

The Bulletin

Statewide Vision Resource Centre

Number 18

Monday 2nd December 2013

406 days till the next SPEVI Conference in Melbourne
Monday 12th to Thursday 15th January 2015

Professional Development Activities for 2014

The program for 2014 is available from this link: <http://www.svrc.vic.edu.au/PL.shtml>

Tribute to Associate Professor Hector Maclean

Associate Professor Hector Maclean, who sadly died in August, was the Paediatric Ophthalmologist for the Educational Vision Assessment Clinic from the early 1970s until his retirement in 2010.

It was Hector's family's wish that in lieu of flowers a donation could be made to the Statewide Vision Resource Centre, via the Seymour Goulburn Lions Club, to provide a musical instrument to support the children attending the Support Skills Program. This request acknowledged Hector's two great loves: children and music.

As a result of his kindness, and the generosity of the Seymour Goulburn Lions Club who also contributed to this fund, the Statewide Vision Resource Centre now has a beautiful new Yamaha upright piano.



Visitors to the Christmas morning tea enjoyed piano accompaniment provided by former student James, a talented musician and composer, seen above in the photo.

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Report from SVRC MasterClass with Ike Presley

From Marion Blazé

Specialist teachers of the vision impaired spent two days attuning to the most rapid Southern American drawl, on November 27 and 28. Ike Presley began by telling us his life story as a person born with cataracts, growing up with very little support or technology and gradually moving into becoming one of the world's leading lights on adaptive technology for people with vision impairments, working for the American Foundation for the Blind. What a great way to help wind up two years of National Partnership funding for technology for our kids!

Ike very sensibly started by emphasising the need to first get the simple things right for students with vision impairments: lighting, optical correction, proximity (devices to get things up close and comfortable), even torches and head-lamps. He also reminded us of the legitimacy of teaching students with vision impairments how to train a 'human reader', because this is often the most sensible option and needs to be 'managed' by the student. He then took us through a structure of the types of technology and what they are useful for: accessing printed information, accessing electronic information, communicating through writing, producing materials in alternative formats and accessing the environment.

Often it was the background story which inspired us. For example, why not use an electronic magnifier as a 'mirror' for doing makeup? Or 'consider the set-up time for technology' – students can set an alarm for five minutes before a lesson finishes so they can pack up before they move on. Ike's own favourite way to read, is by enlarging electronically but at the same time having text read to him so he doesn't need to go back and re-read anything.

Ike also alerted us to networks and resources such as 'Access World', an online technology magazine, and FamilyConnect and CareerConnect all on the AFB website.

On the second day, Ike showed how to conduct an Assistive Technology Assessment and started with the need to gather the background information:
ophthalmological,
clinical low vision,
functional low vision,
vocational, learning
media, psychological and
academic assessments all



forming part of the background before assessing possible technology needs. It was wonderful to hear that we are exactly on the right track in looking at reading speeds and visual fatigue as important pointers as to the student's overall efficiency with their technology. I liked Ike's example Assistive Technology Assessment Report which pointed out the need for the student to become competent with the technology before it is used in the classroom, so that it can be used efficiently and assist instead of impair the student's access to classroom learning.

Boy, Ike can talk! He hardly took a breath! Thank you to Deb for transporting Ike daily to and from his city Hotel – and he kept talking! And a special 'thank you' goes to Annette and Lyn who took Ike to Healesville Sanctuary on the Saturday after our MasterClass – and yes, he was still talking!!

Report: Dot Power Day – The Orchestra

From Lea Nagel

The theme for our last Dot Power Day of 2013, held on 19th November, was The Orchestra. Our main aims for the day were for children to learn some basic braille music notation and to develop their ideas of the orchestral instruments – sound, shape, size, texture and how they are played.



Our usual morning introductions began with the flute playing the invitation song instead of the guitar. One student said that this was a violin, which illustrated the gap in knowledge about musical instruments that can be experienced by people who are blind. Each of the children handled a flute and a violin and was shown how they are played.

The children were presented with the braille notation for some simple rhythms using note C, E and G, in quavers and crotchets as well as a crotchet rest. They called these “ta”, “ti-ti” and “sh”. Using angel chimes, which are individual notes from a xylophone, the children played these rhythms. They all concentrated really hard on this task and were able to play a piece of music by the end of the session, the Cheeky Monkey song.

