**Letter of Recommendation**                                                    March 2014

I am an experienced specialist teacher for children on the autism spectrum from the UK, now working in Cape Town, South Africa. I have an Honours degree in Psychology and went on to gain post grad qualifications in Education and then Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). I have over 12 years' experience as a special needs teacher and a specialist teacher for children on the autism spectrum, working as advisory teacher for a local authority and managing a specialist provision for autistic pupils. Over the years I have gained much experience and training in using a number of different teaching support strategies for learners with special needs and autism (e.g. ABA, TEACCH, PECS, Social Stories, Social Skills).

I moved to Cape Town in 2012 and started teaching at a local remedial school, Oakley House School. It was while I was working here that I was first introduced to the *GemIIni* program, through an organisation called Khuluma Education, who had just gained unique access to the *GemIIni* program. It is a specially developed online, language video-modeling tool, to help children on the spectrum and those with other special needs and language delay develop their language and communication skills.

GemIIni systems claimed to have 'a *globally significant tool* for the low-cost treatment of speech, language and communication delay for learners with autism and other special educational needs.' I wanted to test this out and see if the program would also benefit our learners here in Cape Town. So, in October 2013, I conducted a two-week trial at my school (Oakley House), with our Reception class. The children were tested before starting the program to get a baseline, and again on day 5 and on day 10 of watching the videos.

The children had watched their video session up to six times a day, three times through together in class each day and three times through at home (this equated to only half an hour a day). ***The results showed that the low-verbal children on the spectrum taking part made between 166% - 433% increases in their expressive language after only 10 days of accessing the GemIIni program.*** *These results were astounding and demonstrate just how effective this program is in teaching children with language delay!*

**In order to test whether the children would retain the remarkable progress they had made in just two weeks, I re-tested the children three weeks after our trial. To our delight they scored 100% in the expressive and language test, demonstrating they had truly learnt so say the words and understood what the words mean (correctly labelling items).** This showed they had not just learnt the words by rote from watching the program, as they could now recall and correctly label each of the items having not watched the video session for over 3 weeks, when asked and shown the individual pictures. This learning was so exciting to see!

In addition, we have observed gains in their general concentration, overall confidence in communicating and ability to engage with others and starting to functionally use some of the language appropriately in context. Another qualitative observation was their ability to now focus on the mouth of someone speaking to them and imitate how to say a word. All of this was incredible progress in such a short space of time.

Since January, I now work full-time for Khuluma Education. Khuluma Education is focused on introducing appropriate technology to provide sustainable and effective solutions to address the key education challenges here in South Africa. Khuluma aims to remove many of the geographical and financial barriers to support and education across South Africa and make effective and quality learning accessible to all. The *GemIIni* program is one such solution.

We are now using the *GemIIni* program in collaboration with a number of schools in South Africa, including Oakley House School, Vera School for Autism, SNAP Academy and Kidstart Early Intervention Centre in Cape Town and Bellavista School in Johannesburg. We are also working with a number of new schools who have expressed an interest in using the *GemIIni* program. In addition, we have a growing number of individual students registered with the program and are we looking to increase this number considerably over the next year. A number of speech therapists have also registered to use the program with their learners, as part of their practice and to set assignments.

I have a keen interest in research and just started a Research Masters in *Technology for Language Learning* at Stellenbosch University. Having had a highly successful 2 week trial at Vera School using the program in 10 different classes last term, I have been requested by the school to do a large scale data collection with a number of classes of learners at Vera School, so they then have the evidence to be able to apply for funding to use the *GemIIni* program throughout their school. I will also use the data we collect for my research thesis.

To those who can afford this subscription for the *GemIIni* program, it is a low cost intervention, costing only R250 per student, per month, for unlimited access to the online video modeling program. But the needs in South Africa are diverse and for those children and schools from poorer communities, who could not afford this low cost fee, we are developing a sponsorship program. We are building links with a number of organisations to develop an effective sponsorship program, to be able to use the *GemIIni* program with children in poorer communities across the country and support their language needs.

In addition to supporting the needs of special needs students to develop their language skills, we recognise the potential the *GemIIni* video modeling program holds to be of great benefit for many children in South African learning to speak English, as an additional language.

We whole heartedly endorse the *GemIIni* video modeling program and look forward to continuing to see the positive affect it has on our learners here in South Africa!
Kind regards

**Naomi Botha**
*Khuluma Education – Operations Director (Special Needs Education)*