



SHINE LITERACY'S KHANYISA PROJECT 2018:

A brief overview and key findings





1. Background: Khanyisa Project 2018

Shine Literacy is in its second year of implementing the Khanyisa reading programme, which aims to provide every child with structured time to practice reading in class and to improve their reading skills. The pilot project, started in 2017, had 24 participating schools and in 2018 continued with 11 schools that participated in the pilot.

In 2018, Reading Partners were assigned to thirty-nine Grade 2 classrooms. Their responsibilities in the classroom were to read one-on-one with each child – paired reading – and to read a story to the whole class daily. One thousand five hundred and sixty-five learners (764 girls and 801 boys) were reached through this programme in 2018. The Reading Partners (unemployed matriculants aged 19 to 25 years) had immersive training for one week in April 2018 before starting at schools in Term Two. The Jobs Fund provided monthly stipends for the Reading Partners until the end of October 2018.

As with the pilot year, each class was equipped with a fully resourced class library of graded paired and shared readers (taking into consideration the Language of Learning and Teaching (LoLT) specific in each school). Mats and cushions were provided for Reading Partners and learners participating in the project.





2. Highlights

- Feedback from the initial training was very positive, Reading Partners were engaged and very willing to try all activities presented.
- Ten Reading Partners left the programme during the year. Having extra Reading Partners at each school was invaluable, as the programme was not disrupted if a Reading Partner left.
- Grade 2 teachers were very welcoming and accommodating when they met their respective Reading Partners on the last day of training.
- Completion certificates were awarded to forty-two Reading Partners at Graduation in November. Eight Reading Partners from this cohort have applied to study for teaching degrees at Institutions of Higher Learning.
- Friday feedback sessions proved to be important and beneficial for the Reading Partners. At the sessions, they got the opportunity to share best practice, and sought support and advice from each other and the teaching specialists to help them address issues arising during their practice.
- One Family Literacy Workshop was facilitated in September and attendance was high with over 60 parents or guardians attending. One crucial feedback from parents was how they valued having people who speak their language facilitating the programme, as they were able to understand what was being said, and could participate more easily than when the workshops were conducted solely in English.
- A Grade 2 Teachers' Community of Practice (CoP) was held to introduce the concept of creating a professional platform to share ideas and tackle education issues together. These teachers were interested in a continued CoP in 2019.



3. Findings

WHAT WORKED WELL

LEARNERS

- Began accessing and using library resources. *“Children wanted to borrow books from the school library to read at home over the holidays.”* Reading Partner
- Most learners improved in confidence and were willing to read. *“When I started there was a particular learner who didn’t even know his alphabet so I didn’t know what to do... but I actually got him to start reading and he has since passed some of the children who were already good at reading.”* Reading Partner
- Willing to try reading books in English as a first additional language.
- Were encouraged to take a book home and read to a family member. *“I told learners to ask their parents to take them to the library. The next day a mom came to school saying her daughter had brought the message home and they had gone to the library to get books out. I felt proud for at least getting through to one child.”* Reading Partner

TEACHER / SCHOOLS ADMINISTRATION

- Mentored the Reading Partners
- Gave Reading Partners autonomy to work with children as they saw fit. *“She knows my job description and she gives me enough time to read.”* Reading Partner
- Helpful to the Reading Partners, giving them resources, and treating them as equals. *“She appreciates my presence in the class and she always encourages me when I do my readings – she never disturbs me.”* Reading Partner
- Paid compliments and motivated Reading Partners.

READING PARTNERS

- Overall, this was an enjoyable and fulfilling experience. *“I thank you guys for this opportunity – it has helped me to see things differently and I am grateful now that I know which path to follow. I am happy to be part of this programme.”* Reading Partner
- The robust training received at the beginning was useful and was a sound work related foundation for them.
- Eight Reading Partners have applied to study for teaching degrees at Institutions of Higher Learning.

WHAT NEEDS IMPROVING

LEARNER SPECIFIC

- Children’s attendance drops during exam season.
- Some children can be difficult to manage and teachers do not help the Reading Partners manage this untoward behaviour.

GENERAL

- Some Reading Partners were not given an opportunity to read for up to three weeks.
- Violence (Gang or Taxi) in some city areas can cause fear, stress and insecurity to all who live in those areas.
- The Jobs Fund pulling out of the Western Cape Education Department (WCED) poses a challenge for stipends.



4. Impact

The impact of the Khanyisa 2018 programme was three pronged.

Firstly, at its heart is the strong evidence that children want to read and do so if, and when, they have a dedicated, trained person to support them in the journey. Children responded well to having a Reading Partner to do paired reading with them daily. Anecdotally this improved their reading skills, or at the very least, improved their confidence to read independently, with one person, or in a large group. Shared reading brought joy, and made books come alive for both the children and Reading Partners.

Secondly, teachers found having a Reading Partner in class a good support for them. They noticed that some reluctant readers were more willing to read to their Reading Partner and they encouraged that. The teachers also acknowledged that some Reading Partners were innovative and had a good rapport with the learners. Some teachers even picked up some simple classroom settling strategies from the Partners. This programme is most effective when teachers are active agents and participants in the programme. This has to be a core mandate for Shine Literacy in ensuring that teachers are part of the process.

Finally, the Reading Partners benefited immensely from this structured, intensive and rewarding experience. Reading Partners started to see themselves as readers and accessed reading materials for their own pleasure. Those who are parents used the strategies learnt in the programme to support their children's development at home, ensuring that this programme is not only for the confines of the school.



5. Recommendations for 2019

- Learner progress will be tracked using Early Grade Reading Assessment (EGRA).
- Create a template to track the number of books each child reads.
- Work with Action Volunteers Africa (AVA) to source funding for Youth stipends.



6. Conclusion

A key impact of the programme was that it allowed children to get more reading opportunities during the school day. Children gained confidence and read significantly more texts with their Reading Partner than they would have without one.

Having a designated seating area for reading in the classroom created a safe and fun place for children to read and begin to see reading as a fun, but important part of their daily schedule. Children's attitudes towards reading improved positively, with children wanting to have turns to read daily with their Reading Partners.

An unexpected, yet powerful effect of the programme is that a number of Reading Partners have become interested in teaching as a profession and have applied to study education at tertiary institutions. Being Reading Partners has afforded them work experience and skills in literacy that they will be able to pass on to others.

Finally, Literacy and Youth development in South Africa have been given high priority by our President, and are an important element of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. Shine Literacy, together with Action Volunteer Africa recognise the importance and synergy of placing youth in our primary schools and see this as a scalable programme with far reaching impact.



"When I started there was a particular learner who didn't even know his alphabet so I didn't know what to do... but I actually got him to start reading and he has since passed some of the children who were already good at reading."



Nicole, Levana Primary