

A Message from the EDITOR

It's hard to believe we're in the thick of winter. It seems like just days ago we sent out our first issue of "Sharing Visions". We have been delighted with the response to this newsletter. We've had requests to include more partners such as Orientation and Mobility specialists, CNIB and even parents on our distribution list. In addition, we've had inquiries as to how groups can be a part of the publication. As you will see in the following pages many submissions from across the province have come in to us. We've had submissions from the Durham Board, York Catholic Board, Hamilton-Wentworth Board, CNIB, and Ann MacCuspie. We've also included a Trekker review from our O and M department.

In this edition and future editions, we will highlight an individual who is blind or visually impaired who has enjoyed success in a particular area of life. Hopefully, these stories will inspire others and, perhaps, provide mentorship opportunities for those written about. We have spotlighted Bill Morgan in this edition.

Throughout the province this fall there have been a number of noteworthy PD opportunities that many of us have attended. I am always struck by the passion our group of educators share. It is energizing to be a part of this diverse and very dynamic group of professionals.

The College of Teachers is currently updating the Blind AQ courses and a team of six educators came together to advise the College in November 2008. Final revisions we are told will take the better part of a year.

The province's SEA approvers met at the Durham Board in January. The meeting was most productive.

Our goal of connecting Vision Educators across the province is becoming a reality. We welcome and encourage your participation and any suggestions. Please enjoy and share the second issue of Sharing Visions.

Elizabeth Dunton

Principal

Resource Services and
Short Term Placements

W. Ross Macdonald School



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"Education is not the
filling of a pail, but
the lighting of a fire."
-William Butler Yeats



VIEWs UPDATE — Julie Spry, VIEWs President

It's hard to believe that Spring is just around the corner and then comes VIEWs Summer Camps.

VIEWs offers two weeks of residential summer camps for children ages 8-21. **Camp Freedom is an Independent Living Skills Camp, which runs from July 12-17.** It focuses on the essential skills that children who are blind or have low vision need in order to be independent. VIEWs camps are holistic in nature. We instruct campers in personal management of daily living skills such as using a knife and fork to eat, cooking, cleaning and organizational skills. There is also a strong emphasis on social and recreational skills development. Our staff are certified Independent Living Skills Instructors, Orientation and Mobility Specialists and Vision Teachers.

Our second week of camp will be **VIEWs Third Annual Music Camp for Braille Users, running from July 19-25.** We welcome children who love music. Our students receive a morning of instrumental music lessons, vocal training, braille music instruction, as well as an opportunity to develop their skills in dramatic and theatre arts. Our music staff are university trained certified professionals with experience teaching braille users and our drama staff bring years of practical experience working with children who are blind. The afternoon and evening programs are leisure and recreational. Yes, there is time to swim, socialize with new friends, make crafts, and much more. Last year's campers loved making drums and didgeridoos for the evening camp fire and drum circle. There were evenings when we had special guests, such as a Jazz group that came to jam with the campers and a Ska band to dance to. At the end of the week, we wrapped it up with a concert to showcase the talent of our campers.

VIEWs residential camps are coordinated by parent volunteers and are staffed by vision professionals with volunteers support. For more information please contact VIEWs registrar, Dawn Clelland at clelland@rogers.com

VIEWs summer programs are only made possible due to the continued support and partnership with W. Ross Macdonald School. I would like to take this opportunity to thank W. Ross for so generously opening their doors to our children each summer.

The summer can be a very long and lonely time for children who feel isolated from peers, so please mention VIEWs camps to all of the children's families you think may benefit from our interactive programming.

If you have any questions in regards to VIEWs membership or our programs please contact me. I am looking forward to hearing from all of you.

Julie Spry, VIEWs President, juliecspry@hotmail.com, (519) 745-5372



Blind Sports Camp

For the past three years, the Ontario Blind Sports Association has been hosting a four day residential sports camp at the W. Ross Macdonald School. Twenty campers aged 10-18 are given the opportunity to learn about sports programs that are offered through the Ontario Blind Sports Association. These sports include goalball, wrestling, athletics (track and field) and swimming.

Counsellors at the camp include Provincial Coaches as well as Paralympic athletes. Registration fee for the camp is \$ 250.00. This year's camp will be held Monday July 6 to Friday July 10. More information is available on The Ontario Blind Sports Association web site. www.blindsports.on.ca

Mick Ferras, Residence Supervisor, WRMS



Deafblind Bell Choir Hits the Right Note With Students

By Kathy Vincer, Photos by Dawn Gray

Kathy and Dawn are teachers at W. Ross Macdonald School

Bells, bells, bells! Every Friday morning, one can hear soft melodious bell tones, appreciative laughter and encouraging applause coming from the Deafblind School Active Room here at the W. Ross Macdonald School.

