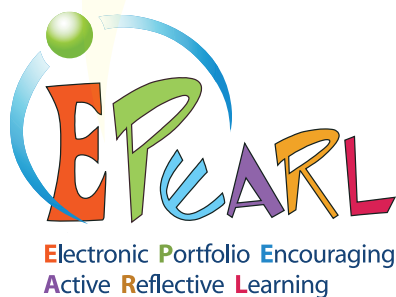




## CSLP Learning Toolkit Newsletter

In August 2008 we will be offering the Learning Toolkit, using the current ePEARL MYSQL database as the foundation.

- The Learning Toolkit will combine the three CSLP-LEARN tools—ABRACADBRA, ePEARL, and ISIS-21, which will be available from the one installation.
- The shared database will be populated using the current procedure of importing from GPI (or Excel).
- Administrators and sub-administrators will be able to toggle on/off each of the different tools.



- **Design: Exciting Updates for Version 3.0**
- **Research: Pan-Canadian Project**
- **Teacher Support: A Virtual Tutorial and an Online Community**
- **Funding Update**

### Design: Version 3.0 Due Out in August 2008

We have had a busy year so far incorporating comments and ideas from the field to continue improving our e-Portfolio software. Our design team has made some exciting updates based on suggestions from our partners and research schools. Some of the key changes include:

- Merging the workspace and portfolio environments into one environment
- Simplifying the teacher's ability to print comments and track students' use
- Adding a field for student reflections on group projects
- Creating the capability for students to move multiple artifacts to their Presentation folder at one time
- Including more themes for Level 3 users to personalize their environments
- Improving icons and visual display throughout the tool

We are very excited about these updates and want to thank our partners and research classrooms for their valuable input. This version will be available mid-Summer.

### Research Update

We have completed the following phases of the research:

1. Collected all pre-test data
2. Sent mid-year questionnaires to teachers to determine the amount and type of use of ePEARL in their classrooms. These will be re-distributed in mid-March.
3. Accessed student portfolios in our research schools to learn about the type and extent of use from our primary research schools in:
  - Quebec (Leonardo DaVinci, EMSB; McCaig, SWLSB; PE Trudeau, WQSB; Holland, CQSB)
  - Manitoba (Ruth Hooker, Lord Selkirk SD; St. Alphonsus, Catholic Schools Commission; Roland, Prairie Rose SD)
  - Alberta (Coalhurst, Palliser SD; Spitzee, Foothills SD; Heritage Heights, Foothills SD)

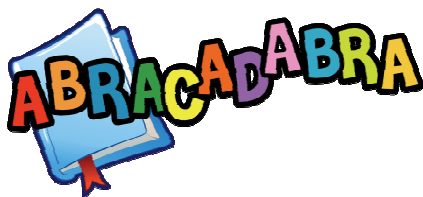
As of this writing the use in research classrooms, with a few notable exceptions, has been quite low. In addition to providing support to the teachers (see below) we would appreciate additional support from administrators and IT personnel to ensure that the use of ePEARL is maximized for the students' benefit. We are hoping to organize a Research Advisory Board meeting in May.

## Teacher Support

Our team at the CSLP is also hard at work at creating more tools to support ePEARL users. Two important elements of this support are: a) developing a Virtual Tutorial for new users and b) creating an online community for current users to share ideas and connect with each other in the form of a wiki.

The Virtual Tutorial is broken down into two formats: Level 1 users and Level 2 & 3 users. Each format has an easy to navigate main screen that will walk a user through how to use the features in the software. This will help alleviate the demands for individual training sessions and allow teachers in more remote areas to be introduced to ePEARL in a structured and consistent format. This tutorial will be available when v3 is released. LEARN-Quebec is funding the development of this important tool.

The teacher Wiki was launched in December of 2007 and we are excited about its potential to help support educators who are anxious to develop their skills and share ideas about their use of ePEARL. This forum is moderated by Ofra Aslan, a Ph.D. student in Educational Technology, who has been using ePEARL with special needs students. This wiki is a place where teachers can post sample lessons, pose questions to other experienced educators, and seek advice about different situations that arise when using ePEARL. If you have teachers or consultants who are interested in joining this forum, please email: ofra.aslan@education.concordia.ca with their name, school, and email address. This Wiki is being funded partially by a grant from the Canadian Council on Learning.



