

A look back at Literacy Month 2022

From Mammuso – Transforming Literacy Learning Spaces

I was privileged to be part of an imbizo of six black women leaders in education and literacy organisations in celebration of, and advocating for, the significance of literacy and education through what our organisations are doing, culminating in celebrating International Literacy Day on 8 September 2022.

Spearheaded by Funda Wandé, in response to UNESCO's important theme and mandate to Transform Literacy Learning Spaces, we gathered to start rethinking the fundamental importance of literacy learning spaces to build resilience and ensure quality, equitable and inclusive education for all.

Hosting the conversation was Sihle Nontshokweni, literacy advocate, children's book author and producer of 'The Ultimate Book Show'. The panel included **Sibonelo Nongcula**, Numeric CEO; **Nangamso Mtsatse**, Funda Wandé CEO; **Nqabakazi Mathe-Gina**, Nal'ibali Director; **Sibongile Khumalo**, The Learning Trust Executive Director; and myself, **Mammuso Makhanya**, Wordworks Director.

There were some important issues raised in our robust engagement, which stood out for me:

- The need to address inequalities that affect children, marginalisation, and poor access to services and resources by low-income communities.

- The importance of organisations to know their strengths and capitalize on them, and to collaborate with others whose competencies address different parts of the system.
- The importance of having more male caregivers and parents to participate in the early literacy in a child's life; to ensure community and home environments are turned into learning spaces.
- The foundation of learning and education being an access to literacy (and quality education).

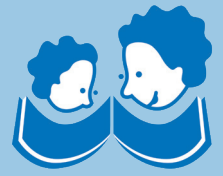
We recognised that there is no challenge that is more important than the next (even though some could be more urgent) but we need financial support for implementation. We would like to encourage funders and decision-makers to commit to growing and strengthening civil society organisations to deliver on their missions.

This gathering marked more than the significance of early learning but brought into sharp focus the need for deliberate collaboration among organisations in the sector to ensure we collectively work towards our National Development Plan and Sustainable Development goals.




Wordworks team reflections

What does early literacy mean to us?



I strongly believe that early literacy development also has a positive impact on the child-parent relationships as it strengthens the bond between the two.

Ntsiki Ntusikazi,
Early Literacy
Specialist



I get a smile on my face when a parent has understood just how important their role is in their child's life.

Christine MacLachlan,
Programmes Officer



Early literacy development is the foundation for ensuring that young children develop good language, reading, and writing skills

Sudika Martin, ECD Trainer



It is tremendously valuable to both the child and parent when parents spend time supporting their young child's learning.

Colleen Diedericks,
Programmes
Manager



I'm passionate about helping parents and teachers to see young children as individuals, to find what makes each one happy and enthusiastic to learn, and for them to realise that this can inform their parenting and teaching practices.

Kerry Saadien-Raad,
Early Literacy Specialist



Amabali neenkoko zosapho ziluncedo ke koluhambo lokukhulisa ulwimi lomntwana kwangoko.

Bukelwa Yuze, Early
Literacy Specialist



I'm passionate about hearing the diverse voices of caregivers, understanding their circumstances better and seeing how, with Wordworks' support, they are emboldened to step fully into their roles.

Magali von Blottnitz



I love engaging with partners who infuse our materials and programmes into their work. It excites me that our materials can be used to reach more and more young children and their families through the work that our partners do.

Paulene Solomon,
Programmes Manager



It brings me great joy to know that as a young adult, I am creating opportunities for young parents to grow their understanding of early literacy.

Kirsten Deane,
Online Producer and
Writer



I love to see the real life evidence of the changed lives of our slogan – 'Changing lives through literacy' reflected in feedback from parents, teachers, caregivers and

others who work with young children.

Andrea George,
Communications
Manager



I get a kick when I see the materials we develop and print reach the hands of these beautiful children and make an impeccable impact in their lives.

Tahirih Smith-Adams,
Finance and Materials
Officer



I so much enjoy seeing childrens' delight as they learn and master reading and writing; and their excitement at reading aloud to others.

Colleen Hughes,
Head of
Operations



If there was ever anything I did right and felt proud of was sharing knowledge with one parent, practitioner, and trainer at a time. And to wake up and do it all over again is a true blessing to me.

Asanda Mpahla, Early
Literacy Specialist

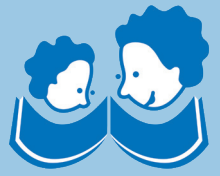


It makes me smile when educators or parents report back on the little milestones that their children have achieved/ reached or the aha moments they have experienced.

Faheema Hassiem,
Early Literacy
Specialist



Wordworks team reflections continued ...



Seeing the eyes of a child shine through as they are intrigued by a story or being able to utter and use new words or read on their own is priceless for me. The children benefiting from the little I contribute brings me absolute joy every time.

Cheryl Ann Thomas, Early Literacy Specialist



As a parent and grandmother, I believe literacy development is a fundamental component of a child's development.

Edeline Boka, HR and Office Administrator



Into endingathanda ukuthi sonke siyazi kukuba; sonke sinoxanduva nendima ekufuneka siyidlalile kuphuhliso lwemfundo lwabantwana abasekumabakala aphantsi. Ayiloxanduva likatishala/tishalakazi esikolweni qha.

