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## **NEW THRASS SING-A-LONG FAMILY READING PROJECT SET TO HAVE MAJOR IMPACT IN BRITISH SCHOOLS**

The THRASS SING-A-LONG Family Reading Project is an exciting new project that uses 44 songs to help parents and teachers help children to read and spell, while at the same time having an enormous amount of fun. Launched in Johannesburg at the end of January, it is already enjoying considerable success in South Africa and is now set to have a major impact in British schools.

Everyone knows just how important it is for children to develop sound literacy skills from an early age, and it is also accepted that music, and in particular singing, can have a wide range of benefits for children. The most important of these benefits from the point of view of teaching literacy is that singing has been shown to accelerate learning and improve the memory.

The new THRASS SING-A-LONG Family Reading Project therefore uses 44 songs that parents and others can sing with children to explain the 44 sounds (phonemes) and 120 main spelling choices (graphemes) of English. The songs have been written by British educational psychologist, Alan Davies, an expert in synthetic phonics who has pioneered the extremely successful THRASS (Teaching Handwriting Reading And Spelling Skills) synthetic phonics programme and Janine Plunkett, a South African music teacher. They are real fun for both adults and children, as they all have wonderful imaginative titles such as "The moon fell out of the sky", "A great big gorilla" and "You don't get pandas in Africa", and really memorable tunes in different musical styles and dance rhythms, such as African Round, Blues, Charleston, Hawaiian, Irish Dance, Jazz, Ragtime, Reggae, Twist and Waltz.

In order to give parents and teachers the confidence to dance and perform actions to the 44 songs with children to help them read and spell, as well as singing with them, Alan and Janine have also created MOVE-A-LONG WITH SING-A-LONG one-day workshops. Only a few workshops have been held to date but the comments from those attending show just how impressed they have been: "a wonderful and exciting experience", "a wonderful way in which children and parents can learn to read and spell", "SING-A-LONG concept dynamic and a wonderful way to interact with my children".

The first public performance of the SING-A-LONG songs in the northern hemisphere will take place at Oxley Park Primary School, Milton Keynes on 31 March and the first MOVE-A-LONG WITH SING-A-LONG workshop on 1 April. Oxley Park is a THRASS 'Centre of Excellence' where THRASS is used throughout the school, both in dedicated literacy sessions and integrated into other curriculum subjects. Although the school is only in its third year, it has already been rated as an outstanding school by OFSTED in its first inspection.

Cathy Higgins, Head Teacher at Oxley Park, attended the launch of the THRASS SING-A-LONG Family Reading Project in the southern hemisphere, in Johannesburg, South Africa, and is convinced of the enormous potential of the Project: "I was particularly impressed by the enthusiasm of the children taking part. The children from my own school who are taking part in the concert on 31 March have been just as enthusiastic and everyone is really looking forward to both the concert and to the first MOVE-A-LONG WITH SING-A-LONG workshop. At Oxley Park we see parents as children's first and continuing educators and these workshops will offer yet another excellent way for them to be just that."

The MOVE-A-LONG WITH SING-A-LONG workshop on 1 April will coincide with the start of the British Government's 2008 National Year of Reading during which Ed Balls, Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families, wants all parents to make the effort to hear their children read regularly and businesses to encourage staff to volunteer to hear schoolchildren read, in order to help build a more skilled national workforce. However, many parents and adult volunteers currently lack the confidence to identify the one-, two- and three-letter spelling choices in English words and say the sounds that they represent. The THRASS SING-A-LONG Family Reading Project can give them that confidence.

An indication of the significance of the THRASS SING-A-LONG Family Reading Project is that in South Africa it is being sponsored by Absa Bank, a member of the Barclays Group, that intends to introduce the THRASS programme into 1,000 schools using the SING-A-LONG Resources, and Pritt. In addition, Janine Plunkett has been invited to train all the Foundation Phase student teachers in five South African universities, starting with the University of the Witwatersrand in Johannesburg.

Janine Plunkett will take part in the SING-A-LONG concert at Oxley Park Primary School on 31 March and will then lead the THRASS MOVE-A-LONG WITH SING-A-LONG workshops at both Oxley Park Primary School on 1 April and at Stoke Park Junior School, Eastleigh on 3 April. She will then accompany Alan Davies to the Caribbean, where she will lead two workshops for the Government of Barbados, which is intending to implement THRASS in every school across the island.

The SING-A-LONG songs are featured throughout all the THRASS SING-A-LONG Family Reading Resources, which comprise a 96-page hard back book, an interactive book and audio CD, each with vocal and instrumental tracks, and a colouring book. A MOVE-A-LONG WITH SING-A-LONG DVD and a sheet music book will be available later in the year.

There is little doubt that the THRASS SING-A-LONG Family Reading Project is set to have a major impact in British schools.

For information about the THRASS SING-A-LONG Family Reading Project, visit [www.thrass.co.uk/sing-a-long.htm](http://www.thrass.co.uk/sing-a-long.htm)

For information about the THRASS SING-A-LONG Family Reading Resources, visit [www.thrass.co.uk/list2008.htm](http://www.thrass.co.uk/list2008.htm)

For a short promotional animation of the THRASS SING-A-LONG theme song, visit [www.thrass-downloads.com/SAL/AD/SAL\\_IB\\_AD3.htm](http://www.thrass-downloads.com/SAL/AD/SAL_IB_AD3.htm) and for sample pages from the THRASS SING-A-LONG Interactive Book software visit [www.thrass-downloads.com/SAL/SAL\\_IB\\_DEMO.swf](http://www.thrass-downloads.com/SAL/SAL_IB_DEMO.swf)

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

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Mike Meade, Media Director, +44 1829 741413 Mob: 07970 151 738  
[mikemeade@thrass.co.uk](mailto:mikemeade@thrass.co.uk)

Chris Griffiths, International Development, +30 266 203 1207  
[chrisgriffiths@thrass.co.uk](mailto:chrisgriffiths@thrass.co.uk)