

Annual Report
March 2010 – February 2011

Since our beginning in 2001 SLED - Sign Language Education and Development has been working towards **outstanding education for Deaf learners through South African Sign Language**. Our vision is to see all of South Africa's Deaf children achieving their full potential, and our main objective is to **facilitate the Deaf child's equal and democratic right to literacy and learning** through the promotion of South African Sign Language.

This document reports on the activities that we have been involved in for the period **March 2010 to February 2011**.

Opening Doors to Literacy for Deaf Learners: A Foundation Phase Reading Scheme

SLED has conceived, created, developed, and produced **15 South African Sign Language (SASL) literature DVDs and 8 accompanying reading books**. This reading scheme highlights the initial need for "mother-tongue" proficiency, which for Deaf learners is South African Sign Language (SASL). Thereafter, learners can use their preferred visual mode language skills to "bridge" to written literacy in an additional language, usually English. Work done by SLED includes developing educational methodologies (for the education of learners and the training of educators and facilitators) as well as the artwork, filming, editing and production of materials, and subsequent educator training using these materials.

Presently, the materials focus on two levels – Pre-School and the Foundation Phase - and include DVD's, books and teacher flip charts. The stories used in the materials reflect the current situation in South Africa of Deaf children who come from a wide variety of backgrounds. Age appropriate signed and written text was designed to **encourage literacy based on sight and not sound**.



The materials are beautifully illustrated by Abram Moyaha, SLED's Deaf artist, and reflect the unique **cultural identity of the South African Deaf community**.

During this financial year we have worked on the following:

Abram Moyaha continued to work on the illustrations for the new Foundation Phase books. In March 2010 he started a **two month art residency in Sweden** working with his mentor Peder Gowenius. When Abram returned, the benefit of his residency was obvious in his new illustrations and his renewed enthusiasm. Later in the year Peder visited Cape Town and continued his highly valuable input with Abram.

We filmed and edited several new stories that we have been preparing over the last few months.

These stories are presented in SASL on DVD and have an accompanying book with age appropriate English text:

Watch out, Thandiwe!

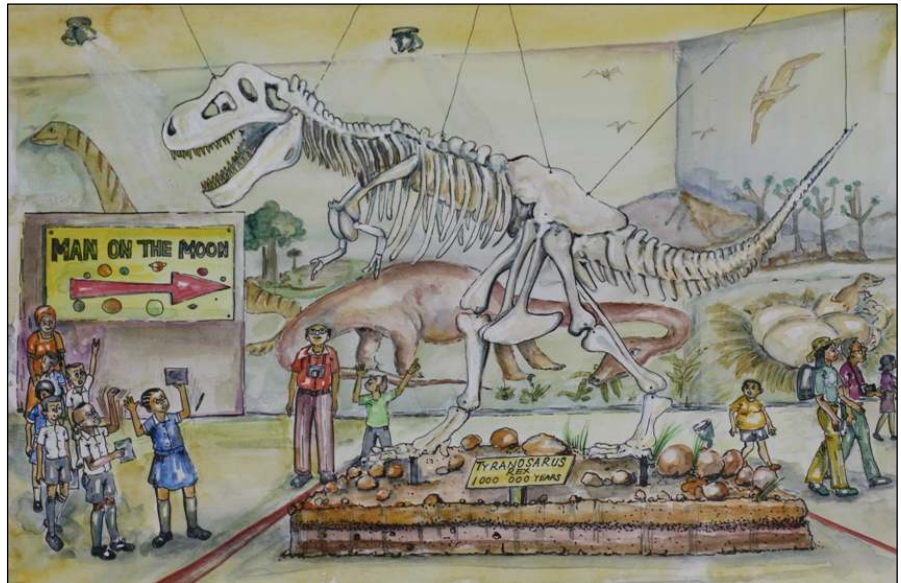
We learn more about Thandiwe in this story as she learns about transport and the dangers on the road. In this story we also see positive examples of good parental communication and support.

Off to the Moon!

The Grade 1 class goes to the museum. The children practise their fingerspelling as we learn about the first man on the moon. Thandiwe dreams that she and Yasmin are astronauts.

