

SHARING VISIONS

Issue 1

November 2008

A MESSAGE FROM THE EDITOR

We are delighted to launch the first edition of "Sharing Visions", a newsletter for educators of the blind and low vision. For a number of years, educators across the province have sought ways to become connected and build a network of professional sharing and support. It is our intent to use this newsletter as the vehicle to achieve those means.

As a network we can grow by addressing our needs, sharing professional development opportunities, and reviewing AT devices in order to build on best practices and high yield results for our students.

Essentially, we can build this newsletter into something we all can benefit from. We cannot achieve this however without your voice. We encourage you and your vision colleagues to write to us with your ideas, suggestions and any topics we should include as well as any contributions

you would like to submit.

Recently we completed a database of VITs email addresses throughout the province and we have included each on our mailing list. Please share with any Rehabilitation teachers or O and M instructors in your area. We would be pleased to include them as well. The more we reach, the better!

In our first edition we have included segments which we believe will be of benefit to you.

- Our "Tech Corner" will review AT devices.
- The "Dot 5 Q" segment will provide the opportunity for a question and answer format.
- "Dates to Remember" will highlight upcoming events and any relevant PD opportunities
- VIEWS will also include periodic updates
- Dates for upcoming Short Term Placements at W. Ross Macdonald School

We do hope you enjoy this first edition and look forward to hearing from you and receiving any contributions you wish to submit.

Together we can "Share our Vision".



Elizabeth Dunton

Principal
Resource Services and
Short Term Placements

W. Ross Macdonald
School

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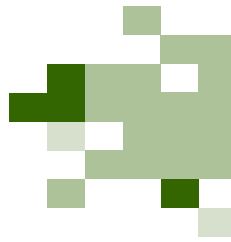
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*"Keep your face to the
sunshine and you
cannot see the
shadows"*

-Helen Keller

*(Sundry Interviews,
undated)*





VIEWS UPDATE—Julie Spry, VIEWS President

VIEWS is a provincial Child and Family advocacy-support group for children that are Blind or have Low Vision. Outreach and connecting families from across the province has been our focus this fall. This has been achieved through our partnerships with W.Ross in the form of VIEWS commitment and active involvement with programming of Short Term Placements, the Provincial Government, through our receiving a Parents Reaching Out Grant which enabled us to travel across the province and the CNIB for providing venues where ever we went. This fall alone we have conducted workshops, conferences, meetings and teleconferences with families from over 50 communities. We have new members from Thunder Bay to as far north as Pikangikum, and from Windsor to Ottawa. I would like to take this opportunity to thank all of our Partners in helping to make these very deserving children's future just a little brighter.

WEBSITES to CHECKOUT

<http://www.wafb.org/braillebug/>

<http://www.uacoe.arizona.edu/viliteracy>

http://www.blindmusicstudent.org/low_vision_green

TRICKS OF THE TRADE

HIGH INTEREST LOW VOCABULARY BOOKS

High Noon Books have the one of the biggest selections of High Interest/Low Vocabulary Books for Secondary grade level students with low reading skills.

Many of the stories are appropriate for students with vision loss. Information can be obtained from their website,

www.HighNoonBooks.com, or (800) 422-7249 (California) or Artel Educational Resources, (800) 655-9255 Vancouver.

Jan Nemeth (WRMS)



DOT 5 Q CORNER

From time to time, we all have questions about the education and unique needs of the students we serve, while others may have the answers. One or two questions will be chosen for each newsletter. The questions will be forwarded to the appropriate professional to be an-

swered. Please submit your question to the *Editor Elizabeth Dunton* at liz.dunton@ontario.ca

Q Can a student with glaucoma, participate in sports and physical education?

A. I would always have the family contact their Ophthalmologist to get an answer. If the student is allowed to participate in sports, please be aware of the results of a Brazilian study which appeared in the September 2006 issue of Archives of Ophthalmology. It states that lifting

CONTINUED- DOT 5 Q CORNER

heavy weights, especially while holding breath, is linked to an increase in intraocular pressure. However, intraocular pressure is usually decreased after aerobic activities such as running and biking. You can read more about this study in the Insight Email Newsletter on the CNIB website at www.cnib.ca

"If we do not like our work, and do not try and get happiness out of it, we are a menace to our profession as well as to ourselves."

-HELEN KELLER

From "Know Thyself" The Home Magazine, September 1930

TECHNOLOGY REVIEW BY JOHN MARTIN

The Scene-Eye is an electronic magnification reading system (CCTV) that allows for a continuous zoom magnification at 50 times or greater and affixed with contrast enhancement.

The latest near/distance viewing closed circuit television viewer (CCTV) is available from sight enhancement systems in Waterloo, Ontario. This versatile machine is light weight (1.5 pounds) and the adaptability of the device allows for it to be easily connected to any television, monitor, laptop or p.c.

