

## FROM SHELLEY

When we developed the Ready Steady Read Write tutor programme for Grade R and 1 children, we needed to make a decision about what was most important to include in each lesson. At this early stage of learning to read and write, children have a great deal to learn about letters and the sounds they make, and how these letters combine to make words. What better way to do this than through games!

We also knew that we needed to build children's oral language and vocabulary, and so we made time during the lesson for talking. Talking about a book helps children to know what to expect when they read the book – and both talking and reading give children words and ideas for drawing and writing.

Of all the steps in our lessons, writing is often the most challenging for young children. Before learning to write, most children are familiar with drawing as a way of representing ideas on paper. Drawings of things generally look like the actual things. However, the difficulty with writing is that words are not in any way related to how things look, and children need to learn that written words are related to how we say things, not the things themselves. The sounds in spoken words are related to letters in written words, even if this is not always a perfect match. When children understand how our writing system works, we say they have grasped the alphabetic principle.

When children first begin learning to write, the Ready Steady tutors participate in the writing process with them. They might begin by writing down what children want to say, with children writing some letters or words in a sentence if they are able to. This is an important part of writing development as children are learning that spoken words can be written down, and that each spoken word matches a written word. When we ask children what they want to say, they are also building confidence in expressing themselves and sharing their ideas. The next step in children's development as writers is when they begin to experiment with writing letters that represent the sounds in spoken words. This 'invented spelling' or emergent writing shows us that they are starting to discover how the written language system works.

As teachers, tutors and parents, we play such an important role as we guide children into the world of written words.



Shelley O'Carroll,  
Director of Wordworks



**Ready Steady tutors have structured sessions with their children, once a week for one hour. The focus is on creating a fun, nurturing environment for children so that they become more confident readers and writers.**

**STEP 1 Talking and Doing:** Tutors engage the children in a conversation by taking a "picture walk" through the book they will read. This is a wonderful opportunity to learn new vocabulary and make meaning even before the children read the story.



**STEP 2 Reading:** Tutors support the children as they start to read independently. They help children with strategies to work out words they do not know, all the while giving praise and encouragement.

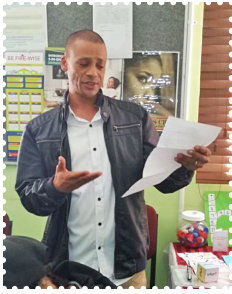


**STEP 3 Drawing and Writing:** Tutors support children as they draw and write a sentence about something they have just read. Tutors encourage children to use invented spelling, where the spelling matches the sounds they hear in words. Children's efforts are encouraged as they put their thoughts on paper.



**STEP 4 Playing Games:** Tutors play a variety of games with children to build their knowledge about sounds, letters and words. The focus is on learning and building knowledge in a fun way.





## MY STORY

### Graham Naidoo

*Graham Naidoo is a Ready Steady Read Write tutor at Cornflower Primary in Cape Town. He was trained in February this year and has been tutoring young children since then. He also attended the eight sessions of the Home-School*

*Partnerships Programme run by the school and recently received his certificate for completing the course.*

"My 9 year old daughter, who attends a neighbouring school, was struggling at school and I was determined to help her. I was attending night school which was run at Cornflower Primary. Here I met Raqual Claasen who is the Co-ordinator of the Ready Steady Read Write Tutoring Programme. With the skills she gained as a trained tutor, she offered to work with my daughter on Saturdays. She also showed me some games I could play with my daughter to help her with her reading and writing. I was so inspired by the work she did and the progress my child was making while working with her, that she invited me to become a tutor at the school. I am very grateful for the opportunities she gave me. This was the start of my journey working with young children.

In the short space of time since I've been tutoring, I can see the difference in the children I get to work with. They've become more confident and I am impressed by how eager they are to learn. They love the games and I've realised that children learn best when they are playing! I can see that building relationships with the children I tutor is key to supporting their learning. Some even call me "Daddy" by mistake and I love it because it means they see me as someone they can trust. We even talk about haircuts and sports before we start the lesson!

The Home-School Partnerships programme really brought home to me how important it is to spend meaningful, quality time with my children. I've always been a hands-on dad but I feel the course has given me skills to improve the way I communicate with my children and how to get the best out of them. I know many parents who say they don't have the time to spend with their children, but I feel that we must take responsibility for our own children – we can't expect the teachers and tutors at the school to do it alone. I think that a father's job is not only to work and bring home money for his family – he must get involved and spend time with his children.

My own daughter's attitude has changed from "I can't" to "I can" – even her teacher commented on how much progress she is making. Her school reports show this too!

Since completing night school, I've been interested in adult learning and soon I am going to be trained as an ABET facilitator, but I have realised that it's also important to support children when they are young. I've been spreading the word in my own community and I've been helping other children when I can.

It's beautiful to see children learn!"

## DID YOU KNOW?

Children on the Ready Steady Read Write tutoring programme are assessed three times a year. These assessments are conducted in a non-threatening way to make sure the correct children are selected for the programme. It is also used to measure the children's progress during the year. This assessment kit can also be purchased by teachers who work with Grade R and Grade 1 children: <http://www.wordworks.org.za/buy-resources-2/>.



## TOP TIP

Here are some ideas to build your child's comprehension while they read.

Ask open ended questions that extend children's thinking e.g. *What do you think is going to happen next in the story? Why do you think...? What would you do if...?*



Explain and describe how things work or why we do things e.g. *Tigers have stripes so that they can't be seen in the long grass. The stripes help to camouflage them!*

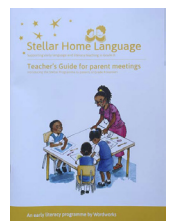
## DID YOU HEAR?

### New WordWorkshops!

We have added FOUR NEW WORKSHOPS to our WordWorkshops offerings, all aimed at supporting young children's language and early literacy development.

- Supporting phonics and early reading and writing through games (Gr R and Gr 1): [24 July](#)
- Games to support early literacy and language (4-5 year olds): [7 August](#)
- Stellar Home Language: Teacher's Guide for 8 two-week cycles (update): [14 August](#)
- Stellar Home Language: Teacher's Guide for parent meetings: [21 August](#)
- Supporting emergent reading (3-6 year olds): [28 August](#)
- Supporting young children's writing (Gr R and Gr 1): [4 September](#)

All the workshops will be 2.5 hours long and presented at an all-inclusive cost of R200 per workshop. See descriptions and registration forms here: <http://www.wordworks.org.za/workshops-on-resources-2/>.



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