Fishing

Jan, his father and a young puppy go fishing with disastrous consequences. Later he causes further mayhem at the hostel. At the end of the story he learns how to create his own story book.



Growing vegetables

Yasmin, Phuti and Jan meet the new gardener and with the rest of the class, learn how to grow vegetables. They also learn the value of good food and how to help people who are hungry.

These stories are on DVD only:

Fire!

The class learns about the dangers of fire and how to prevent accidents. They also get a visit from firemen with a real fire engine.

Soccer

This story challenges chauvinism while encouraging the idea of team work. There are plenty of SASL classifiers for sport used in this story which is signed by Abram Moyaha.

Visit to the farm

The class goes on an outing to a children's farm where they learn about different animals. They complete a worksheet that focuses on categorisation. Phuti and Jan get very muddy after an unauthorised pony ride.

In February 2011, Kirsty Maclons and Judy Jurgens, who does our in-house ABET training, started developing the **English text** that will be used in these new books. This is an in-depth process that requires research and planning.

Empowering Teachers and Facilitators of the Deaf

In order to fulfil our mission, SLED considers the **training of teachers in pedagogy appropriate for Deaf learners** to be one of our highest priorities. To this end SLED runs a sustained programme of training on the methodology and use of SLED's materials in a number of provinces around the country. The initial aim of this strand of the training is to make the classrooms into busy places of learning where appropriate language is made visible. This is to introduce the notion of the Deaf child as a visual learner.

The teachers feel that SLED's training has made a significant difference to their way of teaching and they felt much more confident to use the SLED SASL and English literacy acquisition materials.

SLED has been working especially closely with the **Foundation Phase teachers at Ekurhuleni School for the Deaf in Gauteng**. These teachers are busy with their Stage 2 SASL course. Kirsty Maclons has been supporting their learning with tutorials and



regular visits to the SASL class.

Assessment Training at Ekurhuleni School for the Deaf

In March 2010, we held a very important workshop at Ekurhuleni, as the teachers were struggling with how to assess Deaf learners' use of South African Sign Language and English. The teachers were unaware of methods of

assessing and were confused by the National Curriculum Statements. Perhaps the most difficult obstacle to overcome was **how to assess a language, SASL**, that they were not fluent in themselves. During this workshop we demonstrated how to use a pre-recording of some of their Foundation Phase learners as an assessment tool and the school has since purchased a video camera for this purpose.

South African Deaf Cultural Identity, Literature & Literacy Workshop held at Mary Kihn School for the Deaf, May 2010

Although we have interacted with this school on and off for the last five years, this was the first workshop that focused solely on the Foundation Phase. We wanted them to see how the SASL skills that they were learning during their **Stage One course must be applied in the classroom**. It was also important for us as an organisation but also for the teachers, to understand where we are going with this training, what is our ultimate goal. For example, if the teachers signing skills are weak, then they will not be able to teach their Deaf learners properly, so we are training them in SASL. Also, in order for the learners to achieve a full National Senior Certificate, they must have good English reading and writing skills so SLED's workshops focus on developing the **teachers' skills at bridging from SASL to English**.

During this workshop Kirsty Maclons spent several sessions explaining how the NCS work and what they signify. It was quite a revelation to us that most of the teachers had been using the NCS for a few years and still didn't fully understand what they meant. We also assisted them in revising the lesson plans that the school is using so that they were easier to complete and more meaningful.

Demonstration lessons allow the teachers to see how to teach their learners as well as how their learners are doing. From the previous workshops we realised that these demonstration lessons were too long and were therefore unrealistic for the teachers to imitate. We shortened the lessons to 30 minutes each and built each lesson on the lesson taught the day before.

We did a similar programme to that done at Ekurhuleni, where we filmed some of the learners doing an assessment task and then as a group we viewed the filmed footage and assessed them using the NCS for SASL and English.

"The course was fruitful. I learnt things I didn't know. Now I know the difference between Signed English and Sign Language and even if I am writing a sentence or reading a story, I must not do it (use English and SASL) at the same time."

