

Taking IT to the remotest areas



Together we stand: From left Prakash Morar, SchoolNet Project Manager, Bongji Peyana, Principal of Sandi Senior Secondary School, and Joe Rajaratnam from Thintana, are working together to give learners at Sandi hope for their future.

At Sandi Senior Secondary School, which is situated in a remote rural area near Umtata, many of the boys were destined to become cattle herders, and the girls their young brides, but this is no longer the case. Thanks to the dedication of Bongji Peyana, Principal of the school, and the help of Thintana Communications, many of these learners now have the prospect of a tertiary education to look forward to.

Thintana has donated 14 computers to the school as part of the i-Learn Project. "These will give Sandi's youngsters contact with the outside world for the

first time," Peyana says. "We have only 15% to 20% of the textbooks we need. The computers will enable us to get information from other sources. They will also give the learners the chance to interact with other schools, even those as close as Umtata," he adds.

"Communication with schools in other countries will also be possible, and could help improve the learners' English," says Peyana.

Peyana was praised by President Thabo Mbeki in his recent State of the Nation address for his dedication. The

school achieved a matriculation pass rate of only 3.3% in 1997, but the percentage soared to 82% in 1998, and 93% in 1999. Last year the pass rate dropped again to 47%, which Peyana attributes to having had just one maths and science teacher for 128 pupils.

"There is jubilation about the computers," says Peyana. "Computers are like a dream for the students here and everybody is very excited. It is as if Umtata is being brought to the rural areas. And developing these areas is what our president is always talking about.

"The students' forefathers did not even reach Grade One," Peyana says. "These students will be the leaders in the area, and the computers will assist in developing this."

Peyana says that different grades will use the computers on different days of the week, with time slots allocated for groups of around twenty pupils at a time. Before drawing up computer education projects, teachers at Sandi Senior Secondary will consult those at other schools, in Umtata and other cities, who are already using computers.

"Thintana and SchoolNet are doing a wonderful job, and we really must say thank-you to them," Peyana says.



netnews

03

Thintana School Internet Project

September 2002

Published by
SchoolNet SA

PO Box 87626, Houghton, 2041
Ground Floor, Broll Place, Sunnyside Drive, Parktown, Johannesburg
Tel: +27 (0)11 645 6400 Fax: +27 (0)11 484 4449
WWW: <http://www.school.za> Email: info@school.za

Design and production by rothko: +27(0)21 447 3714

A continuum of opportunity for South African learners

By Rodwyn Grewan, CEO SchoolNet SA

For educators and learners across South Africa, the Thintana i-Learn Project has opened a window on a whole new world of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs). The good news is that it does not stop here. Thanks to the vision of Joe Rajaratnam, Co-Chairman of the Thintana Corporate Citizenship Committee, and Telkom's Centre for Learning, a continuum of opportunity has been put in place for South African learners who want to move forward in the internet age.

These opportunities include bursaries for learners to study

ICT-related subjects at universities in South Africa. Thanks to the i-Learn Project we now have an ICT platform in schools across South Africa. Now we need to encourage our children to understand how they can use this platform and the opportunities provided by Telkom to develop themselves.

I wish all of you the best as we move into the final stages of the i-Learn Project. Please remember to think about the further opportunities available to you. For more information on how you can benefit from these opportunities, please contact the Telkom Centre for Learning on (012) 643 6000.

Hungry for the opportunity ICTs can bring



Elsabé van Tonder

Learners at Sandi Senior Secondary School have to overcome great odds to learn in an extremely poor and rural location characterised by overcrowded classrooms and few text books. But the Thintana i-Learn Project is set to boost these young learners' capacity when Sandi becomes one of the most recent schools to get its donation of 14 computers. **Read the full story on page 4.**

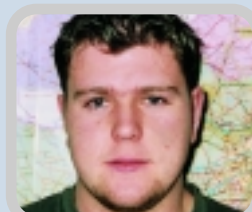
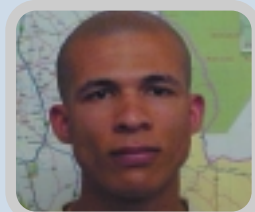
Who you gonna call? *Meet the helpdesk*

The SchoolNet helpdesk is there to help you when things go wrong. Meet the team below:



Thozama Daniels (Call Logger)
I am responsible for the logging and follow-up of calls coming into the support centre. I enjoy watching big-screen movies and sport, from soccer, boxing and rugby. Going to the gym, and travelling are some of the activities that make my world go round.

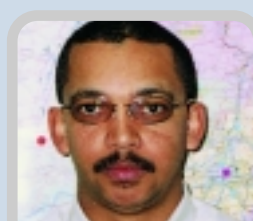
Dudonne Diergaardt (Support Technician)
I provide telephonic support to users. My duties are mainly troubleshooting first level problems. My likes: sport, relaxing with friends, reading and music. I enjoy the rich diversities of cultures in this country. My dislikes: the traffic on my way to work!



David Peal (Systems Engineer)
I am the systems administrator and am responsible for all the servers locally and off site. I enjoy wine routing, watching movies and playing games.