A student can use the framing features to capture an image by freezing the frame. Storage of adaptive equipment for students attending school can often be cumbersome, particularly as they move from class to class. The "Scene-Eye" allows for

greater portability as it will fold to the dimensions of only 7"x5"x1-3/4". The small carrying case that comes with this unit allows for easy storage and its light weight makes transporting the unit easier for the student. The adaptable device would fit into most carrying cases or backpacks. Attached is a rotating hinged lens that can easily move from a near to distant task.

The "Scene-Eye" has a 6-hour lithium battery with large control keys, allowing for its routine use to remain simple for the consumer. Most notable was the stability the machine offered to the reader with low vision. A smaller device than many of the commercial products, the "Scene-Eye" appeared to present with less environmental vibrations that have often been noted on machines that are port-

able and do not always allow for a still picture. The sturdiness of this product is notable for the frequent user, as well as the adaptability. The unit sells for approximately \$2,500.00, with the user needing to provide the monitor of their choice.

To find out more about this new product, contact can be made with the producer at www.sightenhancement.com or by telephone at (519) 883-8400.



"Useful, I believe, is the highest joy of man's life."

-HELEN KELLER

Letter to Colonel Edwin A. Baker, Director of the CNIB, Toronto



Short Term Placements at the W. Ross Macdonald School

Where we've been – where we're going

The 2007-2008 school year marked the start of Short Term Placements at the W. Ross Macdonald School. This program offers weekend experiences as well as summer camps for students enrolled in School Boards across the province. Last year we held five STPs and three summer camps:

October 26 - 28, 2007	Promoting Independence	For 5 – 9 year olds and their families
January 25 -27, 2008	Jaws and Zoomtext Tech weekend	9 years and up
February 22 -24, 2008	Teen Esteem and Empowerment	High school students
April 25 – 27, 2008	Transition to High School	Grade 6, 7 and 8
May 23 – 25, 2008	Life after High School Preparing for College and University	Senior high school students
July 7 -11, 2008	Sports Camp Ontario Blind Sports	Open
July 20 -26, - 2008	Braille Music Camp VIEWS	Open
July 27 – August 2, 2008	ILS – Camp Freedom VIEWS	Open
Oct 4—5, 2008	First off-campus STP held at Upper Canada Village in Morrisburg	Grades 4—8
Nov 7—9, 2008	Ways to Work—Finding Employment	High school students
Jan 23—25, 2009	Tech Head Weekend— JAWS, ZoomText-AT	Grade 4 +
Jan 27—Mar 1, 2009	Steps to Independence— The Next Chapter	Age 7—11 and their families
Apr 24—26, 2009	Spa and Sports Weekend	High school students

Stay tuned for dates for Sports Camp, Braille Music Camp, and ILS Camp 2009.

Fast Facts

- To date 108 students have participated in our STPs.
- 28 are return participants
- Participants have come from Sudbury to Windsor

Benefits Seen

- Empowering students
- Building social networks
- Bringing parents together
- Increasing ILS skills

"It was fantastic! I loved it. I want to go back again. The weekend helped me feel like a "normal" person."

Student from the Transition to High School weekend.



The Braille Challenge

Looking for a unique, hands-on opportunity to challenge your students and reinforce the value of literacy in our world today? January 4th, 2009 marks the 200th birthday of Louis Braille. In honour of the occasion the Canadian Braille Authority (an organization which promotes braille literacy) is sponsoring a Braille Challenge which will enable elementary school students across Canada to learn the basics of the braille code. Free online braille tutorials will be made available. Challenge activities include tasks such as decoding secret braille messages and producing braille labels for the school environment. Participants will have a chance to win gold, silver and bronze certificates. The Braille Challenge officially begins on November 17th, 2008. For more information about upcoming bicentenary competitions and events see the Braille 200 web site at www.braille200.ca.

How To Get Started

1. Go to http://uacoe.arizona.edu/viliteracy/braille_Lessons.htm.
2. In the section entitled "Braille Lessons" you will find directions on how to download "Perky Duck" which is a software program that will allow you to produce a visual braille font which your students will use to learn the braille code.
3. In this same section, you will find a link to "Braille Lessons" which are tutorials which your students can use to learn the braille alphabet.
4. When they have learned the braille alphabet they can get started on the activities required for the Braille Challenge.
5. There are fifteen activities involving braille outlined below. To earn a Bronze Certificate, students must complete four of the fifteen activities. To earn a Silver Certificate eight activities must be completed. A Gold Certificate will be awarded to any class successfully completing twelve of the activities.
6. The Braille Challenge will be open through June 2009. When your students have completed the number of activities they have chosen, have your school principal, a local teacher of students with visual impairments, or a staff member of your local CNIB verify these have been completed. Contact Jen Goulden at jen_g@moffit.ca and provide her with your verification and the name and address of the school and specific class who have earned the certificate. It will be forwarded immediately.
7. If your students chose an activity which requires embossed braille rather than the visual print braille, contact a local teacher of students with visual impairments or your local CNIB to request assistance with the braille.
8. Beginning in January 2009, a braille message will be placed on the Canadian Braille Authority website and the Braille 200 website. Students can decode the message and send their answers to Jen Goulden at jen_g@moffit.ca. She will advise the students of the accuracy of their solved message.
9. There are several websites with activities involving braille which have been designed for elementary school children who are sighted. These activities are lots of fun and provide awareness of braille and the significant role it plays in the lives of braille readers. Go to the following websites to have extra fun with your students:
Dots for Families <http://uacoe.arizona.edu/viliteracy/default.htm>
American Foundation for the Blind <http://www.afb.org/braillebug/intro.asp>
10. Should you have further questions or encounter difficulties with any of these instructions or activities, please **contact** Jen Goulden.

