

A smooth transition

From Mammuso

Hello

At the beginning of spring I made the decision to join Wordworks after eight wonderful years with my previous company. I embraced this opportunity because of the organisation's vision, its people, and its invaluable contribution to the South African society. Everyone in the organisation was included in the director's recruitment process and that inclusivity and democracy are key principles the organisation values.

Getting on board

Joining an organisation during this pandemic can be challenging, for both the new arrival and those already inside. The lack of daily physical contact can make it difficult to bond and fit seamlessly into an environment. However, this was not the case with my arrival at Wordworks, thanks to the excellent induction programme, which enabled me to meet every single person, virtually or face-to-face, – from staff to the board.

Mission alignment

The ties that bind everyone at Wordworks are their love and passion for literacy, and sharing this with children, learners, educators, parents and communities. The organisation has attracted people across all ages who believe in the mission and vision of the organisation. I have never worked with so many educators under one roof, and this made me recall my school career assessment which predicted that I would be a remedial teacher. I have been dodging this calling ever since, but now seem to have landed close by!

Partnerships and collaborations

In interacting with Wordworks' external partners, it became clear that the organisation values meaningful collaborations and partnerships. In celebratory events, and donor, government, school and NGO meetings, I observed partnerships in action where projects were showcased as a culmination of collaborative efforts to the collective goal.

Board speaks

During the past few weeks, I have had the opportunity to meet board members of Wordworks. They are incredibly invested in the organisation; providing the needed guidance and support and leaving the executive to get on with the business of managing the organisation. My engagements with the board made me feel at home and I know that I will be supported throughout my tenure.



*Mammuso Makhanya
Incoming Director*

Varied experiences

Over and above meeting staff and board members during my induction, my highlights were attending the graduations of the organisation's programmes. The first graduation was for the Home-School Partnership Programme, where Prof. Jonathan Jansen gave the guest address emphasising the important role that Wordworks plays in recognising and supporting the parental role in their children's education, which COVID-19 has brought into focus. I was profoundly touched by a couple who spoke at this graduation giving a first-hand account of how the programme equipped them to play a meaningful role in their children's learning.

Foundation laid

With a solid foundation laid during my induction, I believe I am on a path to a good vocation at Wordworks.

I would like to thank the Wordworks family and all our various partners for a warm welcome. We highly value your contribution, support and inspiration to our work and wish you great health and a fruitful 2022.

Enjoy the festive season, stay safe and let us remember at all times that the virus is still very much with us.

The Wordworks Board and senior management team



*Top L-R Tracey Chiappini-Young, Jane Coombe, Gabriel Boka, Shelley Von Seidel, Mignon Hardie
Bottom L-R Colleen Hughes, Jennifer Khumalo, Mammuso Makhanya, Shelley O'Carroll, Babalwayashe Molate*



Nangamso Mtsatse

Wordworks remains in touch, even while social distancing!

Visit the Wordworks data-free home learning site to access informal at-home activities, support resources for Grade R and Grade 1 learners, and the Wordworks App: <https://www.homeliteracy.org.za/>.



From Shelley

In my last newsletter piece as the Wordworks director, I would like to pay tribute to the incredible network of people who I have worked with over the past 16 years.

I have never doubted that working in the education and NGO sector in South Africa is unique in providing opportunities to meet and get to know some of the most capable, dedicated, compassionate and gifted individuals.

Throughout my leadership journey at Wordworks, I have been humbled by the deep integrity, kindness and commitment of people within our team and those I have worked with from other NGOs.

I have learnt and grown from the diversity of cultures, backgrounds and languages that have been a big part of my working life, and for this I am deeply grateful.

Living and working in such an unequal society where so many young children are denied the opportunities they deserve, brings a great sense of responsibility. It also brings a real risk of heartache and a sense of being overwhelmed for anyone who opens their eyes to the reality of the burden of care on women, and the tragic wasted potential of so many young and capable children.

Our ongoing work in this sector is only made possible and meaningful through finding colleagues and friends who

believe in a better world – and make it their business to make it possible.

As an organisation, we have had the privilege of partnering with and learning from some of the most respected NGOs in our country, who have journeyed with us to make support for early literacy a priority. I have been honoured to see how these NGO partners have taken our materials and programmes into their work in schools, ECD Centres and communities – and it continues to bring me such joy to see this work growing in important and exciting ways.

I have also been humbled by the deeply committed principals, teachers, advisors and other government officials who face the extent of our education crisis on a daily basis and yet never lose hope in the possibility of bringing about positive change.

When I look back on the past 16 years, I am so proud to see how much has been possible through each of us offering what we do best, humbly and with respect, as we work bravely towards the bold and vital goal of changing lives through literacy.

Shelley O'Carroll,
Outgoing Director of Wordworks

A tribute to Shelley

Wordworks said a formal thank you to Dr Shelley O'Carroll for her sixteen years of inspiring leadership, at a small and poignant event which was livestreamed to many of her colleagues, partners and friends.

The event included heartfelt and moving tributes from many of the people Shelley has worked with as Director of Wordworks. These included community, school and government representatives, donors, academics and thought-leaders in the early childhood development and literacy sectors.

The Wordworks team and board, as well her family, were there to share this surprise event with Shelley and to join in with the tears and laughter as we remembered and celebrated together.

Watch "A tribute to Shelley" on our YouTube channel: Wordworks SA.