Bonga Magazi, Audio-visual Material Production Coordinator

It is heart-warming to see young children playing our games or reading our little books. It is exciting to know that we are making a difference to so many little ones and that they will have a good start in their lives through our work.

Ingrid Brink, Publishing Officer



I really enjoy the creative aspect of developing materials for teachers, practitioners, parents, tutors and caregivers to use with young children in their care. That we are contributing towards the development of early literacy in the children of our country keeps me motivated and it is very exciting to see how our materials are taken up and enjoyed.

Sue Setton, Early Literacy Specialist



I love that our work has an impact in children's lives now, in their day to day learning experiences, as well as having an impact on how they navigate and experience the rest of their school years and beyond.

Katherine de Wet, Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning Officer



I'm passionate about training teachers by providing the tools for them to train their parents. Teachers see the transformation take place in their classroom as they witness the growth and development of the learners who have been supported by their parents at home

Gaynor Cozens, Early Literacy Specialist



Working with teachers who make a conscious decision about making a difference in early literacy inspires me. The cohesion of teacher and parent is an absolute joy ... cohesion brought about through literacy.

Lavinia Davis, Early Literacy Specialist



I love working in the field of early literacy as it seems to bring together so much I care deeply about. Adult education and lifelong development, parenting and teaching in supportive and respectful relationships based on interactions of integrity, genuine interest and mutual regard. Learning words and stories to help us understand ourselves, one another and the world around us.

Jane Coombe, Head of Programmes



I feel very privileged to be able to do what I love knowing that the outcome benefits so many little people on their journey to reading and writing. The creative and strategic process of materials development is very rewarding and there is nothing more heart-warming than seeing them being used in the field.

Jacqui Botha, Materials Design and Production Manager



Early literacy helps children communicate and understand the world around them better. Seeing children developing the love of reading by trying to read every word they see around them, picking up papers to read and asking adults the meaning of certain words makes me smile.

Lydia Makiva, ECD Trainer



Early literacy ... is important to me because it provides the building blocks for future learning.

Faith Shabangu, Early Literacy Specialist

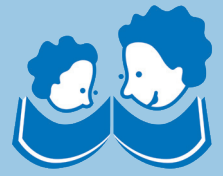


It always amazes me to see the commitment and dedication of each of the NGO's, Education districts, ECD forums and ECD centres that we work with.

Natasha Rosen, Early Literacy Specialist



Highlights of our ongoing research and learning activities

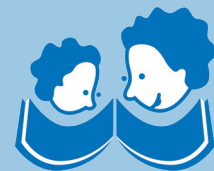


Yizani Sifunde, a partnership project between Wordworks, Book Dash, and Nal'ibali focuses on improving early literacy in the Eastern Cape in communities from East London, Sterkstroom, Molteno and Burgersdorp. Since the initial implementation in 2021, Yizani Sifunde has reached over 1 400 children, impacting on early literacy development in the early childhood development (ECD) sector.

Yizani Sifunde

This project has been made possible through the Liberty Community Trust





The Literacy Association of South Africa 2022

Sharing our work at the conference

Wordworks presented on some important developments in our programmes in line with the conference theme:

Rethinking literacy and pedagogic agency in the Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR).

Mammuso Makhanya, Natasha Rosen, Jacqui Botha, Katherine de Wet and Magali von Blottnitz presented the following papers/workshops:

Materials access in the digital age:

hybrid offerings rooted in human connection

Materials access in the digital age - hybrid offerings rooted in human connection

LITASA Conference
30 September 2022
Jacqui Botha,
Natasha Rosen



Activating teachers and parents for home learning:

lessons on pedagogic agency

Activating teachers and parents for home learning: lessons on pedagogic agency

Snapshot session
LITASA Conference
30 September 2022

Dr Magali von Blottnitz,
Mammuso Makhanya,
Katherine de Wet



Bringing a Wordworks online self study training course to ECD practitioners:

a snapshot of pilot

Bringing a Wordworks online self-study training course to ECD practitioners: a snapshot of pilot learnings

Snapshot session
LITASA Conference
30 September 2022

Jacqui Botha,
Natasha Rosen,
Katherine de Wet



A practical introduction to the TIME programme:

an early grade home learning innovation for scale

A practical introduction to the TIME programme: an early grade home learning innovation for scale

Workshop
LITASA Conference
1 October 2022

Natasha Rosen &
Katherine de Wet



Shelley O'Carroll inaugural award winner

The Shelley O'Carroll Early Literacy Award is awarded to an individual, project, organisation, unit/centre or team whose research and/or practice has contributed to understandings of how the literacy of young South African children can be developed and supported.

The award was handed over to the winner, **Adele Mooi** from the **Dr CL Smith Foundation** by the Mammuso Makhanya (Wordworks Director) at the 2022 LITASA Conference.

Congratulations to this well-deserving winner! Find out more about this organisation [here](https://www.litasa.org.za).



Wordworks Vision 2030



In September, we embarked on a Strategic Planning process to work through Wordworks Strategy 2030. The process will culminate in a strategic plan that will guide Wordworks for the next seven years towards its Vision 2030. The initial workshops involved stakeholders such as our Board, some donors, and staff representatives and some of our Strategic partners. This varied group provided invaluable, rich and varied input.

