

Great Commission United
Library Hub Expansion Project

The following is a report prepared by The DG Murray Trust who began supporting GCU's Library Hub Expansion project in 2016, together with funding provided to GCU by the Learning Trust and individual donors.

GCU was established by an ex-gangster, Mario van Niekerk, to combat high levels of gang activity and violence in Heideveld. In its first decade, GCU focused primarily on reducing gang involvement through sports. By establishing soccer teams and other activities, it offered children a space to belong and an alternative to gang subculture.

In 2010, GCU launched a literacy programme at its main partner school, Woodlands Primary. While most school-based literacy support programmes focus on specific grades and/or only support those children who are behind, GCU's library hub model seeks to offer school-wide coverage. Children are channelled into three different reading interventions, based not on grade or age but on reading level: beginning readers attend Wordworks sessions, struggling readers attend paired reading sessions, and children who are relatively "on track" attend regular library sessions where free voluntary reading and fun activities take place. Homework help and sports are offered after school.

The Library Hub project is run with strong buy-in from the Heideveld community: GCU's stipended volunteers largely come from the surrounding neighbourhood, and some are graduates of GCU programmes. The programme operates largely during the school day, in collaboration with teachers.

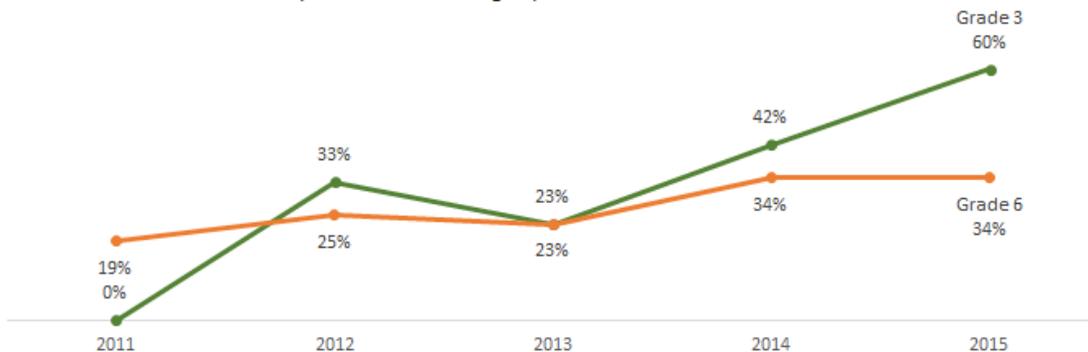
PROGRESS TO DATE

GCU launched its Library Hub literacy programme at Woodlands Primary in 2008. At that time, the library had been closed for 13 years. After two years of mobilising donations to re-open the library,

GCU introduced a library period for all children in 2010. When it saw slow progress, it introduced Wordworks and paired reading (Shine's methodology) in order to respond to each child's needs.

Progress in Woodlands Primary since the full programme was introduced in 2010 has been dramatic. The Grade 3 WCED (Western Cape Education Department) systemic assessments pass rate has improved from 0% in 2011 to 60% in 2015, as shown in the graph below.

Woodlands Primary's Grade 3 WCED systemics literacy pass rate has improved dramatically since the Library Hub launch in 2010, from 0% in 2011 to 60% in 2015. Grade 6 results have also improved, but did not go up in 2015.



In 2016, GCU expanded its Library Hub programme to five primary schools in the Heideveld area. At the time, the Wordworks programme was active in all five schools, but paired reading and library time were only taking place in 2 of 5 schools.

GCU's two strategic objectives for 2016 were to grow the reach of its programme and to improve its M&E. Its theory of change assumes that when more learners have weekly opportunities to improve literacy skills, working with caring adults, learners' literacy skills will improve.

GCU succeeded spectacularly at growing its reach. It extended all three programmes to all five schools, nearly tripling the number of learners reached (from 2 120 to 5 764) and exceeding its growth targets by 130%, as shown in the graphs below.

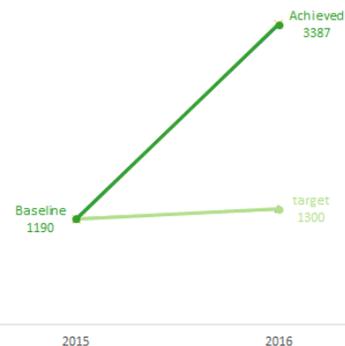
The **Wordworks Programme** continued at **5 schools**, growing its reach by **110%**.



The **Paired Reading Programme** expanded from **2 to 5 schools**, growing its reach by **89%**.



The **Library Programme** expanded from **2 to 5 schools**, growing its reach by **185%**.