After an enjoyable and social morning tea break, the children were offered a hands-on experience with orchestral instruments. Visiting talented musicians and teachers, Sam and Barry patiently allowed each child to handle a trombone, trumpet, French horn, clarinet, saxophone, piccolo, oboe and tuba. While the children were exploring the instruments, Sam and Barry described and played them. Children found tactual diagrams of each instrument in their braille books and compared the diagrams with the real objects. They commented about size, volume and pitch, discovering that larger instruments played a lower pitch. They also discovered different ways of blowing into instruments, and different tone qualities that are made. The idea of a composer was discussed and Barry played his own interesting composition on the saxophone.

Professional musicians, Miranda, Naima and Phoebe brought some different instruments for the afternoon session. The children touched and listened to a double bass played by Miranda who has played with the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra. Phoebe, who teaches viola, and has played with orchestras around the world, played theme music from Harry Potter, and Naima demonstrated her flute skills and talked about musical improvisation. These musicians played instruments for our Bingo game. All of the children correctly identified each instrument and were able to find the word on their braille Bingo card. The children then had great fun teaching the musicians how to read the braille music piece that they had learned in the morning, and all played the Cheeky Monkey song together.

Children met adults who had a range of careers in music – a clarinet teacher, classroom teacher, composer and musicians who have played with the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra. They know that braille music is available and that they are able to learn it if they choose to. Braille music can be requested through i-access and the Statewide Vision Resource Centre. When the children’s classmates are introduced to print music notation, they can send the music in to us to be transcribed. We have planted the seeds for a musical future in these children!

See also: <http://svrc.vic.edu.au/EPdotpowernov2013.shtml>

Wow!!! “Top Tech Tips” Competition Results 2013

From Marion Blazé

Twenty three students submitted entries for this year’s competition in either video or audio format, some submitting several entries. Tips ranged from ‘How to use a guide line on an electronic magnification unit’ to ‘Using a calculator on a computer’ and ‘How to write a story on your BrailleNote’. All entrants received a certificate with special prize winners receiving fabulous audio books from Bolinda Audio or One-Direction(!) USB flashdrives donated by OfficeWorks.

Entrants in the [Lower Primary](#) category were:

- Zac, Jessica, Bodhi, Anna, Shana – all receiving Honourable mentions
- Third prize – Ben
- Equal Third prize – Boedi
- Second prize – Zeynep
- First prize – Samantha



Entrants in the [Upper Primary](#) category were:

- Claudia, Corey, Sarah – all receiving Honourable mentions
- Third prize – Danijela
- Equal Third prize – Zac
- Second prize – Patrick
- Equal second prize – Caleb
- First prize – Sam



Entrants in the [Lower Secondary](#) category were:

- James & Riley – receiving Honourable mentions
- Second prize – Daniel
- First prize – Ethan

Entrants in the [Upper Secondary](#) category were:

- Second prize – Tess
- First OVERALL prize – Jack

Would-you-believe, Jack from Gippsland, our overall prize winner, sent in twelve separate videos of “top tech tips” for using the iPad! We hope to put some or all of these wonderful presentations and ideas on our website - so watch that space!!

A special thank you goes to Bolinda Audio and OfficeWorks Nunawading for their support in donating prizes.

We’d also like to thank all the students for their efforts – and all the VTs who helped! Some of the entries will be uploaded to the SVRC website – we’ll let you know when!



SVRC Expo Vision Impairments, Monday November 25, 2013 – Report

From Marion Blazé

A ‘select’ group of participants made the most of this terrific chance to see the range of technology options from Australian Independence, Bolinda, European Eyewear, Humanware, Pacific Vision, Precision Industries, Quantum RLV and Vision Australia.

We also had representatives from Blind Sports, Guide Dogs Victoria, ‘Speccles’ glasses bands, iEnable Technology Solutions (with a braille tutor on an iPad!) and more. With so many competing events at this time of the year, numbers at the SVRC Expo were down, but a number of enthusiastic teams comprising student, parent/s and VT took a careful look at the technology and ideas. If you missed the Expo, feel free to drop in and pick up a ‘show bag’ including which includes catalogues and brochures from Jaycar, Windmill, AUSOM (the Apple Users Society of Melbourne) and more.

