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Harnessing Technology to Promote Science Learning and Scientific Literacy

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MAC Research Team

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Paul Horwitz, Concord Consortium, Principal Investigator
Janice Gobert, Concord Consortium, Co-PI & Research Director
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Ken Bell, Concord Consortium, Project Manager
Sharona Levy, Northwestern University
Trudi Lord, Concord Consortium
Jody Clarke, Harvard University
Project Summary

• Funded in 2001 by the IERI (Interagency Education Research Initiative) program.

• This program emphasizes scalability, “evidence-based” research, and diverse populations- No Child Left Behind (NCLB).

• In our project, we place a heavy emphasis on using model-based technologies for inquiry as a means to promote scientific literacy.

• We are doing this in three domains: Biology, Physics & Chemistry.
What do we mean by scientific literacy?

- The book *Science for All Americans* (early 90s)-partly responsible for changing the way we think about WHO gets educated in science.

- If accessible to a broad range of learners, then how to make it so….focus on qualitative understanding of causal relationships underlying scientific phenomena.

- Knowledge in this form is more generative, transferable, and can be applied to everyday life which important to making decisions that effect our everyday lives (e.g., radon testing).
Scientific Literacy (cont’d)…
Perkins (1986)

- Content knowledge

- Process skills (i.e., inquiry, evaluation of evidence, communication, etc.). In MAC we add reasoning with models.

- Understanding the nature of science- i.e., that it is a dynamic process and that the current understanding of science is based on our theories and methods with which we view them.

- Understanding More recently, it has been argued that understanding the nature of models is an important aspect of epistemology as well (Gobert & Discenna, 1996; Schwarz & White, 1998).
Inquiry need not preclude accountability!

That is, our technology allows for accountability by:

• Interactive curriculum and assessment materials…
  Computer-based activities pose challenging science problems, track students’ actions as they solve them, and offer contextualized help.

• Embedded Assessment & Formative Assessment allows for students to get feedback WHEN they need it!

• Delivered over the Internet
  When a school registers with us its data is collected on our servers, automatically analyzed in real time, and used to create diagnostic assessments of students’ conceptual understanding.
Overview to today…

- Research Questions
- Technology
  - Engine & software tools (BioLogica, Dynamica, Connected chemistry).
- Theoretical framework of MBTL.
  - Curricular Designs & Scaffolding Framework
- Assessments
  - Embedded assessments, Pre- and post-assessments, & surveys
- Logging Capacity & research with logs
- TPD & Teacher support
- Scalability
Research: Level 1- Case Studies with students

Case studies of students with software tools to assess ... 
~ conceptual progression of concepts (progressive model-building),
~ development of scaffolding framework
~ HCI issues.

Tools:

*BioLogica (formerly GenScope, teaches Genetics)*
*Dynamica (teaches Newtonian /Mechanics)*
*Connected Chemistry (teaches Gas Laws)*
Teacher Data collected with surveys

~ science teaching style, epistemological understanding, science “comfort” level, pedagogy with modeling.

Surveys

~ Teachers’ epistemologies of models (adapted from Gobert & Discenna, 1997)
~ Teachers’ science teaching survey (adapted from Fishman, 1999) and teachers’ background questionnaire (The CC Modeling Team).
Research: Level 2-Classroom Research

Years 1-2

- 1) Further refinement of scaffolding framework.
- 2) Empirical studies of scaffolding framework.
- 3) Development of Assessments and Embedded Assessments
- 4) Development of Classroom communique and portal for teachers’ use.
Research: Level 3- Longitudinal study in progress

Dependent Variables-
Cumulative gains on
students’ content knowledge,
modeling skills,
epistemological knowledge, and
attitudes towards science.
Research: Level 4- Scalability

- What kinds of technology infrastructure and data logging capacities are necessary to provide high level, conceptually-based feedback to teachers about their students?

- What kinds of additional support (professional development, online support, etc) is necessary for teachers to succeed?

- How can we scale up from 3 partner schools to many schools across the U.S. where we deliver software and collect data from schools with modest support?
Forms of Knowledge, I-P & “Theoretical” Cognitive Affordances

- Different knowledge forms have both different I-P requirements and cognitive affordances allowed based on degree of isomorphism between the “knowledge representation” and “thing” it is representing.

