



## **The STELLAR programme: A summary**

The STELLAR programme is run by Wordworks, a non-profit organisation set up in 2005 to support early language and literacy learning among children from historically disadvantaged communities in South Africa. STELLAR stands for 'strengthening early language and literacy teaching in Grade R'.

### Aim

The objective of the STELLAR programme is to improve the language and literacy skills of Grade R children. To achieve this, we provide training and materials to Grade R teachers to help them develop the knowledge and skills to teach early language and literacy effectively.

### Training

Teachers participating in the programme attend monthly training workshops over a period of six months. The sessions are held after school and last for 2 – 2.5 hours. At each workshop, STELLAR trainers share information and ideas on teaching techniques, activities and learning materials that support effective early language and literacy learning. We use participative learning techniques that help to build competence and confidence in a non-judgmental environment. Teachers implement the programme between workshops and share their experiences and learning with each other as the course progresses.

### Structure

The programme is built around eight story-based modules. For each module, teachers are given step-by-step guidelines for whole class and small group activities over a two-week period. Children move through immersion in a rich language experience in week one, to participating in a range of fun activities in week two which encourage the application of the newly learned language and vocabulary. In this way, children are helped to become confident listeners and speakers, to build their knowledge of letters and sounds, and to begin to express their ideas through emergent writing.

### Materials

Each STELLAR participant receives a pack of user-friendly materials that enables them to continue delivering the programme after the training has ended. The resource packs include story books, visual aids, activity guidelines, tips and ideas, photocopyable resources, sequence pictures, and much more.

## Why is the STELLAR programme needed?

South African children are underperforming significantly in literacy. Many children still fail to reach the minimum expected level, and results lag behind even other low-income African countries. The reasons for this are complex, but a central problem is that for many years, there has not been enough emphasis on early language and literacy learning before the start of formal schooling and in Grade R.

The evidence shows that children who have more developed language and literacy capabilities when they start Grade One, go on to become better readers and writers. In particular, in the early years children need to have opportunities to build their competence and understanding in two key areas – language skills (such as vocabulary and comprehension) and code-related skills (such as letter-sound knowledge).

## History and plans

The STELLAR programme started in 2011, and has been delivered in the Metro South and Metro Central Education Districts in the Western Cape. By the end of 2013, 137 Grade R teachers at 68 schools and preschools had taken part.

The programme is continuing to grow in 2014 with the help of funding from USAID's School Capacity and Innovation Programme. From 2015, Wordworks will provide training to Education District officials and non-profit organisations, so that they can deliver the STELLAR programme independently. Working with these partners will enable the programme to touch far more children than we could reach on our own.

## About Wordworks

Wordworks supports early language and literacy learning among children from historically disadvantaged communities in South Africa. We seek to share our materials, know-how and enthusiasm with teachers, parents, volunteer tutors and home visitors in a respectful and inclusive way.

At Wordworks, we are passionate about children and passionate about literacy. We believe that every child in South Africa deserves the chance to learn to read and write successfully. And we know that without that chance, many children will never reach their full potential.

For more information, visit [www.wordworks.org.za](http://www.wordworks.org.za)



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