In this edition:

- Last professional learning event for 2015!
- New and exciting 2016 coaching and mentoring opportunities
- Enhancing the linguistic and cognitive development of signing students who are deaf
As I mentioned in the 2015 Term 3 newsletter, The Victorian Government made a commitment to establish Victoria as the Education State where every Victorian has an equal right to the knowledge and skills to shape their lives. Part of this work is to promote inclusive practices through the Special Needs Plan (SNP). VDEI is leading two Special Needs Plan initiatives: the Review of the Program for Students with Disabilities (PSD) and the Inclusive Education Workforce Capability project.

On 23 October 2015 the Minister for Education launched the Victorian Government’s Special Needs Plan commitment that as a condition of teacher registration with the Victorian Institute of Teaching (VIT), all new teachers will be required to have completed a special needs component as part of their tertiary studies. Existing teachers will also undertake special needs training as part of their ongoing professional development. The VIT is leading the regulatory registration requirements for teachers and Initial Teacher Education program accreditation. The Department of Education and Training is undertaking the SNP Inclusive Education Workforce Capability project in collaboration with the VIT to further lift the standard of teaching and educational inclusion for students with disabilities. VDEI is responsible for this project and has scoped a five stage implementation plan to identify inclusive practice teacher learning needs not currently met. Recommendations will be made to the Minister of Education in mid 2016.

VDEI’s core work continues with an exceptional range of professional learning opportunities such as our Auslan Intensive Course for Teachers of the Deaf and two mentoring programs: Advanced Pedagogy in Signed Language and Auditory-Verbal Practice.

As the 2015 school year draws to a close, I acknowledge and thank our many associates, patrons, and colleagues who join us in our pursuit of maximising the learning potential of every child living in Victoria who is deaf or hard of hearing. I pay particular tribute to Professor Greg Leigh and Ms Trudy Smith of RIDBC Renwick Centre for their collaboration and generosity in supporting VDEI’s professional learning program. A further special thanks to the Victorian College for the Deaf (VCD) for allowing VDEI to share its facilities. It is a joy to work alongside VCD’s students, staff and parents.

Finally, I am grateful to my VDEI colleagues. The challenge of fulfilling the Education State vision has been at times unrelenting. My team wholeheartedly embraced the challenge and delivered every milestone on target. Each team member has contributed to the success of VDEI, the PSD Review and the Inclusive Education Workforce Capability Project. I believe that 2015 has been an outstanding success for VDEI in every measure and look forward to new opportunities for supporting children and young people with disabilities in 2016.

Dr Jill Duncan, Director
For more details and to obtain an EOI, see the news and events section on VDEI’s website.

A message about parking at VDEI

Deaf Children Australia recently sold the three small freehold parcels of its 597 St Kilda Road property, which means that visitor parking is now unavailable. We apologise for the inconvenience this may cause VDEI’s visitors.

The VDEI Learning Centre

VDEI have a purpose built Learning Centre to host professional learning and partnered programs. The learning spaces are designed for flexibility of use and layouts, perfect for hosting small groups or up to 100 participants. If you would like to book the VDEI learning centre.

Download the booking form.

Contact Us

Enhancing the linguistic and cognitive development of signing students who are deaf or hard of hearing

By Dr. Breda Carty

I attended the International Congress on Education of the Deaf (ICED) in Athens in July 2015. One of the most interesting sessions was a symposium about the challenges of working with signing students who are deaf or hard of hearing (DHH) who may not have rich sign language input outside their school environment. Children whose parents are also DHH, or exposed to other environments with fluent and consistent sign communication, are more likely to have age-appropriate academic and social skills. However, only a small minority of signing students have these linguistically rich backgrounds. The symposium I attended focussed on what teachers can do to enrich the linguistic and cognitive abilities of students who are not exposed to complex signed communication in their home or social environments. Read more

Auslan Intensive Course for Teachers of the Deaf

The Auslan Intensive program provided 23 practitioners with an opportunity to build their Auslan skills. Participants attended five days of professional learning held at fortnightly intervals over a ten week period. Specific learning tasks completed between professional learning days provided an opportunity for participants to consolidate their developing skills.
The course, presented by Joe Sabolec, Steph Linder and Jennie Kadiki from Melbourne Polytechnic, focused on some of the more complex features of Auslan; including the use of space, depicting signs and strategies such as constructed action and dialogue. Feedback provided from course participants was extremely positive. 

