Support Skills

A Program for Students with Vision Impairments

SPEVI Conference 2020: Creating a Clear Vision for the Future

Lea Nagel

Statewide Vision Resource Centre

Acknowledgement of land

Our Support Skills Program is held on the land of the Wurundjeri people and I wish to acknowledge them as Traditional Owners.

I would like to acknowledge that we are meeting today on the traditional Country of the Kaurna people of the Adelaide Plains.

I would like to pay my respects to their Elders, past, present and future.

Objective

To share the Support Skills Program with SPEVI encouraging cross-pollination of ideas with educators of the vision impaired.

This paper will give a snapshot of the Support Skills Program in 2020.



Eligibility: Educational Vision Assessment Clinic

- Distance vision with glasses, if needed, worse than 6/18 and/or
- Visual field no greater than 20 degrees in radius around a central fixation
- 550 students eligible for service in years Foundation to 12
- Years 4 to 10 = 7 year levels = approximately 296 students
- 80 = more than a quarter of eligible students attend

Support Skills Program in brief

- Where: Statewide Vision Resource Centre.
- For: Students in years 4 to 10 who are partially sighted or blind.
- When: Once or twice per term.
- What: 6-part timetabled day, Expanded Core Curriculum.

Background

- 1880s: Royal Victorian Institute for the Blind (RVIB) provided education to students who were blind at 557 St Kilda Rd.
- 1961: Approximately 70 children resided at the RVIB Burwood school.
- 1970s: Local schooling of students with disabilities, fewer students attended the RVIB school full-time.
- Early 1980s, 4 students who were attending local schools began coming in to RVIB school on curriculum days to learn specialist skills.

Background continued

- 1986: Garry Stinchcombe began coordinating.
- 1986: 30 students, mostly braille.
- By 2004: Students with vision impairments were mostly enrolled in their local schools and supported by RVIB and Department of Education Visiting Teacher Services.
- 2004: 80 students, braille and large print users.
- 2009: RVIB, now Vision Australia closed the Burwood School.

Background continued

- 2010: Support Skills relocated to Statewide Vision Resource Centre, Department of Education Victoria.
- 2010: 60 students, most twice per term.
- 2018: Garry Stinchcombe retired.
- 2019: Lea Nagel coordinator.
- 2020: 80 students, 56 once per term, 34 twice per term.

Support Skills aims:

- To support the inclusion of students with vision impairments in their local schools.
- To support learning in the Expanded Core Curriculum, supplied by the school and visiting (itinerant) teachers.
- To enable children to work alongside other children who share similar experiences, developing their support networks.
- To give families an understanding of educational and life possibilities and opportunities.
- To demonstrate to school staff how to present curriculum to children who have vision impairments.

Grouping

Students are arranged into groups for the year taking into account:

- Year levels.
- Friendship groups and requests.
- Travel arrangements (families, friends).
- Mix of students gender, braille/large print.
- Large print users generally once per term.
- Braille or high needs generally twice per term.

Grouping

2020: 5 groups.

- 1 group comes once per term.
- 4 groups come twice per term.

Twice per term groups:

- Core group of approximately 9 who come twice.
- Alternating group of approximately 8 who each come once.

Grouping example

- Session 1: 9 "core" + 4 "once".
- Session 2: 9 "core" (same students) + 4 "once" (different students).
- Total students in group: 17.
- Total students in at a time: 13.

Timetabling

Timetable is planned each week taking into account:

- Subjects in order of preference from enrolment forms.
- Emailed requests from student, family, VT, school.
- Follow-up suggested in previous SSP sessions.
- Staffing.
- Spaces.
- Technology for each student each session.

