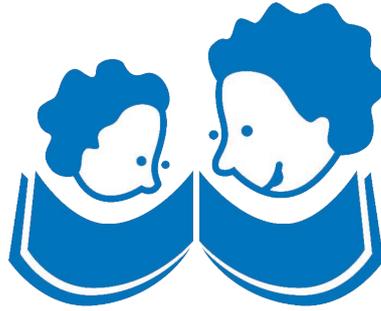


Annual Report



2021



Wordworks focuses on early language and literacy development in the first eight years of children's lives. We share knowledge and collaborate with those who care for, work with and advocate for young children so that they recognise the importance of early language and literacy and support its development in homes, schools and community settings.

We see a world where young children are supported to develop early language and literacy so that their lives are enriched and they grow to their full potential.

The Wordworks board members and management



From left to right:

*Back row: Nangamso Mtsatse, Tracey Chiappini-Young, Jane Coombe, Gabriel Boka, Shelley Von Seidel, Mignon Hardie
Front row: Colleen Hughes, Jennifer Khumalo, Mammuso Makhanya, Shelley O'Carroll, Babalwayashe Molate*

Annual Report

2021



A warm, nurturing, responsive relationship with a caregiver helps a child's brain to grow!

Director's message: A year of transitions

Mammuso Makhanya who took over the directorship of Wordworks in 2021 is delighted to present this annual report. It reflects our activities and achievements, despite a challenging socio-economic environment.

The past year has seen the world adjust to the reality that we have to co-exist with the COVID-19 coronavirus in our lives – be it in education, health, the workplace and all other areas of human endeavour. As the Wordworks collective, inspired by the president's exhortation that "it is in our hands", we did all we could to curb the spread of the pandemic by instituting strict health protocols together with the necessary support systems to keep up productivity, accountability and morale.



We were determined not to let COVID-19 get in the way of our mission "to inspire, share knowledge and collaborate with those who care for, work with and advocate for young children so that they recognise the importance of early language and literacy in homes, schools and community settings". We adapted our working methods to the challenges posed by the second year of lockdown. Our staff developed capacity and demonstrated unprecedented innovation and leadership at all levels, enabling us to meet our strategic goals.

We were keenly aware that our partners in the Early Childhood Development and Education sectors were faced with challenges and hardships in a year that saw the continued closure of centres, infrequent school attendance and loss of staff due to ill-health and funding constraints. All this culminated in further learning losses that deepened the literacy crisis that plagues our country. Since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, increasing numbers of young children are starting school without important language and literacy foundations. The already significant achievement gap is widening, deepening intergenerational cycles of poverty and lost potential. Early intervention and targeted support has become more urgent than ever before if South Africa is to break this destructive cycle.



Notwithstanding these serious challenges we also saw unprecedented levels of resilience, adaptability, commitment and creativity as a sector which continued to deliver much-needed services in the face of the onslaught of the pandemic. In fact, collectively we exceeded our measures of success for 2021, increasing our WordNetworks partner membership; teachers, children and parents reached and significantly the number of government structures that we work with.



In 2021 we focused considerable effort on families and communities in relation to them supporting early language and literacy for young children. Home-school partnerships have been a strong theme for the year and have enabled us to support the education system to ensure continued learning in a context where COVID-related learning losses have been dramatically high.

The partnerships with our donor community strengthened to new levels last year. Some provided us with the necessary emergency funding to respond to COVID-19 challenges, and others were agreeable to necessary alterations to programme implementation – all of which contributed immensely to our performance.

During this period the founding director stepped down from her leadership duties and is now focused on her literacy interests including evaluation, research and writing. She has worked closely with me and senior management during the transition period to ensure a careful handover. We are immeasurably grateful to retain her services so that she can continue to strengthen our organisation and the broader sector.

One of the major highlights of 2021 was the commendation of our work in the UNESCO Global Education publication, "Learning to build back better futures for education: Lessons from educational innovation during the COVID-19 pandemic". See more on this in our programmes section.

