because it would allow us to get access to the same books at the same time at the same price as everyone else," said Christopher Danielsen, spokesman for the NFB. "Publishers and manufacturers have to ensure they are designed to be accessible to work with braille displays. That's what Apple has done. Apple is not perfect but they're way, way ahead of everybody else in this area."

Apple's accessibility efforts come at a pivotal time. For decades now, the number of braille users has been on the decline. Data from the American Printing House for the Blind's annual registry of legally blind students shows that in 1963, 51% of legally blind children in public and residential schools used braille as their primary reading medium. In 2007 this number fell to just 10%, while in 2011 it stood at under 9%.

While there are many reasons for the decline of braille, technology that converts text to speech has been identified as a major factor. In a nationwide sample of 1,663 teachers of visually impaired and blind students conducted in the early 1990's, 40% chose reliance on technology as a reason behind braille's decline.

"When we experienced the tech boom in the nineties, I was led to believe speech was the way forward, that braille was becoming obsolete," said William O'Donnell, a Manhattan-based student who has been blind since birth.

But learning or reading using braille – rather than audio – has distinct advantages, say educators.

"There's this tremendous importance to seeing the way print looks on a page, what punctuation does and looks like in a sentence," said Catherine Mendez, who works as a kindergarten teacher at Public School 69 in the Bronx. "Braille in the context of early literacy is huge. If we can get these devices into the hands of kids early we can bolster their understanding in a way speech can't do."

There are professional benefits to learning braille too. A survey conducted by Louisiana Tech University's Professional Development and Research Institute on Blindness found that people with sight disabilities who learn to read through braille have a much higher chance of finding a job, even more than those who read large print.

And once you get that job braille might help you keep it. "In business meetings it's more unobtrusive to use braille. If I want to multitask, headphones are rude, but braille is acceptable," said one braille reader. She uses braille when writing formal letters or papers, or preparing notes for a public speech or presentation. Other comments from braille-readers:

- "Literacy is the foundation for having a job and living an independent life. For reading every day, you cannot just rely on speech."
- "Braille has come unbound from the book".
- "Braille is portable, searchable, downloadable and you can convert print to braille yourself!"

## South Pacific Educators in Vision Impairment Biennial Conference 2013: Call for Presentations

**When:** 13-18 January 2013

**Where:** Rendezvous Hotel, Auckland

**Deadline for abstract submission:** Tuesday 1 May 2012

**Author feedback by:** Friday 15 June 2012

**Abstracts can be submitted using the following options:**

Email to [kate@aomevents.com](mailto:kate@aomevents.com) using the electronic submission form.

Post to 41 Anderson Street, Thebarton, SA, 5065

**For further information:** [Kate@aomevents.com](mailto:Kate@aomevents.com), All Occasions Group

## VIBE Ski Club: Super Skier Sponsorship Program 2012

The VIBE Ski Club aims to provide the opportunity for blind and vision impaired people to enjoy the Victorian alpine area and to provide community support through club members.



Members and their families are encouraged to connect together through events run through the year. Events range from alpine activities such as ski trips and family fun days to social activities such as BBQ's and trivia nights. Activities run by the club are open to members and non-members with a focus on attracting additional Vision Impaired people to try activities within the alpine environment.

The VIBE Ski Club has started a new sponsorship program, with the aim of providing financial support to assist the successful application to learn how to ski or improve their skiing abilities.

This exciting new program commenced in 2011, and this year there will be one scholarship for a VIBE Ski Club member and one for a non-member. The successful applicants will receive a VIBE Ski Club Super Skier Package which includes:

- Resort Entry to Mt Baw Baw Alpine Resort
- 1 personal lesson with a fully qualified ski instructor
- 1 day Ski hire
- 1 day lift ticket

Applications close 30<sup>th</sup> April 2012, successful applicants will be notified in June 2012. For more information and an application form, please contact Anita Deed: [anitadeed@bigpond.com](mailto:anitadeed@bigpond.com)

## Toys for Kids with Vision Impairments: Playability Toys

Source: Parent News, February 2012

Playability toys are designed especially for children with disabilities including those who are blind or vision impaired. Rib-It-Ball (\$24.95) is a ribbed ball that is easy to grab by even the smallest of hands. The handle-like ribs aid in the development of balance and motor skills. The ball is also ultra-light weight, making it fun and easy to throw even for children with limited muscle strength. The handle-like ribs prevent it from rolling out of reach so that children experience more hands-on "play time" instead of frustrating "chase time". Rib-it-Ball comes with a unique material within its ribs that naturally makes noise and enhances auditory awareness every time the ball is touched.

