

## POINT OF VIEW

We know that children who have more developed language and literacy abilities when they start school generally go on to become better readers and writers. Many parents and caregivers would love to know how they can support language and literacy learning in the years before their children begin school. Here are some ideas!

**Talking** lays the foundation for comprehension. Giving explanations and asking and answering questions builds understanding of words and concepts. Remember, we can begin talking to children long before they can talk themselves.

**Drawing and mark making** leads to early writing. If young children are given opportunities to draw and experiment with writing and to observe adults around them writing, they learn that writing has a purpose and that the letters on a page represent spoken words. They also learn to express their own ideas through their drawings and emergent writing.

**Reading for pleasure** fosters a love of reading, and builds strong language. The telling of stories (traditional, family and 'remember when we' stories) helps to bridge the gap between everyday language and the more complex and formal language of books and school.

**Paying attention to print** helps children to realise that print carries meaning and motivates them to notice, and try to make sense of the print around them. If children are familiar with most letters and the sounds they make, they will learn to read and write more easily.

**Playing listening games and listening to songs & rhymes** helps develop language and listening skills that are vital for learning to read and write.

**Pretend play** helps children build language, ideas and the ability to take on roles and act out stories. These are also important foundations for literacy.

You have it in your power to give your young child the greatest gift – rich early language and literacy experiences. Just remember the tips above - talk, read and tell stories with your children; encourage them to express themselves through drawing and making marks; notice and discuss print around you; play listening games; sing songs together; and join in pretend play!



Shelley O' Carroll,  
Director of Wordworks

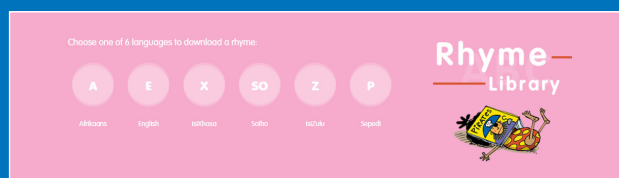
## PICTURE STORY



Connecting with partners: The Every Word Counts (EWC) Programme team visited partners in KZN and the Eastern Cape who are using the programme with families and in ECD centres. It was wonderful to see how EWC is being used in unique ways by our partners to deepen understanding of the importance of building language, and of starting early!

## DID YOU SEE?

Nal'ibali's interactive Rhyme Library in 6 languages:



Look up these catchy rhymes, some of which you will recognise from your childhood. They will keep your very young children and babies entertained and nurture their love for words.

*'Sharing rhymes with young children helps them to enjoy playing with language and to learn about its patterns and rhythms'* (Professor Roger Beard).

<http://nalibali.org/rhyme-library>

## DID YOU KNOW?



Loving words help children's minds to grow! Using negative language creates a barrier to brain development and learning.

## Training for Wordworks Programmes

If you would like to attend training in one of our programmes, please consult our website for training dates. Application forms will be available on the website when applications open: <http://www.wordworks.org.za/category/train-with-us/>



## MY STORY

**Nosipho Gumede** has been the Early Childhood Development Technical Support Officer at Network Action Group (NAG) in KwaZulu-Natal since 2014. Her work involves enhancing the skills of practitioners, improving programming, and providing monitoring and support to all sites in the Ugu Municipality District.



I joined the Early Childhood Development (ECD) sector because there was a need for an ECD facility in our rural community of Mehlomnyama. My husband and I started an ECD facility in the community, so that our small children could develop more social skills with their peers and at the same time we accommodated additional children to bridge the gap that existed at that time. This initiative exposed me to greater opportunities. I attended the NAG ECD Network meetings and ECD training, where I gained greater understanding of ECD whilst developing the confidence to share parenting experiences with other ECD practitioners.

My first Every Word Counts (EWC) training in September 2016 was enlightening. I felt encouraged and motivated to go back and share what I had learned. NAG had already started ECD Learning Groups, but we were struggling to retain participants and keep them motivated. Immediately after the training, we started to plan how we were going to use the EWC material with these groups. ECD practitioners responded very positively and valued the new ideas for activities and resources. We have seen improvements in attendance at the Learning Groups as well as in parenting and teaching. Practitioners now have a better understanding of how to conduct parent meetings. Instead of waiting for parents to show up at set times, they now approach parents informally. The Wordworks EWC team also provides on-going support and updates, making it interesting and inspiring to work alongside them.

EWC training has contributed immensely to our personal growth as a family. I have even downloaded the CareUp App (<http://www.wordworks.org.za/category/resources/>) which we view in our home language – isiZulu. My husband is also very motivated and plays the guessing game and reads stories with our children. I have realised that engaging children in everyday activities helps boost their self-confidence and improves their vocabulary drastically. I am so confident now about my children's language development.

Some of the ideas that excited the ECD practitioners supported by Nosipho are available for download from our website. See our leaflet '**How to support our babies' learning**' - available in English, Xhosa, Afrikaans and Zulu! (<http://www.wordworks.org.za/category/resources/info-sheets/ages-0-3-info-sheets/>)



## TOP TIP

Make your own toys! Babies and toddlers often enjoy playing with household items rather than with expensive toys. They learn many things from these kinds of toys. Illustrated here is an easy-to-make colour matching game for toddlers made from an egg box, a splash of paint and plastic caps. Also shown are shakers made from tightly closed bottles filled with water and colourful plastic objects.



## DID YOU HEAR?

Wordworks is growing! Our team has been enriched by Paulene Solomon who has joined the Ready Steady Read Write team as an early literacy specialist; and Natalie Bell, a publishing specialist, who is managing the revision of the STELLAR materials.