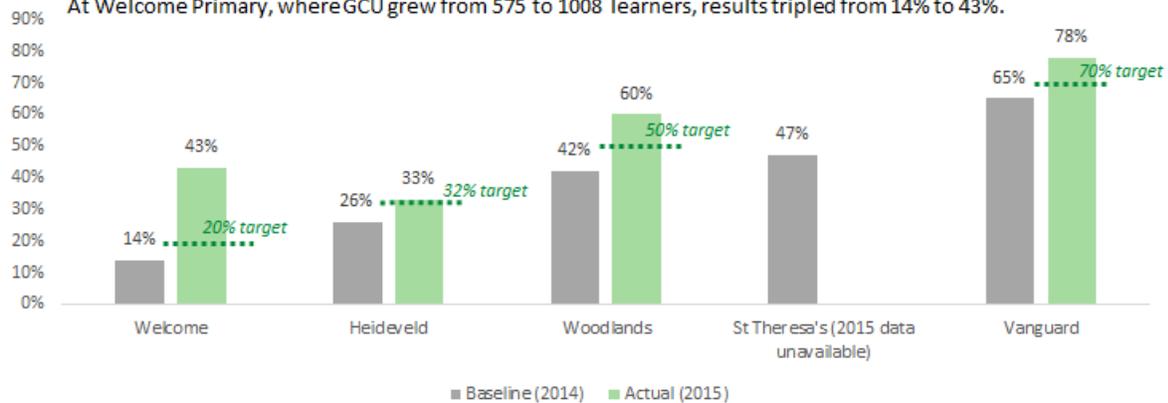
It also helped 1 school launch a brand-new library and refurbished 3 libraries with additional books, shelves and art. Three of five schools now run after-school programmes.

Encouragingly, these schools have seen positive WCED systemic test outcomes. Improvements in Grade 3 results were consistent across all schools for which data is available, and exceeded internal targets set by GCU.¹

GCU has also assisted a number of its young stipended staff to access study and work opportunities.

In 2015, Grade 3 WCED systemic literacy pass rates both **improved** and **exceeded GCU targets** at all schools for which data is available.

At Welcome Primary, where GCU grew from 575 to 1008 learners, results tripled from 14% to 43%.



In 2016, of 42 staff members:

6 are enrolling in further education in 2017, 5 of whom are studying to be teachers.

2 are currently studying towards a Level 1 qualification in Early Childhood Development.

10 are writing their matric exams.

8 accessed better jobs via the work experienced gained at GCU.

WHAT IS THE EXPECTED PATHWAY OF CHANGE AND THE KEY MILESTONES TOWARDS THIS?

GCU's Library Hub model includes three literacy support programmes.

- **Remedial: Wordworks model.** Children in Grades R-7 who cannot read, or whose skill level is extremely low, work one-on-one with a stipended Wordworks tutor once a week.
- **Reading support:** Paired reading (Shine-inspired model). Children in grades 3-7 who can read but are below an appropriate level work with a stipended paired reading tutor once a week.

¹ In Grade 6, improvement was less visible: while one school improved from 39% to 52%, one only improved from 51% to 52% and one stayed the same at 34%. Data is outstanding for 2 schools. This suggests that it is critical to start as early as possible, and that interventions in the foundation phase may be more likely to show positive outcomes within one year than interventions in the intermediate phase.

- **Weekly library time:** free voluntary reading. Children choose their own books and spend time on extensive, sustained reading. The stipended librarian helps ensure books chosen are not too easy or too hard.

These programmes run alongside sports and chess programmes, which many children also attend.

Through these small group, regular interventions, GCU seeks to improve children’s reading skills; increase children’s exposure to positive role models; and increase personal awareness of choices and possibilities. It expects this to lead to improved academic performance, which is measured by internal assessments (using Wordworks’ tool), pass rates and Western Cape systemic assessments; increased self-esteem and ambition; and increased positive behaviour. Ultimately, it expects that this will reduce the dropout rate, lead to more matric passes, and increase the number of youth from Heideveld who access post-school opportunities and choose not to get involved in gangs.

Sessions are run by stipended community volunteers. The majority are young people, many of whom use the experience and skills development they gain at GCU as a stepping stone to accessing new opportunities, such as further study or new jobs. In this way, youth programme facilitators can be viewed as secondary beneficiaries of the programme.

In 2016, GCU focused on extending its full Library Hub programme to all 5 primary schools in the area. Over the next three years, GCU seeks to sustain and strengthen this expansion; increase collaboration and engagement with school staff; and improve the quality of literacy activities by investing in staff training. Specific targets and goals for 2017, 2018 and 2019 are laid out in the table below.

Gang violence, substance abuse and uninvolved parents remain a challenge in the community. Contextual factors that will support the project are GCU’s thriving sports programmes, which complement the literacy programme, and the support and buy-in of the principals at all five schools.

Three-year strategic targets			
Strategic objective	Year 1 targets	Year 2 targets	Year 3 targets
Sustain and strengthen Library Hubs at 5 schools.	Consolidate 2016 expansion and strengthen quality of literacy activities.	Sustain hubs at 5 schools; add computer equipment and IT literacy training for learners.* ²	Sustain hubs at 5 schools; establish book lending facilities at each library.* ²
Increase engagement and collaboration with school staff.	MoUs signed with each school.	Work with principal to improve internal	<i>TBC based on project development and needs.</i>

² *If additional funding is raised.

	GCU staff trained in effective communication with school staff. Hub coordinators take on more responsibility for school liaison.	communication with all teachers. Establish quarterly reviews with GCU and school staff.	
Grow staff capacity	Hub coordinators receive IT and admin training. All staff receive Wordworks training.	Hub coordinators receive project management training. All staff receive Wordworks training.	All staff receive Wordworks training. <i>Additional training TBC based on project development/ needs.</i>
Support staff to access opportunities.	Develop personal growth plans for each staff member, and support them to access appropriate opportunities (including supporting staff without Grade 12 to write matric). Strengthen tracking of opportunity access.		