

Give your child a free educational advantage!

After announcing the exciting roll-out of the TalkTogether Project last month, this educational programme will now be made available to employees' children.

It's vital to give your children a head start in life and Absa can help you do that ... free of charge!

All you need to do is point your browser at www.talktogether.co.za as well as www.thrass.co.uk to download free, interactive educational software and calendar charts that can be used on computers, laptops and interactive whiteboards.

Do it for your children and any other children you care about – it will have an impact on the rest of their lives!

This initiative is all part of an Absa joint initiative aimed at improving literacy in South Africa.

If children are to develop life-long learning skills, it is vital they are targeted in the early foundation stages of their lives. Good grounding in language skills is the platform on which all other learning takes place.

"The simple fact is, if a child fails to grasp the fundamentals of language, he or she will always be at a huge

disadvantage," says Nicholas Young, chief financial officer for Personal Bank: New Business Cluster. "At Absa, we realised there is an enormous literacy gap in South Africa and felt we needed to do something about it."

Educational partnership

It was with this in mind that the TalkTogether Project was launched. The initiative is a unique educational partnership between Absa and THRASS (TM) UK and SMART and is guaranteed to revolutionise the teaching and learning of language in South Africa.

The TalkTogether Project is run in association with universities, primary schools and other organisations across the country and was recently showcased to over 1 000 school principals. Its aim is to increase literacy in all areas and provide a platform to celebrate South Africa's 11 national languages.

With the support of selected university education faculties,

TalkTogether schools were established to help in the training of foundation-level teachers, the teaching of children and the promotion of research in education.

Underpinning the initiative is THRASS (TM), the brainchild of educational psychologist and innovator, Alan Davies. It is a unique, ground-breaking teaching methodology designed to quickly improve the learning and teaching of English and has taken the education world by storm.

The method is currently being taught in schools in Europe, Africa, Asia, the Middle East, the Caribbean and the USA. It specifically targets foundation-level learners and their teachers, as this is a key stage for kids to grasp lifelong learning skills.

Sounds and words

A strong foundation in English is created by using the 26 letters of the alphabet and 44 phonemes (sounds) as well as graphemes to explain sounds and words.



Alan Davies (Founder and MD: THRASS) and Nic Young (Absa) with the sponsored equipment in the background (SMART Interactive Whiteboard, Projector and Laptop).



Learners from Sunlands Primary enjoying their new toys during a demonstration with Alan Davies.

THRASS is Teaching, Handwriting, Reading and Spelling Skills.

Download now!

"Our ultimate goal is to have primary schools in South Africa become part of the TalkTogether project," says Nicholas. "Imagine the impact that would have on our country. But we do not want parents and learners to have to wait until their particular school comes on board. We want them to have access to the unique training materials and learning aids right now and they can do that by visiting the TalkTogether website.

"THRASS(TM) Calendar Charts are available, free of charge, to help teachers, assistants, parents and children with early language learning. Hard copies of the charts are available in English and several other European and African languages," comments Nicholas.

"Use the printed and interactive THRASS(TM) calendar charts, in one or more of the available languages, to develop speaking and listening skills, reading and spelling skills, social skills, general knowledge, memory and intellect by playing Questions & Answers using the words, letters and numbers.

"I urge all Absa employees with young children, grand-children or even friends with children to visit the website and download the free material. It will make a huge difference in a child's life!"

In addition, the THRASS® Phoneme Machine is a ground-breaking computer programme that uses the International Phonetic Alphabet and moving human lips to demonstrate the pronunciation of sounds and a variety of frequently-used English words. Interactive flash-cards, pictures and calendar charts are also used.

The system is currently being adapted to be used to improve teaching and learning techniques in other languages and is now available in all 11 official South African languages. Languages currently offered are Afrikaans, isiNdebele, isiXhosa, isiZulu, Sepedi, Sesotho Setswana, siSwati, Tshivenda, Xitsonga and Swahili.

The TalkTogether Project was launched as a pilot project at the Roseneath Primary School in Johannesburg in July.

Its effectiveness and impact on literacy training will be measured in a

study by the Wits School of Education. Dr Jean Place, head of the Foundation Phase Programme at the University of Witwatersrand, is at the forefront in introducing the THRASS Programme to South African schools and universities.

In fact, the university is the first tertiary institution in the world to introduce a two-day THRASS certificate course as part of its curriculum for the Bachelor of Education degree.

Sunlands Primary School in Cape Town was launched as the second TalkTogether School on 6 September with four more schools to be set up by early 2008.

School educators will not be left out. The THRASS TalkTogether Project will, in partnership with teacher organisations such as the National Professional Teachers Organisation of South Africa (Naptosa) and the South African Democratic Teachers Union (Sadtu), run a number of teacher-training events. ■



Edmund Jeneker (Absa Provincial GM for Retail Banking), Laola Altschul (THRASS), Alan Davies (THRASS), Ivan Meyer (Vice Principal: Sunlands Primary School), Joy Alexander (CPUT), Anne Hill (CPUT), Nic Young (Absa).

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