## Design Update

### ABRACADABRA/ePEARL Link

Whereas ABRACADABRA is a web-based reading resource with activities that allow students to practice skills necessary to become independent readers, ePEARL is a web-based electronic portfolio designed to help students develop self-regulated learning skills. The different levels in ePEARL are designed to meet the needs of students from elementary to high school. These portfolios can follow students throughout their school journey.

This ABRACADABRA/ePEARL link is still being developed and should be in place shortly. If you were to visit ePEARL's website now, you will see some of ABRACADABRA's components already in place. We hope to add more to this link before our official release date. Here, teachers and students will have access to written and recorded pieces of work as well as different ways to assess them.

## Funding Update

ePEARL is innovative and user-friendly software that has gotten much interest from schools all over Canada and around the world. We are working hard to keep up with the inquiries to explore our demonstration software and then get it installed.

Our work this year was funded by several agencies including:

- Canadian Council on Learning (CCL),
- Canadian Language and Literacy Research Network (CLLRNET),
- Fonds Québécois de recherche sur la société et culture (FQRSC),
- LEARN-Quebec,
- Ministère de l'Éducation, du Loisir et du Sport (MELS)

This year our proposed three-year study of ePEARL will be cut short due to the elimination of funding from the Canadian Language and Literacy Research Network. CLLRNet, who provided the primary financial support for this longitudinal study, lost their government funding and will be closing up shop. As a result we are revising our research design for next year and are anxious to find new sources of funding to continue supporting the research and design of this valuable tool.

- Design: ABRA/ePEARL link & Assessment
- Research: Pan-Canadian study
- Teacher Support
- Funding Update
- Publishing Possibilities for Students

## ABRACADABRA Assessment Module

Assessment is a hot topic of discussion; everyone has something to say about when, how, and why it should be done. ABRACADABRA will offer a myriad of different ways of assessing – all of which are supported by research that sustains a balanced approach to literacy acquisition – however, we leave it up to the teachers' discretion to choose what works best for them and their students. For example, we offer suggestions as to what the trace data of a particular activity implies but it is up to the teacher to make that evaluation. Because we do not know the circumstances of the classroom or the students, we cannot make that evaluative call.

## ABRACADABRA Research

Our 2007-2008 research focuses on how ABRACADABRA is used by teachers in whole class settings. 26 classrooms from across Canada are a part of this year's study. We are grateful that in Quebec, Jules Verne Elementary and Hillcrest Academy from the SWLSB, along with Sinclair Laird Elementary from the EMSB are participating in this research. Ontario has Southbridge Public School in Waterloo and Cleardale Public School in London participating. From Alberta, Big Rock Elementary in Okotoks and Joe Clark Elementary School in High River are our research school participants. The information we obtain from the field will help us design tools that are more in line with administrators', teachers' and students' needs.

If more schools would like to be a part of the research, please call us at the CSLP (514-242-8484, ext. 5922) or visit our website for more information:  
<http://doe.concordia.ca/cslp/ICT-ABRACADABRA.php>.

## Teacher Support

Teachers in our research schools receive additional training from the CSLP's researchers, staff, and research assistants in and outside of the classroom.

The professionals at LEARN-Quebec Schools will offer support to schools that want to use ABRACADABRA but do not want to be a part of the research.

The Teacher's Zone in ABRACADABRA is accessible by all. It provides support by means of activity explanation, lesson plans, black line masters and the like.

Non-Quebec research schools receive on-site support by our partner researchers from universities in their particular provinces. The CSLP works hand in hand with these investigators to ensure the research design is respected so that reliable and valid data is collected. Visits are also made to each research site by the CSLP's team.

If a school is interested in using ABRACADABRA and would like to receive training, please call us at the CSLP (514-242-8484, ext. 5922) to make arrangements.

Please be aware that we are working with various language arts consultants, principals, and teachers to design this module. These key people are guiding us to make this module one that lines up with the QEP and other provincial curricula. It is our desire to have an assessment tool that will be useful to all.

Because this feature is so critical, much research will need to be done before a full-scale release is possible. We hope to launch a basic version in late 2008 that will be further developed as we receive more data from the field.

