

# The Bulletin

## Statewide Vision Resource Centre

Number 14

Friday 29<sup>th</sup> August 2014

**SPEVI Conference – Melbourne**  
**Monday 12<sup>th</sup> to Thursday 15<sup>th</sup> January 2015**  
**More news about this exciting event on page 2**

### Professional Development Activities for Term 3-4, 2014

Fliers for the SVRC Professional Learning programs can be downloaded from the SVRC website:

[www.svrc.vic.edu.au/PL.shtml](http://www.svrc.vic.edu.au/PL.shtml)

**Please note:** the SVRC encourages attendance in person or via video link – please be in touch if you'd like to “virtually” attend any of these sessions.

Event	Date
<b>Dot Power</b> – for braille readers from pre-school to grade 3 <b>THEME</b> – All about me and my friends and graphing!!	Tuesday 9 September
<b>Space Camp</b> – Huntsville, Alabama	20-25 September
<b>No SPEVI Day this year</b> Please come to the SPEVI Conference instead!	-
<b>Vision Australia TEXPO - Kooyong</b>	October 10 & 11
<b>Dot Power</b> – for braille readers from pre-school to grade 3	Tuesday 18 November
<b>Educational Expo for Students with Vision Impairments</b>	Monday 24 November
<b>Xmas Morning Tea – all invited – please RSVP</b>	Wed 3 December

### SPEVI Conference – Update 3 – only 138 sleeps away!!

SPEVI bear has started checking out the support services for students with vision impairments in Victoria. Here he is with Kate at the Statewide Vision Resource Centre's 'Support Skills Program'. 70 students attend SVRC on Fridays, for a timetabled day of technology, art, music, orientation and mobility, carrier advice, and anything else which supports their development of skills within the expanded core curriculum. Kate says her favourite thing at Support Skills is playing the flute.



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## Invitation to Attend SPEVI Conference

Dear SPEVI members and colleagues,

Melbourne is abuzz with preparations for the SPEVI Biennial Conference that will be hosted in Melbourne from 12-15<sup>th</sup> January 2015 at the Melbourne Conference and Training Centre. Talk on the street is dominated by rumours about the exploits of SPEVI Bear, the conference mascot, and whether or not he is winning the hearts and minds of Victoria's educators.

The Conference Organising Committee, chaired by Rachel Morgan, is working closely with All Occasions Management (OAM) to ensure that the conference program and social functions offer delegates a wide range of opportunities for professional learning, networking and knowledge sharing. The conference registration brochure will be available on the SPEVI website early next week – Please visit <http://www.spevi.net/spevi/spevi-conference-2015.php>. The brochure includes information about the conference venue, program overview, registration form and fee information, and accommodation options in Melbourne. Please consider booking your accommodation early as the Australian Open Tennis Championships will commence in Melbourne on Monday 19<sup>th</sup> January (the week after the SPEVI conference).

In response to the conference theme of “Together towards tomorrow: Families and professionals – a vision for success”, we have attracted well over 100 abstracts for oral presentations and workshops. The Conference Organising Committee has established a Scientific Committee, chaired by Paul Pagliano, to review conference papers submitted for peer review.

The conference keynote speakers are Dr Karen Wolffe, Dr Lauren Ayton, Shiralee Poed and Susan LaVenture. Karen, Lauren and Shiralee will address current national and international research in the areas of expanded core curriculum, ocular motor function and the bionic eye, and curriculum adjustments for learners with vision impairment. Susan LaVenture is an internationally renowned advocate for parents of children with impairment and will address her work in developing education and advocacy programs for families.

The conference will be held in conjunction with the SPEVI-ICEVI Pacific EFA-VI Forum that will be hosted on Friday 9<sup>th</sup> and Saturday 10<sup>th</sup> January at the Heritage Room, University College, Melbourne University. The Forum is designed for Pacific Island, Australian and New Zealanders professionals and parents who provide support for children and youth with vision impairment across the Region.