A Message from our Superintendent



This first edition of Sharing Visions is really a celebration of a coming together for vision educators across Ontario. It is very much a testament of the value teacher's hold in sharing information, strategies, resources and special interests related to the field of Blind/low vision education. Coming from a school board, I am well aware that often information is sent centrally to a board level, but can, at times, have difficulty reaching the hands of itinerant teachers. Our new contact lists will provide us with a stronger likelihood of building networks and sharing information that ultimately allows us to better meet the needs of our students. With a spirit of collaboration and a commitment of facilitating connectivity of peers and enhancing quality professional development, we look forward to your participation in the success of this newsletter.

Please feel free to contact me at W.Ross Macdonald School at any time!

Sharing Visions—Dates to Remember

December 5, 2008—Aniceta Skowron, From Geometro — a company which produces tactile manipulatives will be making a presentation at W. Ross Macdonald School. The morning session is geared for VITs and math teachers. The afternoon session is for parents. \$10 includes lunch. Register with Kerri Readings at Kerri.Readings@ontario.ca.

Morning Session for Teachers—9:30—12:00

Come and learn how to teach your students to build and understand 3-dimensional shapes. You will build simple and wonderful structures and get ready to explore the concept of surface area and symmetry — all in an easy and effective way, using materials that never fail to generate excitement among children. You will be ready and prepared to help your students to develop and strengthen basic spatial concepts through fun and play. This hands-on workshop will be conducted by Dr. Aniceta Skowron — an enthusiastic scientist-educator. Space limited to 30 people.

Afternoon Session for Parents—12:00—2:30

Come and learn how to teach your child to build and understand 3-dimensional shapes. You will build simple and wonderful structures and get ready to explore the concept of surface area and symmetry — all in an easy and effective way, using materials that never fail to generate excitement among children. You will be ready and prepared to help your child to develop and strengthen basic spatial concepts through fun and play. This hands-on workshop will be conducted by Dr. Aniceta Skowron — an enthusiastic scientist-educator. Space limited to 30 people.

Mark Your Calendars

Susan Osterhaus, renowned math teacher from Texas, will be presenting a 2-day math workshop for VITS, math teachers, and parents on April 17 & 18, 2009.

Where: W. Ross Macdonald School

Details to follow.



Susan has asked for teacher input as to their needs in terms of teaching math to blind students. Please send information to Mary at the e-mail address below.

We hope you have enjoyed the first issue of *Sharing Visions*. We welcome your contributions and suggestions and expect to publish 3 newsletters per year — fall, winter and spring issues. We can be reached at

Mary.E.Cousineau@ontario.ca

Elizabeth Dunton
Sharing Visions Editor

Canadian Vision Teacher's Conference 2009

Banff Centre, Banff Alberta

Climb High Lead the Way

The Western Provinces organizing committee for the Canadian Vision Teachers' Conference 2009 (CVTC is honoured to host this event at the Banff Centre, Banff Alberta. We, Along with our partners, are in the initial planning stages for this conference.

Mark your calendar for October 18-20, 2009. Join us in beautiful Banff, Alberta for breath-taking scenery and stimulation presentations.

Watch for the call for papers soon. Visit the following websites for information about the Banff Centre and Banff, AB.

www.banffcentre.ca; www.banff.ca

For more information, please contact: Pam. Rannelli
pam.rannelli@gov.ab.ca; Brian Yee byyee@cbe.ab.ca

Heads Up—SEA Workshop

When: January 9, 2009
Where: Durham District School Board
Facilitator: Pat Bolger

MEETING

What: Vision Educators Network of Ontario, (VENO)
"Tricks of the Trade"
When: Monday March 9, 2009,
Where: York Catholic District School Board, Education Centre, 320 Bloomington Road West, Aurora
Guest Speaker: To be announced
Needed: Presenters for 15 to 20 minute sessions to discuss effective teaching strategies/tricks of the trade that have helped you as a teacher of the visually impaired. This will be an opportunity to share your knowledge with professionals in the field of vision loss. Topics could range from individual subjects, braille seat work, technology, art activities, social activities, class trips, orientation and mobility to eating, and lesson planning while driving from school to school. If you wish to make a presentation, please contact Carol Gear at Carol.Gear@ycdsb.ca and cc to Susan Howe at susan.howe@ontario.ca with information about your presentation.

Look for more information in future newsletters.

Co Hosts: Carol Gear, Susan Howe

