



From Mammuso

As I sit here, working on this piece, I get transported back to my childhood in Soweto, playing in the dusty streets with makeshift toys. I marvel at that journey, and how the foundation laid and relationships formed in childhood shape the people we become. I love that I am now working in an organisation that helps children have the strong foundation that I did.

Strategic planning underway

A key milestone on our journey is the upcoming strategic planning that is due to take place in late August. The session will involve internal and external stakeholders and will map the opportunities, goals, strategies and an implementation plan that will guide Wordworks for the next seven years towards Vision 2030. Siyabulela. Thank You. Re a leboha. Dankie in advance to everyone who will be dedicating their time and expertise to this valuable process.

Early Childhood Development function shift presents new opportunities

April 2022 witnessed a seismic shift in the South African Early Childhood Development (ECD) sphere, with the function shift of ECD from the Department of Social Development to the Department of Basic Education, bringing us closer to the government's commitment to two compulsory school grades before Grade 1 (President Cyril Ramaphosa, 2019 State of the Nation Address). This is a very positive move as it shows the government's commitment to the development of young minds and the ECD sector, which is still reeling from the devastation of the COVID-19 pandemic and the repressed economy. I hope that this move will help inject the needed resources and capacity by the government and the private sector.

Exciting sectoral collaborations

As an organisation and sector, we continued to forge ahead with key activities during this period. A major one was taking part in the recent Roots and Shoots launch at Stellenbosch University. The goal of this initiative was a deep dive into research from early learning to school outcomes. The Roots and Shoots team, Wordworks, Thrive by Five and Funda Wandé, among others, shared their research findings, illustrating the extent of the learning gaps, and giving impetus

to the need and value of our collective interventions for better learning outcomes.

Wordworks collaboration with Henley Business School (HBS) – Our stakeholders speak

We entered into a collaboration with Henley's Executive MBA programme as part of their Reputation and Responsibility study module. The main focus of the project was the management of reputation by building powerful relationships with key stakeholder groups. The students engaged our Strategic and Implementing partners to understand how we are perceived and what our stakeholder groups need from us. We are extremely humbled and affirmed by the outcomes of this process. Some valuable findings were that our partners see us as "trustworthy" and "transparent". They say we provide "quality services" and are "respectful" in our dealings with them. We note the impact of COVID 19 on our partners as they say they "miss direct contact with Wordworks" and would like us "to be more visible in the community". We have heard our stakeholders and are already building onto our strengths and what we do well, in addition to working on strategies to improve those areas that need development. We are very grateful to our internal and external stakeholders for all their efforts in this process.

Support from donors

The dedicated, energetic and talented Wordworks team would never be able to do its work without the funding from our committed donors. In addition to financial support, we continue to receive valuable pro bono services to bolster our operations. Thank you for your support! (See our list of donors on our website - <https://www.wordworks.org.za/donors/>). As we head into the second half of 2022, we are confident that our work together with our partners during the course of this year will greatly contribute to children's literacy and language development in homes, schools and community settings, laying a foundation for a prosperous future for South Africa.

Mammuso Makhanya

Mammuso Makhanya Wordworks Director

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/>



MY STORY

Mariette Steyn

Expanding our Home-School Partnerships Programme into the Loeriesfontein community

"This course made a huge difference for these participants. They are so proud of attending and completing it. They are now going out into the community and into their own homes, making a big difference."

Mrs Mariette Steyn is a Hyde Park Primary School Teacher-facilitator of the Wordworks Home-School Partnerships Parent Programme. She was inspired to take the programme to Loeriesfontein in the Northern Cape, and to share the programme with young adults there who work with young children in the community. These participants also have young children of their own. The course, usually spread over 8 weeks, was conducted over a full week in June, requiring time and energy that would normally be devoted to taking a holiday break!

This is Mariette's experience of the course.

"It was quite a challenge with all the loadshedding and full-day sessions, but the participants were hungry for knowledge, and although I saw they were tired at times, they did not want to stop. At the end of the second day I wanted to stop for a break but they said please continue. That made everything worthwhile. I was grateful for the assistance and support of Sonja Squires and Zelda Vos. By Thursday they said they wished they could go on for the whole June holiday, but I could not. I was dead tired after Thursday!"