Thank you to Bunnings Nunawading who donated ‘stuff it’ bags so that participants could gather brochures to take home. The day was punctuated by presentations of some of the prizes for our ‘Top Tech Tip’ competition and thanks go to Bolinda Audio and OfficeWorks Nunawading for donating prizes for the award winners (see separate report on this competition).

Equipment Grants for Students with Visual Impairments

Source: <https://edugate.eduweb.vic.gov.au/newsevents/schoolbull/Pages/S485-2014.aspx>

Equipment Grants are available to help Victorian government schools purchase major items of essential, specialised equipment for students with vision impairments who do not meet the eligibility requirements for the Program for Students with Disabilities.

Guidelines and the application form are available at the above link. Applications for 2014 are due by 28 February 2014.

Audiobooks from Bolinda at a 15% Discount

Another big thankyou to Markus Taylor from Bolinda for a wonderful array of audio books for prizes in the 2013 “Top Tech Tip” Competition!!! Markus has also kindly arranged that from now till the end of the year, students who are eligible for support from the Statewide Vision Resource Centre and their families and Visiting Teachers can have a 15% discount on audio books from Bolinda!

Bolinda have a great range of books for children, teens and adults including those by:

- Allison Lester
- Andy Griffiths
- Enid Blyton
- Ethyl Turner
- Linley Dodd
- Markus Zusak
- Morris Gleitzman etc

For access to the Bolinda catalogue, visit: <http://www.bolinda.com/aus/>

Please contact Markus Taylor for further information about this pre-Christmas offer or to place an order: (03) 9338 0666.

New Electronic Magnifier on the Market: Eye-full

Australian Independence Products have a great new portable electronic magnification unit available. The Eye-full connects to a PC or television to provide colour or black/white images to the screen. It is possible to freeze and un-freeze the current image. The unit uses the computer's software to capture images or record video. When folded, the Eye-full is 270 x 27 x 80mm

Cost: \$270 + \$100 (USB computer screen adaptor) + \$50 (laptop power cable)

Contact: Australian Independence Products: (03) 9946 5459

LED Globes

Also available from Australian Independence Products are a range of LED light globes with bayonet and screw bases in 5- 10- and 18-watt versions. They provide instant light (no warm-up) and are available in warm white and cool white.

For prices, contact: Australian Independence Products: (03) 9946 5459

ExSight Sports: Offering VI Sports Experiences

ExSight Sports aims to introduce students to vision impaired sports so that they gain an understanding and appreciation of disability and disability sports in an active and challenging environment. ExSight Sports delivers experiential vision impaired challenges to schools, community groups and corporate teams.

Rob from ExSight can offer a range of adaptive sports activities which will build students' understanding of diversity and disability in an active environment! All equipment is supplied.

Contact Rob: 0438 663433 or visit www.exsightsports.com.au

DEECD Professional Learning – Inclusion Online Courses

Source: DEECD Communication S480_2013

The Department is implementing an online learning initiative to build the capacity of our education workforce to support students with disabilities and learning difficulties. Inclusion Online offers a suite of courses to enable staff in Victorian government schools to undertake online professional learning focusing on the understanding, assessment and classroom support of students with disabilities and learning difficulties. Each of the courses focuses on a specific disability, and is held over one school term (ten weeks), requiring approximately two hours of online participation per week. This learning can take place at any time convenient to the participating staff member. Completion of an Inclusion Online course will contribute to 20 hours of professional learning, which may be credited to the participant's professional learning record. Course participants are supported by an online tutor and study alongside a cohort of up to 11 colleagues.

The following Inclusion Online courses are available in Term 1 2014:

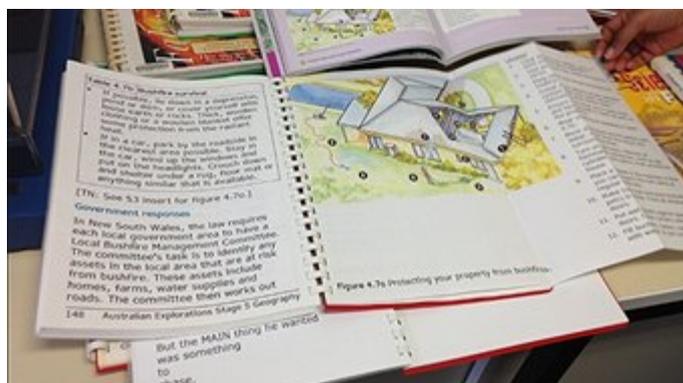
- Understanding Autism Spectrum Disorders
- Inclusion of Students with Speech, Language and Communication Needs
- Understanding Dyslexia and Significant Difficulties in Reading
- Understanding Hearing Loss

Staff wishing to participate in one of the Inclusion Online courses in Term 1 2014 should contact their region's Lead Tutor, or register via PD Online at <http://www.pd-online.com.au> by 7.00pm Friday 6 December 2013.