P. Mosia, Deaf Teaching Assistant

"I am so happy at last SLED has explained what we Deaf people have tried hard to explain. I hope we will implement it and work as a team."

Mrs. Dyabaza, Deaf Teaching Assistant



"The course gave us a lot of knowledge about Sign Language and the teaching of it as a Home / First Language. Also, how important the study of Sign Language is and the different components of Language that need to be taught at our school to learners, assistants and teachers. The course helped us to adapt our school curriculum and assessment for the Deaf."

J. Wilmot, HOD Foundation Phase

South African Deaf Cultural Identity, Literature & Literacy Summative Workshop held at Ekurhuleni School for the Deaf, May 2010

This workshop focused on looking at all that we had covered during the previous training and the areas where the teachers felt they needed more support. We were delighted to have Tsakane Bok, from the Embassy of Finland, with us during this workshop. Her inputs were realistic and insightful.

Some of the topics we covered were:

When I am teaching using SASL (Home Language) and English (Home Language), which Learning Outcomes (LOs) apply?

	SASL	English
Listening	✓	
Signing (Speaking)	✓	
Reading and Viewing	✓	✓
Writing		✓
Thinking and Reasoning	✓	
Language Structure and Use	✓	✓

So of the six Learning Outcomes five apply to SASL and three apply to English.

What to do when teaching?

- When a learner asks you how to spell a word – DON'T spell it letter by letter. Instead divide the word up into sensible chunks and spell each chunk before allowing the learner to write it.
- When you are preparing ALL activities (including Language, Numeracy and Life Skills)
Work out the VISUAL ENGLISH of the lesson: will you make flashcards or write on the board? What sentences do they need to understand and/or know how to write?



- The learner must be surrounded by a world of words
 - Flashcards must be everywhere (hall, classroom, corridors, toilets etc)
 - Flashcards must be changed and moved often.

Grade R the boy

Grade 1 The boy sits. The boys sit. the tall boy

Grade 2 The tall boys play soccer on the grass.

Grade 3 The tall boys run quickly to school.

Bridging between SASL and English: how do I do it?

- When the Deaf child starts in Grade R the priority is for her to gain SASL literacy as quickly as possible.
- Once she has achieved all the LOs for SASL Grade R she then must go on to achieve English Literacy too.
- She will use what she has learnt about SASL to enhance her learning of English.

At the end of the year each teacher must pass on to the next class:

- Which books and DVDs have been completed during the year
- What English and SASL structure/grammar/sentence types have been completed during the year
- What English vocabulary each child has learnt during the year. This list will be added to at least every week during the year.

Training the Deaf Trainer

Given the current quality of Deaf Education, particularly in relation to providing access to knowledge, **SLED has identified the need to provide training for Deaf teaching assistants.** This is partly to provide them with more expertise as teachers, to encourage respect and sound teaching of this First Language for most Deaf learners, and also to raise the credibility and therefore, the earning power, of these teaching assistants. This is the rationale behind these workshops.

Members of the SLED team travelled around South Africa interviewing possible candidates for this course.



First workshop April 2010

We divided the 18 Deaf participants into two groups. The participants were teaching assistants from several different provinces – Gauteng, Western Cape, Mpumalanga, Eastern Cape and Kwa-Zulu Natal

We chose only some of the activities from SLED's SASL Stage 1 course that were suited to the Deaf teaching assistant participants.

These various activities were highly relevant because....

- They were helpful to encourage the participants to understand that the Non-Manual Features (NMFs) are a very important part of SASL's grammatical rules. We started without NMFs and had a group conversation with the participants. They were confused that we were not using NMFs and they thought that we were rude. The DVDs were useful because we could discuss and compare the differences between using NMFs and not using NMFs.
- The participants watched the DVD of a signed conversation and then translated bits of it into correct English. It was challenging for them to write correct English. The activity took longer because they struggled with English writing and spelling. We noticed that the participants' English was very weak.

