



FEBRUARY, 2006

Where's ABRA?

Greetings from the CSLP!

Everyone has been hard at work over the last several months – researching, designing, developing and promoting ABRACADABRA. Having begun our 2006 research initiative, I thought it would be a good time to let you in on some of the finer details of what has been going on.

Have a quick read – access the new link – and let me know what you think.

Geoff

All of the improvements and new additions can be seen at:

<http://grover.concordia.ca/abra/version1/>

Activities

- The Alphabet Song
- Letter Sound Search
- Letter Bingo
- Word Families
- Basic Decoding
- Word Changing
- High Frequency Words
- Expression
- Spelling Words



We will be adding 5 new stories early in the spring. The following stories will replace the existing Level 1 – giving ABRA a few texts for the very early reader. We have even engaged new artists for these illustrations, expanding the look of the ABRA library.

- Canadian Wild Animals
- The Fruit Family
- Counting to Ten
- My Town
- Where am I?
- The Four Seasons

An excerpt from:
Counting To Ten



~Four~

Instructional Design

I have been working on the design and content creation for all of the new activities. I have also been creating support material for the facilitators in our intervention, which will eventually turn into a guide for the teacher.

I am quite excited about designing three new fluency activities to reinforce the skills of accuracy, reading with appropriate speed and expression.

Our team has also set some brainstorming and initial flowcharting in motion for linking ABRACADABRA with e-portfolio and the database that will record students' activity.

Stay tuned for more activities and the Professional Development Module!

Ane Jorgensen



ABRA Research

Once again the Sir Wilfrid Laurier and English Montreal School Boards have demonstrated their commitment to partnering with the CSLP by allowing us to conduct an ABRA intervention in 6 of their schools! We have just finished testing over 150 students who will be a part of this year's study. Research assistants from Concordia and McGill will be working with students up to the spring.

This year's study will focus on understanding the difference between a synthetic phonics- and a rime- based approach to reading. Of course, we will receive lots of feedback on the usability of the application - which will serve to improve its look and feel and navigation.

Denise Silverstone



ABRA Future Plans

We have had some very exciting presentations and discussions with some very interested parties. Upon presenting our work at the CSLP with the Children's Learning in a Digital World Conference at Brock University, TVOntario Kids approached us to use ABRA on their site. More as it develops.

We have also presented ABRACADABRA to the Ministère de l'Éducation, du Loisir et du Sport. They immediately saw the value and the potential of ABRA - and we are currently engaged in discussions over funding for both ABRA and e-portfolio.

This spring, Anne and Geoff will be presenting e-portfolio and ABRA at the Canadian School Board Association here in Montreal.

We continue to seek interested organizations that can help fund both the research and the development of our tool. If you happen to have any ideas, contacts, or suggestions- please don't hesitate to contact me.

The Design and Development Team

The design and development team is quite enthusiastic about its recent experiments with the ABRA interface. To see a prototype activity visit the site:

<http://grover.concordia.ca/ABRA/version1/abracadabra.html> click: ABC icon, and scroll using the arrow all the way to the last activity.

This Word Changing activity will give you a small glimpse of the direction we are heading. We are developing this new concept to engage students deeply into the activities and to strengthen their sense of identification with ABRA. Design of a full proposal will be ready early in the spring.

We are also in the process of developing a student database that will record information about student's activities. This database will facilitate the link with e-portfolio, our electronic portfolio process environment in which students can set goals, reflect and exchange ideas about their work. Finally, to support our research activities, we will soon be testing how to track data when students use ABRA. We have challenging months of work ahead of us!

Catherine LeBel

As always - I am interested in your comments. Please feel free to contact me:

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