



Reading Pictures

Amiria's journey to tactile learning

Presented by Meredith Pitcher



What was my starting point?

- “Hungry Fingers” - the philosophy and resources of Bog Marek started our thinking.
- The NZ Tactile Graphics project led by Trish Bishop took us on a journey.
- My desire to give our learners excellent skills in interpreting and understanding tactile graphics gave me a purpose.

The BLENNZ Pedagogy of Tactile Graphics

There are 5 guiding principles that support tactile graphic skill development. They are, in brief:

1. Understanding body concept and spatial orientation.
2. Real life experiences facilitate the progression from 3 dimensional to 2 dimensional images.
3. A reduction of complexity in a graphic makes it easier to interpret. Consideration is given to the view taken and adding detail sequentially.
4. Knowledge and understanding of lines and their orientation.
5. Time: for exploration and to gain understanding.



Where this has led me...

I work with learners receiving support from BLENNZ Palmerston North. I work explicitly with the group of young learners that we perceive will be our Braille and tactile learners in the future.

I base my professional practice on:

- The Active Learning Philosophy.
- The recognition that learners' real life experiences and language will form the foundation for their learning.
- Play being the vehicle for learning.
- Facilitating shared experiences in order to extend learning.
- Being a reflective practitioner.

What follows are the photographs that I have taken of Amiria during my visits in the last four years. They are arranged under the guiding principles of the BLENNZ Pedagogy of Tactile Graphics and follow Amiria's learning experiences over time.

Introducing Amiria

Amiria:

- is 4 years and 7 months old.
- has the eye condition Optic Nerve Hypoplasia.
- is Anna and Harry's first child, she had no siblings.
- has attended an Early Childhood Centre from 20 months, she attends daily.

Amiria and her family have rich musical experiences, she loves to learn through song.

I have worked with Amira from the age of 9 months.



Principle 1. Learning body concept and spatial orientation through play



Defining space and supporting effective search through using trays and bowls



Understanding space and supporting hand function by using boxes and tables



Understanding space and supporting curiosity through using bags



Meredith Pitcher, Blind and Low Vision Education Network New Zealand

Principle 2. Using real life experiences as the foundation for learning activities



Books - starting with Scratching and Exploration books



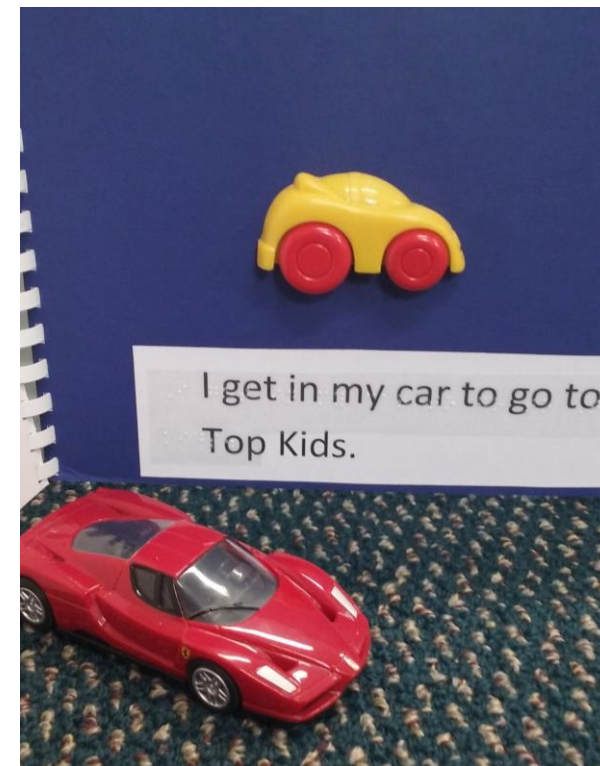
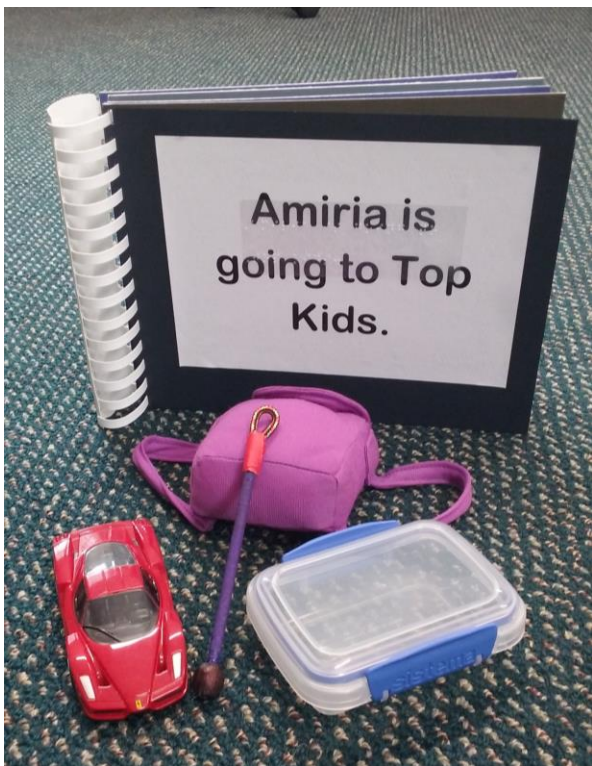
Meredith Pitcher, Blind and Low Vision Education Network New Zealand

Introducing new books with real objects and models



Meredith Pitcher, Blind and Low Vision Education Network New Zealand

More models



And more models



Meredith Pitcher, Blind and Low Vision Education Network New Zealand

Producing a familiar book in Piaf



Meredith Pitcher, Blind and Low Vision Education Network New Zealand

Principle 3. Reducing complexity through the view taken



Principle 3. Adding detail in graphics sequentially



Principle 4. Understanding lines and their orientation



Principle 5. Allow time for exploration, repetition and understanding



Meredith Pitcher, Blind and Low Vision Education Network New Zealand

Other learning



In Summary

Amiria's learning was supported through structuring the environment, the resources and the activities in a sequence that promoted her understanding of tactile graphics through curiosity and perseverance.

- By setting up the environment with trays, open and closed containers, the 'bag' and the wooden floor table.
- By getting little fingers to search and explore space and texture with the items listed above, Scratching and Exploration books.
- By using Amiria's real life experiences as a foundation for language, for models and for books in a tactile format.
- By using models, books and song to enhance her understanding of tactile concepts and language.
- By using the 'familiar' to introduce tactile graphics made using Piaf.



The highlights

- Witnessing that first glimmer of ‘hope’ as parents observe their child exploring and learning.
- The many little ‘Amiria’ celebrations along the way.
- Knowing that Amiria’s learning and development will prepare her well for school.
- Being able to apply what I have learnt from Amiria with my younger learners following a similar journey.

Thanks

In relation to my work in this area I wish to thank the following people for their contribution to my learning journey:

- Amiria and her family; Anna, Harry and Nanny Cynthia.
- Michael who preceded Amiria in this journey. Lily and Tobi who are following on from Amiria.
- Sharon Duncan for her mentoring of my learning around Early Childhood.
- Trish Bishop for her mentoring in Tactile Graphics – for all our discussion, planning, making resources and putting ideas into practice.