The Deafblind Bell Choir of 16-18 students, with 10 staff assisting, meets for about 30 minutes each Friday to share their own musical experience by practicing ringing the bells. The practice is structured in the same way each week with a warm up first (playing and stopping together), then scales with each student playing one note, and finally songs with a vocal rendition done first to hear how the song goes. There is positive reinforcement with the group clapping for each other and lots of verbal praise.



The Choir was the inspiration of Amy Wark, Music Therapist at W Ross Macdonald, who runs the weekly practice. She wants to encourage the students, who range in age from 7 to 21, to develop their creative potential by appreciating and enjoying music. Her other goals for students include helping them build self-confidence in a group setting, increasing their self-esteem by successful participation in musical activities and raising their awareness of sounds in their environment.

The Choir has hopes for taking their music on the road; Amy plans to have the Choir perform in the community at a local nursing home later in the year. Meanwhile, just going to weekly practice has been an enriching and most enjoyable extracurricular activity for students who are deafblind.

“Bell Choir is awesome!” says Natalie, an 18 year old performer. “I like the sound of the bells- they are soothing. There are nice people in this choir and I am definitely joining next year.” The Bell Choir will be performing at the annual Deafblind Christmas party this 18th of December for students, staff and parents.



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Corner

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“The best and most beautiful things in the world cannot be seen nor even touched, but felt in the heart.”

Helen Keller

Question:

Do any Boards grant credit for any Essential Skills for the Blind? (formerly known as Expanded Core Curriculum)

Answer:

This is an excellent question, but unfortunately there is no “stock” answer.

Our understanding is that different Boards approach this in different ways. Since the Student Success initiative was launched, principals can offer up to four GLE credit courses for Special Education students (one credit per each year of 4 years of school).

Boards and principals decide what will be the content of such courses. Some Boards use these courses for credit recovery purposes. Others, we are told, include Orientation and Mobility and Assistive Technology as part of these courses. Some Boards are also considering granting a credit for Braille, again using a GLE course code.



My Trip to Beijing

By Bill Morgan, Educational Assistant, WRMS

I began judo at the age of 15 in Brantford, Ontario. I was introduced to the sport while competing at the 1990 World Championships for the Blind as a member of the Canadian wrestling team. As judo was a Paralympic sport and wrestling was not, it seemed like a wise choice to begin judo; as I had an interest in becoming a Paralympian. I had no idea what this meant, but I made it my personal goal to get there! Since 1991, I have achieved the following: numerous medals locally against sighted opponents; 2 bronze medals (2003 and 2006) at the IBSA World Blind Judo Championships; Pan-American Champion (1999); 3 Paralympic Games (2000, 2004, and 2008), and became the first known visually impaired person in Canada to earn the rank of Sandan (third degree black belt) in the sport of judo. Through my experiences, I have travelled across the world through Europe, North and South America, Asia, Australia, and many provinces throughout Canada.

On Thursday, August 28, 2008, I departed for Beijing with my coach and several of the Canadian Paralympic Team staff. The flight was approximately 12 hours, but felt more like 6. Surprisingly, I have become more comfortable with long flights through my athletic experiences. When we arrived in Beijing, I was surprised with the air quality. Although there was definitely smog, I was able to breathe quite well with a slight burn in my throat. This came as a surprise to me since we were led to believe the air quality may cause complications for the athletes.

With this being my 3rd Paralympic Games, I experienced few surprises because I have been through it all before. However, I was surprised to see a village that surpassed the 2 previous villages. Nothing was missed and the volunteers were exceptional! The food in the village consisted of typical foods we would eat in North America — things such as pizza, pasta, a salad bar, Asian cuisine, meat and potatoes, and McDonald's. Yes, McDonald's is a sponsor who has the benefit of being in the Olympic and Paralympic Villages.

My competition took place on September 9, 2008. I fought 2 incredibly tough matches and was unsuccessful in winning either of them. The "Proud Canadian" in me was pleased and honoured to have had the opportunity to represent the city of Brantford, Provincial Schools, and my country, for a third time at the Paralympics. However, the competitor in me was striving for more and was disappointed with the results.

Upon completion of the competition, I had the opportunity to travel around Beijing with my wife, Risa, and my mother, Joanne. We travelled by subway, by foot, and even by cable car to the top of The Great Wall of China. The Great Wall was fascinating to experience, certainly a "must" while visiting Beijing. We also visited the Forbidden City, Tiananmen Square, the Silk Market, and numerous shops. We have all seen the photos, but we had the opportunity to see nightlife at the night Market where the locals eat bugs, unusual animal parts, etc.! Overall, Beijing did an outstanding job of hosting the 2008 Olympic and Paralympic Games and I am pleased to have been a part of history.



