

# THE LEARNING TRUST

## PARTNERS WITH WORDWORKS

**Eight years into operation, The Learning Trust (TLT) aims to increase, improve and extend learning opportunities for young people growing up in conditions of poverty and exclusion. We do this by finding, incubating and progressively building the organisational capacities of community-led education initiatives through funding and capacity building partnerships.**

Through a passion for community solutions, deep expertise and collective impact, TLT's work is transforming early-stage non-profits and supporting established organisation to pilot new ideas. An internal evaluation of our work has shown that the critical enabler of organisational transformation (from being fragile to increasingly mature, resilient and influential) is our capacity strengthening. We walk a five-year journey with each of our grantees as their leadership, programme and organisation develops. When our grantees graduate from our support, we form extended partnerships with them to increase their reach and strengthen their programming.

Wordworks is one such partner. Following TLT's support of their expansion into the Eastern Cape, we now work alongside them to support the development and sustainability of other organisations wishing to use the Wordworks literacy model. This partnership enables Wordworks to scale their work through collaborations by supporting the implementation of quality literacy interventions using their model.



# WORDWORKS EXPANSION THROUGH COLLABORATION

Wordworks develops early language and literacy in the first eight years of children's lives. By sharing their model, materials and enthusiasm with teachers, parents and volunteers in a respectful and inclusive way, Wordworks seeks to ensure that all children can learn to read and write successfully. TLT's funding and capacity development relationship with Wordworks began in 2011, with the objective of supporting the expansion of their Eastern Cape coastal schools project. Post-graduation, TLT partnered with Wordworks to scale the roll-out of their Ready Steady Read Write programme by growing the network of tutoring interventions using this early literacy model for greater collective impact.

The TLT/Wordworks partnership offers a model for literacy improvement that draws on a network of holistically supported, community-based extended education programmes. The organisations are supported in using a common Wordworks literacy intervention to improve the literacy levels of the children that they service. At the same time, these organisations are provided with TLT funding and organisational capacity support to ensure that they become and remain healthy and thriving organisations that are better able to implement their literacy interventions.

In 2016 and 2017, this collaboration reached the following organisations' coordinators, tutors and learners in two provinces:

**WESTERN CAPE:** Darling Outreach Foundation, Bethesda Community Centre, Beautiful Gate, Great Commission United (GCU), Thope Foundation

**EASTERN CAPE:** Masinyusane Development Organisation, Lebone Centre

- Seven partner organisations working in 15 schools
- 19 coordinators and 163 tutors providing weekly support to children
- 2350 children from Grade R to Grade 3 attending lessons with tutors for at least 6 months

As a result of the TLT collaboration, Wordworks' value-add is taking a subset of this broader network of organisations and giving them additional programmatic support, funding, and organisational support. The partnership has enabled Wordworks to recruit more appropriate organisations into the network; an extensive process that Wordworks was unable to do previously due to capacity limitations. It is evident that the beneficiary organisations have been advanced through this dual support. In addition to using the Wordworks model, many have been able to expand to new schools and extend their reach. Additionally, they now have allocated resources and capacity to implement and institutionalise the Ready Steady Read Write programme. The additional capacity support provided by TLT has contributed to the success and sustainability of the programmes. Below, we share a selection of stories from this collaboration.



# GREAT COMMISSION UNITED

## UPS ITS NUMBERS

GCU was set up in 2001 by Mario van Niekerk, with the aim of addressing gangsterism and high youth unemployment in Heideveld, Cape Town. They provide physical education and After School sports programmes to engage youth in school and provide them with academic support through tutoring. Having begun with approximately 200 learners in just one school, today, GCU has a presence in five local primary and high schools, working with over 4000 learners. TLT started working with GCU in 2011, contributing funding to the value of R1 000 400 over the last seven years.