We are proud to announce The Shelley O'Carroll Early Literacy Award

In order to honour her enormous and pioneering contribution to the field of early literacy, Wordworks and the Literacy Association of South Africa (LITASA) have established the Shelley O'Carroll Early Literacy Award, which will be given to the individual, team or organisation whose research or practice has developed our understanding of how the literacy of young South African children can be improved. The award will be presented annually at the LITASA conference. For more information visit www.wordworks.org.za.



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These team members will be missed as they move on to new chapters of their lives.

Wordworks bid a sad farewell to four colleagues this year, sending each off with a beautiful photo collage of memories. Thank you to Sue Setton, veteran Wordworks manager, for these beautiful tributes.



Brigid Comrie

More than 16 years ago, before an auspicious meeting between Shelley and Brigid at the Potters Market where they decided to start Wordworks, Brigid had already developed a parent programme.

Over the years she refined it into what it is today; the excellent, highly effective Home-School Partnerships programme. This programme has had a huge impact

and it has changed the lives of thousands of teachers, parents and children.

Brigid also worked on other Wordworks programmes, the Stellar Grade R programme, and more recently the Every Word Counts Programme. Brigid has also contributed to the development of materials for Little Stars and the TIME programmes.

After many years of dedicated and inspiring work, Brigid is retiring at the end of this year. We will miss her wise advice and her calm, loving presence at Wordworks.

We wish you well, Brigid, and know that you will enjoy tramping about on our beautiful mountain and spending more time with your family.



Ruth Stafford

Ruth has been with Wordworks for the last 10 years.

After retiring as a Primary school teacher at St Mary's Primary School in Retreat, Ruth trained with the Ready Steady programme as a coordinator with the idea of starting up the programme at her old school. Within a short space of time, Ruth built up a team of 16 volunteer tutors from the school community. It was clear that Ruth

had loads of expertise, knowledge and skills and that she would be an asset to Wordworks so in 2013, Ruth joined the Wordworks Ready Steady team as a mentor.

Ruth has added value to our training sessions with her warmth and welcoming personality, her wealth of knowledge and her professional manner.

Ruth has excellent work ethics. Her willingness to tackle challenges

positively along with her warm nature made her a loved and effective mentor. Ruth inspired confidence in the coordinators and tutors and was always available to help them with their challenges.

Ruth has plans to visit children and grandchildren overseas during her years of retirement. We will miss her and we wish her everything of the best for the future.



Sarah Florence

Sarah has been with Wordworks for 4 years.

She is qualified as a speech and language therapist and had been working in that field for a number of years when she joined the Ready Steady Read Write team as a part-time mentor in 2017.

Her knowledge and expertise in this field was like gold for all of us at Wordworks and particularly for the Ready Steady Read Write programme.

From the start, Sarah jumped into training coordinators and tutors in the Ready Steady programme. She was always well prepared and reliable and has a wonderful knack of conveying information in a very simple and clear way. Sarah brought many new ideas and refreshing perspectives to the way we did things.

One of the special qualities that Sarah brings to her work is her kind and caring nature. Because of

this quality, Sarah developed good relationships with the coordinators and tutors she mentored at her schools.

We have so enjoyed having Sarah on the team, not only for her bright mind but also for her wonderful sense of humour.

Sarah will soon move with her family to England to be closer to her mother. We wish them the very best in their new life.



Gail Lindsay

Gail qualified as a Ready Steady Coordinator in 2014 and started a site at West End primary school. She has a deep love for her community in Mitchells Plain and from the age of 13 she has been involved in sport, youth groups and counselling in the area.

Gail recruited young people who were sitting at home with nothing to do and got them to join as tutors. At one stage she had 22 volunteer tutors and a waiting list of people

who wanted to join her team. Gail is extremely organised and her sessions ran like clockwork.

She joined the Ready Steady Read Write team as a mentor for the Mitchells Plain schools where she was very proactive and worked hard to encourage and motivate principals and teachers to run the programme effectively at their schools. Soon Gail was also asked to mentor a group of Mitchells Plain schools.

Over the years, Gail has used many opportunities to involve Wordworks in community events.

Gail is practical, sensitive and intuitive and was always our person on the ground, who knew how people were feeling and whether our ideas were working.

We will miss Gail and wish her all the best for her future. We know she will continue to serve her community with all her heart.



Round-up of 4th term highlights



Team members report on Wordworks activities for the year



One of 24 certificates handed to NGO Trainers now qualified to train on the EWC and Little Stars programmes



Little Stars ECD Practitioner Certification Ceremony in the Eastern Cape



Little Stars orientation for 2022 pilots with Districts and ECD Forums



Undefeated by Covid Wordworks staff pack gifts for graduates



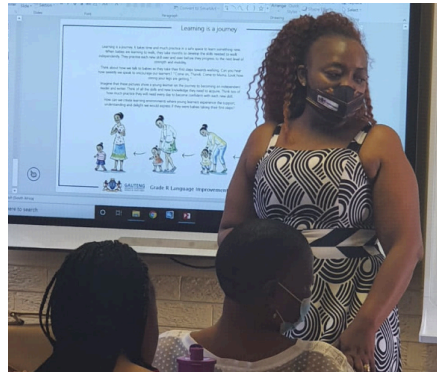
HSP Portfolios of Evidence - proof of Teacher-Facilitators' hard work



Certificates of service for longstanding Ready Steady tutors and coordinators



Gauteng Grade R Language Improvement Programme materials ready for teacher training in 2022



One of 180 Gauteng Trainers trained by Wordworks - introducing Grade R teachers to the Language Improvement Programme



40 000 home learning activity packs ordered for Term 1 – Term 2 orders open. Schools working in partnership with parents and caregivers to make up learning losses.