"The Great Wall"



Ukraine (white) vs Canada—Bill (blue)



Risa, Bill, Joanne

"Imagination is more important than knowledge."

Albert Einstein

Deafblindness and Intervention Workshop

By Gary Bridgett, Deafblind Educational Co-ordinator, WRMS

Deafblind Resource Services enjoyed presenting their annual Introduction to Deafblindness and Intervention Workshop on October 1 and 2, 2008. Participants from several Boards and from Provincial Schools, enthusiastically threw themselves into the simulation activities. Many eyes were opened (excuse the pun) as a result of these exercises, in which participants wore goggles that simulated different types of vision loss. Earplugs and strong admonitions to participants against using voiced communication added the effect of Deafness to the simulations. The loss of both functional distance senses, is a profound experience which, when simulated, brought emotional responses from many of the participants.

Planners for this year's event attempted to engage those attending through breakout sessions on topics such as augmentative and adapted communication, stimulation of vision and hearing, technology and planning for transitions. Evaluation and feedback indicated that the smaller sessions provided greater opportunity for active participation. Certainly that is appropriate to our program goal of supporting language-rich, activity-based programming. Notice of next year's session should be distributed by mid-April 2009.



Trekker Breeze

Submitted by Sue Blackford, O & M Specialist, WRMS

Recently the Vision Resource Services and the Orientation and Mobility Departments at the W. Ross MacDonald School purchased several Trekker Breeze Units from Humanware. They are a big hit.

One O&M specialist says they are "as easy as 1-2-3". One of her students used the Breeze during a lesson and was able to master the operation of the keys within that time period. She likes the key describer mode. "This is a piece of equipment that is very user friendly that may be used by many students and not just those that are tech savvy".

A few of our students have been so impressed with the unit that they have ordered one. Mike likes the ease of use. He has done research on accessible GPS units and says that most of them have too many buttons. The Trekker Breeze has 9. Mike also likes the affordability of the unit compared with the price of other systems. It is smaller and simpler to handle in the elements and is easier to get up and running.

Mike mentioned he likes the ease with which routes can be created. All you have to do is walk a route and record it for future reference. Breeze tells you where you are, where you are going and what is around, such as stores and public services and you can create points of interest. Mike is one of the students that has purchased a Trekker Breeze.

We are pleased that we have these units and are thankful to have the opportunity to demonstrate this technology for our students.

Testimonials:

"I believe that having this tool will give me the confidence and independence I need to travel places."

"When I go to university, Trekker will help me be able to orient myself to a new city without sacrificing too much study time. It will also help me to locate buildings on campus, preventing me from being late for class."

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Previously published in the CBA Fall 2008 newsletter

By Linda Stirrett (parent to a 20 year-old daughter who is congenitally blind)

Hail to braille! Ever notice how many wonderfully-positive rhyming words there are to communicate about braille? So why then does it sometimes receive "negative press", relating it to less than flattering rhyming associations, notions or practices like: stale, frail, derail, bewail, wail, snail, travail, fail, blackmail, bail or jail. We've all heard and seen it before! So let us declare, from this day forward, braille shall cease to be spoken of in the same foul breath, or considered in these misguided cerebral twists. We will work to *upscale* braille, giving it its due respect. From hereafter, let it be our mantra: "We *regale* in braille. We *wale* and *avail* ourselves of it, *curtail* negativity around it, and embrace all that it *entails*. *Braille prevails!*" Now *inhale* - *exhale!* and repeat again ...

Okay, seriously, if we knew that embracing reading and writing was going to be a painful and arduous task, would we be excited about it? Yet how often do we see curious minds and impressionable braille-reading fingers re-routed with, "That must be soooo hard!" "How can you do that?" "Nemeth ... ahhh! Run away, run away!" What I propose is that we use this forum to revel in braille and to share positive ideas and experiences; things we have done as parents and educators to elevate braille in the lives of our children.

But first! Before we get started, some "braille business" please! Let's settle an old-misnomer, perhaps a *folktale* about braille! -- "To capitalize or not to capitalize; that is the question?" I have it on good authority (and it's not *Microsoft's*), that braille is to print, as English is to French. Braille and print are codes! English and French are languages! Braille is NOT a language! We do not capitalize "print", so we do not capitalize "braille" -- unless it is referring to the infamous Louis, or it begins a sentence. You knew that already? Great, then let's get on with a *full-scale sale* as we *unveil* some "*Braille Trails and Tales*".

