A message from our director

The Victorian Deaf Education Institute (VDEI) has completed three evaluations of its 2015-16 Professional Learning Program: 1) a meta-analysis of surveys returned after VDEI’s learning events, 2) stakeholders focus groups, and also 3) an online learning needs analysis of the sector. I will summarise each for you here.

Evaluation 1: Meta-analysis of VDEI’s learning events in 2015
The meta-analysis summarised 193 surveys received after learning events delivered onsite and online. Survey statistical trends indicated high approval ratings for the event topic’s educational relevance, knowledge and learning gains; the opportunity for professional development; and VDEI’s event organisation. The majority nominated ‘Quarterly’ (49%) and ‘Monthly’ (33%) as their preferred frequency of attending VDEI events. VDEI’s technical and general support during webinars and onsite presentations were appreciated too.

Half of the surveys (n = 87) revealed a consistent need for furthering professional learning; an expert or course instructing life skills specific to a student managing their own challenges of living with deafness. Healthy mental wellbeing, which follows the student’s mastering of these attributes, was also a priority.

Evaluation 2: Stakeholder focus groups
VDEI sought feedback on its professional learning program from three focus groups in May 2016: principals and assistant principals (n = 8), teachers of the deaf (n = 6), and paraprofessionals (n = 4). A facilitator conversed with these 18 stakeholders who attended a separate day for each group at VDEI. Their feedback informed three key themes: provision of VDEI’s professional development, the benefits of VDEI’s professional learning program, and the challenges and learning gaps in the education of students who are DHH.
Constructive feedback from each group further yielded the trend of research not translating to practice easily for various reasons, typically beyond the presenter’s control. Follow-up seminars were therefore recommended to practice, integrate, and hone the recommended new pedagogy further.
Altogether, the stakeholders viewed VDEI in high esteem and urged the continuation of VDEI’s professional learning program. Most also requested that VDEI facilitate and support the strengthening of relations between parent and professional groups. Paraprofessionals lamented that they received insufficient learning to meet their unique professional needs. Equipping students with life skills specific to identifying, circumventing, and mastering challenges experienced with deafness was highly demanded too.
Additional professional learning suggestions included: hearing the lived experience of presenters who are DHH, bimodal education, how to best work with families or children with multiple disabilities, and how to encourage parents to learn Auslan. The needs of rural Visiting Teachers of the Deaf were particularly pronounced.

Evaluation 3: VDEI’s annual online learning needs analysis - 2015
Twenty-eight teachers of the deaf completed VDEI’s annual learning needs analysis. Their average age was 54 and they averaged 18 years’ experience working as a teacher of the deaf. The majority (n = 16) communicated with spoken language only with their students. Thirteen taught at a deaf facility, eight were visiting teachers, and four taught at a specialist school for the deaf. Three did not specify their occupation.

Here are the learning needs of the teachers of the deaf who replied to the survey in order of preference:
• developing communication, language, and literacy (79%)
• understanding the student’s individual learning requirements and social-emotional needs (71%)
• facilitating the student’s social-emotional development (68%)
• communication, language, and literacy assessment tools (68%)
• developing spoken language (64%)
• implementing individual learning plans (61%)
• accessing appropriate resources (57%)
• catering for students with additional disabilities and/or learning needs (57%)
• how living with deafness influences development (54%).

Another survey item asked what knowledge and support the sector as a whole most requires. Here are the responses in order of preference:

• understanding and facilitating the mental wellbeing of students appeared the strongest need (61%)
• teaching the students’ acquisition of both spoken language (57%) and Auslan (57%)
• skills for training mainstream teachers (54%)
• increasing their awareness of deafness (54%).

The majority (86%) viewed onsite learning at VDEI as their favoured mode of learning delivery. In conclusion, the three separate analyses share a striking need: life skills specific to a student managing their own challenges of living with deafness. This concept differs greatly from traditional pedagogy for students without a disability.