Some highlights were:

- Anine has an 8-year-old son and 3-4 year-old daughter that love making their own little books. Anine said they don't like reading, but since they started making their own little books they cannot stop reading and are even inventing their own stories!

- Mirtle, Michelle, and Andy travelled 120 km daily to attend the course.
- Marguerite-Ann played the games and loved the little books.
- Arlecia enjoyed making the games to benefit language development.
- Deidre didn't get the final notice of the June programme and when I asked after her, the rest of the group contacted her. She came the next day, very upset she wasn't there the previous day, but I quickly informed her of the highlights. She was at the school every day before everybody, making sure she didn't miss out.
- One woman mentioned how they didn't realise how time flies while playing games or making their own little books. They did not even miss their cellphones.
- Jolene downloaded the Wordworks App and shared with us how her daughter enjoys it. Jolene also loves reading, making the sounds and her daughter's reactions to them.

The most important and heart-warming experience for me was how they did not realize how important the road to developing language and maths abilities through play is – from making games and realising the importance of using it in everyday life – to making a daily connection with your child/ren. By the end of the programme they were exploring all the options of the course and buying into it once more.

We applaud Mrs Steyn's vision to help these young workers take the programme into their community. She is a true early literacy champion!





Farewell

It is with sadness that we say goodbye to Setungoane Letsatsi who joined Wordworks in July 2021 as the Programme Manager for the Gauteng Grade R Improvement Project. She is leaving to take up a new professional challenge but promises to stay in touch! S'tu has left her mark on our organisation, touching us and our key stakeholders with her dedication and professionalism. We will miss her warm personality and generous spirit.



PROGRAMMES ROUND-UP

Early Childhood Development (ECD) Programmes

250 ECD practitioners were trained on our ECD programmes during the second term.

Participant feedback:

"The way the training was conducted with such a lot of good feeling made me want to take the feeling to the children in my classroom so that they can have more knowledge than before."

"The thing I like is the trainers, they were so friendly, explaining everything and motivating practitioners and they give much more confidence and trust in myself. I felt so small but now I feel big and understand."

We love working directly with practitioners as it gives us the opportunity to learn more about how the work is taken into the classroom.

Our ECD team says:

"It was a great experience to observe how the programme is making a positive impact on children's language development. Children respond well to the activities and enjoy the stories. The practitioners have shared how the children are more confident in telling and sharing their own stories."

"There has also been improvement in the involvement of parents by wanting to know more about the different stories and activities that the children do at the centres. The practitioners and principals were able to extend these activities that parents can do at home, for example: taking home drawings and encouraging parents to ask questions about them."

Read about our Little Stars and Every Word Counts ECD programmes here:

<https://www.wordworks.org.za/little-stars-home-language/>

<https://www.wordworks.org.za/every-word-counts/>



TIME Programme child assessments and home visits

Our TIME and Monitoring & Evaluation teams are doing some field work! During July and August, we are spending time at schools, assessing Grade R children's literacy and mathematics skills, visiting their homes, talking to their caregivers and observing how they are doing the TIME programme at home. This is part of a two-year study in which we are tracking the development of 36 children from 11 different schools from their entry into Grade R until the end of Grade 1. There is a lot of excitement and already a lot of learning!



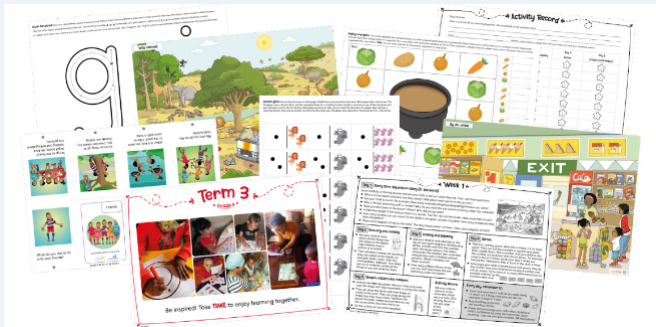


School Community Programmes

TIME (Together in my Education) Home Learning Programme

Our TIME online support sessions in the second term were attended by 290 participants from 250 schools and 17 NGO partners.