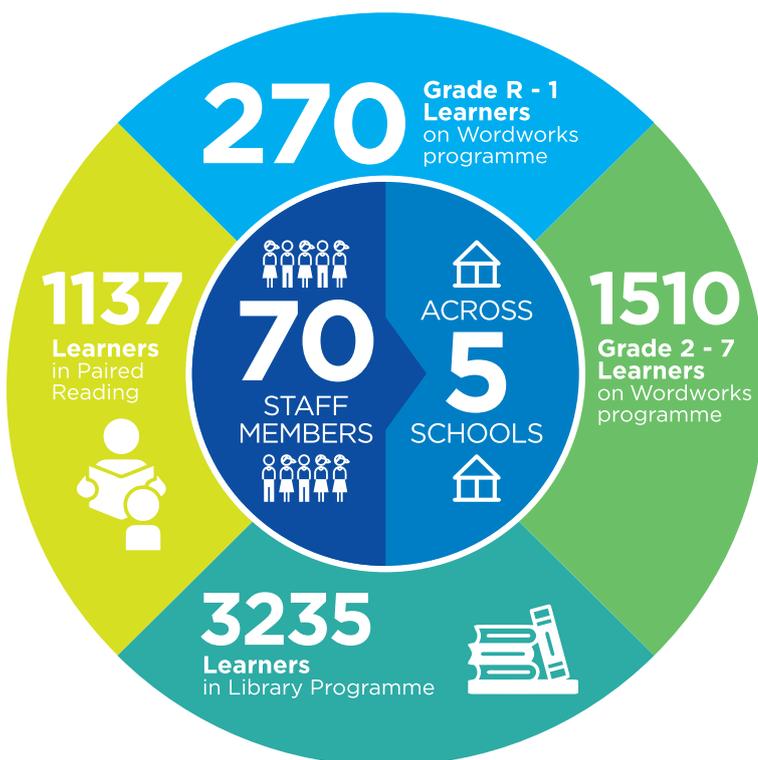


“TLT makes every project they support their own. Today GCU has reached over 4 000 children in our tutoring program and TLT laid the foundation for that. We will forever be grateful to TLT!”

As part of an initial partnership with Wordworks, GCU received basic training in implementation of the Ready Steady Read Write model in one school, with subsequent improvement in their literacy results. However, as they expanded to five schools, it became challenging to scale the model without extra training and support, compromising the quality of the intervention. In 2016, GCU sought support from the TLT/Wordworks partnership to help them improve the quality of their literacy programme in all their expansion areas. At this stage, their coordinators and tutors received updated programmatic training as well as new resources.

In addition, GCU has benefited from TLT organisational capacity support prior to and throughout the partnership with Wordworks. This has helped to create a healthier organisation that is better able to deliver the literacy intervention. Their team participated in all capacity building opportunities, including seminars, Leadership Development workshops (in the form of Neuro-linguistic Programming – NLP) and Community of Practice (CoP) engagements offered by TLT. They also received extensive one-on-one support to improve their M&E systems. In the initial years of working with the GCU team, they used paper tests to demonstrate their learner progress. Today, they have a much more systematic approach, with every learner’s results recorded electronically, allowing them to draw meaning from their data.

In 2017, GCU had 70 staff members working across five schools, with 270 Grade R-1 learners and 1510 Grade 2-7 learners on the Wordworks programme; 1137 learners in paired reading and 3235 learners in the library programme.



# DARLING OUTREACH CENTRE SHIFTS ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE

Established in 2010, Darling provides holistic family support services to the community of Darling in the Western Cape. The organisation started their journey with TLT in 2016 upon joining the Wordworks collaboration. At the end of 2017, they had received a financial contribution of R130 000 to enable them to start a literacy support programme for Grade 1 learners at the local primary school.

In that year, Darling supported 56 Grade 1 learners with the in-school Wordworks literacy programme, resulting in an incremental improvement in the academic performance of most learners. In addition, anecdotal evidence pointed to a significant improvement in the self-esteem of learners. The children in this programme demonstrated a stronger sense of self in terms of their body language, communication and active participation.



Darling has exceeded our output expectations and have demonstrated extremely passionate commitment to learning. They have been active participants in all major TLT capacity support events like seminars and CoPs, as well as extensive one-on-one M&E support which allowed them to design their first Theory of Change (ToC).

Through the TLT/Wordworks partnership, Darling Outreach Centre has gained support to ensure that they are on the right track, networks to share and collaborate, and access to opportunities such as the After School Practitioner training (“Beyond my world of aftercare” programme).



## BETHESDA COMMUNITY CENTRE SUPPORTS LEARNERS & PARENTS

Based in Moorreesburg, Bethesda works to address the lack of literacy skills in young children up to the age of 12 years. Their mission is to provide learners with every opportunity to successfully complete primary and secondary schooling and to enter tertiary education. They started as a small community-based organisation, run by an incredibly passionate and committed leader. Bethesda was selected to be a part of the TLT/Wordworks collaboration in 2016. By 2017, they had received a financial contribution of R130 000.

Although they started off small, reaching only 16 learners in their first year, they focused on quality, ensuring that they build a strong foundation for the programme to grow. Moreover Margaret (Director) did not hesitate to volunteer herself and staff for the Wordworks Home Parenting Support Programme and, without additional funding, had a pilot training programme for 20 parents, facilitated by her team. The training was a huge success with powerful feedback from the parent beneficiaries.

Bethesda is one of the success stories of the Wordworks strategic partnership initiative. The organisation receives limited funding, yet achieves great results and has a visionary approach to learner support in the local community they serve. They have also been proactive in making the most of the capacity support opportunities provided by the TLT/Wordworks collaboration, which has in turn, advanced their growth.

**“It is of great help to have people listening to you, not judging, but giving advice and guidance”.**

Working closely with TLT, the organisation has received coaching in the design of their ToC, strategic planning and budgeting. They have also participated enthusiastically in all major capacity support opportunities, including seminars and CoPs. This support was both at a practical level as well as through mentorship and coaching. In their experience, TLT’s annual seminar was a valuable experience and they also valued the tailor-made, relevant and targeted support overall.