Mail Braille - "Free Matter for the Blind" - I always get a little excited each time I post or receive brailled materials in the mail. I bet some of you do too! After all, it's not often the Government says ... "No worries. This one's on us!" Our excitement pales in comparison to a child who receives mail, or writes and posts his/her own letter. And think how grand it will feel as they spend the fifty-two cent savings on a goodie. With inflation, gst, and pst in some provinces, don't be surprised if they learn quickly that writing many letters converts into a more worthwhile treat! And while you're at it, let's show them the newly released braille dog guide stamps that they won't need to purchase, but which Grandpa and Grandma can, or which makes a great stocking stuffer!

"Naomi Knows It's Springtime" - I remember purchasing copies of this book when my daughter was young. Its story shares a positive image of living with blindness as "Naomi" experiences the wonders of the seasons through her other senses, and rebuffs her neighbour's pity. After shedding a few tears (or more) , I carefully brailled the story in uncontracted braille onto adhesive braille label paper, and adhered it to the corresponding text in the book, producing my own twin vision books for donation to my daughter's school library. In the inside cover of each copy, I also attached a print and simulated braille reference sheet. Upon delivery of these "awareness projects" to her school, I requested that the book be put into the general circulation for families and children to read and have fun deciphering the braille. My hope was to de-mystify braille and encourage positive communications about people with visual impairments. This book is now out of circulation; however I'd be thrilled to see a comeback! I'm sure you know of many other quality books that can double for this purpose. Here's a great link to some:

<http://192.188.148.10/Education/books.htm>

Fostering Literacy through Braille for Families and Educators - I am fortunate to be involved with a tremendous non-profit organization, Alberta Society for the Visually Impaired (ASVI) Edmonton District, which fosters and elevates braille in a number of ways. Through our Society, Literary Braille and Nemeth courses have been offered to families and educators, and adaptive technology, including braille notetakers and embossers, have been donated to our children for home use. Recently we began a "Perkins-at-home Program", with the goal of ensuring that every toddler or braille-reading student in our membership has the equivalent of a paper and pen to create at home. And, in an effort to help parents of children newly diagnosed with visual impairment, our group donates copies of *Children with Visual Impairments: A Parents' Guide*, (an updated edition was released last year by Woodbine House), to our local CNIB Toy Lending Library. Another excellent resource for similar donation is *Experiencing Literacy: A Parents' Guide for Fostering Early Literacy Development of Children with Visual Impairments* (Holbrook and Koenig), and I can't help but get excited about the National Braille Press' publication: *Just Enough to Know Better*, the first resource I ever looked at related to braille.

As we know, literacy is positively correlated with employment, and employment is positively correlated with self-actualization, and healthy and autonomous living. These are only a few ideas to get us going. In an effort to promote literacy through braille, please share your "*Braille Trails and Tales*" by sending them to: Linda Stirrett, 27 Pineridge Crescent, St. Albert, Alberta T8N 4P6 or linda.stirrett@telus.net

And finally, *wassail* to the health and prosperity of *braille* -- (translation -- "Cheers to braille") -- AND to those who keep it exciting and alive!

SHORT TERM PLACEMENTS

Upper Canada Village – October 2008

Feedback from several locales indicated that travel and distance were a challenge for a number of parents. To address this challenge we delivered our first off-campus STP in October 2008.

Eight participants from the Ottawa region came together at Upper Canada Village in Morrisburg on October 4 and 5. This group of 10 – 12 year-olds immersed themselves in history, as they transformed into children living in the 1860s. Each child and staff member dressed in period costume and adhered to the social norms of the time. All meals were consistent with the period, as were the recreational activities. A rousing sack race and three-legged race occurred after a lesson in the school house.

The children also milked a cow, fed the pigs and pumped water for the horses. This hands-on experience was a first for many of the children. In addition, all had the opportunity to “apprentice” with one of the village tradesmen. The boys scattered between the cabinet maker, the shoe maker and the broom maker. Our one young lady learned how to make cinnamon rolls.

This weekend was a resounding success with several parents stating they would travel to Brantford to have their child participate in future STPs.

Our second off-campus STP will occur in Thunder Bay on May 22 – 24, 2009. Stay tuned!



Ways to Work – Finding Employment November 7-9, 2008

Twelve senior high school students enjoyed an engaging and fun weekend in November. The participants worked through a number of activities aimed at preparing them to enter the world of work. Nancy Periera, was our keynote speaker. As a blind woman who has navigated both university and a career, she shared a number of critically important pieces of wisdom with the group.