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	Netbook	Brl maths			Laptop		zoomtext	prodigy	netbook, VR	prodigi		
	laptop	counter			lpad, prodigi			connect	JAWS, ipad,			
	4	4	4	4	5	5	4	4	6	6	6	Teacher 1, T2, T3, T4, T5, T6, T7, T8
	Student 1	S2	\$3	S4	S5	\$6	S7	S8	S9	S10	S11	Teachers
9:20	PE with		PE with		PE with T:PE Maths	Technology with	Technology	Music with	O&M with		O&M with	T:Psychologist, T:Art
	T:PE_Maths		T:PE.Maths. &		& T:Volunteer. Meet	T:Advocacy,Research & T:Braille in		T:BrailleMusic in the Music		the Garry	T:O&M at the	
	&		T:Volunteer.		in the Foyer.	SSCentral	iii recii i	Room	Garry Stinchcombe	Stinchcombe Gallery	Garry	
	T:Volunteer.		Meet in the	Meet in the		sessestimet.		Room	Gallery		Stinchcombe	
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	Foyer.											
10:10	DLS with		O&M with	Braille Music		Art with T:Art in the	O&M with	O&M with	Polaris with	Art with T:Art in the	Art with T:Art	T:PE,Maths,
	T:DLS in the	T:O&M at the	T. COUNTY OF THE	with	,	Art Room	T:O&M at	T:O&M at the	T:Tech in	Art Room	in the Art	T:Advocacy,Research,
	Kitchen	Garry	Gally		Stinchcombe Gallery		the Garry	Garry	Office 3		Room	T:Psychologist,
		Stinchcombe	Stinchcombe	in the Music			Stinchcombe	Stinchcombe				T:Tech, T:Braille
		Gallery	Gallery	Room			Gallery	Gallery				
		Ť					1					
	Recess											Recess:T5, T6
11:30	O&M with			Braille Maths		DLS with T:DLS in the		Art with T:Art	Braille Music	Technology with	Technology	T:Tech,
	T:O&M at the Garry	& T:Volunteer		with T:PE,Maths	T:Volunteer in the Art Room	Kitchen	Ritchen	& T:Volunteer in the Art	with T:BrailleMusic	T:Tech in Tech 1	with T:Braille in Office 2	T:Psychologist, T:Advocacy,Research
	Stinchcomba	in the Art	in the Art	in the Maths	Room			Room	in the Music		III Office 2	1.Advocacy,Research
	Stinchcombe Gallery	Room	Room	room				Room	Room			
12:15	Braille	Technology	Technology		Research Skills with	PE with T:PE,Maths &	DF with	PE with		PE with T:PE.Maths	PE with	T:BrailleMusic,
12.15		with T:Tech in			T:Advocacy,Research		T:PE_Maths	T:PE Maths &	T:PE.Maths. &		T:PE_Maths. &	T:Psychologist,
	T:Braille in					the Foyer.	S.	T:Volunteer.	T:Volunteer.	T:Volunteer. Meet in	T:Volunteer.	T:Tech, T:Art,
	Office 2	Office 5		Office 2	20202020000	ilie i oyer.	T:Volunteer.	Meet in the	Meet in the	the Foyer.	Meet in the	TechSupport
				Office 2				Foyer.	Foyer.	tile i oyer.	Foyer.	
								r uyer.	r uyer.		r uyer.	
							Foyer.					
1:00	Lunch											1st half: T3, T4
												2nd half: T1, T2
1:50		Braille reading	_		Polaris with	Social Skills with		Technology	Social Skills	Social Skills with	Social Skills	T:PE,Maths,
	LechSupport	with T:Braille	with T:Braille			T:Psychologist in		with T:Tech in			with	T:BrailleMusic,
	& T:Tech in Office 3	in Office 2	in Office 2		T:Tech in Office 3	SSCentral		Tech 1	T:Psychologist		T:Psychologist	T:Advocacy,Research, T:Art,
	Office 3								in SSCentral		in SSCentral	LAII,
2:40	Art with	Social Skills	Social Skills		Social Skills with	Vision issues with		Social Skills	Art with T:Art	Vision issues with	Music with	T:PE,Maths, T:Tech,
	T:Art &		with			T:Advocacy,Research		with	& T:Volunteer			T:Tech, T:Braille
		T:Psychologist				in SSCentral		T:Psychologist			in the Music	
			in SSCentral			20000000000		in SSCentral	Room	50000000000	Room	
	Room											

Main Timetable

GROUP A Session 1

Friday 1st March

ATTENDING:

Grade 4: Student 1, 2, 3, 4, 5

Grade 5: Student 6, 7

Grade 6: Student 8, 9, 10

Absent: Student 11

8:45am ASSEMBLY in SSCentral. All welcome.

9:20am

PE with Teacher & Volunteer. Meet in the Foyer.

Students: 5

O&M with 2 O&Ms at the Garry Stinchcombe Gallery

Students: 3

Technology with Teacher in SSCentral

Student: 1

Technology with Tech trainer in Tech 1

Student: 1

Braille Music with Music Teacher in the Music Room

Student: 1

Student

Locker: 22

SUPPORT SKILLS PROGRAM 2019

Individual student timetables

GROUP A Session 1

Friday 1st March 2019

8:45am

ASSEMBLY in SSCentral. All Families and staff welcome.