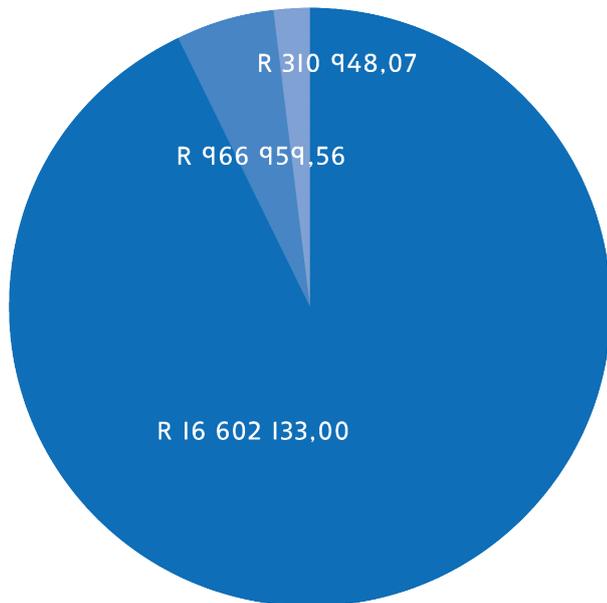


Shelley O'Carroll and Mammuso Makhanya

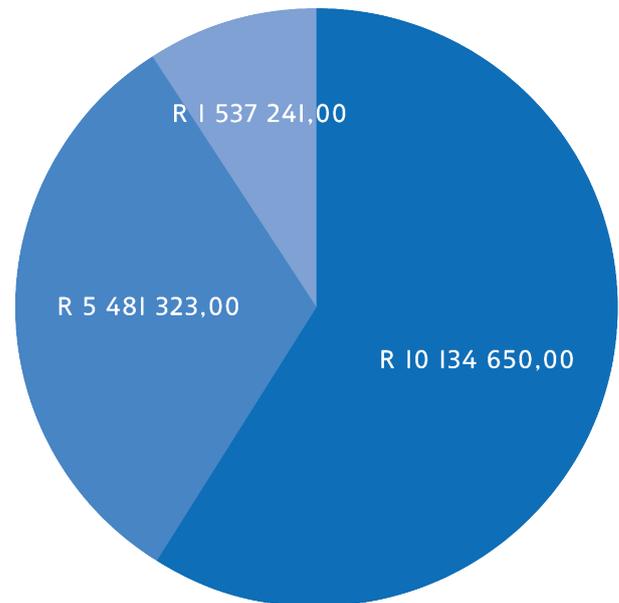
Even though the year tested and stretched us, we ended it with renewed hope and optimism as we take the many lessons forward into future work. This would not have been accomplished if it were not for the unwavering support of our staff, board, donors and our numerous civil society and government partners.

Financial report: With thanks to our donors

Income 2021



Expenditure 2021



Income	2021	2020
Grants and donations	R 16 602 133,00	R 12 354 374,00
Sale of resources and services rendered	R 966 959,56	R 962 171,00
Interest	R 310 948,07	R 239 966,00
Bursary fund	*discontinued*	
	R 17 880 040,63	R 13 556 511,00

Expenditure	2021	2020
Training and capacity building	R 10 134 650,00	R 7 959 807,00
Materials and resources	R 5 481 323,00	R 3 188 096,00
Overheads and office costs	R 1 537 241,00	R 1 535 811,00
Bursary fund	*discontinued*	
	R 17 153 214,00	R 12 737 039,00

We thank our donors for their confidence in our work throughout the challenges, changes and celebrations of 2021.



Thank you to the individuals who have donated to our work.

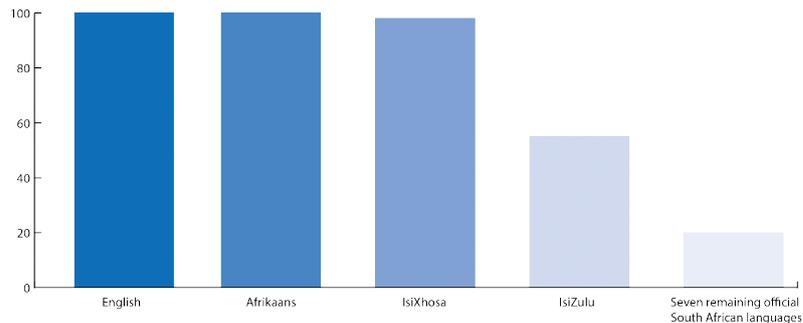


We thank these organisations for materials donated to our work.

