The University of Kentucky Commonwealth Center for Instructional Technology and Learning (CCITL) project is implementing and evaluating the scaling up of a multi-mediated web-based performance support system (WPSS). The purpose of this system is to assist Kentucky instructional providers (i.e., teachers, curriculum coordinators, instructional assistants, related services personnel, administrators) in selecting and implementing instructional technology with students with learning challenges. The CCITL system models “best research to practice” in terms of instructional technology applied to Pre-K through secondary school-based curriculum content for all learners regardless of ability.

CCITL draws upon an inclusive body of empirical research on instructional technology and its impact on learners as well as on effective learning environments for all students. The research and knowledge base of CCITL taps into available national research on instructional technology and evidence-based strategies. The infusion of the CCITL content into a multi-mediated and dynamic web-based environment provides an innovative feature that is anticipated to both enhance its use by local school instructional employees as well as its effectiveness as a professional development tool.

The CCITL system was developed in three distinct phases over a two-year period: (a) a needs assessment phase, (b) the prototype development phase, and (c) the evaluation phase. The project was first implemented in six pilot school districts selected to ensure that their school populations were representative of the overall demographics of the state, including socioeconomic, racial, population density, and cultural diversity in the Commonwealth of Kentucky. During the needs assessment phase, project staff surveyed the six participating school systems to determine technical capabilities and instructional needs of those particular school systems. In addition, focus interviews were conducted to gather further information.

During the prototype development phase, the CCITL system was created. It is a dynamic web-based environment based on a series of 22 databases that make up four interrelated components. The first component of the system, Advisors, contains a secure discussion area in which instructional personnel can consult with an experienced instructional technology consultant about the implementation of instructional strategies and technology in their unique circumstances. The second component of the CCITL system, Strategy Center, allows instructional personnel to search a database for information about evidence-based strategies. The database for the second component contains strategies related to a variety of areas such as mathematics, reading, writing, science, study skills, and behavior management. A third component of the system, Library, allows instructional personnel to search a database for information about literature related to evidence-based strategies contained in the Strategy Center. The fourth component of the CCITL system, Learning Lab, allows instructional personnel to search or browse a database of information about how to integrate instructional technology into the classroom.

Following the prototype development phase, project staff conducted a formative evaluation of the system to assess its functionality and determine necessary revisions. This was followed by a
summative evaluation using a case study method designed to assess its effectiveness in providing technical assistance to instructional providers.

During the third year, the scaling up phase of the CCITL project, the focus was shifted to promoting awareness of the system in 50 “test bed” school districts. The school districts were representative of the Commonwealth with regard to socio-economic, population density and related demographics. Several activities (i.e., system demonstrations and train the trainer workshops with follow-up activities) have been designed to encourage use of the CCITL system in the natural environment, which increases the likelihood of continued use and dissemination of the system to co-workers. As part of the evaluation process, the project will assess how instructional personnel find and utilize information in the system and whether use of the system impacts on the academic success of students with learning difficulties in the participating schools and districts.