On behalf of the SPEVI Committee of Management and Conference Program Committee, I warmly invite you to join us at the SPEVI Biennial Conference in January 2015.

Cheers, Frances

### **Dr Frances Gentle**

Lecturer, RIDBC Renwick Centre & The University of Newcastle NSW;  
President, South Pacific Educators in Vision Impairment (SPEVI); and  
2nd Vice President, International Council for Education of People with Visual Impairment (ICEVI)  
Royal Institute for Deaf and Blind Children (RIDBC)  
E-mail: [frances.gentle@ridbc.org.au](mailto:frances.gentle@ridbc.org.au)

More information is available at:  
<http://www.spevi.net/spevi/spevi-conference-2015.php>

## SPEVI Now on Facebook and Twitter



Don't forget to 'Like' us on Facebook and check out where SPEVI Bear gets to next!  
SPEVI Conference 2015

AND follow SPEVI on Twitter #SPEVI2015

## Sponsorship for SPEVI

**Thank you to the Insight School** for becoming another major sponsor of the Conference.

**Thank you also to Vision Australia** who have become Gold sponsors of the conference.

The more sponsors we have the more we can offer in the conference and the lower the cost for families. We are still diligently chasing sponsorship, so do let the committee know whose arm/s we can twist!

## SPEVI Early Bird Registration

Don't forget savings can be made by registering early for the conference. Early bird registration will be due by November 10. Register online at:

<https://webservice.aomevents.com/ei/getdemo.ei?id=283&s=7AC0NVPGS>

## Texpo 2014... Save the date

Source: Email from Lousie

Preparations are currently underway for the 2014 Texpo event. Save the date for 10 and 11 October in Kooyong, as well as 17 and 18 October for Enfield.

### ***Venue details and opening hours***

**Melbourne** (Vision Australia, 454 Glenferrie Road, Kooyong)

- Friday 10 October, 10am – 4pm
- Saturday 11 October, 10am – 3pm

**Sydney** (Vision Australia, 4 Mitchell St, Enfield)

- Friday 17 October, 10am – 4pm
- Saturday 18 October, 10am – 3pm

The objective of Texpo is to bring people together to promote our services and exhibit adaptive technologies.

This year, the Vision Australia stand will showcase our products and services by focusing on the four key pillars identified in the strategic plan – daily living, employment, education and emotional and social support.

SVRC will also have a stand at Texpo

## Adapting Work for a Vision Impaired/Blind Student

Many thanks to Gayle Skinner for her reflections on making adaptations to work sheets for our blind early learners.

1. Being creative and flexible are key traits to draw upon when assisting a blind student. The questions should be “What is the learning intention for this task? How can my student access this task? How can I adapt this game/sheet/task – or create an appropriate version to engage my student?”
2. Discuss the learning intention or expected outcome of the activity with the teacher. This is the key prerequisite to thinking about the best way for the student to have success with meeting the learning intention.
3. Using concrete materials as much as possible for as long as possible. The student will determine when they are ready to move to the abstract. Your VI/Blind student does not have the visual memory of his/her peers, so concrete materials help to build missing knowledge.
4. In Prep and Year One many worksheets are picture based, so puff paint or a drawing board can provide some tactile elements to the task – simplify the pictures and guide the student to feel tactile pictures. Use language of direction – left, right, top of document, bottom of document, portrait and landscape – these are terms that the student will need to be familiar with so start incorporating these from day one.
5. Beyond Prep and Year 1, many worksheets for sighted students are set up to be visually attractive and visually interesting. A blind student does not need this visual stimulation. A low vision student may need a simpler version of what is an over stimulated presentation. You need to assess the printed sheet and decide whether pictures are for visual “prettiness” and what, on the page, is a necessity for understanding. Then re-format the information so the student can easily access the content. This may mean creating a new document that is more suitable for the student.
6. Knowledge of the child and how they learn best is important, but equally presenting information in different ways broadens the students’ knowledge and understanding of tactile representations e.g. – three ways to develop an understanding of “half” (all three were used over several days with the student)
  - Suggestion 1. Use wikisticks curves or line shapes on the left of the page and the student creates the other half also using wikisticks.
  - Suggestion 2. Roll out play dough and use cutters to make shapes. The student then experiments with how to cut the shape into halves or quarters
  - Suggestion 3. Students painted on half the page, then folded the paper for a print of the other half. The VI student cut a paper shape in half then glued each piece on to the left and right sides of their paper.