Our programmes: Materials development and sharing

Our goal is to make our materials widely accessible as we believe they can be effectively used by a range of formal and informal ECD roleplayers to build early language and literacy foundations. To do this we are working to:

- **Keep materials affordable through careful design, bulk printing and sponsorship.** In 2021, we fully sponsored materials for partners to the value of R 1 566 203,33 and provided cost price materials to the value of R 956 145,33.
- **Create materials in all official languages.** By the end of 2021, 100% of our materials were in English, 100% in Afrikaans, 98% in isiXhosa, 55% in isiZulu and 20% in the remaining seven official South African languages (isiNdebele, Sepedi, Sesotho, Setswana, Siswati, Tshivenda and Xitsonga).



- **Ensure online access to materials;** in 2021 there were 59 314 user engagements with materials on our website.



- **Activate our open source policy,** engaging partners who wish to collaborate to re-version and re-purpose materials while maintaining quality, and the purpose and principles of open source.
- Work closely with **provincial Departments of Education** to develop resources to support their early literacy programmes:

The Gauteng Department of Education's Grade R Improvement Programme

Wordworks is honoured to have been selected as the language technical partner for this important five-year provincial priority programme funded by USAID, the Maitri Trust, the Zenex Foundation and the Gauteng Education Development Trust, and managed by the Joint Education Trust.

Working very closely with the GDE, we have been responsible for developing and language versioning the Home Language classroom, teacher and training materials.

We are proud of the materials and excited that they are being rolled out to all Grade R teachers at Gauteng public primary schools in 2022 through a carefully planned programme of full-year training by advisors and department heads.

The Western Cape Education Department's @ Home Forum

Working within the forum in the context of Covid learning losses, Wordworks initiated the development of the TIME (Together in My Education) vome Learning programme to provide affordable, practical and fun daily activities to help build young children's foundational skills. TIME contains early literacy content from Wordworks, early mathematics content from RED INK, and stories from Na'l'ibali, African Storybook and Book Dash. In 2021, the TIME materials were shared for distribution to nearly 50 000 homes through more than 300 schools and 24 NGOs across several provinces.

A recent UNESCO Global Education publication highlights the potential of the programme beyond Covid to "influence early childhood development through active caregiver involvement".

http://www.ibe.unesco.org/sites/default/files/resources/book_ibe_-_global_education_innovation_initiative.pdf

Our programmes: Training development and sharing

Our goal is to enable all those who wish to use our early language and literacy programmes and materials to easily access blended training opportunities through our network of training partners, online facilitated courses and self-study. To do this we are working to:

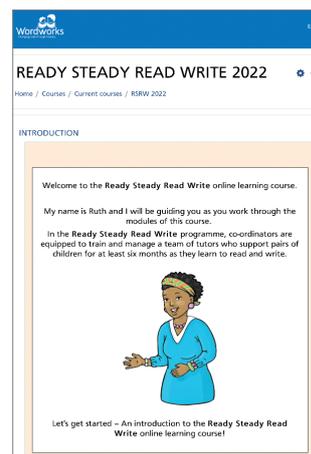
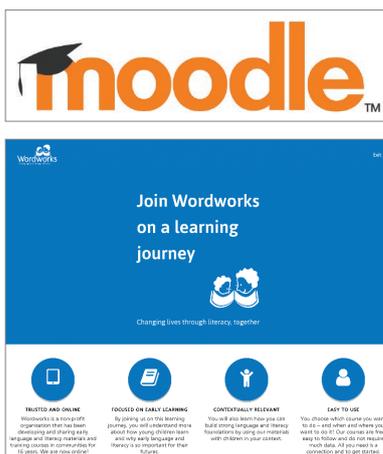
- **Provide high quality Training of Trainers courses for our partners** to prepare them to conduct effective programme training in their contexts. In 2021, we facilitated ToT courses for 144 trainers nominated by their NGOs and ran a five-day block training for 168 trainers from the Gauteng Department of Education.



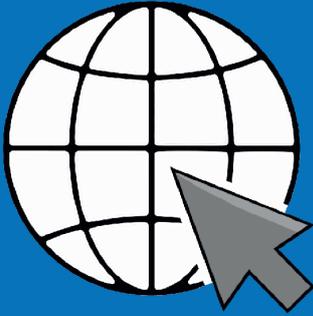
- **Conduct training largely through online facilitated sessions**, making use of interactive activities, participant workbooks and high quality slide packs which incorporate multimedia audiovisual features to enrich the learning experience. This has enabled us to extend our training to more people, further afield and to offer specialised language-medium training in a more cost-effective manner.



- **Develop and test self-study online courses** for practitioners, teachers and tutors that can be offered for blended training experiences. We are learning important lessons with respect to course design and trainee uptake and we look forward to making these more widely available soon.