Nancy’s advise is always practical and down to earth. She holds high expectations for herself and achieves all the goals she sets for herself. She was truly an inspiration.

The culminating event of the weekend was conducting individual interviews for each participant. For a number of the participants, it was the first interview they had ever had.

Socially, the group enjoyed Saturday night out at a local restaurant. Braille menus were available.

Most of this group had been to a previous STP weekend. We did welcome several new STPers!



Tech Head Weekend January 23-25, 2009

Our second Jaws and Zoom Text weekend was another resounding success. Each group worked on their own unique project and built their skills using Jaws and Zoom Text. Everyone learned how to set up an email account and how to save and retrieve information from a flash drive. The Zoom Text group wrote their own short stories, including graphics retrieved on line and then created an audio book reading their own stories.

After a busy day in the computer lab, participants headed off to the bowling alley. The crowd really enjoyed this outing and once again, for several, it was their first time bowling.

All returned home with a new set of skills and a number of new friends.

Of the twelve participating, three were new STPers!!



Implementation of Unified English Braille (UEB) in Australia and New Zealand

by Betty Nobel and Ann MacCuspie

In May 2005, the Australian Braille Authority (ABA) formally adopted Unified English Braille as the official braille code for use in their country. This resolution was passed by the majority of its 30 member organizations. There was only one vote against its adoption. It was agreed that UEB would be phased in over a five year period. Previous to the passage of the resolution, the ABA worked very hard to promote UEB and provide information about it. It was thought that it was important to present the key elements of UEB to Braille users, transcribers and educators to allow stakeholders to provide positive or negative feedback to the ABA. This exposure to UEB was extremely valuable and helped all members of the ABA come to a decision about adoption of the code.

Josie Howse, the Director of the Vision Resource Centre, a major Braille producer in New South Wales, played a significant role in the implementation of UEB by developing UEB lessons for transcribers based on an update of the British Braille Primer which had previously been used by transcribers and teachers to learn braille. Another important factor is that two technology companies adapted their devices to include support for UEB. The Mountbatten Brailier and the Braille Note products are now configured for UEB.

UEB is being implemented at all levels from K-12. In Australia, they previously used British Braille but with capitals, the American Computer Braille Code, and a separate mathematics and chemistry code. The concept of one code for all subjects except music had considerable appeal. The standardization of a Braille code for both literary and technical areas (e.g., math, science), with reduced ambiguity and only one meaning for any given symbol, regardless of where it was used, was viewed as a tremendous advancement for those learning and using braille.

Australia is now in their third year of implementation. New South Wales was the district designated as the first area to introduce UEB. In the first year, all braille materials required for students in preschool, were produced in UEB. The following school year, materials for primary level and grade one, were produced in UEB. This process will continue until all grade levels have their books in UEB. However, any new books being produced for higher level grades, will be done immediately in UEB with a key to the code changes included in the front of the text.

Initially teachers were given the responsibility to make decisions about when their students would be introduced to UEB - in grade 3, 5, 7, or 8. This choice would be made in March to ensure the student's textbooks would be ready in UEB for the beginning of the next school year. In 2006 all technical materials (e.g., science, math) for students in primary through grade 6 were prepared in UEB and available if needed.

The students in higher grades usually chose to move to UEB after they had received one or two texts in the new code. Students who would be writing national exams had the option of continuing with textbooks in the original code during that particular school year. Because publishers are continually introducing new editions of textbooks, and new novels, teachers did not feel that the availability of materials for students was significantly affected by the introduction of UEB.

For adult readers of braille and for other consumers, public workshops held at libraries and other easily accessible locations were provided. The national braille organizations held numerous information sessions and initiated activities to support the learning of UEB. Since 2006 any new materials produced by the National Braille Library, have been produced in UEB, although books previously produced in the old code are being circulated when requested. About 50% of commercial materials used by adults are now being requested in UEB. Most clients report they are now reading materials in UEB, with ease, and some actually reported they did not even notice the change in the code.

For transcribers and proof readers, the implementation of UEB required a formal, structured approach to learning the new code. Training sessions were organized, the Australian Primer was used, and Duxbury produced a translation program for UEB. Transcribers have been overwhelmingly in favour of the new code, since its introduction. They reported that with the use of the Duxbury translator, particularly for technical materials, production from print to braille is much faster because there are fewer rules to remember. As well, all transcribers can now handle all kinds of materials (i.e., literary, math), so training transcribers in specialty areas is no longer required.

Australia and New Zealand are working together on a trans-tasman UEB Braille certification. New Zealand adopted UEB in November 2005, but its use is being phased in more gradually.