- **textual representations**, which describe in words, describe temporal sequences reasonably well but are poor at describing spatial/static aspects of science phenomena

- **diagrams/illustrations** good describe static/spatial features of phenomena but poor at describing causal and temporal features;

- **models** and **simulations** show the dynamic, causal mechanisms as well as the temporal features of a phenomenon.

- Thus text should offer fewer cognitive affordances than models but…
Student Difficulty in Learning from Models

…simply providing a diagram or model as an adjunct to text does not facilitate or promote deep understanding because:

• increased cognitive load on learners (Sweller, et al, 1990; Gobert, 1994).

• students lack the necessary domain knowledge in order to guide their search processes through diagrams/models (Lowe, 1989; Head, 1984; Gobert, 1994; Gobert & Clement, 1999).
Thus …

• Students need scaffolding to guide their search processes, to support perceptual cues afforded by models, support inference-making from these perceptual cues.

• Our scaffolding is based on model-based teaching & learning (Gobert & Buckley, 2000)
Model-Based Teaching & Learning (Gobert & Buckley, 2000)

- Synthesis of research in cognitive psychology and science education
- Model-based learning as a dynamic, recursive process of learning by constructing & reasoning with mental models.
- Analogous to hypothesis development and testing seen among scientists (Clement, 1989).
Model-Based Learning in situ

Intrinsic Learner Factors
Epistemology of models
Attitudes & Self-efficacy

Intrinsic Teacher Factors
Epistemology of models
Teaching experience
Background

Classroom Factors
Implementation of MAC activity use (logged)
Teacher practices (reported via Classroom Communique)
Curriculum/Instructional design of MAC activities

• Follow MBTL framework (Gobert & Buckley, 2000) and
• Utilize a progressive model-building approach (White & Frederiksen, 1990; Raghavan & Glaser, 1995)
Model-Based Scaffolding Elements in MAC tools.

- **Representational Assistance** to guide students’ understanding of the representations or the domain specific conventions in the domain.

- **Model pieces acquisition** to focus students' attention on the perceptual pieces of the representations and support students' knowledge acquisition about one or more aspects of the phenomenon (spatial, causal, functional, temporal).

- **Model pieces integration** to help students combine model components in order to come to a deeper understanding of how they work together as a causal system.

- **Model based reasoning** to support students’ reasoning with their models.

- **Reconstruct, Reify, & Reflect** to support students to refer back to what they have learned, reinforce it, and then reflect to move to a deeper level of understanding.
General MAC Scaffolds include:

- Advance organizers to evoke prior knowledge and provide them with a structure to “fill in” the concepts.
- Post organizers to reflect on and concretize what they have just learned.
- Orienting tasks to give the student a cognitive goal for the task.
- Glossary of terms provided within the software.
- Embedded assessment of understanding with “individualized” feedback to items in real time.
Effects of epistemology

- MBTL and cognitive affordances focus primarily on factors dealing with student’s cognitive processing but...

- Another important aspect is students’ epistemological understanding of the nature of models and the nature of science b/c they
  
  Influence knowledge integration (Songer & Linn, 1991).
  
  affect reasoning with models (Gobert & Discenna, 1997; Gobert, 2004).

- Using log files we expect to detect differences in students’ manipulations of MAC models depending on their epistemologies of models,
  
  e.g., those with more sophisticated epistemologies may be more systematic in their manipulations with models.
  
  Can use this data to track modeling skills over time.
Modular architecture aids software implementation and maintenance.