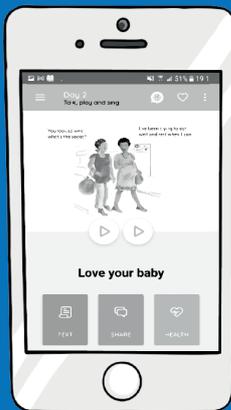
Wordworks



52 080
website users



1 200
Instagram page
followers



3 150
people used apps with
Wordworks content

Western Cape Education Department from 2015



Ongoing supply
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with
13 755
0-3 year-old
children



where **3 989** teachers and practitioners
use early litera



with **68** NGOs, **317** schools
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Wordw

reach 2021

Support, training
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other provincial
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Needs
Training

Gauteng Department of Education from 2021



4 700
newsletter
subscribers

4 811

in schools, communities and homes

with
17 750
5-8 year-old
children



with
32 351
5-8 year-old
children



for teachers and
other provincial
staff
34 696
parents and
caregivers



for schools and ECD centres in
the
10 000
networks



for sharing materials
and training
10 000
networks



59 314
user engagements with
programme resources on
our website

Our partners: Expanding programme reach

The number of partners implementing, training on, and managing Wordworks programmes continued to grow, collectively reaching 52 481 children through:

- 68 NGOs and 317 schools and ECD centres
- 3989 teachers and practitioners
- 34 696 parents and caregivers.

We continued to work closely with the **Western Cape Education Department** where Wordworks' Grade R classroom materials have been used since 2016 as part of *ELIT*, their Early Literacy strategy, reaching a conservative estimate of a further 50 000 children each year.



Yizani Sifunde pre-Grade R Early Language Intervention

Where we have the opportunity, we work closely with partners on collaboration projects that combine the different strengths and offerings of different organisations to create and test something new.

Yizani Sifunde (isiXhosa for "Come, let's read") is a collaborative five-year project in the Eastern Cape funded by the Liberty Community Trust. It's structured as a three-way partnership between Book Dash, Nal'ibali and Wordworks.

Although the project started work in 2020, 2021 was the first year of on-the-ground implementation when the Yizani Sifunde project was rolled out to the first cohort of 40 ECD sites and their communities around East London, Elliot and Queenstown.

Wordworks trained, supported and resourced Eastern Cape partners ITEC and Khululeka who provide training to ECD practitioners on the Little Stars classroom programme as well as the Every Word Counts parent programme. Book Dash ensured an abundance of books for the children and their families, while Nal'ibali focused on sustained literacy practices in the community.

We are learning from careful monitoring and evaluation which informs ongoing reflection, review and improvement of the model of work and partnership.

Yizani Sifunde
This project has been made possible through the Liberty Community Trust