The Blind and Low Vision Education Network New Zealand (BLENNZ) introduced UEB in 2007 and, beginning in the 2008 school year, young children have been using UEB. Older students are still using the Nemeth Code for math and sciences, but are using UEB in other subject areas. In both Australia and New Zealand, when a book is produced in UEB, the braille reader either receives a UEB symbols list or one is included at the beginning of the book. Both New Zealand and Australia report the following advantages of UEB. There is one universal code only. UEB is a system that follows print and allows for typeform indicators when desired, technology can more easily be adapted to conform to UEB rules. One symbol generally has only one meaning. Current readers of literary Braille lose only nine contractions and are able to read UEB material with no problem.

In Canada we have both similar and different issues associated with the adoption of Unified English Braille. Without a national body or authority to mandate the code to be used, we are challenged to ensure stakeholders have accurate information about the code, and are willing and able to invest in the process to work collaboratively. The Canadian Braille Authority and the CNIB have been involved in committees developing UEB for over a decade. They have participated in meetings of the International Council for English Braille, and some hold prominent positions within this organization. However, the biggest challenge in Canada is getting teachers to examine the code in sufficient depth, to evaluate the potential benefits the code would provide to their students. The resources necessary to do this have recently been developed and are available free of charge. Teachers can access and/or download a copy of the Australian UEB Primer, a self-instruction document posted on their website:

<http://www.e-bility.com/roundtable/aba/ueb.php>

The answers to the Australian UEB Primer lessons are posted on the Canadian Braille Authority website, so teachers can look at the lesson, attempt the exercises, and self-correct immediately.

www.canadianbrailleauthority.ca

In April, 2010, CBA will vote on a motion to either adopt or reject the use of UEB. It is critical that teachers of braille students across Canada become informed about UEB, and become vocal about their support for, or opposition to, the adoption of UEB in Canada. The Canadian Braille Authority is anxious to have input from teachers, and grateful for this opportunity to increase the awareness among them of the importance of their voice, in the upcoming decisions.

WEBSITES TO CHECK OUT

<supporttheblind.com> is dedicated to helping vision staff with the needs and issues surrounding students with blindness and visual impairments, etc. The site was constructed by Shahan Ahmed a grade 12 student at Sir John A. Macdonald Secondary in Hamilton. Shahan became visually impaired just a few years ago and has become a strong advocate for students with special needs. Shahan would love to hear from other visually impaired students in the province.

Submitted by Larry Thomas, Vision Itinerant Teacher, Hamilton Wentworth DSB

"Talking from the Heart" is a audio webcast of 7 high school graduates in British Columbia. Each graduate was asked to identify what they learned in high school that helped them when they graduated. They were also asked what they wished they'd learned before graduation. An excellent presentation.

The website is: http://setbc.org/setbc/vision/prcvi_heart.html

Submitted by Carol Gear, Special Programs Teacher, Vision: Orientation and Mobility Instructor, York Catholic District School Board

Check out the article entitled *Materials Help Dyslexic and Blind* at <http://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2008/12/14speded.h28.html?tmp=356126621>

Roz Rowley, a teacher at the Perkins School for the Blind has been assisting blind students who are experiencing difficulty reading braille. She has modified the Wilson system, a phonics-based curriculum for dyslexia and students are finding success!

http://www.ddsb.durham.edu.on.ca/Pdf/SpecEd_Newsletters/fall_2008.pdf

I think we've accomplished some pretty cool things here this year.

submitted by Carolyn Stratford Rylott, Specialist Teacher of the Blind, Low Vision and Multiple Disabilities, Vision Technology Coordinator, Durham District School Board

Mark Your Calendars—Workshops, Conferences, Dates to Remember

Noteworthy Professional Development

For Vision Teachers, Math Teachers, Vision Itinerant Teachers, and Parents

by Elizabeth Dunton, Principal, Resource Services

World renowned math educator, Susan Osterhaus will provide a two day interactive workshop on “Technology for Accessible Mathematics and the Audio Graphing Calculator (K-12).” Susan will review math technology from low to high tech which is currently available and assist teachers in determining the most appropriate ways to teach their students. For the audio graphing calculator, participants will learn hands-on what the calculator can do.

This exciting opportunity will occur on April 17-18 at the W. Ross Macdonald School. Susan comes to us from the Texas School for the Blind. She has been a math educator working with students who are blind or visually impaired for 41 years and is the author of *Teaching Math to Visually Impaired Students*.

We are delighted to offer this outstanding professional development opportunity to vision professionals and parents across the province.

