



NOVEMBER, 2004

WHERE'S ABRA?

IT HAS BEEN ALMOST A YEAR SINCE WE BEGAN PRODUCTION ON ABRA. PHIL, ANNE, MICHA, MONICA, MYSELF, AND THE REST OF THE TEAM AT THE CSLP HAVE ALL BEEN WORKING HARD TURNING OUR VISION INTO A REALITY, AND TAKING IT ON THE ROAD.

WE THOUGHT OF CREATING THIS NEWSLETTER TO HELP KEEP EVERYONE IN TOUCH. WE'LL LET YOU KNOW WHAT PARTS OF THE SOFTWARE HAVE BEEN DEVELOPED, OUR SHORT TERM PLANS, AND WHAT KINDS OF RESEARCH ABRA WILL BE PART OF. TAKE A LOOK!

GEOFF

NEW ADDITIONS TO ABRACADABRA CAN BE SEEN AT:

[HTTP://GROVER.CONCORDIA.CA/ABRA/SCHOOL](http://grover.concordia.ca/abra/school)

STORIES

- DARRYL DON'T DAWDLE
- THE THREE BILLY GOATS GRUFF
- BEAN SPROUTS
- WATERFALL
- THE FROGS AND THE WELL
- HENNY PENNY
- FEELINGS
- WHEN I OPEN MY EYES

ACTIVITIES

- AUDITORY BLENDING
- AUDITORY SEGMENTING
- NUMBER OF WORDS IN A SENTENCE
- NUMBER OF SYLLABLES IN A WORD
- SAME SOUNDS
- CVC MEMORY
- WORD SIMILARITY
- PHONOLOGICAL ID
- SUMMARIZING
- COMPREHENSION



THE INSTRUCTIONAL DESIGN TEAM

ANE AND MYSELF, THE INSTRUCTIONAL DESIGN TEAM, ARE THE 'BRIDGE' BETWEEN THE EARLY LITERACY EXPERTS AND THE DEVELOPMENT TEAM. WE HAVE PARTICIPATED IN MEETINGS WHERE THE PEDAGOGICAL ASPECTS OF THE SOFTWARE ARE DISCUSSED (SKILLS, CONTENT, LEVELS, SCAFFOLDING, ETC.). WE HAVE BEEN 'TRANSLATING' THIS INFORMATION INTO ACTIVITY SPECIFICATIONS AND FLOWCHARTS THAT THE DEVELOPMENT TEAM USES IN THE ACTUAL COMPUTER PROGRAMMING AND INTERFACE DESIGN. OVER THE PAST SEVERAL MONTHS WE HAVE DESIGNED SEVERAL NEW ACTIVITIES FOR THE SOFTWARE.

AFTER EACH VERSION OF THE SOFTWARE IS RELEASED, WE VERIFY ITS CONFORMITY WITH THE PEDAGOGICAL SPECIFICATIONS. THIS SUMMER WE BROUGHT THE NEW ACTIVITIES TO A MONTREAL AREA SUMMER SCHOOL FOR USABILITY TESTING. WE HAVE ALSO COLLABORATED WITH THE CURRENT ABRA RESEARCH BY CREATING OBSERVATION PROTOCOLS AND TRAINING THE FACILITATORS WHO CONDUCT THE OBSERVATIONS. WE ANXIOUSLY AWAIT MORE FEEDBACK IN ORDER TO REFINE THE INSTRUCTIONAL QUALITY OF ABRA.

MONICA LOPEZ



ABRA SUMMER SCHOOL

THIS SUMMER WE HAD THE OPPORTUNITY TO BE INVOLVED WITH A SUMMER SCHOOL PROGRAM CALLED THE WRITER'S WORKSHOP. FOR THREE WEEKS, TRAINED FACILITATORS WORKED WITH GROUPS OF CHILDREN ON THE VARIOUS ABRACADABRA ACTIVITIES. THE OVERALL RESPONSE WAS OVERWHELMING. NOT ONLY DID THE CHILDREN ENJOY THE ACTIVITIES, MANY WERE BRINGING THEIR EXPERIENCE BACK TO CLASS AND WRITING ABOUT THEM!

