

King, L., Chauvin, A., Fichten, C, Barile, M., & Havel, A. (2010). The dragon in the classroom: Using ICTs to help ALL Students Succeed. **Prof Web**. Retrieved May 3, 2010, from <http://www.profweb.qc.ca/en/stories/laura-king/index.html>



Last fall, we interviewed a PHD student with a learning disability (LD) to understand how information and communication technologies (ICTs) could help students with LDs succeed at college and university. This student, like our 57 other experts such as service providers, teachers, technology specialists and neuropsychologists, had been chosen for her knowledge of the post-secondary level of schooling, ICTs and LDs. Our expert raised an important concern: some teachers need to be sensitized. To justify her claim, she told us that while taking an undergraduate course, she asked one of her teachers to write the word he just said on the board so that she could write it down without errors. Her teacher's answer was one which marvellously illustrates her point: "Sit closer so you can hear better."

Monday May 3 2010

The Dragon in the Classroom: Opening Our Doors to an Increased Use of Technology



000 Multidisciplinary

Laura King, Teacher, Cégep André-Laurendeau



Click to find out more about concept mapping!

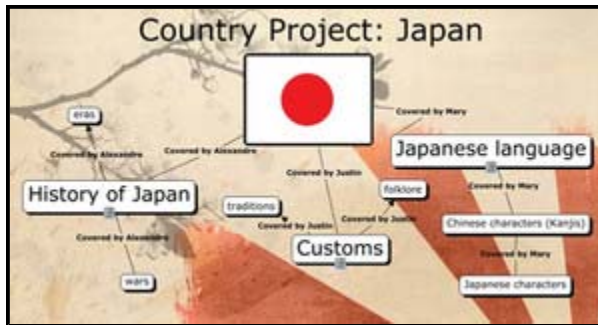
In interviewing our "experts", we learned about a wide range of adapted and general-use software. As many of us know, students with learning disabilities can have difficulties in a variety of domains. These include problems with reading, writing, and mathematics. While ICTs do not provide the answer to all of the concerns of students with LDs, these do make a huge difference in making students' lives easier and their academic work more efficient and successful. ICTs allow students to put the accent on their abilities and not on their disabilities by allowing them to produce high quality work and exam results.

For instance, some experts suggested that dictation

software, such as *Dragon Naturally Speaking*, could be helpful as this type of ICT allows students who have difficulty with writing and spelling to produce better-quality papers. The experts mentioned multiple advantages to using technology for students with LDs such as helping them complete their school work, being more autonomous and boosting their confidence. Not surprisingly, the biggest drawback was negative perceptions: sometimes the students with LDs who use ICTs feel marginalized; staff and peers may also perceive the use of ICTs to be an unfair advantage or even an opportunity to cheat.

One way to partially, or even totally, eradicate these negative perceptions is to make a variety of potentially helpful ICTs, be these general use software or specialized software designed specifically for individuals with print impairments, available to everybody, whether they have LD or not. Another possibility is to insist that colleges and universities select e-learning resources, such as course management software, general use software, and

course materials (e.g., textbooks, course packs), that are designed to be accessible and usable by all students, including those with all types of disabilities. If you take it to a higher level, you have Universal Design of Instruction (UDI): using strategies and materials that are accessible to all students regardless of age, gender, or disability.



C-maps for team work!


Using free concept-mapping software, like **C-map**, is a simple and effective way to achieve the universal design of instruction goal. C-maps are a good alternative to more conventional software that makes outlines and plans. For example, psychology, health-sciences and nursing teachers can use C-map to break down the parts of the human brain so that each individual part has its own image and information which is readily accessible with a '**click**'. Teachers who do group work will find C-map useful as each team member can complete his or her part and then easily integrate it into a larger schematic diagram which 'maps' the entire **team's work** for an oral presentation or a research paper.

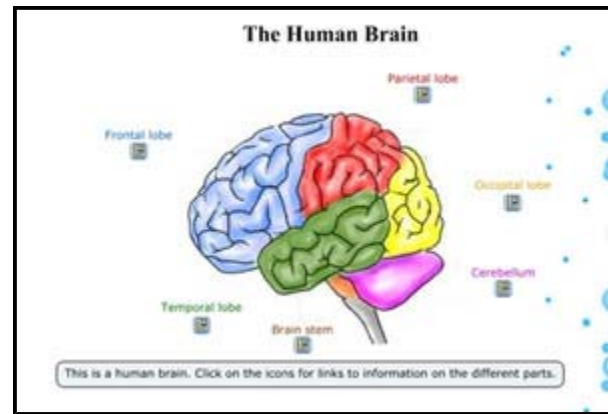
Our PHD student is living proof that using ICTs can help students with LDs achieve at the post-secondary level. Thankfully, the experts we interviewed made numerous **suggestions** about ICTs that can make teachers on the front-line more effective with all of their students. We teach in the 21st century - during a time where ICTs are an integral part of our lives and yet, at the post-secondary level we wait impatiently for more funding and resources so this everyday reality can be better reflected in our schools. As more teachers open their classrooms doors wider to students who are "differently abled," fair use of ICTs will allow larger and more diverse groups of students to experience academic success.

Did you know that...?

- When first-semester college students with LDs receive needed accommodations, they obtain the same grades as their non-LD peers.
- College students with LD in pre-university programs who receive needed accommodations graduate at the same rate as students without LD.
- One frequently-mentioned postsecondary accommodation is the use of information and communication technologies (ICTs).

We would love to hear from you! How have you tackled using ICTs in the classroom to meet a variety of learners' needs? How has letting students use adaptive technology in your classroom

helped students to meet your learning objectives?  ©



An example of a C-map - Click for more detail!

This article was written as part of a of a three-year **FQRSC research grant** on college students with LDs and their use of ICTs. Other members of this team who have contributed to this article include:

- Alexandre Chauvin, research assistant, Cégep André-Laurendeau
- Catherine Fichten, teacher-researcher, Dawson College, Jewish General Hospital, McGill University
- Maria Barile, co-director, Adaptech Research Network
- Alice Havel, Co-ordinator of The Centre for Students with Disabilities, Dawson College



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