For registration details contact Kerri Readings at kerri.readings@ontario.ca



AT4ALL: ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY FOR ALL

ON THE ROAD TO SUCCESS



August 27 – 29, 2009

Ministry of Education

Provincial Schools Branch

255 Ontario St. S.

Milton, ON L9T 2M5

Phone: 905-878-2851

TTY: 905-878-7195

Questions? Ask for ext. 213

The conference will promote enhanced understanding of assistive technology (AT) in meeting the needs of all learners by:

Sharing evidence-based research on the efficacy of a variety of AT tools for learning;

Furthering the role of AT in supporting differentiated instruction;

Enhancing awareness of the role of AT in life-long learning.

WHO SHOULD ATTEND?

Educators, Parents and Families, Technicians who work in AT, Professionals (i.e. School Psychologists, Speech and Language Pathologists and Occupational Therapists), Vendors and Publishers.

Please visit www.AT4ALL.ca to register, to view “Call for Workshop Presenters” materials, and for complete conference details.

Dr. Jutai and Vendors Demonstration

February 25 & April 22

At the Ottawa District School Board on **February 25** from 1:00—4:30 pm at the Board Office.

Dr. Jutai will speak on his research regarding the psychological impact assistive technology has on the blind.

Vendors will provide demonstrations following Dr. Jutai’s keynote address.

This same PD opportunity will occur at the Robarts School in London on **April 22** from 1:00—4:00 pm. Registration information is available from kerri.readings@ontario.ca.

Canadian Vision Teachers’ 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 stimulating presentations.

CNIB Library Braille Writing Co

Cash prizes for original stories, essays and poems in braille by primary or secondary students!
 Deadline: May 29, 2009



Visit www.cnib.ca/braillewritingcontest to:
 Get details – eligibility, rules, entry form and prizes
 Get inspired – last year’s winning entries
 Get started – creative writing tips

Need info in print or braille?

Questions?

Call 1-800-268-8818 or
 Email kids@cnib.ca

PHOTO: C ISTOCKPHOTO.COM/CHRIS FERTNIG



2009 CNIB Braille Conference
A Braille Odyssey: 2009 and Beyond
October 29 – 30, 2009
Toronto, Ontario, Canada

Call for Workshops — including round tables and presentations

CNIB would like to invite proposals for workshops, roundtables and presentations that celebrate the success and potential of braille – its past, present and future. The Braille Conference will offer its registrants a variety of workshops/roundtables and presentations that are interactive, practical, skill-based, research-based and/or theoretical. We encourage proposals and participation from a range of different perspectives.

Please contact us at brailleconference@cnib.ca to obtain a form if you would like to propose a workshop, roundtable or presentation. Selections will be made by March 31, 2009.

“We differ, blind and seeing, not in the nature of our handicap, but in the spirit with which we meet it and conquer it.”

Helen Keller



VENO WORKSHOP

COME & RECHARGE YOUR BATTERY



Date: Monday March 9, 2009

Time: 8:30-3:30

Place:

York Catholic District School Board,
 320 Bloomington Rd. W.
 Aurora, Ontario L4G 3G8

Cost:

\$30.00 (lunch, breaks, fee to cover public viewing of the movie “BLINDSIGHT”) Any extra money will be donated to “Braille without Borders”.

Carol Gear, Special Programs Teacher, Vision: Orientation and Mobility Instructor, York Catholic District School Board, 905-713-1211 ext. 7638

Carol.Gear@ycdsb.ca



BLIND-LOW VISION EARLY INTERVENTION PROGRAM PARENT MENTOR POSITION (0.1 FTE)

JOB POSTING

Early Words is seeking a Parent Mentor for the Blind-Low Vision Early Intervention Program (B-LV). The B-LV Program provides education and support for parents from their child's birth to school entry. Services are designed to assist parents in encouraging the healthy development of their children and to promote skill-based learning.

The Parent Mentor:

- links families together to support each other
- provides support and education to families at appointments as requested
- assists families to advocate for themselves
- communicates with families and staff to schedule Team Meetings
- obtains, maintains and disseminates resource information as requested/required
- works collaboratively with the Family Support Workers, Early Childhood Vision Consultants and CNIB Early Intervention staff to support families

JOB SPECIFICATIONS

The Parent Mentor is:

- the parent of a child with vision loss/blindness who feels able to guide and support other parents with optimism and compassion
- familiar with community resources and has successfully navigated the system of vision support services
- organized, with good time management skills
- computer-literate
- in possession of good communication skills, both oral and written
- in possession of a valid driver's license
- able to work effectively as part of a team
- able to work selected evening hours as required

Educational Qualifications:

- post-secondary education or comparable experience

For further information or to submit a resume by March 1, 2009 please contact: Susan Honeyman, honeyman@earlywords.ca, 905-381-2828 extension 235.

