

### **SMART technology aids innovative literacy project**

*Interactive whiteboards in South African schools add impetus to THRASS project*

SOUTH AFRICA, Johannesburg

Six SMART Board interactive whiteboards have been installed in pilot schools across South Africa as part of an innovative project to improve literacy.

Five of the boards were donated to schools by financial services company Absa Bank, a member of the Barclays Group, as part of the THRASS Absa TalkTogether Project, and one was jointly sponsored by THRASS, SMART Technologies and its southern Africa distributor Edge Interactive.

SMART Technologies has teamed up with THRASS UK to bring the latest educational technology to assist learners, whose home language is not English, to speak the language. The THRASS Phoneme Machine is a ground-breaking computer programme that uses the international phonetic alphabetic and moving human lips to demonstrate the pronunciation of sounds and hundreds of frequently used English words.

Chief operating officer of Absa New Business Cluster, Nicholas Young says the donation of the SMART Board interactive whiteboards to five schools was in keeping with the approach to establish pilot sites as model centres for the TalkTogether Project. These schools are spread across the country and located close to participating universities that have foundation phase teaching as part of their teacher training programmes.

The installation of the SMART Board interactive whiteboards and training of the teachers to use the technology was done by SMART resellers in South Africa, Compute Corporate Technology Solutions and Edit Microsystems.

Young says he expects the boards through their interactive aspects to enhance both the learning and teaching experience.

“The boards provide the project with the best-case scenario technology platform. We believe there is benefit to be derived from the use of the technology as it allows for the use of all the enhanced and interactive elements of the THRASS methodology. By providing the TalkTogether Schools with leading technology we eliminate infrastructure as a variable in increasing literacy as compared with other more privileged schools with more funding.”

He said Absa would consider additional donations of SMART Board interactive whiteboards, based on the expansion of model centres for the project.

The educational partnership between Absa and THRASS aims to revolutionise the teaching and learning of English in South Africa through partnerships between primary schools, universities and other organisations. British educational psychologist, Alan Davies, executive director of THRASS UK, pioneered the programme to Teach Handwriting Reading and Spelling Skills (THRASS).

The five model centres referred to as TalkTogether Schools are Roseneath Primary School, Johannesburg; Eendracht Primary School, Pretoria; Sunlands Primary School, Cape Town; George Randell Primary School, East London; and Clairwood Boys Primary School, Durban. The SMART/Edge donated board was installed at Masibambane College in Orange Farm, south of Johannesburg, and is a Centre of Excellence for the THRASS programme.

The principal of Sunlands Primary School, Alta van Heerden, says the SMART Board interactive whiteboard was installed at the school last September. All the school's educators have been trained in the THRASS programme as part of the TalkTogether Project and, and learners have responded favourably to the interactive nature of the lessons.

The Cape Peninsula University of Technology has taken on THRASS as a research programme and each week up to 120 final year student teachers spend an hour at the school teaching THRASS to small groups of learners.

Hilton Williams, principal of East London's George Randall Primary School, said learners "are loving" the use of the interactive whiteboards in learning to properly pronounce English words. Student teachers from the University of Fort Hare are working with his learners as part of the TalkTogether Project association.

Former Principal of Masibambane College, Mr Darryl Geffen, said the children were able to learn and interact in an audio-visual classroom which makes teaching and learning of the English language easier for everyone. In addition to the core school programme, the interactive whiteboard is being used for community educational projects.

Carol Jeal, who trained Gauteng educators in the use of the SMART Board interactive whiteboards for the THRASS project, believes that SMART's Screen, Shade and Spotlight are tools which are well suited to the language programme's use of the interactive whiteboards, and that most creative teachers would be able to use the Notebook software to revise and assess work completed using THRASS.

"Most teachers feel that the SMART interactive whiteboard will enhance their teaching," she said.

### **About SMART**

SMART Technologies is an industry pioneer and global education market segment leader in user-friendly ICT products and group collaboration tools. The award-winning line of SMART Board interactive whiteboards is the

most widely installed in the world because of its unsurpassed product quality, versatility and ease of use. The SMART Board interactive whiteboard is used to teach over 18 million students in more than 600,000 classrooms in more than 100 countries around the world.

SMART is a private company founded in 1987. Employing more than 1,000 people, SMART is headquartered in Calgary, Alberta, Canada, with assembly facilities in Kanata, Ontario and offices in Bonn, Paris, Tokyo, Shanghai, New York City, Chicago and Washington, DC. SMART has been issued and maintains a broad portfolio of patents with numerous U.S., Canadian and other patents pending. In 1992 SMART formed a strategic alliance with Intel<sup>®</sup> Corporation that resulted in Intel's equity ownership in the company. SMART products are sold through dealers across North America and distributors worldwide. To learn more about SMART visit [www.smarttech.com](http://www.smarttech.com).

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