9:20am

Technology with Tech Teacher in Office 4

10:10am

Art with Art Teacher in the Art Room With Student 3, Student 4

11:00am RECESS

Lockers

Locker list Independence



Feedback sample, abbreviated

9:20am Braille Music with Braille Music Teacher

Today Student told me all about his music sessions where he is encouraged to create lyrics to existing songs, and practice rhythm to a guitar accompaniment with a shaker. Today Student and I explored some rhythm and melody in braille music. Student remembered ta, ti-ti and sh from previous Dot Power days, and we added lyrics to speak in rhythm... Student read the words of each line aloud, then the rhythm in rhythm names, and then the words in rhythm. Although we came across different pitches today, the ti-ti's only use the top four dots of the braille cell whereas the ta and sh incorporate the bottom dots...

Student took to braille music quite well and was very enthusiastic about each new task we undertook which was wonderful to see.

Feedback sample, abbreviated

10:10am Polaris with Tech Teacher

Student's Polaris had recently been displaying brackets as a low G. This is a sign that we are in the wrong braille code. Student changed the braille code back to UEB, from the Options menu....

While exploring his Documents folder, we discovered several files named Noname. This led us to discuss how and why they are called Noname, then to rename the files. Student did this from the File Manager menu initially, learning that the File Manager is a program and has a menu...

Commands:

Rename: Enter + R ...

Subject areas

- Art
- Technology
- Music & Braille Music
- PE
- Careers
- Research Skills
- Vision Issues

- Social Skills
- Braille
- Braille Maths
- Drama
- Daily Living Skills
- Orientation and Mobility

Partner Organisations

- Vision Australia Daily Living Skills
- Guide Dogs Victoria Orientation and Mobility
- Technology sales and support phone and in person
- Donvale Primary School small gymnasium & kiln
- Heatherwood School playgrounds, gymnasium, business
- Donvale Gymnastics some PE sessions
- Genazzano College swimming pool & staff, carnival
- Arts Access Victoria, National Gallery Victoria

