

FROM SHELLEY

If you visited schools where tutors are using the Ready Steady Read Write programme to support young children learning to read and write, you would be struck by children contributing eagerly to conversations about books and a strong message to children that it's important to try even if they can't write perfectly. You would see how much fun reading and writing can be when it is taught through games, and you would notice children eager to begin their lessons, and leaving with a sense of confidence in themselves as readers and writers.

We know that learning is taking place within this supportive space, and this is confirmed by feedback from teachers, and the fact that schools sustain programmes year on year. However, tracking the actual progress of the children on literacy assessments is also an important part of the Ready Steady programme. Annual assessments of children's literacy at the start of Grade One, six months into the year and at the end of the year, confirm that on average children are making substantial progress.

The improvements in their scores are statistically significant, which means that these changes would not just have happened by chance. We know that children are in class every day, and so their literacy should be improving, however, systemic results in many of the schools where we work show that children often struggle to make expected levels of progress. We are therefore greatly encouraged by the progress made by children participating in the tutoring programme. Since

2006, over 20 000 children have received support through tutors offering their time.

20 000 children started their school journey with stronger language and literacy skills, greater confidence in their ability to express themselves and an experience of success with reading and writing. They felt supported, were more eager to learn and more likely to fulfil their potential. We are reminded that 'it does not matter how great or small the impact is, as long as there is progress it brings a brighter future' (the words of a tutor at Beautiful Gate).

We know that many people want to be part of making South Africa a better place for all. If you would like to be a part of making a difference, please consider making a donation to Wordworks. This donation could mean that more children benefit from weekly tutoring to give them the support they need to learn to read and write. It could mean the difference between a confident reader with a love of books – and a child whose potential is never realised. <http://www.wordworks.org.za/category/make-a-donation/>

Shelley
Shelley O'Carroll,
Director of Wordworks



Ready Steady Tutors learn together: Here are some highlights from the Ready Steady cluster sessions where 138 tutors came together to reflect on the programme at their sites, learn more about supporting early literacy, solve problems and share ideas with each other and their Wordworks mentors.



Tutors sharing feedback and exchanging ideas to improve their Ready Steady programme.



GCU Academy Tutors learning about making toys for toddlers using recycled materials.



The winning literacy quiz team!

TOP TIP

Learning to form letters

Help young children form letters by asking them to make b-i-g movements. Keep these activities fun:

use playdough to make letters, or encourage children to write letters in the sand with a stick or on paving with chalk or a paintbrush and water. They can also write letters with their fingers in trays filled with sand. Children find it easier to write in capital letters, but it is best to show Grade R and Grade 1 children how to form lower case letters.





MY STORY

We pay tribute to **Lynette du Preez** who has recently signed off from the Ready Steady Programme after eight years. She became involved with the programme after she retired as a high school teacher. While most people would be easing into their well-deserved break, Lynette decided she wanted to be involved with helping children to read and write.

After attending training, I started with the Ready Steady programme at St Andrews Primary in Saldanha Bay. As the material was mostly in English, I translated some of it into Afrikaans. Initially I tutored four Grade 1 children in a small storeroom. The next year, four parents from the community joined my team.

In 2013, I moved to Cape Town and started the programme at Simon van der Stel Primary in Wynberg. Two happy years followed with a team of six diligent tutors. On my return to Veldrif, I started the Ready Steady programme at Noordhoek Primary with six volunteers. After my husband's health deteriorated, I was obliged to leave the project.

A highlight for me as a tutor was when I explained to a child how letters form a word. I saw his eyes light up, and he said: "Oh, is that how it works!"

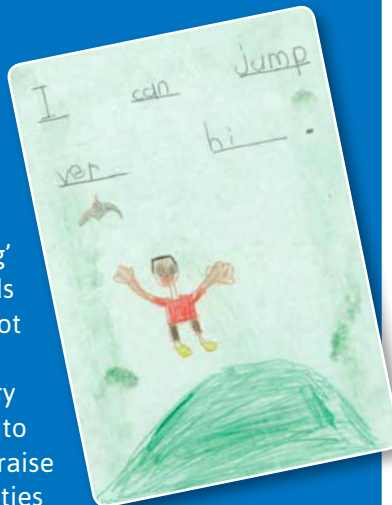
These eight years enriched my life tremendously. I met and worked with friendly people and saw that I could make a difference in a child's life. My wish to continue until my eightieth birthday, was not fulfilled, but I cherish the lovely memories.

Thank you, Wordworks!

DID YOU KNOW?

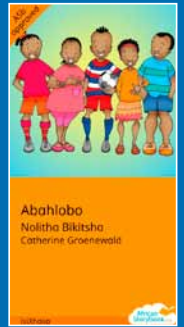
Have-a-go writing

Learning to write is a process; children in Grade R and Grade 1 need plenty of opportunities for meaningful writing experiences where they can 'have a go' without being anxious about making errors. As children learn to write, they go through a stage of 'invented spelling' where their spelling matches the sounds they hear in words, but the words are not always spelt correctly. Children should be encouraged to trust themselves to try to write words. They will feel confident to 'have a go' if they are supported with praise and affirmation. If they have opportunities to write often, they will learn the correct way of spelling words over time.



Did you see?

Do you struggle to find locally written books for young children just starting to learn to read – particularly in African languages? Did you know that there are many lovely multilingual children's books that you can download for FREE from www.africanstorybook.org. You can even access the books on your phone by installing the African Storybook Reader from the Google Playstore. *Abahlobo*, a beautifully illustrated early reader, is our most recent favourite!



Did you hear?

Introducing the Wordworks Big game box Workshop!

Learning to read and write should be enjoyable and children learn best when they are having fun! Wordworks has developed games and activities that are fun and engaging and help children to practise letters, sounds and words so that they can read and write with more success. The games are currently available in English and will be available in Afrikaans and isiXhosa later in the year.



If you work with young children and would like to attend a practical workshop on how to use the games to support early literacy, or if you would like to purchase your own Big Game Box, get more details here: <https://bit.ly/2N1oQT1>

Remember, if you donate to a Public Benefit Organisation (PBO) then you qualify for a tax deduction. Wordworks is registered as a PBO and we can issue you with a Section 18A certificate/receipt to include in your annual tax return.