Think about the skills that need to be learned to support the student’s access for this work and for future work e.g

- Learning to set up own equipment ready for work
- Reading a table, email or Power-point in Microsoft Word using JAWS
- learning to cut and paste on the Braille-note – the index of the BNT Guide can give other ideas here,
- JAWS reference sheet can also be of assistance in thinking about the next skills that the child needs or could be taught ahead of time.
- Colouring in requires appropriate pencil grip and finger strength to press down and control a pencil or pen,
- Editing commands on the BNT for editing and refining stories,
- Touch typing skills for access to laptop/computer.

7. Consider the most appropriate media for the student – should the task be done in concrete materials and a photo taken to record (no adapted sheet), should the material be saved as text only and transferred to a BNT as e-text, should the task be adapted for a paper braille version?
8. Under the guidance of the classroom teacher and the Visiting Teacher you are presenting materials in an appropriate format and building the skills to access the task. The teacher should be engaging with the student about expectations and knowledge. One of the most important “skills” for both the teacher and the student is to communicate with each other directly without having to talk via the aide. The aide should not be teaching the content – but supporting how the student gets to the content.
9. Sit away from the student as much as possible. Continually look for ways to encourage independence. Take care not to fall into the trap of doing what is easiest and quickest by doing things for the student that they can do for themselves.
10. Think about what is age appropriate for peers and then consider adaptations or processes so the Blind/VI student can also do similar tasks and take some care of themselves.
11. Doing what everyone else is doing does not mean doing exactly the same activity in the same way as everybody else. Adaptations must be made for the student.

## Websites for Keyboarding

We are always looking for new ways for students to practise their keyboarding. All of the keyboarding websites below offer speed typing tests. Some provide certificates with your name and typing speed on them. Others provide comparisons with others who have visited the site and taken the test. Many participants have scores of over 100 words per minute!

Here are some to try:

- **10 fast fingers** – provides practise and typing speed tests  
<http://play.typeracer.com/>
- **Ratatype** – has typing lessons and typing speed tests. This website will also print a certificate  
<http://www.ratatype.com/>
- **TypeRacer** – this website provides a live online typing competition. TypeRacer, allows people to race each-other by typing quotes from books, movies, and songs. It is the first multiplayer typing game on the web.  
<http://www.ratatype.com/>
- **BBC Dance Mat Typing** – for absolute beginners to more advanced typists.  
<http://www.bbc.co.uk/schools/typing/>



The image above is a cartoon picture of a goat dancing from the BBC’s Dance mat Typing Website. The goat is wearing a hot pink suit and sunglasses!

## Spectronics Workshop: Literacy Instruction for Young Learners

From the Spectronics Website: <http://www.spectronics.com.au/register>

This workshop will give you ideas for application in ALL primary school classrooms, for ALL students in the room!

The other unique learning opportunity offered by this workshop is that it is jointly presented by an early childhood educator and a speech pathologist. As an experienced early childhood classroom teacher, Jenni McDonald, knows what it's like in the real world of education. Like you, she has simultaneously tried to juggle the needs of many students while striving to accommodate their individual learning needs. She has also advised other teachers as an Early Childhood Literacy Consultant, so she appreciates how you feel when you have "experts" come in trying to tell you what to do in your busy classroom!

Jenni's contribution will be balanced wonderfully by input from speech pathologist, Amanda Hartmann. As a result of her 17 years of experience in her private speech pathology clinic, working in schools across Australia and SE Asia, and in her role as a member of the Spectronics Consultancy Team, Amanda has developed a keen eye for identifying the pre-requisite skills for reading and writing that may need extra attention in individual students.