**Pedagogica™**

- **Script**
- **Scripting editor**
- **SCHOOL’s server**
- **Data**

- **MAC activities**

**Engines**

- BioLogica engine
- Dynamica engine
- Connected Chem engine
# New Logging Specs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Screen/task type</th>
<th>Logged by Pedagogica</th>
<th>Post processing</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“Telling? screens ? text w or without diagrams</td>
<td>1. Time in screen</td>
<td>Reading content code</td>
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<tr>
<td>Screens with text and a manipulative task</td>
<td>1. Time in screen</td>
<td>Nature of task</td>
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<td>2. Interaction time</td>
<td>Tries to success</td>
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<td>3. Inputs to model</td>
<td>Systematicity</td>
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<tr>
<td>Screens with multiple choice questions</td>
<td>1. Time in screen</td>
<td>Type of question (assessment v. scaffolding)</td>
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<tr>
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<td>2. Answer</td>
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<td>3. Correct answer</td>
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<tr>
<td>Screens with essay questions</td>
<td>1. Time in screen</td>
<td>Type of question (assessment v. scaffolding)</td>
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<tr>
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<td>2. Typing time</td>
<td>“Quality?o f answer</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. Answer</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hint pop-ups</td>
<td>1. Time in Hint pop-up</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Which hint accessed</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
## Technology Features & Affordances

### Technological Features
Pedagogica generates logs for every student interaction capturing student’s…
- Actions and choices with models
- Data on duration and sequence
- Responses to questions

Embedded Assessments with models & questions...
- Generate profile for students
- “pivotal” points in curriculum
- Responses to questions

### Affordances
“Hard” data -- used for implementation variables: which activities were used, pattern of use (consecutive or intermittent days)

Finer-grained data can be used for
- Filtering data
- Measure of systematicity
- Duration as covariate for level of treatment

These data will be used to derive student reports…
- Formative assessments
- Summative assessments
Technology Enhanced Formative Assessment for Teachers’ Use

Explicit assessment items--Pre/post & Embedded Assessments
Log files as data…

- Time with manipulable models
- What steps they take with models (systematicity)
- Time on task/screen
- Time & tries to success
- What info or help they seek

Interax with prior knowledge & epistemology
Model-Based Assessment

Can assess students understanding...

- Pieces of models (structure, i.e. parts, process, i.e., interax of parts to produce phenomena)
- Integration of pieces of models
- Success reasoning with model
- Skill at transferring model (i.e., reflection, solve problems, inferences).
Connected Chemistry

Goals

• Challenge a causal understanding of Chemistry concepts within the framework of complexity theory.

• Facilitate the distinction and connection between model and reality in science.

• Promote a coherent understanding of micro-->macro connections.
Technology Development in BioLogica

- Teaches transmission genetics (Mendelian genetics + intro to the molecular view).

- Multi-level model—families, organisms, chromosomes, genes, DNA.

- Covers meiosis, mono-, dihybrid-, sex-linked, & polygenic characteristics.

- Allows for genetic investigations.
Examples of Scaffolding
Representational Assistance (DNA strands)
Students are told to click on magnifying glass to see germ cell.
Students see hidden structure and process (pieces of model).

Click **COMBINATION VIEW** so you can see both representations.
Representational Assist- Linking different representations

Compare the two representations of chromosomes. To make it easier, drag the strands in the cell (in the left panel) apart so they line up the way they do in the diagram at right.

*Find the pair of X chromosomes in the cell and double click on one of X chromosome.*
Making Gametes

Students click play and watch the gametes being made for both mother and father (Model Pieces Integration)

As you can see, one germ cell has not yet gone through meiosis. You can run meiosis in this view by clicking the play button under the germ cell as you did before or you can drag the slider (just to the right of the play button) all the way to the right.

Run meiosis.
Model Piece Integration

After watching the process, now see the baby dragon (its physical representation).

Congratulations! You used our models of meiosis and fertilization to join gametes from each parent to create a new baby dragon. If you want to create a new baby, you need to run meiosis again to make new gametes.

Do you think all the offspring of these parents will look like this one? Why or why not?
Reconstruct, Reify, & Reflect.
Students see visually how a family might have different looking offspring with different traits. They are asked to reflect on the model.

In designer dragons (next activity) students now are given tasks: e.g., create a baby boy, create a dragon without horns. They run the model and choose gametes with specific chromosomes. This reinforces what they have learned and moves them to a deeper level of understanding (integration, RRR).
Technology Development in Dynamica

• Teaches Newtonian Mechanics in a qualitative way for Physical Science or Physics (CP, ACC, Hon’s).
• Covers: Vectors, Vector addition, Force & Mass, Gravity, Momentum, Collisions, & Balancing Forces.
• Allows for experimentation & inquiry on these topics.
QuickTime® and a Sorenson Video decompressor are needed to see this picture.
Schools & Levels of Partnerships

- 3 Partner Schools - First 2 years of project ~1000 students, 22 teachers
  
  *large urban, suburban, small urban, very mixed SES*

- 10 Member Schools added in 2002

- Contributing Schools - adding these daily.

