



Absa and THRASS Media Release

18 July 2007

South Africa's Absa Bank to fund British literacy programme THRASS

The THRASS phonics programme, pioneered by British Educational Psychologist Alan Davies, has already been welcomed as heralding the start of a new era in the teaching of English in Africa. Now Absa, a member of the Barclays Group, are set to announce the corporate sponsorship of THRASS through the THRASS Absa TalkTogether Project. The primary aim of the project is to increase literacy in South Africa, through the improved teaching and learning of English, that will be achieved by partnering universities, primary schools and other organisations. The secondary aim is to provide a platform to celebrate South Africa's eleven national languages, through free interactive software and printable calendar charts.

The THRASS (Teaching Handwriting Reading And Spelling Skills) phonics programme scores full marks against all the British Government's criteria for a high quality phonics programme and, earlier this year, THRASS was the first commercial programme to be listed on the Government's new dedicated phonics website. THRASS is widely accepted as providing a revolutionary approach to teaching English and is used by teachers, parents, educational psychologists and speech and language therapists in thousands of schools in Africa, the UK, Europe and the Caribbean. In addition to teaching handwriting, reading and spelling to learners of all ages, abilities and backgrounds, it also teaches lifelong word solving skills for their own and other languages. THRASS is widely acknowledged as having the potential to more than double the normal rate of progress for reading and spelling in English.

To date, over 3,500 teachers in South Africa have been awarded the THRASS Accredited Certificate, largely by successfully completing a two-day course, frequently organised by the national teachers' union NAPTOA. THRASS has been implemented in a significant number of government schools, including farm schools in the Kwen Basin, Mpumalanga and township schools in Orange Farm, Johannesburg and also in prestigious independent schools in several provinces, including the largest private schools chain, Crawford Schools.

The THRASS Absa TalkTogether Project will be launched at Roseneath Primary School in Parktown, Johannesburg on Monday, 23 July 2007. The launch will be attended by senior representatives from Absa, The University of the Witwatersrand, the South African Government, the British Council, UK Trade and Investment (UKTI) and other national and international agencies, including SMART Technologies Inc. from Canada.

Roseneath Primary School, in common with the other TalkTogether schools, will benefit from accredited THRASS training for staff and from the provision of resources for the Foundation Phase classes, including the installation of a large interactive whiteboard. This SMART Board, funded by Absa, helped by a grant from the Canadian Government, will have broadband connection and staff training will focus



on how best to use the equipment. The daily teaching of THRASS, and the other home languages, will be supported by eighty Foundation Phase student teachers from the University of the Witwatersrand, under the direction of Dr Jean Place, Principal Tutor, Foundation Phase Division. The THRASS-trained student teachers will spend approximately two hours a week in the school, teaching and assessing the ten THRASS skills and helping with the learning of the home languages.

The new Version 5 of the THRASS Phoneme Machine software, a groundbreaking interactive computer programme, will also be launched on Monday, 23 July 2007. The programme uses moving human lips and the International Phonetic Alphabet to teach children, and indeed learners of all ages and abilities, to read and spell in an entertaining and fun way. It has been found to be very helpful to those for whom English is not their first language, and those with learning difficulties. Version 5 will allow users to download interactive calendar charts in many African and European languages. The African languages will include all eleven South African national languages (Afrikaans, English, isiNdebele, isiXhosa, isiZulu, Sepedi, Sesotho, Setswana, siSwati, Tshivenda, Xitsonga) as well as Swahili. The charts feature children's voices saying the days, dates, months, numbers one to twenty, main colours and names of the twenty-six lower-case letters (and their associated capitals). Dr Melodie de Jager, a South African expert on learning and a keen advocate of the THRASS methodology, believes that these charts are 'Maps for Time' and help children to understand about the sequential order of the days, dates and months. The software is currently being showcased at the Microsoft Africa School Technology Innovation Centre (ASTIC) in Johannesburg.

By the end of the year, it is anticipated that six TalkTogether Schools will have been launched by Absa - each with a SMART Board and linked to a university. The next TalkTogether school, after Roseneath Primary, is likely to be a school nominated by the University of Pretoria.

The THRASS multi-lingual calendar charts and Phoneme Machine software can be downloaded free-of-charge from links on both the Absa TalkTogether Project and THRASS UK websites:

www.talktogether.co.za and www.thrass.co.uk/talktogether.htm

For more information about the project, the free materials and the TalkTogether Schools, South Africans can SMS their names to 32828 (R1.00 per sms), e-mail info@talktogether.co.za or write to the Absa Foundation, P.O. Box 7735, Johannesburg 2000.

.../ends.

Issued by:

Absa Corporate Affairs

THRASS UK News Media Centre
www.thrass.co.uk/nm.htm



For more information please contact:

Absa:

Jacqueline de Winnaar
Tel: +27 11 350 6085
Email: jacquelineb@absa.co.za

Nicholas Young+
Tel: +27 11 350 3450
e-mail: nicholas.young@absa.co.za

LeRoy Munetsi
Tel: (011) 350 5023
e-mail: leroy.munetsi@absa.co.za

THRASS:

Mike Meade
Media Director
+44 1829 741413
Mobile: 07970 151 738
e-mail: mikemeade@thrass.co.uk

Chris Griffiths
International Development
Mobile: +30 266 203 1207
e-mail: chrisgriffiths@thrass.co.uk

About Absa:

The Absa Group Limited (Absa), listed on the JSE Limited, is one of South Africa's largest financial services groups offering a complete range of banking, bancassurance and wealth management products and services.

Absa's business is conducted primarily in South Africa and on the African continent, where it has equity holdings in banks in Mozambique, Angola and Tanzania.

At 31 December 2006, the Group had 672,0 million shares in issue and a market capitalisation of R84,1 billion.

At 31 December 2006, Absa had assets of R495 billion, 749 physical outlets, 8,4 million customers, 7,053 automated teller machines and 35,154 permanent employees.

Absa is a subsidiary of Barclays Bank PLC, which holds a stake of 56,6% in the Group. Barclays is an international financial services group engaged in retail and commercial banking, credit card issuing, investment banking, wealth management and investment management services.



The corporate social mission of Absa is to grow partnerships by providing financial and other resources to needy communities, and to ensure their sustainable development. The strength of Absa's Corporate Social Investment (CSI) initiatives lies in long-term partnerships and relationships with targeted communities. In this regard, Absa adopts a developmental approach to the funding of sustainable development projects by utilising community driven programmes with strong community participation. Absa is one of the largest banks in South Africa, and has an integrated corporate social responsibility programme.

For more information, please visit the Absa website: www.absa.co.za.

About THRASS:

The THRASS extensive picture-based training website for schools and parents with easy access to a wide range of resources and support materials and extensive evidence of the widespread success of THRASS is at www.thrass.co.uk

For a summary of the main features of THRASS and the benefits of using THRASS (including comments from teachers and parents), visit www.thrass.co.uk/keyfacts.htm

Demonstration lessons showing Alan Davies using the Phoneme Machine in a wide range of schools can be viewed as videostreams or downloaded from THRASS Video Clips at www.thrass.co.uk/tvc.htm

For more information about the THRASS Phoneme Machine Version 5 and to register for a free download of the software, visit www.phonememachine.com

Version 6 of the Phoneme Machine software is likely to include interactive signing for deaf learners, most probably based on the Cued Speech approach to signing.

For details of THRASS Professional Development Courses that are held regularly in the UK, Europe, West and Southern Africa, visit www.thrass.co.uk/courses.htm.