**What:** Literacy Instruction for Young Learners

**Where:** Pullman Albert Park, 65 Queens Road, Melbourne VIC 3004

**When:** November 5<sup>th</sup> 2014

**Cost:** \$195.00

**Parking:** \$18.00/exit access via Lorne Street.

**Transport:**

- Trams travel down St Kilda Rd (numbers 3, 5, 6, 16, 64 and 67).
- Tram stop 27 is the closest and a short walk down Lorne St.
- The closest train stations are Prahran and Flinders St.

## Free Online Professional Development Certificates (Methods for teaching Braille)

The American-based Hadley School for the Blind offers two free courses to professionals, paraprofessionals and volunteers working with students who are tactile learners. Braille Teaching Methods for Adolescents and Adults is primarily focused on teaching youth and adults who are transitioning from print to Braille or learning Braille as an additional tool to support literacy. In contrast, the course entitled Braille Teaching methods for Children, focuses on pre-Braille skills and methods for teaching children who are developing literacy skills while simultaneously learning Braille.

Both courses are offered free of charge and can be completed online. Each course requires the submission of seven assignments which are graded by a teacher, who is also contactable via email, should students have any questions regarding course content.

On successful completion of the course, participants are posted a certificate. In America, these courses are certified for 20 hours continuing education credit each. Though they may not be officially recognized in Australia, they still offer a good option for those seeking further professional development in this area.

I have recently completed the course regarding teaching Adolescents and Adults and am part-way through the course related to the teaching of children. I have found both courses to be comprehensive, full of practical suggestions and with assessments largely based upon application of knowledge to hypothetical real-life students and situations. Feedback from the American-based teachers has been prompt and helpful and the flexibility of the online learning environment makes it easy to fit these courses around full-time work and other commitments.

## Junior Judo Program

Blind Sports Victoria and Noblesoul Academy are jointly organising an introductory Judo program for children with visual impairment. It is a great chance for your child to try out one of the most successful sports in the Paralympic Games. Please see below for the details.

**When:** Thursday 5pm - 6pm (6 - 10 years of age) / 6pm - 7pm (11 - 16 years of age)

**Period:** 9th October - 28 November (8 weeks)

**Where:** St Ambrose Parish Community Centre (287 Sydney Rd, Brunswick 3056)

**Cost:** \$40 (Judo suits are available for rent without cost)

If you are interested, please email Susan Marshall, Blind Sports Victoria: [info@blindsports.org.au](mailto:info@blindsports.org.au) or Ryosuke Miwa, Noblesoul Academy: [noblesoulacademy@gmail.com](mailto:noblesoulacademy@gmail.com)

## News

- **Catherine Harris** who works at St Columba's Catholic Primary school in Ballarat and **Christine Haber** from Keilor Downs College, have both completed the SVRC Braille by correspondence course. Way to go Catherine and Christine!!! (And 'thank you' to Zhi for all her support!)

## August is ES MONTH – please find a moment to thank the production staff at SVRC

The Australian Education Union has nominated August as the month to especially recognise and celebrate the contribution of Education Support staff to all schools. As well as expressing a special 'thank you' to ES staff in your schools, we'd love you to also take a moment during August to think about the contribution the SVRC production team makes in support of your students and schools. Feel free to email, telephone or have a quick word when you are in. The AEU also has ES Month events and ideas listed on their website at [www.aeu.asn.au/esmonth](http://www.aeu.asn.au/esmonth).

## Finally

The editors, Marion Blazé and Lyn Robinson, would like to thank everyone for their contribution to this issue of The Bulletin, and in particular Frances Gentle, Garry Stinchcombe and Gayle Skinner.

If you would like to contribute to The Bulletin please email [svrc@svrc.vic.edu.au](mailto:svrc@svrc.vic.edu.au)

To read The Bulletin online: [www.svrc.vic.edu.au/Abulletin.shtml](http://www.svrc.vic.edu.au/Abulletin.shtml)