- They need to practise telling stories especially if they are working in the Foundation Phase with young Deaf learners. So the **'Ntombi and the three baboons'** activity was very relevant as the participants are not creative enough. They were using Signed English, and their storytelling skills were weak.
- The **Physical Description Game** is one that they can use with their Deaf learners and they enjoyed it very much.
- They are using Signed English and need to practice using SASL more. During the **Coffee shop role plays** the learners enjoyed the opportunity for some good practice and at the same time we had a group discussion as to why we use Signed English when we have formal conversation and the bad influence that hearing teachers have had on our use of SASL in the classroom. We also brought up the issue about the learners at school who have bad manners, for example, when asking for permission and apologising.

Assessment

On the Wednesday, we had an extensive session looking at the two level four unit standards against which they would be assessed. Once they understood the unit standards we worked together on the Assessment Activities that would make up the Summative Assessment. The participants worked late into the night preparing for their assessment the next day.



Although they were nervous during the assessment, all of the participants coped well with the various assessment activities.

After their filmed assessments were assessed, modified and verified, all 18 of them had achieved their SLED SASL Stage One and were presented with their certificates and statement of results at the next Train the Deaf Trainer workshop in September 2010.

Second Workshop September 2010

Again there were 18 Deaf participants/teaching assistants from Gauteng, Western Cape, Mpumalanga, Eastern Cape and KwaZulu-Natal.

The English component

A large part of this workshop focused on the levels of English usage and understanding of these assistants, so that they can better communicate with hearing teachers, write more coherently in English and use it as a medium of learning as they improve their qualifications. **Providing English instruction is intended to offset some of the negative effects of the poor education they received at school.** English has been and will continue to be used as a language of teaching and learning and general communication in the schools for the Deaf. As this lack of useful knowledge of English is part of the vicious cycle of the ever-worsening levels of academic achievement for Deaf learners, so SLED has undertaken to actively put in place the opportunity for Deaf

teaching assistants to master English sufficiently well to use it to further their own education. This will enable them to attain qualifications which will give them the credibility and authority to develop themselves and their Deaf pupils. It may also consequently facilitate better access to English for the Deaf learners under their care. It is a given that the hegemony of English in this country means that this is second only to the need for learning about Sign Language as a primary language of learning and an acceptable home language.

Workshop focus in English

The workshop focused on three basic areas in which both SA Sign Language and English featured: Sign Language structure, the formalities of English as a structured language



and how curricula in schools are constituted. The aspects of English covered are outlined below and required some collaboration and integrated planning of sessions for augmentation of the learning programme.

As correct structured SASL was practised, it was compared with the structuring of English sentences in their most basic, declarative form (in the active voice). Using the knowledge of 'who' or 'what' as subject and

identified first, followed by the action or verb, with any extension of that as being "plus...", participants were shown the three tenses, each with three basic forms in the active voice as a branched 'tree of verbs'. This visualisation was to make the form variations simple and easy to memorise. We began with the present tense then moved on to the past tense and only later to the future tense which has an additional word in the verb complex. Learners were able to grasp this distinction and having the structure of SASL to use as a base made it easier.

Each participant opened an English file with three sections: one for Rules of English, one for practice exercises and rough planning, and one for Reflections. **The emphasis on reflection as a way of reinforcing learning**, rather than as testing language is a valuable tool for the growth of confidence and reflective behaviour, usually neglected with the Deaf as they are generally considered incapable of such high-level, complex thought and behaviour. This exercise proved valuable for some - most noticeably for the older participants.

The discussion around **how to encourage Deaf children to relate stories of home life** and events used the basic elements of story-telling to assist participants to see how to apply what they learned. This was supplemented by suggestions of how to elicit events and reframe them for young Deaf learners so that they would, through modelling and following stories signed to them, begin to use linearity, and cause and effect reasoning, as well as learning how to tell structured stories.

Understanding the basic structure of stories, then, was used for three subsequent activities: relating the history of the school at which participants taught; choosing children's storybooks to sign, read and relate; and writing a report for schools on the workshop and what they learned.

This basic structure lent itself admirably to the activities and provided participants with a confidence to use this as a framework for what to relate/ write about/ report on. Their excitement at seeing their success and being able to accept the critiques of their structure, styles of delivery and even content encouraged a more critical approach to activities, which in turn lent itself to reflective behaviour. This was tangible in their obvious awareness that they would be equally critically evaluated by their peers and facilitators.