Khoro Makhado (Support Technician)
I enjoy playing soccer, watching comedies, chilling with friends while listening to music, discovering and learning new things, fixing both mechanical and electronic things and also assisting other people to learn what they don't know.



Danver Coetsee (Helpdesk Team Manager)
My duties include reports, maintenance of our database and second level support to the call centre. I enjoy playing the piano and computers are a big part of my life.

Call the helpdesk at 021 674 9140. We can help solve your IT problems.

Getting back on track

i-Learn Project Manager Prakash Morar answers some tough questions about delays and problems experienced during the course of the Project to date.

The i-Learn Project has not been without its difficulties. A number of schools have been experiencing problems with faulty computers and other equipment that have not been replaced for more than a year. What has caused this problem?

Between June and October last year, schools in Gauteng, the North West Province, Mpumalanga and KZN ran into difficulties when the company that had been sub-contracted to roll out computers and other equipment to these schools went bankrupt. Although there was a warranty agreement in place, the company was not able to honour this. As a result, schools in these areas – 33 in all – had to sit with faulty equipment for a long time.

But faulty equipment was not the only problem – training was also delayed at these schools. Why is that?

Training was delayed as a direct result of the faulty equipment. We could not train teachers in those schools because the technology was not in place to support the training. For successful training all teachers must have access to working computers, internet and email.

Is there an end in sight for these schools?

Definitely. We have successfully completed negotiations to get a new sub-contractor to replace the one that went bankrupt. Affected schools will get replacement equipment soon. All equipment will

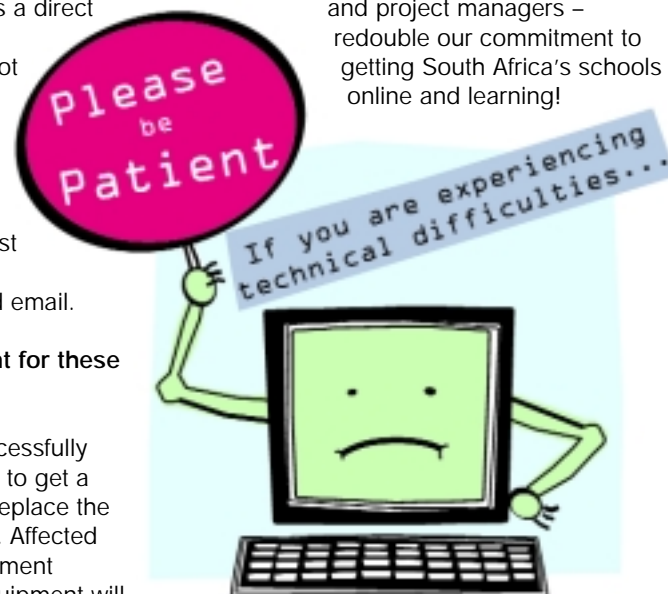
also have a new two-year warranty attached. Teachers will then be ready for training. (see the training timetable below for dates).

Many schools are also sitting with faulty modems that were donated by another company and were not part of the main equipment roll out. Will these schools get new modems?

Modems are a critical part of the Project as they enable people to get access to the internet and email. SchoolNet will make good on all faulty modems and will be replacing them shortly.

Have these problems affected the progress of the i-Learn Project at all?

We don't think so. We have sorted out the problem as quickly as we could. It's full steam ahead now. The Project is gathering momentum. We must all – teachers, principals, trainers and project managers – redouble our commitment to getting South Africa's schools online and learning!



New modules in the making

SchoolNet SA is adding a further four modules to the menu of seven that are currently available on the i-Learn training CD.

Experience gained during the Thintana i-Learn Project has pointed to the need for intensified or additional training, particularly in the area of school management and the role of school managers and principals in supporting the integration of ICTs into schools. This has emerged as a critical factor in determining how rapidly and effectively schools make use of ICTs. As a result, two new modules are being developed to support this area. The modules will focus on ICT leadership at schools and ICTs and planning.

Both modules include the following topics:

- o ICT leadership at schools
- o ICT and change in schools
- o Leadership in the digital age
- o ICTs and planning
- o Staff development in ICT
- o Integration of ICT into the curriculum

The other two new modules will be devoted to specific teaching areas, namely mathematics and science education. Both modules will adopt a generic approach to the teaching of the respective subjects but focus on Further Education and Training (FET) and Senior Phases. The modules incorporate activities involving the use of the internet to find, evaluate and adapt mathematics and science materials from the internet. One of the most important outcomes will be that teachers will produce high-quality learning support materials that use Outcomes Based Approaches.

The new modules are being developed in association with the SCOPE Project (a government-to-government partnership between the South African National Department of Education and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Finland) and SAIDE (South African Institute for Distance Education). Both organisations also helped in the development of the first seven training modules. Additional input for the development of the new modules is also being received from Protec and MSTP (Management of Schools Training Programme).

The Thintana i-Learn Project is creating a thriving community of learners in participating schools around the country. Janet Thomson and Anne Gordon take a look at how the community is helping educators get to grips with Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) in the classroom.