For more info visit <http://www.playabilitytoys.com>

## New Remote Hearing and Vision Services for Children Initiative

Source: [http://www.jennymacklin.fahcsia.gov.au/mediareleases/2012/Pages/disability\\_support\\_010212.aspx](http://www.jennymacklin.fahcsia.gov.au/mediareleases/2012/Pages/disability_support_010212.aspx)

On 1 February, Minister Macklin announced that children with a hearing or vision impairment living in regional and remote Australia will have increased access to specialist services and therapies through the National Broadband Network (NBN). The Government will invest \$4.9 million over three years to deliver the online video-based initiative which will improve access to qualified allied health and education services for families and children with disability in regional and remote communities, where such expertise may otherwise be scarce. The initiative will deliver services to about 125 additional children via real time support and advice, building on the 100 children already supported by the Government.

“A child will be able to meet with a speech pathologist in Brisbane and have a therapy session online through this new video conferencing service”, Ms Macklin said.

Senator McLucas said the funding would deliver early intervention for children with disabilities, giving them the best chance of reaching their full potential.

“We know it’s critical that we support children with hearing or vision impairment as early as possible, because without it, they are more likely to fall behind at school and miss key development milestones,” Senator McLucas said.

This funding is in addition to the almost \$580,000 the Government currently provides to the Royal Institute for Deaf and Blind Children for the Teleschool initiative each year. Ms Macklin and Senator McLucas announced there will be a competitive tender process to deliver these new services shortly.

## Swimming Program

Blind Sports Victoria are offering a four week swimming program for people who are blind or have low vision. The program will develop your confidence in the water and increase your swimming technique in a friendly and welcoming environment. It is open to all ages, and is only \$3 per session.

**When:** Every Thursday for 4 weeks commencing 1 March 2012 from 2-3pm

**Where:** Recreation & Trainside Health Club, 110 Railway Walk North, Hampton (adjacent to Hampton Railway Station)

For more information, or to register, contact John Groom:

T 9557 1716 or email [jrgroom@westnet.com.au](mailto:jrgroom@westnet.com.au)

## Braille Music Course

Hadley School has recently announced the launch of “Braille Music Basics”. For those who are sighted and want to learn about transcribing print music into braille or teaching braille music, this course offers an introduction to the basics of braille music. The course is offered over 10 weeks. Hadley School courses are generally offered free of charge for participants.

For more information visit: <http://www.hadley.edu/ShowCourseDetail.asp?courseid=MUS-206>

## Labelling

A great site which focuses on labelling in the home and workplace can be found here:

[http://www.visionaware.org/labeling\\_marking](http://www.visionaware.org/labeling_marking)

## Staff News

- Loddon Mallee Region Visiting Teachers, **Ali Torney** and **Francine O'Brien** were successful in retaining their positions – hooray! Ali is now ongoing and Francine is contracted until the end of 2012.
- **Ali Torney** was successful in obtaining a scholarship through DEECD to study her Masters of Special Education and will study at Latrobe University Bendigo.
- AND we would also like to congratulate **Ali Torney** and her husband Adam who are expecting their first child in June.
- Loddon Mallee Region Visiting Teacher, **Bernadette Warburton**, will be on leave for six months. During this time, **Logie Edwards** will be supporting the students with vision impairments in the Mildura area. Bernadette, have a great break and Logie, we look forward to being in touch!
- Gippsland Visiting Teacher, **Sharon Saunders**, will be job sharing with **Karina Adam** in 2012 whilst she continues to study vision impairment through RIDBC and work on an autism project in the West Gippsland Region. Karina is a qualified and highly experienced special education teacher who is keen to work with students with vision impairments. So we hope to keep in touch with Sharon and we welcome Karina aboard!
- Two new Visiting Teachers began in Northern Metropolitan Region this year, **Christine Sinopoli** and **Janine McKinlay**. Welcome to the world of vision!

## Support Skills News

We have had two Support Skills sessions already this year – and this year, we are doing things back-to-front! We have started with our older group – Group D (students from Year 7 to 10) – and we are working our way from oldest to youngest (Groups D, C, B and A). The reason for this is that the older students have exams and finish up their school year earlier than the younger students – so their Support Skills program will mirror what is happening in their schools.

In addition to this and due to high demand for the program, we have introduced a fifth group of low vision students which we are calling Group 1 (they come in once a term).

Year 12 student James is on placement here at the SVRC this year for his VCAL work experience. James is handy on the computer and a terrific piano player and he has been in high demand for technology and music sessions. Other visitors have included former student, Sam, who is looking into a career as an O&M instructor.

So as you can see, it is all happening at the SVRC!!!

## Finally

And finally thanks to everyone for their contributions to this Bulletin, especially Max Bini, Phia Damsma, Francine O'Brien, Lea Nagel, Lyn Robinson and Garry Stinchcombe.

If you have something you would like included in "The Bulletin" please email Lyn Robinson [lynrobin@svrc.vic.edu.au](mailto:lynrobin@svrc.vic.edu.au)

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