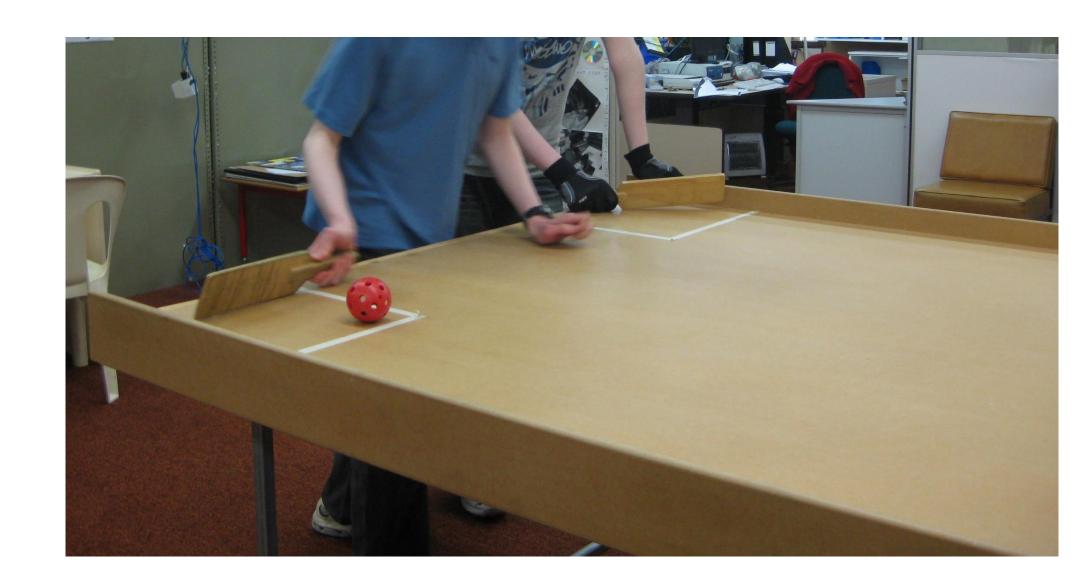
Art: Ceramics





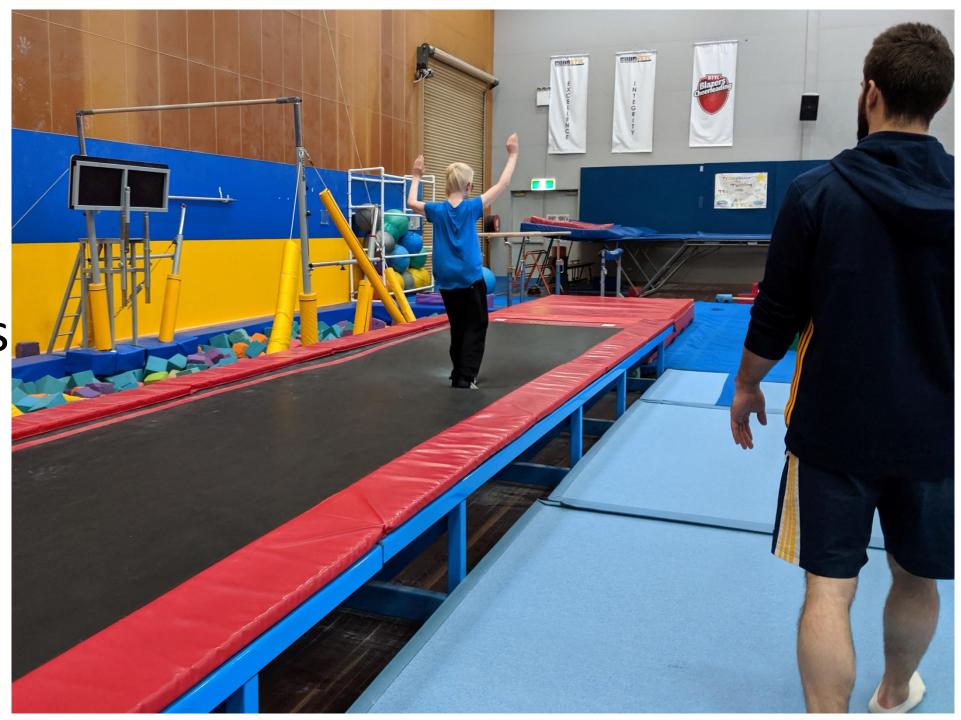
PE

Swish
Blind
table
tennis



PE

Donvale Gymnastics

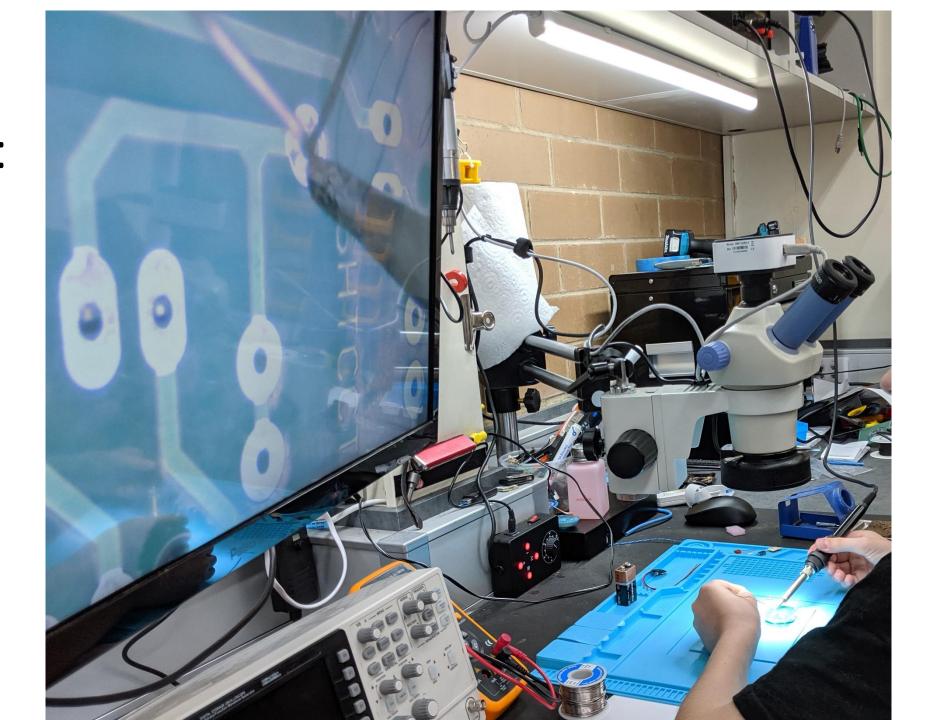


PE

Beep Baseball



Technology: Electronics



Orientation and Mobility: Mapping apps



Braille Music



Careers

Piano Tuner



Staffing

- 8.5 Statewide Vision Resource Centre staff for the day
- 3 sessions from Guide Dogs Victoria
- 2 sessions from Vision Australia
- Manager
- Administration for the day