In each instance, there was a written version (in English) which then had to be translated into SASL, the structure of the signing providing important practice in this essential skill for teaching assistants.

Workshop focus in SASL

During the previous workshop we focussed on empowering these Deaf adults to learn about their own language, South African Sign Language (SASL). During this workshop we reviewed what had been taught at the previous workshop and looked at how the Deaf teaching assistants can help the hearing teachers with SASL. Areas covered included **classifiers, time, parameters, location, questions, sentences, non-manual features and role shift.**

Other parts of the workshop

In the workshop we also looked at:

- how to prepare and present a story in SASL
- personal histories
- histories of South Africa's schools for the Deaf
- steps to great teaching
- curriculum, NCS, CAPS
- SASL as a home language
- SASL as a language of learning and teaching
- Assessment



Positive outcomes

The first of these was the overt excitement of participants at feeling that – for many of them for the first time – they understood **about how English is structured and how it relates to SASL.** Then they could begin to see how to bridge from SASL to English at a very basic level – the level of reading that Grade 1's (the first level at which English should be introduced to Deaf children) would be exposed to in SLED's *Opening Doors to Literacy for Deaf Learners* readers.

The second was the participants' **choosing of children's books** (donated by SLED) to take back to their schools to use for story-telling and encouraging reading. As participants went into the space where the books were laid out for choosing, we were confronted by a most thrilling sight: a large group of Deaf people eagerly reading books (level notwithstanding) and comparing notes on stories, and how easy the English would be to read and translate into SASL.

The third was the slow, but gradual realisation for participants that most were able to **construct a report which could be taken back to their schools.** Not all participants managed this entirely on their own, but most managed to produce reports that were

readable. This activity required more time than was available and it would be worth pursuing this activity – one that, if achieved, would increase both their confidence and their credibility at the schools. Two participants gave SASL versions of their written reports as part of the certificate award ceremony.

Challenges

Time available to complete tasks was always stretched and seldom sufficient. We had underestimated the pace of work possible, but were prepared to sacrifice completion to participants' confidence and sense of achievement and understanding.

Another challenge is the highly differentiated levels of ability, background and accommodation by schools. Each is in a unique situation and such a workshop has to cater to the slowest - not always the optimal learning environment.

The final major challenge is the obvious need to provide further training and workshops to this group of teaching assistants. They worked unbelievably hard, were keen and excited by all aspects of the workshop, and are desperate that there are **more workshops**.

SASL Training: Materials Development

In June 2010, Kirsty Maclons, the SASL Director, evaluated and revised the Stage Two Assessment Guide. SLED has held several Stage 2 courses and from our evaluation and the evaluation of the learners it was felt that it was too unwieldy and did not satisfactorily address the needs of the learners. The draft was then designed and laid out by a desktop publisher before going to print. The **new streamlined Stage Two Assessment Guide was used successfully** in December 2010, for the SASL Stage Two Public classes in Cape Town and Johannesburg.

SLED received a verification visit from the ETDP SETA in October 2010. All of SLED's assessments to date were verified.

SASL Training: Teaching Teachers of the Deaf and the Community

In April 2010, a 5-day introductory workshop was held in Germiston for the Ekurhuleni Metropolitan Municipality Departments of Health & Social Development.



Stage 1

By August 2010, 25 people from the public classes ran at SLED's Cape Town office and 8 people from the classes run in Johannesburg achieved their Stage One.

By August 2010, 6 teachers from Mary Kihn School for the Deaf in Cape Town had achieved their Stage One.

By October 2010, 14 teachers of the Deaf from MC Kharbai School for the Deaf in Lenasia had achieved their Stage One.

By October 2010, 18 members of the Gauteng Department of Health and Social Development achieved their Stage One.



Stage 2

By September 2010, 10 people from the public classes held in Johannesburg had achieved their Stage Two.

By November 2010, 5 teachers from Ekurhuleni School for the Deaf had achieved their Stage Two.