Survey responses show a need for understanding and prescribing practical deaf-specific life skills. These attributes include the student’s: psychological adaptation after cochlear implantation, acceptance of hearing loss, how to make and keep friends, managing difficult people or social settings, proactive thinking and behavioural strategies during adversity, self-advocacy, organisational skills, career orientation, and preparing for adult living. As such, what the student can do for themselves to manage their own life. Dovetailing the above, the students’ mental health and socio-emotional needs are therefore prevalent and immediate. The needs of Visiting Teachers of the Deaf and also students educated in mainstream schools are also distinct. How to best serve the needs of students with multiple disabilities as well as Auslan users was also recommended.

VDEI was encouraged to continue courses offering assessment tools and strategies for fostering a student’s communication, language, and literacy development. Praise for VDEI’s webinar service delivery, which began in 2015, was another commonality. The twilight timestot (5pm-7pm) accommodated the school schedule and the program’s diversity served a greater range of teachers’ individualised professional development. Other online conveniences such as no travel or parking were also appreciated. Overall, feedback suggests that VDEI is catering to the complex needs of diverse professionals serving children and young people who are DHH in Victoria. They also believed that VDEI is capable of delivering requested changes. I wholeheartedly thank the people who provided feedback that we will endeavour to incorporate into our 2017 program.

Dr Jill Duncan

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**School Wide Positive Behaviour Support**

**Professional Learning 2016**

The Department of Education and Training, in collaboration with Melbourne Graduate School of Education (MGSE), is delivering professional learning sessions to continue to support schools who have previously undertaken training in School Wide Positive Behaviour Support (SWPBS). Dr Shiralee Poad (MGSE) will present six topics in SWPBS designed to provide additional capabilities and extend programs within existing SWPBS schools. A further two topics on Functional Behaviour Assessment and School Refusal will be delivered in workshop format by Dr Lisa McKay-Brown (MGSE) and co-facilitated by Travencore School.

[Read More and Register]

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**New exciting resources available on the VDEI website!**

**COMING SOON**

An Auslan version of the PM series, level 1-5, for beginning readers. This reading series was translated into Auslan using deaf language models and is a student resource for teachers, parents
and carers. A digital Auslan version has been developed to be used with the hardcopy of the book. Congratulations to Cengage Learning for allowing the staff at the Bendigo deaf facility to produce this fabulous resource.

The second resource is a four-part set of narrated PowerPoints for parents. These presentations cover ways in which parents can best support adolescents who are deaf or hard of hearing (DHH) through the career decision-making and transition process; self-advocacy skills; and supports and resources for post-secondary education and employment.

Read More

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Theory of Mind Development and Children Who Are Deaf and Hard of Hearing - Stacey L. Tucci, Ph.D.

Theory of Mind (ToM) is the ability to attribute mental states (e.g., beliefs, desires, knowledge, pretending) to one’s self and others and to understand that others may have beliefs, desires, and intentions that differ from one’s own (Want & Gattis, 2005). A developed ToM allows one to understand that behaviour may be driven by mental states (e.g., beliefs, desires, knowledge). As such, behaviour can be predicted and explained by mental states.

Read More

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New Australian Hearing Online Support Service Launched

‘Hearing Help’ is an initiative of Australian Hearing which allows people to complete a hearing test online and access impartial hearing advice and support from hearing clinicians.

To celebrate Hearing Awareness Week, Australian Hearing is urging all Australians to take the online test today.

Read More

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Educational Audiology: Increasing Teacher Capacity for Improving Access To Assistive Educational Technology

3 Part Webinar Series
Presenter: Dr Susan Dillmuth-Miller

Dates: Meet & greet
Thurs 6 October

Webinars: 4pm-5.30pm
Thurs 27 October
Thurs 10 October

Helping Students who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing Navigate Teenage Years

Twilight Workshop
Presenter: Paula Zalcberg
Date: Thurs 13 October 2016
Time: 5pm-7pm
(Registration from 4.30pm)

More Information

Linking Evidence-Based Interventions to Assessment Driven Goals

One Day Workshop
Presenters: Kate Leigh and Sharon Klieve
Date: Thurs 20 October 2016
Time: 9pm-4pm

More Information
Thurs 24 November

More Information

2016 Professional Learning Snapshot
Want to see what's happening at VDEI in 2016?
View and download our 2016 Professional Learning Snapshot.

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