

POINT OF VIEW

Parents know that babies and young children need food, shelter and health care. What many people don't realise is that responding to babies and young children, singing, talking, playing and reading with them is also essential for their development.

There are 8.2 million children under the age of six in South Africa. Half of all our children aged three years don't attend any ECD facility. Homes are therefore critically important places for supporting early learning, and yet there are very limited opportunities for parents and caregivers to get information about how to support early learning informally at home.

Our ECD policy has a focus on providing support for caregivers, but how do we do this practically, and at scale? We know that parents and caregivers of babies and young children need all kinds of support and resourcing, both to promote their own wellbeing and the wellbeing of their children. Many parents want knowledge and practical ideas about how to provide their children with nurturing care that will enable them to realise their potential.

Through our Every Word Counts Programme, we have been sharing knowledge and ideas about how parents, caregivers and teachers of young children can support early learning. In collaboration with partners, this knowledge is being shared directly with parents in homes, ECD forums, clinics and in parent workshops. Despite this we know there are so many parents and caregivers that we will never reach this way. Building on positive feedback from the CAREUP app that was developed for 4-5 year olds in collaboration with the Department of Social Development in 2016, we are very pleased to launch our new Wordworks App for parents, caregivers and teachers of babies and young children. Please consider working with us to share the app within your own networks and give us feedback so we can continue to improve this exciting new resource.

Shelley O'Carroll,
Director of Wordworks



A rich and busy first term for Wordworks

Home-School Partnerships (HSP) Programme



parents at their schools.

Over 130 new Teacher-facilitators were trained during this term! They join 230 established Teacher-facilitators from the Metro, Langeberg and West Coast doing wonderful work with

Ready Steady Read Write (RSRW) Programme



will be assessed mid-year and at the end of the year to track their progress. (<http://www.wordworks.org.za/category/buy-resources/>)

At more than 60 Ready Steady Read Write sites, Co-ordinators began the year by using the Wordworks Early Literacy Assessment kit to select children for the programme. The children who start the programme



Stellar Home Language Programme

15 Trainers from five partner NGOs in the Eastern Cape were the first to be introduced to our carefully revised Stellar materials. They have begun work with groups of teachers

who will soon be taking enriched activities linked to the well-loved Stellar stories to hundreds of Grade R children.

TOP TIP

Children live in a world of shapes

The father and two children are looking for different shapes as they walk down the road. They have noticed that the gate is shaped like a rectangle and the parts of the gate are shaped like triangles. Later when they make sandwiches for lunch they choose to cut their sandwich in the shape of a triangle or a rectangle. Their father is helping them to notice and talk about shapes around them – and this will help them with maths when they go to school!



Download the Wordworks App to receive free daily parenting tips on your cell phone to ensure your child is learning every day! (Search for WORDWORKS in the App Store, or use this link: <https://bit.ly/2GzvRF3>). The app was developed by The Reach Trust and Wordworks, using content from our Every Word Counts Programme. The development of the app was funded by Innovation Edge. Videos have been supplied by The Family Literacy Project, Mikhulu Trust, Bulungula Incubator, Rhodes University Community Engagement and Wordworks. Stories come from Nal'ibali.



MY STORY

Eunice Tokota is an ECD practitioner, but she is also an ECD champion, dedicated to helping families in rural Eastern Cape. She walks long distances to visit homes, sharing early literacy messages from our Every Word Counts (EWC) Programme with parents and caregivers.

Before Eunice was introduced to EWC at the aftercare where she works, she did not know that we can support very young children to talk. Now that they are using EWC, she says the children are speaking well. They are learning to use the correct names for things – even while playing games.

Once Eunice had attended EWC training, she spoke at a community meeting about ways to reach children. Small groups began to attend EWC workshops. One group asked her to run a refresher course before they got their certificates and Eunice says she is keen to do this because: 'Before they can train people in the community, I need to know that they are sure of what they are doing.'

An EWC participant working in agricultural development gave Eunice some seedlings to pass on to parents, for making small gardens at their homes. Her message is simple: 'Whatever you do, you can work with your child. When you dig a hole, tell the child that this is imbewu (seeds); this is izityalo (plants) and intswele (onion). Tell your child it's going to be a big onion one day! And fathers, when you work with your cattle, tell your child that the milk in the cupboard is from the cow. One day we'll realise knowledge is good; it won't be lost; we will use it in the future.'

Eunice says that as she visits families, she has to change her approach for each home. She shows interest in what they are doing. If a mother is sewing, she encourages her to make time for her children, such as giving them pieces of material to do pretend sewing. When parents say that ECD centres are too far away or too expensive, she tells them that they can start the programme at home, talking, playing games and making toys.

Eunice says, 'Every Word Counts is not about today, it's about the future, which will give you a better life than you have. When I say that to parents, I see the change in their faces ... EWC is going to change everything in the family, but the parents must be part of that. It's not about the teachers at school – the teachers are already doing their jobs. It's the parents' role that is the most important.'

DID YOU KNOW?

The Wordworks App is available in four languages – English, isiXhosa, isiZulu and Afrikaans. In the recording studio is well-known South African actress, Denise Newman, the voice behind the Afrikaans version.



Did you see?

Parents, caregivers and teachers of babies and young children - make your own early learning resources! Our new booklet presents 12 inexpensive resources that encourage language development and make learning fun. There are step-by-step instructions and explanations on the benefits to babies and toddlers. The booklet can be freely downloaded and printed from our website. (<http://www.wordworks.org.za/category/resources/info-sheets/ages-0-3-info-sheets/>)



Did you hear?



Wordworks welcomes four wonderful women into our HSPP team. Gaynor Cozens, and Faheema Hassiem, have joined us as Mentors. Both of them have recently retired and ran the HSPP at their schools. In addition, Lavinia Davis and Lorna Solomons are assisting us at this busy time of the year. We greatly value the experience they bring to the schools in our network.

The Wordworks App has a variety of practical and engaging features:

- Content for birth to 2 years, and 3-5 years
- New ideas and activities to build language and support early learning
- Positive and encouraging words to use with babies and young children
- Inspirational messages for parents and carers
- Demonstration videos
- Stories to tell young children
- Songs and rhymes
- Health messages for the first 1000 days.

Read more about the app here: <http://www.wordworks.org.za/category/wordworks-app/>