By January 2011, 15 people from the public classes held in Cape Town had achieved their Stage Two and two of the SLED facilitators also achieved this.

New courses

In January 2011, we started Stage 1 and Stage 2 classes for the public in Johannesburg and Cape Town.

Influencing change nationally

During this financial year SLED has been involved with several national departments and NGOs including the following:

In May 2010, we attended the DeafSA Western Cape Forum and gave valuable input. We also started meetings with UNISA about Deaf Me Normal, a book that tells the stories of the Deaf community of South Africa. UNISA would like SLED to present the book in SASL.

In June 2010, Atiyah Asmal attended a meeting at the Pan South African Language Board. Cara Loening attended a meeting with UNICEF. She also attended the Millennium Development Goals conference in Johannesburg in July.

Kirsty Maclons and Cara Loening had a valuable meeting with Western Cape Premier, Helen Zille, in July 2010. It is important that decision makers understand the language and learning needs of the Deaf child. SLED is impressed with her commitment and dedication towards Deaf children.

In September 2010, Nodumo Same and Kirsty Maclons held several Deaf awareness and basic SASL training for members of the South African Police Force in the Western Cape.

In November 2010, Cara Loening was asked by the Western Cape Education Department to join the Task Team appointed to **investigate the state of education for Deaf children in the Western Cape**. Our director, Cara Loening, chaired this task team which will finalise their investigations in April 2011.

In December 2010, SLED was a founding member of the **Right to Education of Children with Disabilities** national campaign, co-ordinated by the Community Law Centre based at the University of the Western Cape.

In 2010, SLED was asked by the National Inclusive Education section of the Department of Education to help to develop a **capacity building programme for managers at schools for Deaf learners**. SLED will present several sections of this programme at the three day workshop to be held in Johannesburg in March 2011.

Influencing change internationally

In June 2010, Deaf members of the SLED team ran a two day workshop for the empowerment of Deaf Youth of Namibia. The aim of this workshop was to empower the Deaf youth through leadership and knowledge of **Deaf Education, Deaf culture, Deaf community and Deaf History**. However it also focused on the Sign Language issue in Deaf culture and grammar/structure of the language. Follow-up workshops will need to focus on how to teach Sign Language in the right way especially for those who are teaching assistants or Sign Language teachers.

Internal Capacity Building



In May 2010, two of SLED's full time staff and three part time staff started their Level Five Assessor Course: Conduct an outcomes based assessment. This course was sponsored by SLED and the ETDP Seta. All of them achieved this unit standard and were registered as assessors with the ETDP Seta and are now able to assess South African Sign Language.

In November 2010, Leonie Vorster from Evolutions, ran a review and evaluation workshop for the SLED team, focussing on professionalism and accreditation.

One of our big concerns since SLED's inception has been the poor literacy skills of Deaf adults who are involved with SLED. This is due to the lack of SASL skills of teachers of the Deaf. In January 2011, we started an adult English class from our offices in Cape Town. This class is linked via webcam to the Johannesburg SLED office too. These classes will empower the Deaf members of the SLED team to use English with confidence.

Conclusion

In February 2011, SLED was presented with an award for Contribution to Language in the Western Cape by the Department of Cultural Affairs and Sport.

Since SLED's inception in 2001 we have been developing a systematic approach to the advancement of South African Sign Language as a Language of Learning and Teaching and as an integral part of the Languages Learning Area in schools for the Deaf for the ultimate academic and social achievement of the Deaf child. **During this year SLED has played a leading role in developing SASL material and human resources and is set to continue to be at the forefront of opening doors towards an outstanding education for South Africa's Deaf children.**



Sign Language Education and Development – SLED

Tel/Fax: +27 21 448 2520

Email: info@sled.org.za

Web: www.sled.org.za

During this financial year SLED has been reliant on the financial support received from the following funders:



National Lottery Distribution Trust (NLDT)

Embassy of Finland

National Arts Council of South Africa

In order to make a difference for South Africa's Deaf children we are reliant on financial support from the community.

If you would like to support SLED in this way our banking details are:

SLED • Standard Bank • Branch # 004305 • Account # 402103238