## Funding Update

ABRACADABRA was funded this past year by:

- Canadian Council on Learning (CCL),
- Canadian Language and Literacy Research Network (CLLRNet),
- Fonds Québécois de Recherche sur la Société et Culture (FQRSC),
- LEARN-Quebec,
- Ministère de l'Éducation, du Loisir et du Sport (MELS)
- Telstra Foundation (Australia),
- VRQ-CTREQ

Unfortunately, CLLRNet has experienced some hardship this year and is unable to grant us the financial support it promised. Because of this, we will have to scale back some of ABRACADABRA's development. We ensure you that we will continue to keep our software a strong, evidence-based tool that remains "fresh" for teachers and students.

Telstra, the largest telecommunications company in Australia, in 2002 launched the Telstra Foundation with a mandate to enrich the lives of young people and their communities. To this end, the Telstra Foundation is working with Charles Darwin University and the CSLP to conduct research using ABRACADABRA with its teachers and peoples in the Northern Territories. We are excited about the venture and look forward to learning how ABRACADABRA is used in other contexts.

## Publishing Possibilities for Students

In the beginning of March we will be sending out invitations for students to write stories to be published in ABRACADABRA. What a way to provide an authentic writing experience for students! Students from all grade levels can participate and can write about whatever theme or genre they prefer. They will have two months to do this. All writers will receive certificates for participating once their stories are sent to us.



**Information Skills**  
for the  
**Information Society**  
in the 21st Century

- **Our ISIS-21 Team**
- **Activities since September 2007**
- **Project Timeline**

Our latest project, ISIS-21 is unfolding in collaboration with LEARN and the English Montreal School Board with the generous support of a \$100,000 grant from Inukshuk Wireless. Currently in the early stages of development, this prototype instructional software will introduce late elementary students to the fundamental components of information literacy by guiding students through the research process. Topics covered in the prototype will include, the definition of a research topic and corresponding sub-topics, the selection of appropriate retrieval tool(s), introduction to search strategies on the Internet, and criteria for evaluating the quality of the information found. A link to ePEARL will enable students to set goals and reflect on their learning throughout the process.

### **Our ISIS-21 Team**

- LEARN: Bev White (Director), Sharon Peters and Susan van Gelder (Consultants)
- CSLP: Philip Abrami (Director), Anne Wade (Project Coordinator), Catherine LeBel (Creative Director), Jennifer Phillips and Caroline Huebner (Instructional Designers & Research Assistants), Lindsay Bernath and Vladimir Severgine (Designer/Programmers)
- EMSB: Maureen Baron (Consultant)
- Partners - Lesley Farmer (Researcher & Subject Matter Expert, U. of California), Susan Chau (School Libraries Division, Quebec Library Association); St. Georges School, East Hill, Parkdale, Pierre de Coubertin, Westmount Park, and Westmount High schools; Cheryl Prokopanko (Manitoba Education), Denise Rose (Foothills School District, Alberta).

### **Project Timeline**

- Completion of ISIS-21 prototype: August 2008
- Installation on English school board servers: September 2008
- Pilot testing in EMSB partner schools: October/November, 2008
- Focus group with participating teachers and students: late November, 2008
- Final report to Inukshuk Wireless: December 2008
- Solicitation of funds for complete ISIS-21 project (Cycle 3– Cycle 2, sec): Ongoing

Please contact Anne Wade, [wada@education.concordia.ca](mailto:wada@education.concordia.ca) for further information.

### **Activities since September 2007**

- Compilation of a working group with representatives from each of the partner organizations.
- Review of existing technology-based tools for information literacy.
- Review of the research on effective teaching of information literacy skills with an emphasis on self regulation and critical thinking.
- Review of learning outcomes related to information literacy in selected provincial curricula with a focus on the Quebec Education Program.
- Focus group session with school library personnel: two EMSB library personnel and a private school librarian.
- Focus group session with three EMSB teachers (two others hope to participate in this project but were unable to attend).
- At each of these sessions, the following was discussed and presented: background on the project; demonstration of our CSLP-LEARN ePEARL software, preliminary storyboards for ISIS prototype development, and a brief needs assessment was done. Feedback was incorporated into the preliminary design.
- Creation of content material and storyboards outlining the design requirements for two environments in the software: A LEARN mode and an APPLY mode.
- Currently the ISIS team is working with our designers/programmers in the development of the software.

*For more information on any of these tools, please visit <http://doe.concordia.ca/cslp> and follow the link to ICT Projects.*