ABRACADABRA, A Balanced Reading Approach for Canadians Designed to Achieve Best Results for All (http://grover.concordia.ca/ABRA/php2006/abracadabra.html), is a reading intervention being developed by the Centre for the Study of Learning and Performance (CSLP). This website implements a scientifically based balanced reading curriculum in a digital environment. Under continual development, there are numerous activities organized into phonics, fluency, comprehension and writing categories, that allow the student to progress from sound and letter identification, to more complex tasks such as spelling and personal responses to stories – ultimately helping them acquire good literacy skills. The CSLP has focused its efforts in developing these skill-based activities within the instructional module, but the full version of ABRACADABRA will contain a Teacher Environment (professional development module) an tools) a Parent Module and a link to e-PEARL, a digital portfolio developed by the CSLP.

Our research on ABRA to date has first focused on establishing the highest quality scientific evidence of effectiveness (Abrami et al., in press: Savage et al., in preparation, Comaskey & Savage, in preparation). We have used two extended randomized controlled trials using trained facilitators, within classroom controls, and careful implementation monitoring to study ABRA’s impact on student learning. Strong treatment effects have been found. Implementation fidelity was, by design, achieved by using the tool in small researcher-led groups. We also have pilot data on the effectiveness of ABRA as a whole class tool. Our hypothesis is that this tool is a viable source that can provide better instruction and meet the needs of all students to develop good literacy skills. We also hypothesize that this tool will scaffold teachers not specially trained in reading acquisition as they use it for whole class instruction. Ultimately, ABRACADABRA has the potential to act as a model for best practices in teaching reading.