The content was so interesting and delivered in a way I wasn’t expecting - not the usual Auslan PD. Much more in-depth and relevant from the perspective of those who are native users. The fact that it was tailor-made to suit our level of experience and the time and thought that went into this was very much appreciated. And finally, the way VDEI made us feel so special at the end - like we had come on a journey together. I feel extremely lucky to have been able to participate in such a wonderful program. 

Sharon Dart 
TOD Mount View Facility

Have your say! The professional learning needs annual survey

VDEI’s 2015 annual professional learning needs survey is now available. The survey, which was originally developed in 2012, has been updated and distributed annually since its inception. VDEI uses the data from this survey to assist future VDEI professional learning opportunities and to ensure the program continues to meet the needs of professionals working within deaf education.

The survey is divided into five parts:

- your current employment
- about you
- professional learning in 2015
- professional learning for the future (matched against the NAATD competencies)
- additional areas for knowledge and support.

The survey should take approximately 10-15 minutes to complete. If you have any questions please call us on 03 90326400 or email vdei@deafeducation.vic.edu.au

Access the survey here:

Literature review: Mentoring in schools by adults who are deaf
Australian mentor programs have proven popular in catering to the social needs of protégées. The Victorian Deaf Education Institute wanted to know how mentors would benefit students in schools. VDEI’s Senior Project Officer Dr Paul Jacobs and Esperanza Torres therefore conducted a literature review about mentoring in schools by adults who are deaf or hard of hearing (DHH). Students living with deafness encounter numerous academic, psychological, and social challenges that students without a disability do not. A mentor may therefore guide students during their schooling. No such studies were identified. However, three studies in academic settings of mentors with adult protégés who are also DHH are instructive. This literature review also defined the mentoring in the general literature, the strength-based attributes of professionals living with deafness, and Australian deaf-specific mentoring programs. While it may be possible to deliver mentors to school-aged protégés who are also deaf or hard of hearing, there is a need to ensure mentors are adequately trained. Evidence-based and deaf-specific career orientation and social skills programs are recommended to complement the mentoring.

VDEI's Coaching and Mentoring: Auditory-Verbal Therapy in 2015

The Victorian Deaf Education Institute's (VDEI) Coaching and Mentoring: Auditory-Verbal Therapy (AVT) program was also a success in 2015. Five Victorian teachers of the deaf received intensive coaching and mentoring to further develop their skills in the teaching of students who are deaf or hard of hearing (DHH) who use spoken language to communicate.

Cheryl L. Dickson delivered the first year of this course. She provided: one-to-one mentoring, convened online discussions, and analysed filmed teaching instruction to advise the participants’ teaching. Associate Professor Helen Morrison from the Department of Communication Sciences and Disorders at Texas Christian University also instructed the participants. Read more

Expressions of Interest are now available for the 2016 Coaching and Mentoring in Auditory-Verbal Therapy (AVT). For more details and to obtain an EOI, see the news and events section on VDEI’s website.
Transition to Post School Education and Employment

In 2015 VDEI has worked extensively with Dr Renee Punch on a range of professional learning programs and materials to increase professionals and parents knowledge in the area of transition to post-school education and employment for students who are deaf or hard of hearing. Practitioners have had the opportunity to participate in an extended twilight seminar and/or a webinar series held in Term 2.

The latest resource to be developed is a four-part narrated PowerPoint (PPT) that highlights important principles in the post-school transition of students who are deaf or hard of hearing. While it is primarily designed for careers personnel, including career counsellors and disability liaison officers, all professionals working in this area would benefit from viewing the resource.

The PPT’s can be accessed in the resource section on VDEI’s website.