

OCTOBER 2014

Volunteers making a difference

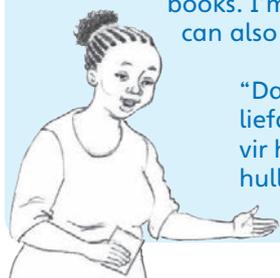
At the heart of the Early Literacy Programme are volunteers who give their time to help children who would otherwise not get the individual attention they need to make progress. This year, over 2600 children have received support on a weekly basis. This amounts to over 1300 hours of volunteering time every week!

We have been interested in finding out why people volunteer, and these are some of the reasons our volunteers give. Some volunteers say that they join because they want to learn how to help their own children and grandchildren. Many of our volunteers feel rewarded by the fact that the school and teachers appreciate their contribution. Volunteers also enjoy being part of a team and having a sense of shared purpose.

By far, the main reason people give for volunteering is a desire to 'give back' and a shared sense of responsibility for children in their communities. They know how much their time means to children and are inspired by the changes they see in children's lives. These quotes give a sense of what volunteering means:

"Seeing their smiles when they recognize you and run up to hug us, that is very special to me. Seeing that you have that impact on this child."

"I'm here for the children. I'm here for the other parent who can't sit at night and see to the books. I'm here to see that that child can also gain the way to read."



"Daar's baie van hulle vat nie liefde by die huis kry. Ons kan vir hulle liefde gee. Ons kan vir hulle sê, 'Jy'd mooi gedoen.'"



Creative ELP volunteers spark children's imaginations

ELP volunteers at Plantation Primary are having fun! Each week they create a theme table to encourage a quick group discussion with Grade One children before they start individual lessons. An inspiring example of what our talented ELP volunteers are doing!

STOP PRESS... STOP PRESS...

High quality Grade R can and does make a difference to later school success. Read the Cape Times article highlighting how the Wordworks STELLAR Programme is achieving this:

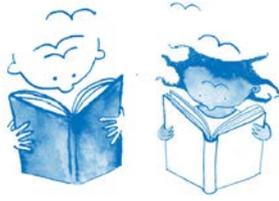
<http://wordworks.org.za/publications/>

Top tip:

Many young children find vowels a challenge to master and this is a fun and effective way to practise them. Take a clean, empty egg carton and write a vowel in each egg space. Put a piece of popcorn in the egg box, close it and shake it up. The child opens the egg box and says the vowel that the popcorn has landed on. If she is correct, she gets to eat the popcorn! Thanks to Renee Lighton for this idea.

(www.renelighton.co.za)





My story

"I got involved in the Home School Partnership Programme because I realised that the parents at our school are eager to help their children but are not equipped. I believed that assisting and empowering them would bridge the gap between home and school, and that our literacy levels could only improve.

We received a very positive response from our parents. Some even took leave every Thursday just to be present every week. The big 'aha moment' came when parents realised that they weren't expected to be like their child's teacher at home. They were to put the fun back into being a parent – not a stressed out parent who shouted and punished the child. They started seeing all the teaching and learning opportunities that came up on a daily basis and could confidently reinforce what the child had already learnt at school.

I absolutely LOVED facilitating the Wordworks programme. There wasn't a week that I sighed! I became much more relaxed with the parents and we formed a WhatsApp group. And now that it is all over, we have a support group meeting twice a month, just to stay connected.

We, as a team, are ready to present this programme at Eastville again next year."



Carmen Petersen is a Grade One educator at Eastville Primary in Mitchell's Plain, and a wife and mother of two teenage children.

Did you know?

What children can do (rather than what they can't do) is the starting point of a child's learning: Vygotsky points out that given the right help, children are capable of higher levels of functioning than if they were left without assistance. But all assistance/instruction needs to be at the child's level. It's key to strike the right balance between adult-led learning and child-led learning. There is a difference between leaving children to do as they like and helping children to take initiative, make choices and decisions, learn from errors and be autonomous learners.

Bruce, T (2005) Early Childhood education. Third edition. UK: Hodder Arnold



Did you see?

Children in South Africa need more books, but books often cost too much when purchased from publishers. The cheapest books have no publisher – then the only cost is printing. So some illustrators and authors do the work of publishers in a single day and after that, anyone can download and print free books. Visit the BOOKDASH website to download free books.
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