

POINT OF VIEW

Imagine a young child starting school in South Africa. By the time she turns eight, she will have spent about 30 000 hours awake and a maximum of 10 000 hours at preschool or school. This means that for her first eight years, at least two thirds of her waking hours will have been spent with a parent or caregiver.

If children only began learning to read and write when they started school, and if language and literacy could only be taught in a classroom, it wouldn't matter too much what happened in all those hours they spent at home.

But we know this isn't the case. To become a good reader and writer, you need to have rich oral language and know quite a bit about books, print, letters and sounds. Some children get a headstart with their literacy because in all those hours they aren't at preschool or school, they spend a good deal of time talking, playing and sharing stories and books. Their parents and caregivers still do the day-to-day things that all parents do to care for young children, but to this care, they *add words* – and in this way, build their children's language.

What if we had 30 000 hours to build early language and literacy for each child instead of only 10 000 hours in the classroom? What if parents and caregivers made small changes to their parenting to build vitally important language foundations? What if there was more investment to make books more accessible to families? What if every clinic, library, preschool and school was resourced to offer courses for parents about how to support their children's learning at home?

Shelley O'Carroll, Director of Wordworks



DID YOU KNOW?

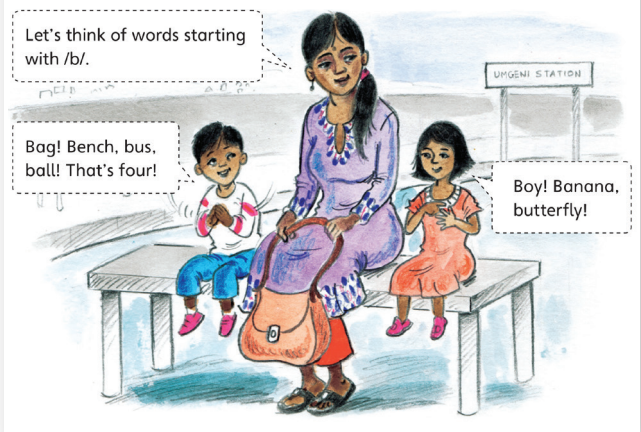


Did you know that just one hour of focused attention a week can make a big difference to how a child learns to read and write? Our volunteer tutors donate this time and more each week to help improve children's literacy. Recently, 200 of these dedicated women celebrated a busy year at our Ready, Steady,... Read and Write Indaba.

TOP TIP

You can make learning about sounds fun for your 3–5 year old!

In this picture a mother and her children are playing a game while waiting.



HAVE YOU HEARD? Where do you usually get your information about parenting from? Have you heard about CareUp? Now you can get information about parenting from an app on your phone!

The new CareUp app is based on our Every Word Counts Programme and will give you new and interesting ideas and activities to support your 4–5 year old children's learning. To get the app for Android, go to PlayStore, search for CareUp and install the app. For mobi, go to careup.mobi.



MY STORY

I have been a Grade R teacher for 10 years. In 2011 I started the Grade R class at Oakhurst Girls' Primary School. When we were told that we were going to be the Emergent Literacy Lead teachers, using STELLAR to support home language, I had some reservations. Having to discuss the same story for two weeks seemed too long; I was concerned that the children would get bored. However, as I worked with STELLAR, I realised it had so many possibilities for extension, which the children often initiate. My class has absolutely loved the stories and they now use the vocabulary. This year more girls than ever before are willing to have a go at writing their own stories and parents are excited about the fact that their children love reading their stories to them at home.

Engaging with other teachers on this journey has been enriching and inspiring. When supported and encouraged, teachers move from strength to strength. I felt energised after the block training, seeing the calibre of the teachers, their dedication and positivity. Teachers helping teachers is the way of the future.

As much as I have been able to give, I feel that I have received so much more!

Erina Muir, STELLAR Lead Teacher



Erina is pictured here with a special STELLAR family. From left, Angelique Twiss, who developed the STELLAR materials and is the Wordworks STELLAR Programme Manager; Erina Muir, STELLAR Lead Teacher (featured in this story); Angelique's sister, Jacqui Botha, STELLAR materials designer; and Jacqui's daughter, Elizabeth, who is currently taught by Erina and is a big STELLAR fan.

STOP PRESS... STOP PRESS

We have already raised R19 900 for our Storybook Fund! This will help Wordworks source affordable and good-quality multi-lingual children's storybooks. Reading to young children is so important but books are often unaffordable, and it can be difficult to find quality ones that are suitable for babies and young children. The books purchased through the fund will be distributed to our network of Wordworks literacy champions, who have attended our training and use our early language and literacy programmes to improve children's literacy. Please share this campaign with your networks. Or, to donate, visit our website: www.wordworks.org.za because #LiteracyChangesLives!



EARLY LITERACY AND LANGUAGE CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Ready, Steady, ... Read and Write! – 24th November: Co-ordinators' Tea

Home-School Partnership Programme – 15th October: Annual Facilitators' Refresher
08h30–13h00, Ottery Youth Centre, Plantation Road

Every Word Counts Programme – 13 October: Refresher