CSLP Learning Toolkit Newsletter Issue: Winter 2010

What's New - Development

Our new LTK logo The Learning Toolkit (LTK) finally has its own logo

Early literacy tool

Bilingual electronic portfolio tool

Prototype of an information literacy tool

Contact us:

· For information on the LTK Institutes or to get on the LTK mailing list, contact **Anne Wade** at *wada@education.concordia.ca*

· To subscribe to the LTK wiki go to: *https://cslp-epearl.wikispaces.com*

· To learn more about the tools in the Learning Toolkit go to: *http://doe.concordia.ca/cslp/ICT-LTK.php*

· For technical support and help with installing the LTK on a server, contact: *ltkhelp@education.concordia.ca*

· To access a demo of the LTK tools or for information about local support in the provinces contact: *ltkdemo@education.concordia.ca*

Three tools are better than one

The Learning Toolkit (LTK) is comprised of three tools: ABRACADABRA, an early literacy tool; ePEARL, a bilingual electronic portfolio tool; and ISIS-21, a prototype of an information literacy tool. The tools can be used separately but both ABRA and ISIS-21 are linked to ePEARL to encourage students to regulate their learning. In the new release of the LTK, Version LTK 2.01 (2009/10/28), the possibility of linking ABRA and ePEARL also means that students have extended opportunities to develop their reading comprehension, writing, and with the digital recording feature, to authentically demonstrate their reading fluency.

In the LTK version, the Assessment Module of ABRA is functional and educators can access both individual and class progress. There are new videos such as *Using ABRA with special needs children* and *Using ABRA with ePEARL to develop prediction* as well as new print materials such as comprehension cue cards for students, job aids, and LTK guides for teachers. You can download these without charge from our website or order the ABRA material from the LEARN store at *http://www.learnstore.ca*.

Finally, the Design and Development team have worked "behind the scenes" to clean up the programming codes to better ensure the LTK works on a wide range of servers including PC, Mac, and Linux.

The new version of the LTK is available for download and installation on a board or district server at: *http://grover.concordia.ca/eportfolio/ltk_versions/*

What's Forthcoming

We have big plans for 2010 with another new release of the LTK ready by early Fall.

The big news for ePEARL is that we are currently developing a Level 4 to the software. Entitled *Fostering reflective practice in teachers* and funded by the Ministère de l'Éducation, du Loisir et du Sport (MELS), this project will result in the design of a new level for teachers and adult learners, and will incorporate more of the nuanced features of self regulation theory including motivational components of the model. Partners on this project are the EMSB, LBPSB and SWLSB. These boards will place pre-service teachers who wish to use ePEARL as part of their practicum in their schools.

In addition, MELS is funding the revision of ePEARL's Level 3 to better meet the needs of POP (Personal Orientation Project) users in the secondary schools.

ISIS-21 will incorporate interactive instructional activities embedded within Student Help. Paper-based activities, for Phase 3 (Using Information) will also be provided.

Finally, a significant new development is that the French adaptation of ABRA is getting underway thanks to the dogged fundraising efforts of Dr. Monique Brodeur from UQAM. This will open up whole new possibilities for early literacy in Quebec and right across Canada. Work on this started in December 2009 with the French adaptation due out in September 2011.

What's New - Training

LTK Support

The LTK is available without charge to educators worldwide and the CSLP is prepared to provide technical support and pedagogical training at no cost to our active research partners. A nominal fee is charged for non-research sites for technical and training support.

Using LTK tools wisely and well requires knowledge and understanding. We encourage prospective adopters to seek training through the CSLP, the RECIT in Quebec, or our regional trainers who have successfully completed a training institute.

For more on the CSLP policies regarding training and technical support please consult our guidelines available at : *http://doe.concordia.ca/cslp/ICT-LTK.php*
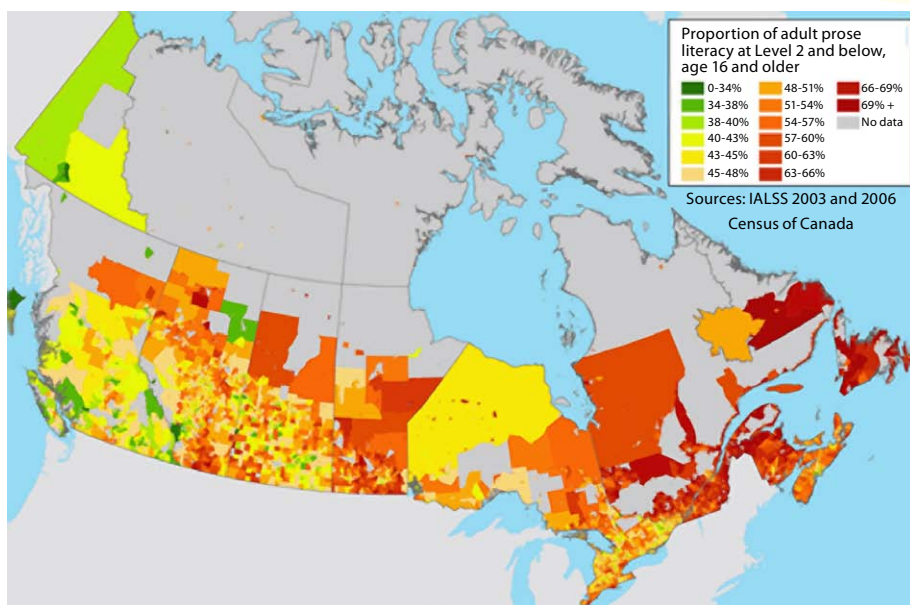
LTK Institutes

With support from the Max Bell Foundation, the CSLP has begun to offer pan-Canadian "train the trainer" two-day institutes covering the tools in the LTK. We have held two so far in Alberta and Quebec in 2008-2009 and plan to hold at least three more in the 2009-2010 school year in Quebec, British Columbia and Ontario. There is no charge for attending the institute (attendees pay their own travel and release time) and participants become certified LTK trainers. If you would like to attend one of our institutes or would like to host one in your area, please let us know.

