A message from our director

The Victorian Deaf Education Institute was established, in part, to monitor and improve outcomes for students who are deaf or hard of hearing (D/HH). Research is a valuable method of understanding best educational practice for teachers and students alike. Given this, VDEI has commissioned seven innovative research projects in 2015-16.

Educational support (including classroom teachers, teachers of the deaf, speech pathologist, and teacher aides) for students who are D/HH is essential for maximising academic potential. VDEI has commissioned the University of Melbourne Speech Pathology Department and Graduate School of Education to write an Australian Research Council (ARC) Linkage Research Grant application to investigate in-school factors that influence the outcomes of students who are D/HH. The University of Melbourne will submit the ARC application in the near future. A Research Advisory Panel guides and informs the research. It consists of stakeholders representing the Department of Education, educators, service providers, unions, professional associations, adults who are D/HH and families of children who are DHH. Pending ARC funding, results will inform policy development and educators of evidence-based educational support specific to students who are D/HH. This research is in its pilot stage leading up to the ARC application submission.

VDEI continues to work with the National Acoustics Laboratory which oversees the Longitudinal Outcomes of Children with Hearing Loss (LOCHI) study. VDEI recently commissioned NAL to conduct two studies related to social capital. Social capital is the benefit people derive from relationships – either group relationships or individual relationships. NAL seek to understand how adolescents (aged 11-15) use and gain social capital with their language, literacy, and psychosocial skills. An online survey includes questions about the participants’ social networks and support such as: access to services, online interaction, school and community participation, and healthcare. NAL further seek to understand their parents’ social capital and how this empowers families. VDEI’s hypothesis is that the stronger the family social capital and the adolescent social capital, the more positive the student’s educational experience.

VDEI offers a competitive open sector research grant annually to support existing or new research promising improved outcomes in Victorian deaf education. A NAL/Australian Hearing research team led by Dr Megan Gilliver received the 2015 grant. Their study investigates whether parents can improve their pre-schooler’s phonological awareness using tablet-based apps. The study also seeks to understand the supports benefiting parents to deliver this instruction. VDEI further awarded the 2016 grant to a University of Melbourne research team led by Sharon Klieve. They seek to understand whether rich and explicit instruction develops the vocabulary of Prep students who are D/HH. Ten teachers of the deaf will be trained to deliver the Text Talk vocabulary building package to students. This pedagogy has proven successful in America and is yet to be trialed in Australia.

VDEI is collaborating further with Ann Porter of Aussie Deaf Kids who will research parental decision-making. The study seeks to understand Victorian trends in the LOCHI study that are different to trends in other states. Victorian children who are D/HH received hearing aids later and enrolled in early education later. They were less likely to use spoken language at home or during early intervention and had poorer language outcomes. A greater proportion of children also changed from signed to spoken language during educational intervention in Victoria than in other states. This research will attempt to discover parental decision-making processes that resulted in some of these trends.

VDEI is also commissioning a systematic review of literature about bimodal/bilingual literacy learning strategies for students who communicate using signed language. The systematic review will be a valuable resource for program planning and delivery. VDEI will endeavour to make the systematic review of literature available on VDEI’s website.

Lastly, VDEI is commissioning a research project that will lead to a working definition of bimodal/bilingual in the Victorian deaf education context. This work is in its early stages. VDEI will endeavour to keep all practitioner and families in the sector up-to-date with this research and all other VDEI commissioned research projects.

Dr Jill Duncan
VDEI’s Leadership of the Inclusive Education Workforce Capability Project

VDEI is leading, in collaboration with academics, inclusive education content experts, and the Victorian Institute for Teaching, the Inclusive Education Workforce Capability Project (The Project). The Project investigates the professional learning required to help teachers make classrooms inclusive of all learners. Evidence-based research informs every aspect of The Project. The Project includes:

- a literature review of evidence-based inclusive education initial teacher training and the ongoing professional learning
- an inclusive education learning needs analysis online survey - released in April 2016, and provided every registered teacher in Victoria the opportunity to identify their personal learning requirements related to teaching children and young people with disabilities
- a scoping study of professional learning opportunities available in 2016 in Victoria
- a feasibility study and business case for the proposed Victorian Inclusive Education Institute, and
- an inclusive education workforce capability report, which will be synthesis of the Project and a series of options for consideration.

MORE INFORMATION

The recent review into the Program for Students with Disabilities found that there is no disability-specific workforce capability strategy and although there are a range of existing professional learning opportunities, there remains a lack of consistent disability-specific professional learning for most school leaders and teachers. This means that the education workforce is often not well equipped to provide an inclusive environment or to respond to the differing needs of students with disabilities. Details about the project are available on VDEI’s website - [http://www.deafeducation.vic.edu.au/News-Events/Pages/Professional-learning-to-support-inclusive-teaching.aspx](http://www.deafeducation.vic.edu.au/News-Events/Pages/Professional-learning-to-support-inclusive-teaching.aspx)

Online Literacy Lecture Series

Online Literacy Project VDEI is currently developing an online lecture series titled: Literacy development for students who are deaf or hard of hearing who use spoken language. The online literacy program supports the Education State initiatives, particularly the Framework for Improving Student Outcomes in the area of Experience in Teaching and Learning, by building practice excellence. [http://www.deafeducation.vic.edu.au/News-Events/Pages/Online-Literacy-Lecture-Series.aspx](http://www.deafeducation.vic.edu.au/News-Events/Pages/Online-Literacy-Lecture-Series.aspx)

Video – Transitioning children from early intervention to primary school

In this short video, three parents share their stories and that of their child who is deaf or hard of hearing as they transition from early intervention into primary school. These stories capture some of the challenges faced by parents when considering the best education options for their child, and how they have successfully transitioned their child from early childhood through to primary school learning. [http://www.deafeducation.vic.edu.au/Resources/Pages/Parent-Resources.aspx](http://www.deafeducation.vic.edu.au/Resources/Pages/Parent-Resources.aspx)

Meet VDEI’s GM of Professional Learning Programs

Hi, my name is Matt Tibble, and I have recently joined the team at VDEI. I have been working for the Department for almost seven years, mainly at the Bastow Institute of Educational Leadership, designing and managing Bastow professional learning programs and various Bastow operations. I look forward to leading the development of VDEI’s learning program for 2017 that delivers on DET’s commitment to supporting professional development for educational professionals in the deaf education sector. If you see me at one of our learning events, be sure to say hi!