

MARCH 2015

Wordworks launches a new programme

Since 2005, Wordworks programmes have supported children as they begin Grade R and move into Grade One. We have always believed in the importance of supporting caregivers, but realised that there was much work to be done before children even begin school. Why is this important? We now know that the first 1000 days of life (from conception to two years) are crucial as this is when the foundations are laid for later learning, thinking and reasoning. Research shows that a warm, nurturing, responsive relationship with a parent or carer helps a child's brain to grow.



We are excited to launch EVERY WORD COUNTS, our newest programme which aims to support parents and carers to build a strong language and learning foundation in their babies and young children (birth - 5 years). EVERY WORD COUNTS includes a comprehensive trainer's guide with resources as well as six illustrated books covering the following topics:

birth to 2 years: talk, play, sing, share books;

3 to 5 years: talk, play, sing, share books, draw and write, enjoy maths every day.

EVERY WORD COUNTS package of training materials and resources is available to NGOs to use in their home visiting and parenting programmes. Individual families wishing to strengthen early learning and language development at home will soon also be able to use the books.



Shelley O'Carroll, Brigid Comrie and Lynn Stefano



Mentor mothers get to work with some of the EVERY WORD COUNTS books during training at Philani, Khayelitsha.

Top tip:

It is fun to introduce new vocabulary through telling children stories. While it can be helpful to give a simple definition of a word as you tell a story, be careful to keep the flow of the story. You can also discuss words before or after the story. Do actions to bring the word alive and ask children to say it over again to 'feel' it in their mouths. Try to use the vocabulary often in the days that follow so that children hear and practise these new words.

STOP PRESS... STOP PRESS...

We are honoured to introduce two new members of our board.

Dr Mantoa Smouse is a senior lecturer and Head of African Languages at UCT. Her research interests include second language acquisition and teaching, childhood bilingualism, multilingualism and child language development.



Mrs Pam Picken has worked in the field of early childhood development for 36 years - as a teacher, as Director of TREE and more recently in ECD consultancy and research. She is passionate about supporting leaders in the ECD and development sectors.



My story

"My name is Ada Brown and I am a Grade R educator at Littlewood Primary School in Mitchells Plain. Growing up was not easy for me as I lost both my parents at a tender age of twelve. My sisters and I was then sent to a children's home. It was here where my passion to work with children started and I am still assisting children in the community.

Being a teacher in a disadvantaged area comes with its challenges. Here the learners are exposed to poverty, violence, gangsterism, drug and alcohol abuse.

When I heard about Wordworks I thought that it was going to be the same as all the other literacy and language workshops. After the first workshop I saw that there was something different. I left the workshop very excited. I immediately read Ali and the paint and prepared the activities for the week. By the third day I could see a change in my learners. The shy learners were participating and the busy learners settled down because they could not wait for their turn to tell the story, using the puppets.

Wordworks is a very positive way of teaching early language and emergent writing skills. For me personally it really works and it is designed in such a way that it caters for all the different ways in which children learn. My learners have become strong emergent writers and their vocabulary has increased tremendously. They have also become very confident in telling stories and role playing them.

When Angelique asked if she could come and film my learners and I, I said "yes" because I knew that with the filming, many teachers, parents, community members and volunteers would be encouraged and empowered. This has been an exciting and rewarding journey for me as well as for the learners."

Did you know?

Reading for fun helps children's brains to grow. A recent study showed that reading for pleasure improves not just literacy, but maths ability too! In this study, reading for pleasure was linked to greater intellectual progress, in vocabulary, spelling and mathematics. What a good reason to join a library and enjoy books with your children!

[A British Cohort study of 17,000 people, reported in The Guardian]



Ada Brown during filming at Littlewood Primary School.

Did you see?

We are excited to tell you that the Stellar lessons are now available for viewing on Youtube at this link.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ji70h3ABiu8&list=PLHR0d5XLzYW4feeXrE3TTUDkPSuXqpdV9>. Thanks to Ada Brown and the children from Littlewood Primary School who were open to sharing their experience on camera.



For more information visit our website: www.wordworks.org.za or keep up to date with our activities by following us on Facebook at www.facebook.com/wordworksSA.