LTK Resources

We have set up an LTK community of practice for educators via a wiki. The purpose is to create informed discussion around the LTK tools and to learn some helpful tips about how to use the software wisely. Lesson plans, support material and professional development videos are posted to the wiki before being placed in the Teacher Resources section of the LTK so if you wish to have "hot of the press" materials, use the wiki. To subscribe, please go to *https://cslp-epearl.wikispaces.com*.

LTK Training @CSL 10/2009

LTK Training, 06/2009

What's New - Research

A portrait of literacy in Canada

The Canadian Council on Learning along with Statistics Canada has co-published an interactive map of literacy rates in Canada. You can see it below or visit *http://www.ccl-cca.ca/cclflash/proseliteracy/map_canada_e.html*

Proportion of adult prose literacy at Level 2 and below, age 16 and older

0-34%	48-51%	66-69%
34-38%	51-54%	69% +
38-40%	54-57%	No data
40-43%	57-60%	
43-45%	60-63%	
45-48%	63-66%	

Sources: IALSS 2003 and 2006
Census of Canada

The picture is indeed worth a thousand words. There is much work to be done to help Canadian students become more literate.

ePEARL

The results of our 2007-2008 pan-Canadian study have been published in *Computers and Education*. This quasi-experiment is the first in the world to document the impact of a process portfolio on students' literacy skills (see Table) as well as student self-regulation skills and teacher use of self-regulation learning strategies in the classroom. ePEARL works to promote effective teaching and learning!

We also conducted a pan-Canadian study in 2008-2009 to refine and extend our previous study. The preliminary results show even stronger effects of ePEARL on student literacy skills!

Canadian Achievement Test (CAT-4) data analysis

Upper elementary students (N= 296)	CAT-4 Pre-test	CAT-4 Post-test	Gain in learning
Non ePEARL Classrooms (Mean, SD)	1.95 (.750)	2.05 (.668)	+0.10
ePearl Classrooms (Mean, SD)	1.78 (.708)	2.11 (.718)	+0.33

LTTA - Learning Through the Arts

Learning Through the Arts is a pan-Canadian initiative of the Royal Conservatory of Music to bring artistic creativity into the classroom and embed it into other curricular areas. Last year, the CSLP began a partnership with LTTA to use ePEARL in this initiative. In a small pilot study, a dancer collaborated with a classroom teacher to teach a unit on ecology. ePEARL added significantly to this experience and the pilot is being substantially expanded this year.

ISIS-21

With funding from Inukshuk, the CSLP developed and tested lasted year a prototype of *Inquiry Strategies for the Information Society in the Twenty-First Century*. Initial interest was so strong that we expanded the pilot to a number of schools in Quebec and Alberta. The results of the evaluation showed that there was a strong correlation (+0.50) between the time students spent using ISIS-21 and their information literacy skills.

What's New - Research (cont'd)

ABRA

It took two years and involved dozens of kindergarten and grade one teachers and about 1000 students but we now have the data from our largest pan-Canadian test of ABRA undertaken to date. We are still combing through these data but our preliminary analyses to date reveal that:

- Teachers can use ABRACADABRA to help reading at scale across Canada.
- Effects are positive and present in Kindergarten and Grade 1.
- Early indication is of the biggest effects in Kindergarten.
- The size of the effects suggests the robustness of the findings.
- The latest findings replicate and extend related studies.
- Further evidence on treatment integrity is likely to uncover larger effects in the best-implementing classrooms.

Eight separate investigations of ABRA have been conducted over the last several years. They vary in quality — some are true experiments — and scope — the latest pan-Canadian study is huge. But together they paint a fairly consistent picture of the positive impacts of ABRA on literacy skills. See Table.

ABRACADABRA Research To Date (2009) Eight Research Investigations

Reading Skill Area	Effect Size*	Percentile Gain*
Phonics	+0.44	+17.0%
Fluency	+0.24	+9.5%
Comprehension	+0.28	+11.0%

All classrooms regardless of implementation fidelity

ABRA OZ

No it isn't about wizards but the magic of ABRA in Australia. After two years of smaller pilot studies and getting used to ABRA, funds from the Australian Research Council and the Telstra Foundation will allow our partners from Charles Darwin University to conduct a longitudinal experiment, the first of its kind Down Under, on the effectiveness of ABRA in the Northern Territory, home to a large number of Australia's aboriginal peoples.

The ABRA-ePEARL link

We are excited about the possibilities in linking together ABRA and ePEARL. This year, as part of our research in Quebec, we are exploring how to support classrooms making active use of both tools. We are also piloting a number of measures that we hope will help us identify the impacts of these LTK tools especially on comprehension and writing development as well as self-regulation.

Accolade from teacher

"All my students have significant learning disabilities and are very challenged when it comes to reading. I have all the latest literacy software and have exposed my students to it, as well as to ABRACADABRA. Hands down, what they find most motivating is ABRA. And what I find most comprehensive, relevant, and beneficial to them is ABRA as well. We do weekly sessions on the SmartBoard where I show them how to use the various applications. Then they get to do the activities right on the SmartBoard. These sessions are the highlight of their week. Two of my students who could not handle any of the early literacy software loaded on my class computers can, and love to do ABRA. Thanks to ABRA, they are finally able to blend sounds. Thanks to ABRA, reading is not a dreaded activity but something fun that all my students can do at their own pace and that doesn't compromise their self-esteem."

Joanne Cosentino, Elementary Teacher, Special Education (Calgary, AB)