Technology for Children with Vision Impairments

Article by Dr Scott Hollier, Ramp Up, 4 Nov 2013

How the technology needs of children who are blind or vision impaired are being met is changing fast, but not fast enough, writes researcher Dr Scott Hollier.



Large print textbooks for children who are blind or vision-impaired are often huge and heavy.

Credit: Media Access Australia

I was 14 when my teachers suggested I could do with some extra support to help with my vision impairment. I was provided with the most cutting edge technology 1990 could offer: a portable electronic keyboard, a glass magnifier ball and oversized text books in large print.

I needed a huge hiking pack to carry it all. It's fair to say the other kids could always spot me pretty easily.

Even in the few short years from age 14 to 17, the technology changed a lot. By Year 12 the typewriter was replaced with a monochrome laptop which was much quieter (although not much lighter) and it was the first time I really appreciated how holding data on a computer instead of giant printed books could make such a difference.

Fast forward 21 years and the difference is astounding. Between then and now we've seen the rapid growth of assistive technology products such as screen readers and screen magnifiers. In recent years, these tools have started to be included in popular devices and operating systems for free. Now everyone can carry around assistive technology, even if they don't know it's there.

However, a big gap still remains between what is possible and the reality of what's currently being done in Australian classrooms, and a lot of that relates to the rapid development of mainstream technologies. This is what my colleagues and I at Media Access Australia have discovered in the past year, working on a comprehensive review of how technology is being used in the education of the estimated 4,000 blind and vision impaired school students.

Read more of Dr Hollier's article at:

<http://www.abc.net.au/rampup/articles/2013/11/01/3882074.htm>

Download the entire Vision Education Scoping Report from

<http://www.mediaaccess.org.au/education/access-in-the-classroom/access-for-blind-and-vision-impaired-students>

UEB Rulebook Now Available

Source: Tammy Axelsen, Round Table

After much anticipation, the Australian Braille Authority are pleased to announce that the Rules of Unified English Braille Second Edition (2013) is now complete and available for download in print (PDF) and braille (six volumes of BRF formatted at 25 lines x 30 cells).

This second edition contains very few changes/errata but it does provide a large number of new rules and resources. Details and download links are available from the ABA website at <http://brailleaustralia.org/unified-english-braille/the-rules-of-unified-english-braille-2010/>

Josh Cooks up ... a House!

Josh from regional Victoria has designed and made a Christmas gingerbread house. He tells us, that he had to cook and assemble the gingerbread, plan and purchase the decorations and then decorate! The result is a marshmallow and jelly-baby extravaganza – and he's clearly very proud of his work!!!



Space Camp 2014

Several students who attend government schools have expressed interest in attending Space Camp in Huntsville, Alabama next year. 2014 will be the 25th Anniversary of SCIVIS – Space Camp for Interested Visually Impaired Students – so it will be an exciting year to be there! At this stage, the following students have indicated their interest in attending:

- Declan H
- Geordie B
- Steve O
- Thomas C



Camp dates for next year are 20 to 25 September 2014 with students flying out of Huntsville on 26th September.

A suitable-sized group, depending on student needs would be 4 to 6 students with 2 chaperones – so at some point, we'll also be looking for a couple of excited DEECD Visiting Teachers who can plan and manage the arrangements and fundraising for the group. And if there are other students who would be interested in attending, please be in touch!

Finally

Editors Deb Lewis and Lyn Robinson with to thank everyone for their contributions to this issue of The Bulletin, and in particular Marion Blazé, Helen Caldwell, Heidi Littleford, Lea Nagel and Mike Steer.

If you have something you would like included in “The Bulletin” please email Lyn Robinson lynrobin@svrc.vic.edu.au

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