WE, OF COURSE, WERE ABLE TO REFINE OUR APPROACH FOR THE PLANNED FALL INTERVENTION, AS WELL AS USE THE STUDENTS' FEEDBACK AND REFINE THE SOFTWARE.

DESIGN & DEVELOPMENT TEAM

THE CSLP DESIGN & DEVELOPMENT TEAM IS RESPONSIBLE FOR, AND HAS BEEN PROVIDING A COMPREHENSIVE RANGE OF SERVICES FOR ABRACADABRA. WE HAVE BEEN WORKING WITH THE INSTRUCTIONAL DESIGNERS' PROPOSED ACTIVITY SPECS, AND WORKING THEM INTO THE NEW ACTIVITIES THAT YOU WILL SEE ON THE LATEST RELEASE. WE HAVE HAD A PARTICULARLY GOOD TIME CREATING THE ANIMATED ALPHABET THAT YOU CAN SEE BY CLICKING ON THE PROJECTOR.

OF COURSE, OUR WORK DOES NOT END WITH THE ANIMATIONS, THE ILLUSTRATIONS AND THE *LOOK AND FEEL* OF ABRACADABRA. OVER THE NEXT SEVERAL MONTHS WE WILL BE REVIEWING THE CODE THAT WAS USED TO CREATE THE ACTIVITIES SO THAT WE CAN BUILD A SOLID ABRACADABRA THAT TEACHERS CAN DEPEND UPON FOR THEIR STUDENTS.

MICHA THERRIEN

ABRA RESEARCH

IT IS KNOWN FROM A GREAT DEAL OF PREVIOUS RESEARCH THAT COMPUTERS CAN AID CHILDREN LEARNING TO READ - BUT WE WANT TO KNOW MORE. DR. ROBERT SAVAGE HAS DESIGNED A STUDY THAT HAS BEEN IMPLEMENTED IN THE SIR WILFRID LAURIER AND ENGLISH MONTREAL SCHOOL BOARDS.

SMALL GROUPS OF STUDENTS WORK WITH GRADUATE STUDENTS AND WILL RECEIVE IDENTICAL COMPREHENSION, AND FLUENCY TASKS IN ABRACADABRA. THE INTERVENTIONS DIFFER IN SUBTLE WAYS ON ASPECTS OF THE ALPHABETICS. INTERVENTION 1 WILL FOCUS ON AUDITORY BLENDING AND SEGMENTING FROM THE START. INTERVENTION 2 WILL PRESENT A PROGRESSION FROM SENTENCES TO WORDS TO RHYMES ACROSS SESSIONS.

THIS STUDY WILL TAKE PLACE OVER MUCH OF THE 2004-2005 SCHOOL YEAR.

SOME COMMENTS FROM THE SIR WILFRID LAURIER PED DAY PRESENTATION:

- *IT WAS NICE TO KNOW THAT CANADIANS ARE WORKING ON LITERACY ACTIVITIES FOR OUR CHILDREN.*
- *IT WOULD BE A NICE ADDITION TO MY CLASSROOM AS A SUPPORT TOOL.*
- *I FOUND THE FACT THAT THE ACTIVITIES WERE RESEARCH-BASED VERY POSITIVE.*
- *THE STORIES ARE GREAT.*
- *THE ENTIRE SOFTWARE HAS SOME USE IN MY CLASSROOM.*
- *FINALLY, THERE IS A LOGICAL APPROACH TOWARDS DEVELOPING READING SKILLS.*

AS ALWAYS - I AM INTERESTED IN YOUR COMMENTS. PLEASE FEEL FREE TO CONTACT ME:
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