ASCY is an equal opportunity employer.
Please note: only those selected for an interview will be contacted.



CNIB recognizes the need for greater public understanding of the issues facing people with vision loss. From local community events to public-speaking engagements to production of publications, CNIB is committed to informing and educating Canadians about vision health issues.

Below are just some of the publications CNIB has developed:

A Strong Beginning: A Sourcebook for Health and Education Professionals Working with Young Children Who are Visually Impaired or Blind

Chapters on anatomy, physiology of the eye, common conditions of the visual pathway, children with multiple disabilities, the multidisciplinary team, parents as partners, functional vision assessment, cognitive, social and emotional development, adapting play, transition to school, multicultural issues and much more!

Connecting to the World: Early Intervention with Young Children who are Blind or Visually Impaired (DVD and Handbook)

The essential tool kit to help professionals and students better understand how children with vision loss learn. Provides valuable information for assisting children with vision loss to understand the world around them.

Finding a New Path: Guidance for Parents of Young Children who are Visually Impaired or Blind

Handbook that can really assist families who are dealing with a child's vision loss for the first time. This book will help parents adjust to the news of a diagnosis and learn where to turn for more help; understand blindness and vision loss; feel supported; deal with common issues such as feeding and sleep disruption; foster play, recreation and friendship opportunities; learn about educational options and much more.

You and Your Vision Health: Yes! Something More Can be Done! Published in 2008, CNIB's comprehensive guide is a one-stop shop for Canadians with questions about vision health and vision loss. The book is the first of its kind in Canada and includes scientific and medical information, plus feedback from seniors who share what they wish they had known when first diagnosed with eye disease.

Tool to Assess Preparedness for Employment (CNIB TAPE Measure) (2nd edition)

Assess your clients' readiness for employment with a brand new comprehensive instrument. Tested with over 230 young working-age people with vision loss, this useful tool will allow you to discover the areas on which to focus to improve the chances of your client obtaining a job interview and job offer. Includes areas like technology, social support and communications.

For a full list of what's available or to place an order, call **1-866-659-1843** or visit the CNIB webstore at webstore.cnib.ca.

To volunteer, donate or find out more about CNIB programs and services, please call **1-800-563-2642** or visit www.cnib.ca.

Blind-Low Vision Early Intervention Program
Provided by Ministry of Children and Youth Services (MCYS)

Submitted by Susan Honeyman, Coordinator, Early Words/1ers mots

Central South Blind-Low Vision Early Intervention Program

Ontario's Blind-Low Vision Early Intervention Program is designed to give children who are born blind or with low vision the best possible start in life. Specialized family-centered services are funded by the province and are available for children from birth to Grade 1.

The program provides education and support for parents so they can encourage the healthy development of their children. Parents learn to help their children develop the skills they need for daily activities at home and in early learning and care settings.

When children are diagnosed with blindness or low vision, a referral can be made to the local Blind-Low Vision Program by a physician, ophthalmologist, optometrist, parent or caregiver. The Blind-Low Vision program offers three types of services:

Family support:

The program provides support to parents when their child has been diagnosed with blindness or low vision. Family support services are provided by family support workers who are graduate-level social workers specially trained in the impact of a visual impairment on child development. The family support worker will help the family understand and cope with the implications of the diagnosis and help them make informed decisions about support services.

Intervention services:

Intervention services are provided by specially trained early childhood blind/low vision consultants in the family's home. The consultant teaches parents how to support their child's development in the following areas:

- intentional movement (orientation and mobility)
- development of motor skills (e.g. rolling, reaching, crawling, walking, and use of hands to manipulate and explore objects)
- daily living skills (e.g. eating, dressing, toileting)
- concept development (e.g. object identification, function and characteristics)
- social and emotional development
- language and communication development
- how to make the most of residual vision
- how to use all the senses to promote development.

Consultation services:

When a child enters a child care or early learning center, Blind-Low Vision Program staff will help the early childhood educators at the center learn how to best work with and teach a child who is blind or has low vision.

Last year the Blind-Low Vision Program served 367 young children and their families in Ontario. For further information about this program or to find your closest contact please go to www.children.gov.on.ca.

Early Education Transition Services

provided by the W. Ross Macdonald School, 350 Brant Ave., Brantford, ON N3T 3J9

(519) 759-0730, Ext. 219

The W. Ross Macdonald School, Vision Resource Services, will provide assessment for pre-school children entering elementary school who are blind/visually impaired. The services can include: assessments in functional vision; print/braille media; orientation and mobility; and SEA claims.

We will also provide program recommendations appropriate to the child's visual impairment for concept development, language development, activities of daily living, and motor development.