



## **Absa and THRASS Media Release**

18 October 2007

### **THRASS Absa TalkTogether Literacy Project Continues Talking with Launch of the Fourth TalkTogether School**

On 23 July 2007, Absa Bank announced its corporate sponsorship of the THRASS (Teaching Handwriting Reading And Spelling Skills) phonics programme through the THRASS Absa TalkTogether Literacy Project. This programme has already been launched with three primary schools - Roseneath Primary School in association with the University of the Witwatersrand in Johannesburg, Sunlands Primary School in association with the Cape Peninsula University of Technology in Cape Town and Eendracht Primary School in association with the University of Pretoria.

Today, a fourth TalkTogether School is being launched: George Randell Primary School - in association with University of Fort Hare, Edgewood Campus in East London.

Each TalkTogether School benefits from accredited THRASS training for staff and from the provision of THRASS classroom resources for the Foundation Phase classes, as well as the installation of a SMART interactive whiteboard. The daily teaching of THRASS, and other home languages, is supported by THRASS-trained Foundation Phase student teachers from the associated university who will spend approximately two hours a week in the school, teaching and assessing the ten THRASS skills and helping with the learning of home languages.

The THRASS Absa TalkTogether Literacy Project is a unique educational partnership between THRASS UK and Absa, and is aiming to revolutionise the teaching and learning of language in South Africa through partnerships between primary schools, universities and other organizations. The project is also aiming to provide a platform to celebrate South Africa's eleven national languages, through free interactive software and printable calendar charts.

In association with the project, 100 personal computers have been donated by Lenovo, an innovative international technology company formed as a result of the acquisition by the Lenovo Group of the IBM Personal Computing Division. In support of the Lenovo contribution, Absa Group Sourcing donated 100 computer screens. The computers have been distributed to the TalkTogether Schools and the associated universities as part of the broader enablement agenda of the THRASS Absa TalkTogether Project.

A key component of the THRASS Absa TalkTogether Project is the THRASS phonics programme, pioneered by British Educational Psychologist Alan Davies. 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 4,000 teachers and student teachers in South Africa have earned the THRASS Accredited Certificate with approximately 400 having been sponsored by the THRASS Absa TalkTogether Literacy Project. THRASS has been implemented in a significant number of government schools, including farm schools in the Kwena 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.

An important part of the THRASS programme is the THRASS Phoneme Machine software, a groundbreaking interactive computer programme that 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. Users can download interactive calendar charts in many African (including all eleven South African national languages and Swahili) and European languages. 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).

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](http://www.talktogether.co.za) and [www.thrass.co.uk/talktogether.htm](http://www.thrass.co.uk/talktogether.htm)

The video of the initial reactions of those who attended the first launch of the TalkTogether Project: 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 can be viewed as a videostream or downloaded from the THRASS UK website:

[http://www.thrass.co.uk/absa\\_reactions.htm](http://www.thrass.co.uk/absa_reactions.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](mailto:info@talktogether.co.za) or write to the Absa Foundation, P.O. Box 7735, Johannesburg 2000.

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[www.thrass.co.uk/nm.htm](http://www.thrass.co.uk/nm.htm)

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**PRWeb press release ends here.**

**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 30 June 2007, the Group had 675,0 million shares in issue and a market capitalisation of R88,8 billion.

At 30 June 2007, Absa had assets of R554 billion; 771 physical outlets; 8,8 million customers; 7,455 automated teller machines and 35,986 permanent employees.

Absa is a subsidiary of Barclays Bank PLC, which holds a stake of 57,6% 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](http://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](http://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](http://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](http://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](http://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](http://www.thrass.co.uk/courses.htm).