

From Mammuso

Wordworks welcomed Mammuso Makhanya as our new Director in November 2021 when she took over from Founder Director, Shelley O'Carroll. Shelley continues to work closely with the Wordworks team on a number of early literacy projects.

Shew! I cannot believe the first few months of this year have gone by so fast, attesting to how I am relishing my time at Wordworks!

We were jolted out of holiday mode by multiple organisational imperatives, including bringing new team members on board, who will bolster us as we grow our portfolio of work. The fact that we have been able to add new employees is remarkable, given South Africa's socio-economic state. They have enriched our human capital and diversity and added to our already rich institutional knowledge and expertise. The new capacity is aligned to our growth areas such as the digital space and spreading our resources into as many of our official languages as possible.

Throughout our various commitments and deliverables, we remain cognisant of our co-existence with the COVID-19 pandemic and its effects on our lives and work. The Early Childhood Development sector is reeling from closures and learning losses are deepening. We count our blessings that notwithstanding all of these obstacles and difficulties in the education sector, Wordworks' services and resources are still in demand. This reinforces our confidence that prospects for the coming year and beyond are very positive.

The Wordworks Board's active participation, guidance and support have been palpable during this transition period. Board members continue to share expertise, networks and all manner of capital to ensure that our organisation thrives. Wordworks is currently recruiting additional board members to strengthen our work and add to the diversity of experience and expertise.

I have cherished traversing the country to meet our existing and prospective donor communities. These engagements have been empowering and enriching. I am making meaningful connections and building a wealth of networks which add value to our work, as we continue to advocate for early literacy and language development for South African children. One of the issues that struck me from these interactions is that our donors are themselves the ambassadors of our work among other organisations and prospective donors.

Our literacy sector has also been hard at work during the first quarter with numerous events and campaigns which are geared at advancing the cause of addressing the

literacy crisis in South Africa. Our participation in these activities drove home the message that we can only attain the Sustainable Development Goals and our own National Development Plan literacy goals when every member of our society plays a role in this work. Subsequent to the activities, we have made submissions accordingly to ensure that national reading and writing campaigns incorporate the Early Childhood Development/early literacy sector.

We rounded off the first quarter with a significant staff gathering, which saw all of us under one roof for the first time this year. In addition to the quarterly business, we celebrated birthdays for this period and had a facilitated activity which contributed to team cohesion.

Thank you to our board, staff, donor community, programme partners and our sectoral fraternity for the continued support and contribution to the work of Wordworks. We look forward to the next quarter emboldened by what we have accomplished to date.

The team is really upbeat about what we will be able to accomplish in the remainder of the year, despite the challenges posed by the economic and social climate.



*Mammuso Makhanya
Wordworks Director*



*Mammuso Makhanya
and Shelley O'Carroll*



The Wordworks Team



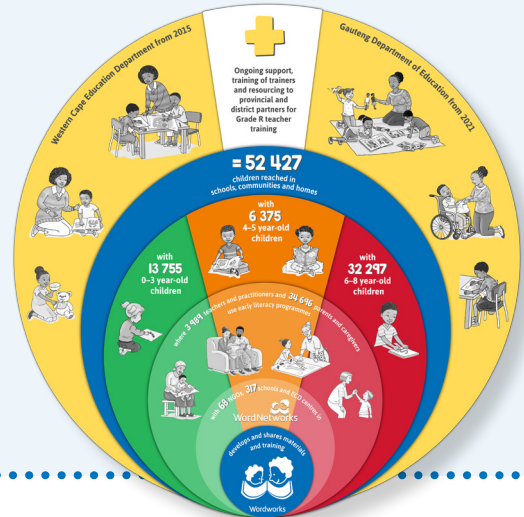
We are stronger together!

Wordworks values our work with our partners highly – schools, NGOs, ECD centres, and government departments that use our early literacy programmes and materials in their own networks. A big shout out to you all – we cannot have the impact that our country needs without your expertise and experience.

In 2021, we worked with 68 NGOs and 317 schools and ECD centres, reaching 52 427 children collectively.

The new, popular Friday Feature on our social media pages shines a light on the work of partners. You can read the growing collection of stories on our website:

<https://www.wordworks.org.za/stories-from-the-field/>



Wordworks welcomes new team members

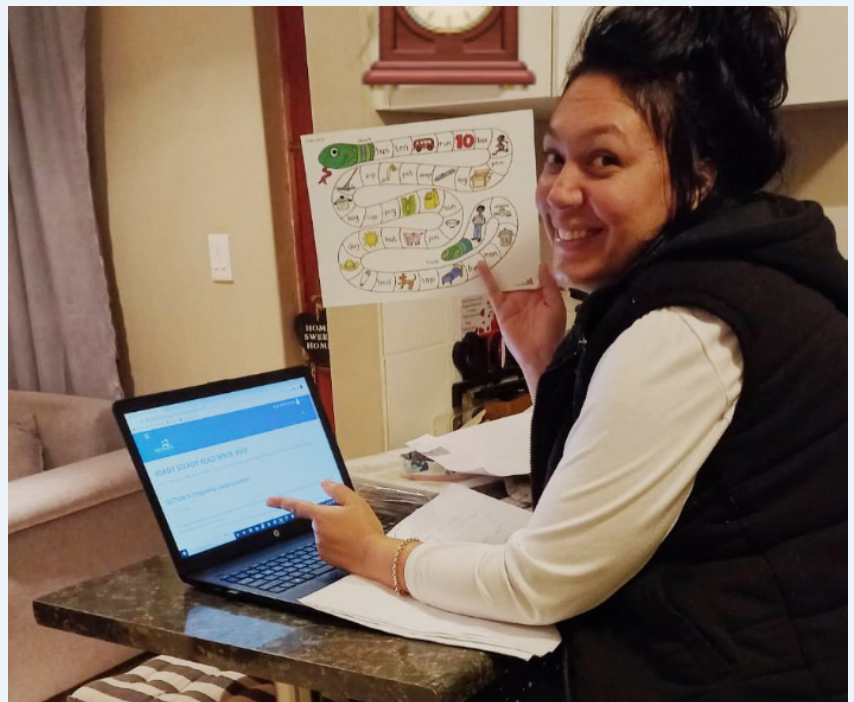
We were very excited to introduce three new team members to Wordworks. These remarkable women have already added so much value in their respective roles.

From left to right: Kirsten Deane is working in Communications as an Online Content Producer and Writer, and Lydia Makiva and Sudika Martin have joined our Early Childhood Development team as Trainers in isiXhosa and Afrikaans.



Programme Highlights

The last few months have been largely devoted to training and orientation sessions with partners running our ECD and school community programmes.





Gauteng committed to quality for Grade R learners

Wordworks has taken on the exciting challenge of working as the Language technical partner to the **Gauteng Department of Education Grade R Mathematics and Home Language Improvement Programme**. Wordworks has developed a wonderful set of resources in all South African languages that meet the multilingual needs of the Province of Gold. Our Master Trainers have been working with 180 GDE trainers who train and support approximately 4400 Grade R teachers across all public primary schools. It has been fabulous to receive reports and photos from the districts showing learners engaged with the rich story-based programme.



School community programmes

We trained and oriented 279 teacher facilitators (from new and returning schools) to use our **Home School Partnerships** parent programme at their schools. See the story of Fairview's 10th HSP anniversary on this page: <https://www.wordworks.org.za/stories-from-the-field/>

We provided orientation and training support to 633 teachers, tutors, Yebo mentors and school leadership forum participants using our **TIME (Together In My Education)** home learning programme. We now have a QR code system for participants to access online multimedia support via our printed materials which can be found here: <https://wwhomeliteracy.org.za/time-activity-packs/>

Wordworks is conducting research to understand the uptake and impact of **TIME** in schools, communities and homes. One of the findings was that parents, district officials and teachers found the **TIME** packs academically sound, visually attractive and user-friendly.

Wordworks maintains contact with teachers and NGOs responsible for coordinating the **Ready Steady Read Write** tutor programme at schools. Online support sessions have been held for programme planning, and an on-line training course developed.

We have strengthened our support systems for these three programmes with **weekly support messages and tips** sent via email. These messages help schools and organisations use the programmes to their maximum benefit. Read more about our early literacy programmes here: <https://www.wordworks.org.za/>





Early Childhood Development programmes

Our ECD team has continued to expand the use of our literacy programmes. We work closely with Khululeka and ITEC who train new ECD centres each year in the **Yizani Sifunde Project** - a Liberty Community Trust funded partnership with Book Dash and Nal'ibali in the Eastern Cape. We are working with the South and Cape Winelands Education Districts to train advisors and groups of practitioners, and are working with ECD Forums to reach practitioners in Paarl and Khayelitsha. Our **Little Stars** course will soon be offered as an online course that practitioners and child caregivers will be able to access in their own time in order to refresh and grow their skills. The course is currently being piloted by Ubunye and Early Inspirations as well as a group of practitioners in their network.



Did you know?

Nearly half the children who attend early learning programmes are falling behind in home language? What of the children who do not attend ECD centres?

The Thrive by Five findings

Wordworks founder and former Director, Dr Shelley O'Carroll, has authored an action brief, focusing on early language and literacy, as part of the recently released Thrive by Five Index. This is the first nationally representative survey of preschool child development ever attempted in South Africa.

The action brief indicates that only 54.7% of children who attend early learning programmes are achieving the standard for Emergent Literacy and Language, with 26% falling behind and 19.3% falling far behind.

The findings also confirm that 65.3% of children attending Early Learning Programmes in South Africa are failing to thrive. These children are not meeting the expected early learning and/or physical growth standards for their age and will start Grade R at a considerable disadvantage, with possible long term implications for their education.

Wordworks welcomes a data-driven approach to the vital work of ECD, and we endorse Thrive by Five's holistic view of young children who require well-rounded care and development if they are to achieve their potential. In addition, we advocate for the importance of high quality, age-appropriate, early language intervention with our youngest children.

The Emergent Literacy and Language and Literacy Action Brief offers a full analysis and presents specific actions to take to rectify the status quo. Read it here: <https://www.thrivebyfive.co.za/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/ActionBriefEmergentLanguageAndLiteracy.pdf>

You can view the Thrive by Five Index Report in the fully interactive data interface on the Thrive by Five website: www.thrivebyfive.co.za. You will also find action briefs suggesting immediate actions that can be taken to improve child outcomes across key developmental domains.