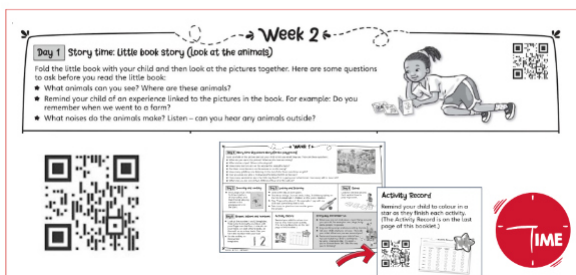
The programme is widely used. In Term 2 over 47 100 printed TIME activity packs were distributed; and more than 47 000 Term 3 activity packs are currently being distributed.



Do you wish to receive beautifully printed Term 4 TIME activity packs at a nominal cost? Register here before 9 September: <https://bit.ly/3S2bBxH>

You can find out more about the TIME home learning programme here: <https://www.homeliteracy.org.za/time/>

QR codes - TIME support messages for parents



Have you seen our new, exciting feature on the TIME weekly planners? Look out for QR codes alongside activities. These will take you to support messages, which are data-free online, in three languages. Please share this tip with tutors, parents and caregivers using the materials with their children.



Home-School Partnerships Programme

42 schools are running the Home-School Partnerships (HSP) sessions this year, and over 21 of these have completed, with lovely celebration events organised by their schools. You can see pictures of many of these events on our Facebook page: @wordworksSA



We are very happy that more and more dads are attending the HSP programme to learn how to support their children's learning at home.

Parent reflections of the course:

"I've learnt the importance of spending time with my children. How I can build on their knowledge informally, by talking to them, making them use their imagination to create things, play games, etc."

"My parents never talked to us or spent quality time with us. I can change this cycle by being the first parent in the family to talk, play and teach my 6 year old son."

"Shopping has never been this fun. I give my daughter her own list and although I have to run after her most of the time, I see the change in her and our relationship is stronger as mom and child."

"I never had the opportunity to complete my matric, you will never know what this means to me."

Read about our Home-School Partnerships Programme here: <https://www.wordworks.org.za/home-school-partnerships/>



Stellar Programme

Thanks to a sponsorship from Ackermans, 91 Grade R teachers from 32 schools have received our revised Stellar materials. A 2-part orientation workshop on these materials was attended by 67 participants in June, and 48 in July.



Participant feedback:

'I am looking forward to meeting new characters and telling their stories to my lovely group of children. Assessments are worked out so beautifully. All the information was very useful. We are excited to start; and thank you for putting our little ones first.'



Gauteng Grade R Improvement Project

Our Training of Trainers (ToT) has been going well. Full day training is followed by further online support sessions, active Whats App support groups and tips offered for trainers before each of three teacher training sessions per term.

We salute the 169 dedicated Trainers who are working so hard to take the Grade R Home Language Improvement programme to 4 400 Grade R teachers in Gauteng.

Participant feedback:

'I have been so committed to ensuring teachers understand this programme; I even go out of my way and use my own money to buy resources for demonstrations during teacher trainings.'

'Teachers have been very excited about the programme and implementing the new skills in their lessons. Language lessons will never be the same again!'



Are you interested in participating in our Wordworks school-based programmes for 2023?

On Thursday, 25 August, we will be conducting an online information session on our TIME Home Learning, our Home-School Partnerships and our Stellar Home Language Programmes.

Complete our Expression of Interest Form here: <https://bit.ly/3viv9UT> and we will make sure that you receive a link to the online session.



Mandela Day at Wordworks

Wordworks is committed to supporting the early literacy activities of our partners.

Mandela Day gave us an opportunity to make practical learning and teaching resources for under-resourced ECDs in our network. It was a wonderful opportunity to reconnect with our team members and the community we serve!