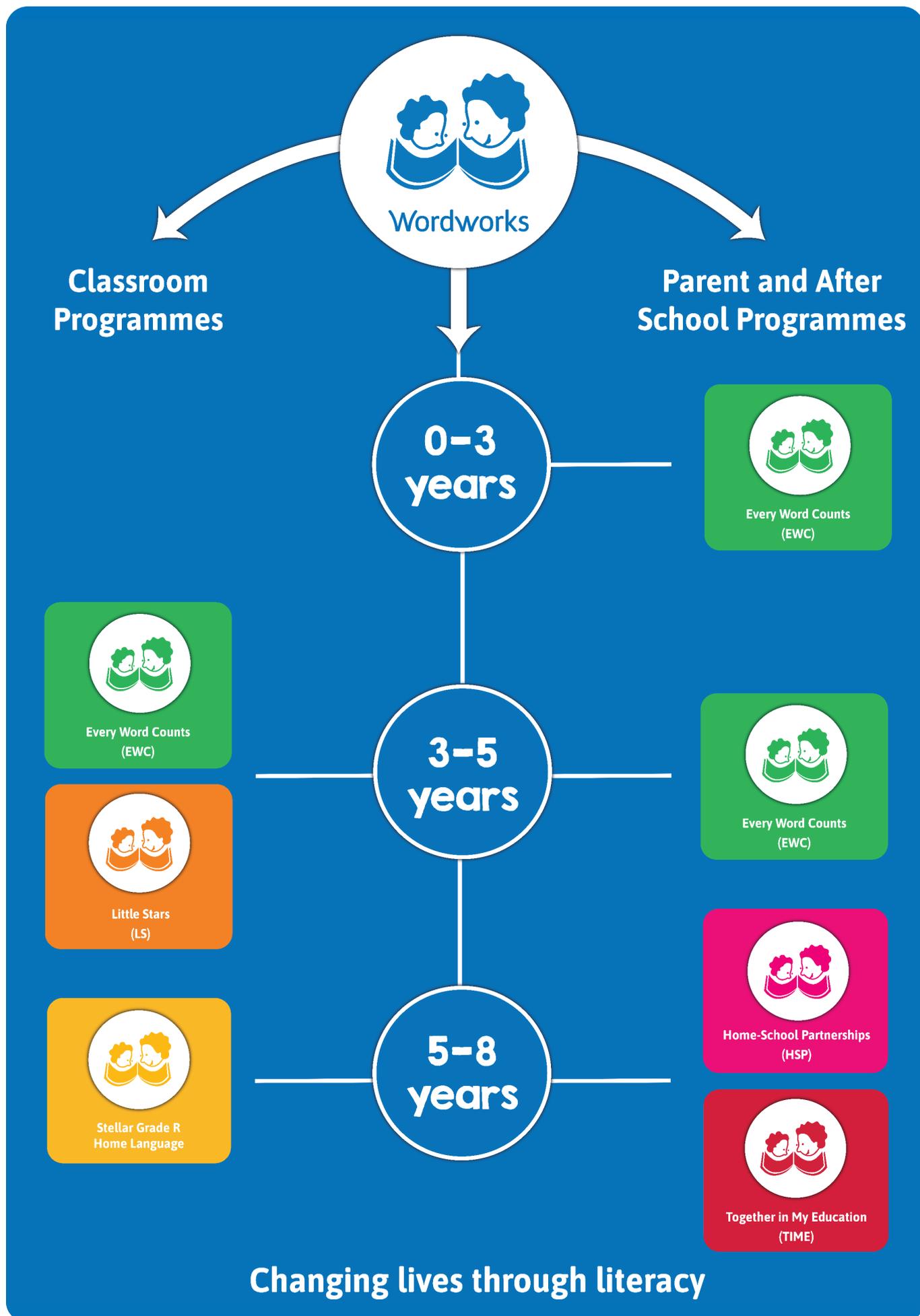


Our partners: 2021 partnerships



Word Networks
 Changing lives through literacy, together

Our programmes



Farewells

Shelley O'Carroll

In 2021, we said a formal thank you to Wordworks' founder, Dr Shelley O'Carroll, for her sixteen years of inspiring leadership. It was a small and poignant event which was live-streamed to many of her colleagues, partners and friends.

The event included heartfelt and moving tributes from many of the people Shelley had 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.



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.

Other goodbyes

Wordworks bid a sad farewell to four colleagues in 2021, each moving on to new chapters in their lives. They are missed.



Brigid Comrie worked as a founding member of Wordworks since 2005. She developed our Home-School Partnerships programme. She also worked on other Wordworks programmes: the Stellar Home Language (Grade R) programme, and more recently the Every Word Counts programme. Brigid has also contributed to the development of materials for the Little Stars (pre-Grade R) and TIME Home Learning programmes.

Gail Lindsay was a mentor, trainer and coordinator with the Ready Steady Read Write programme for seven years.

Ruth Stafford was with Wordworks for 10 years as a mentor, trainer and coordinator in the Ready Steady Read Write programme.

Sarah Florence was with Wordworks for four years as a mentor and trainer in the Ready Steady Read Write and Every Word Counts programmes.

The Wordworks team



The team from left to right:

Back row : Andrea George, Magali von Blottnitz, Gabriel Boka, Paulene Solomon, Cheryl Ann Thomas, Edeline Boka, Colleen Hughes, Bonga Magazi, Christine MacLachlan, Setungoane Letsatsi, Katherine de Wet, Jane Coombe, Ntsiki Ntusikazi, Bukelwa Yuze, Kerry Saadien-Raad, Tiya Shonga, Asanda Mphahla

Middle row: Gaynor Cozens, Sue Setton, Ingrid Brink, Mammuso Makhanya, Faheema Hassiem, Lavinia Davis, Natasha Rosen

Front row: Tahirih Smith-Adams, Colleen Diedericks, Faith Shabangu, Jacqui Botha, Lydia Makiva, Kirsten Deane, Isabella Hugow, Sudika Martin

Our team in action







Changing lives through literacy

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