- As of last month, we are in
  ~ 115 schools,
  ~ 32 States,
  ~ 10 Countries total
  ~ Hong Kong?
Teacher Professional Development & Support

- Fall workshops (1-day)
  - Modeling
  - Research requirements
  - Data collection

- Spring workshops (1/2 day)
  - Data collection
  - Focus groups
  - New developments

- Web Portal, email, and phone
Portal functions

- Online presence for the MAC Project
- Software downloads
- Administrative features - Manage class rosters
- Help and support
  - Curriculum and activity guides
  - Frequently asked questions
  - Online community for Pedagogica teachers
- Classroom communiqués
- Reports for teachers, students and researchers
  - Classroom activity reports
  - Individual student reports
  - Student scores and answers to pre- and post-tests
  - Summary reports for all activities
    - Coming soon
Classroom Communiqué

• Communication between teachers and Concord Consortium
  – Specific to each topic and class

• Assigned Activities
  – Which Pedagogica activities did you ask students to use?

• Preparation
  – What work was done in class to prepare for Pedagogica use?

• Follow-up
  – How will you follow-up in the classroom?

• Comments
  – What issues, if any, did your students have while using Pedagogica?
# Pre/Post Test Summary

## Pre/Post Test Report

**Teacher:** Mr. R  
**Class:** Biology Period 2  
**School:**  
**Activity:** Genetics Pre-Test

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Student 1</th>
<th>Student 2</th>
<th>Student 3</th>
<th>Student 4</th>
<th>Student 5</th>
<th>Student 6</th>
<th>Student 7</th>
<th>Student 8</th>
<th>Student 9</th>
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[Image of the Pre/Post Test Report]
### Pre/Post Test Report

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pre-Test Summary</th>
<th>Post-Test Summary</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number Correct: 23</td>
<td>Number Correct: 19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Problems: 55</td>
<td>Total Problems: 55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Score: 42%</td>
<td>Score: 35%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

51. Redgreen colorblindness in humans is an X-linked recessive trait. Males are more likely to be redgreen colorblind than females because redgreen colorblindness is (assume Male XY, Female XX)

- dominant in one sex and recessive in the other.
- influenced by the hormones present in the individual.
- caused by an allele that is part of the X-chromosome and the male has only one X-chromosome.
- caused by an allele that is part of the Y-chromosome and the female does not have a Y-chromosome.

- dominant in one sex and recessive in the other.
- influenced by the hormones present in the individual.
- caused by an allele that is part of the X-chromosome and the male has only one X-chromosome.
- caused by an allele that is part of the Y-chromosome and the female does not have a Y-chromosome.
In terms of our theoretical goals…

- This research extends a current vein of progressive model-building in science education (cf., Raghavan & Glaser, 1995; White & Frederiksen, 1990) by having students engage in deep inquiry with technology-based models.

- Furthermore, all tasks are scaffolded using a model-based scaffolding framework in order to promote both deep understanding of the content as well as promote a deep understanding of the nature of models in science.

- It is believed that rich, scaffolded model-based tasks such as these engages students in authentic scientific inquiry, and as such can significantly impact content knowledge, inquiry skills, and scientific literacy.
In terms of IT, we are leveraging technology.....

.....As a bird’s eye view into the black box.

To develop detailed understanding of students’ model-based learning with manipulable models---> Important for the Learning Sciences.

For formative and summative assessment for teachers’ and students’ use---> Important for Science Education & practice.

To scale our tools to many schools worldwide---> Important for students’ learning, scalability, & sustainability.
MAC is available…

- Become a contributing school, mac.concord.org
- Some MAC activities & others available through TELS (telscenter.org)
- For more information, go to www.concord.org
- See March ‘04 issue of JSET (www.jset.unlv.edu)
- Contact me at jgobert@concord.org

- THANK YOU!