Coming in from the IT cold

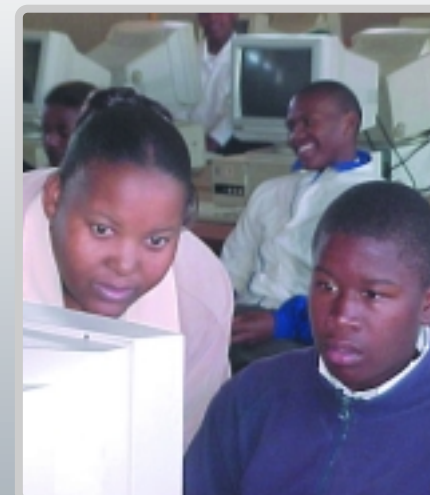
The Thintana i-Learn Project is helping educators across South Africa to overcome those "computer jitters" and to get online and learning. But participants are also discovering that making virtual friends, feeling part of a community, keeping up to date with international affairs via the web, and having fun at the same time, are major bonuses of the Project.

"To share with colleagues and benefit from ideas from a community rather than ploughing solo is a winning formula!" says online mentor Gareth Fotheringham. "It helps a great deal that ideas are shared across the country fast and wow, it is amazing," agrees one educator. Another adds: "At the beginning of the course, I felt like a fish out of water. Today I am very proud of myself, I finished six activities. I enjoyed it so much. It is so good to be friends with people one did not really know and to learn from each other and also to encourage each other or to chat with a person you do not see."

The question is, why are participants so enthusiastic and why is the Project working so well? Success can be attributed to several aspects within the Project. There is no doubt that the

support and positive feedback provided by the online mentors and the comradeship of the online group community play a huge role. In fact, the friendship and warmth experienced through online interaction between educators and their mentors has become so extensive that some speculation about an "online affair" arose when someone wrote: "thanks for your massage..." The culprit insists it was a typo and he meant to say "message", but his group prefer to imagine that he has somehow invented the world's first-ever virtual massage!

But individual educators are also playing an important role in the success of the Project. "A lot depends on the commitment and dedication each educator has as well as the lengths that they will go to in order to achieve what they have set out to do," says online mentor Lonnie King. Examples of dedicated individuals involved in this Project has sparked hope that there are enough people who care, and who are still doing their utmost in the face of all sorts of problems to bring what is relevant to their classrooms. But individuals cannot do it alone. It is essential to have positive participation by the principals and governing bodies



Penny Magubane (left) helps a learner at Sobantu School get to grips with the world of online learning. Penny has been a tireless member of the Thintana online community. "It is good to know that when you are stuck there is somebody out there to help you," she says.

of each school so that they recognise the sponsored network as an investment and contribute towards helping the Project to run smoothly. "Leadership, inspiration and strong support can make all the difference in the success of the Project," says David Moroke, Principal of Itshupeng Secondary School.

For those who haven't yet discovered the joys of the online community, don't be shy. Hit that "reply to all" button. Get out there, make friends – the rewards are huge. So much so that when the courses come to an end there is much sadness. Says Aneesa Basha, a mentor in Cape Town, "I realised the worst part of this is saying goodbye to some wonderful friends I met along the way."

But it is not all a case of goodbyes. Teachers will still have access via email to all their new friends after they graduate from training. More importantly they will now be taking their new-found skills gained in the Educator's Network back into the classroom for years to come. In the words of one of the participating educators, Mr Gorrah, who is the Deputy Principal at Oranje-Diamant Primary School in Hopetown, Northern Cape: "This was an adventure and although it has come to an end, this journey is only beginning. We have all acquired vital skills and the knowledge to survive in this day and age."

Ode to online learning

by Rik Street - Mentor, Cape Town

*I read the words, so many words, that ramble to and fro
I click the line it tells me to. Oops where'd the whole lot go?*

*Now what? I think. What did they say? What am I meant to do?
Attach and save and file and save or save then send to who?*

*File name first then save. Save how? And where, in heavens name?
They think I grew up with these toys, am familiar with this game.*

*The room is locked, the boss is out he has the only key
My mentor says he's waiting for my first activity.*

*At last we get into the room and Telkom's got it right
But just as we're about to start they lock up for the night.*

*Hooray I think I've got it right. My mentor has a smile
I'm not too sure just what I did but it took me quite a while.*

*And now I've got to interact. My mentor will insist
If not you naughty mentee you, he'll cross you off his list.*

*At last I've finished all my six, my e-diary as well
I feel much better after all and have some tales to tell.*

*But late at night when I'm in bed and safely in my house
I dream that I'm a piece of cheese being eaten by a mouse.*

Training timetable

Cycle	Training	Dates	Provinces
5th cycle	Introductory training	July 20th - 28th	All provinces EXCEPT Gauteng due to their revised term times
	Registration to second and third modules	Up until July 28th 2002	
6th cycle	Introductory Training followed by mentored modules	October 12th-20th 2002	All provinces INCLUDING Gauteng
7th cycle	Introductory Training followed by mentored modules	February 2003	All provinces