- Teacher co-ordinator during the week
- Administration support 0.6 during the week

Spaces

- Support Skills Central: 14 at table, extra chairs
- Garry Stinchcombe Gallery: large open space
- Teaching rooms: 3 6 seats at tables × 6
- Art room
- Kitchen
- Storage: PE, Technology, Music
- Outdoor play areas
- Nearby PE indoor spaces

Staff collaboration

- Mentoring
- Support
- New staff
- Volunteers, observers
- Events: Careers Day, Big Arts Day Out
- Administration support
- Professional learning

Events

- Arts Big Day Out
- Careers Day
- Circus
- Try Day
- Athletics or Swimming Carnival (occasionally)
- PE Day
- Graduation
- End of year mini-concerts

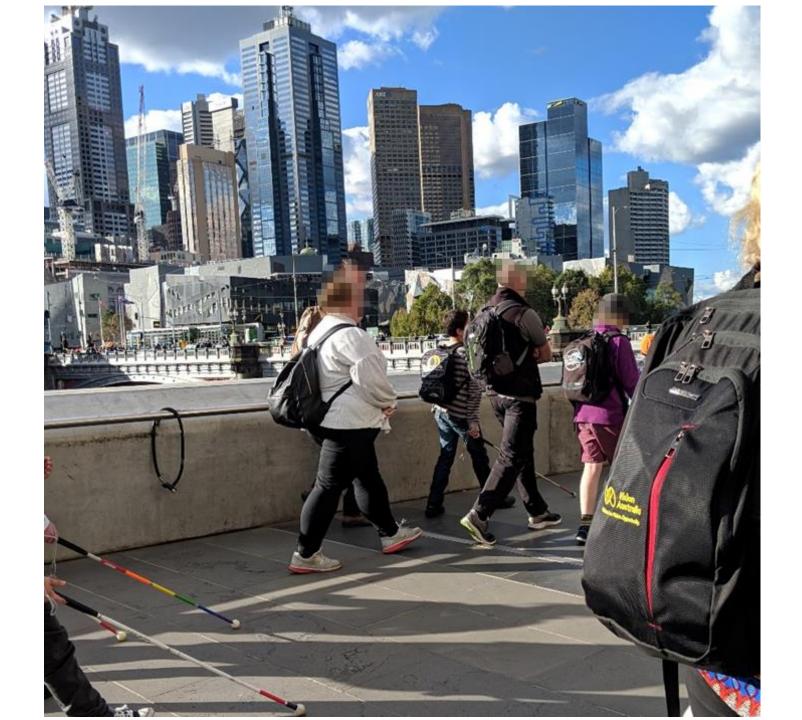
Big Arts Day Out

Koorie Heritage Trust Touch Tour



Big Arts Day Out

Travel with Guide Dogs Victoria



PE

Goalball



PE

Goalball



PE

Goalball



Art Gallery

Touch Tour



Art Gallery

Touch Tour



Swimming Carnival



Feedback from students and families

Best things:

- Student feels fully included.
- Learns skills that help with independence, future.
- Support, information about resources.

Student summaries:

- Love reading, informative, positive.
- Always forward the feedback to school.
- Occasionally have changed our approach to learning in response.

Feedback from students and families

Families find Support Skills extremely valuable. They demonstrate this by bringing their children from all over the state of Victoria. More than a quarter of eligible children attend regularly.

Support Skills Program has contributed to the development of skills and attitudes among school-aged students for many years. The students families develop a network of support through SVRC, and life-long friendships are made.

Feedback from Staff

- ... to be somewhere where expertise is valued and important...
- Flexible, accommodating, skilled people in this program.
 Fantastic team.
- Space that allows for creativity, flexibility, knowledge...
- Support from everybody here, information that comes through is very helpful.
- Enjoyed relating to ... and creating a connection with [students].

Comments on the Program

Garry Stinchcombe:

... the Support Skills Program is still as relevant today as it was nearly 40 years ago. It can still play an important role in the education of students who are blind or have low vision in Victoria.

An informal community of students, families and staff continues to help support and promote the program. This energy is vital to the success of the program.

Thank you to:

Students and families for their enthusiastic participation and encouragement.

Families for transporting students, giving up a day of work, signing forms, replying to emails.

SVRC management for their support.

SVRC staff for bells, resources and help during the day.

EVAC staff for encouraging families' involvement.

School staff, Visiting Teachers.

Thank you

end