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Abstract:
Kids Biodiversity: A Website for the UN-CBD
One of the main concerns of the CBD has been education and public awareness. In 2005, the UN-CBD specified that it was interested in providing children with an interactive and engaging online environment to learn about biodiversity.

The Biodiversity Kids website (2006) was a joint project of the UN Convention on Biological Diversity and the Centre for the Study of Learning and Performance (CSLP) at Concordia University. The CSLP designed an educational website for 6 to 14 year olds, that could function as a stand-alone website but which could also be used in a classroom setting. The two main guiding questions were "how is biodiversity threatened across the globe?" and "what can children do in their context to help preserve biodiversity?" These themes were approached, indirectly, through three games that focus on habitat-species interdependence (Make Me A Home), evolution and diversity (Super-Animal Creator), and global threats to biodiversity (Mission: Cat Rescue).

The project team opted to employ a goal-based, ill-structured problem solving approach. This approach is based on the assumption that by presenting complexity and an authentic problem first, the simpler concepts will be acquired (with support) in the process of finding a solution to the more complex problem. The activities were designed to be relevant to children from a wide variety of cultures and background, technical capacities and cognitive and developmental skills, thanks to informative, differentiated feedback and scaffolding. Alongside the three interactive games, the website included professional support for educators or parents with ideas for complimentary offline activities, as well as suggestions on how to use the games to explore other themes. There are Animal Profile cards, age-appropriate embedded support within the games, a variety of cognitive scaffolds and meaningful feedback.

The final product was released to the CBD server on June 30th, 2006 following a successful presentation of the website to the Conference of Parties in Brazil in March 2006.

Bio:
Einat Idan has been an Instructional Designer for the CSLP since 2006. She has a B.A. in English Literature and Education from Hebrew University, Jerusalem and a M.A. in Educational Technology from Concordia University. Einat has been involved in a variety of evidence-based educational projects developed at the Centre for the Study of Learning and Performance, with a special focus on self-regulated learning. Currently, she is learning more about educational technology theory music and self-regulation, and early mathematics development.