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[The Quebec College Crossroad for IT Integration](#)

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## **Free and Inexpensive ICT for Students with Disabilities**



[Adaptech](#)

Research Network

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The number of students with learning disabilities (LD) such as dyslexia is steadily increasing in Quebec colleges and universities. In recent years, information and communication technologies (ICTs) have often been identified as useful disability accommodations both inside and outside the classroom. This is not surprising considering the global shift toward a technology-oriented society.

Recent research ([Nguyen et coll., 2012](#)) has shown that despite the increasing use of ICTs as disability related accommodations, there is a gap between the views of experts (e.g., service providers, ICT specialists, teachers, etc.) and those of students with learning disabilities. A key reason for this discrepancy according to the students is the high cost of some of the most popular specialized ICTs. Specialized software such as Dragon Naturally Speaking, WhiteSmoke and WordQ cost between \$130 and \$200. Kurzweil 3000 and Médialexie (screen readers) cost about \$1400 and \$1700, respectively, for single user licenses.

### A Database to Enable Access to Adaptive Technology

In an attempt to promote the accessibility and use of ICTs by students with learning disabilities, the Adaptech Research Network has compiled and maintains a database of "[Free and Inexpensive Adaptive Technology Database](#)". How did we define "inexpensive" when it comes to ICTs? For software and hardware for Windows and Mac computers, the ceiling has been set at \$200. For apps that operate on iPhone, iPad and iPod touch, the price cannot exceed \$10.

The "Free and Inexpensive" database consists of over 400 bilingual entries divided by platform: Windows, Mac and iOS-powered devices such as the iPhone, iPad and iPod touch. In addition, the site provides a full review of built-in accessibility features (e.g., screen reading, magnification, braille support, etc.) for Windows 7 and Mac OS X, as well as for the iPhone 3G+, iPad and iPod touch (4<sup>th</sup> gen).

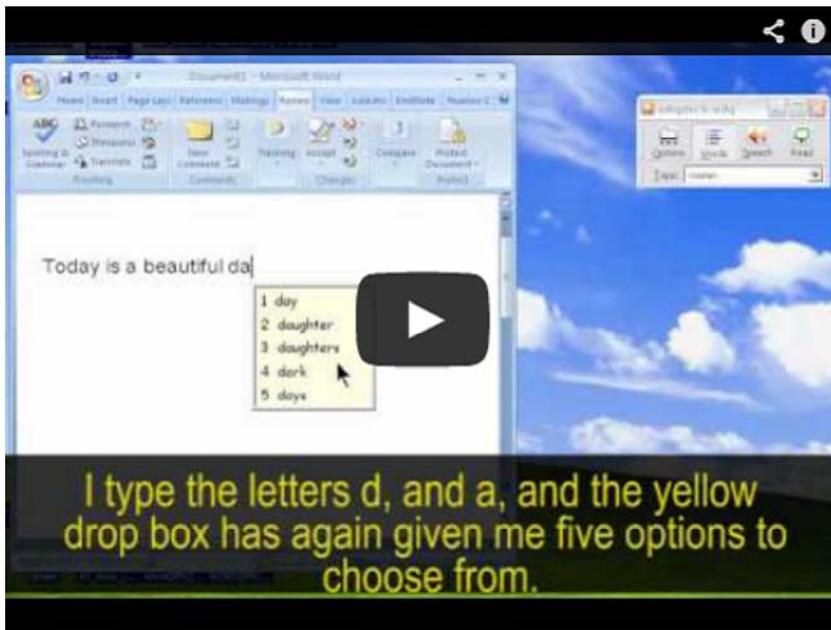
We believe that initiatives such as the “Free and Inexpensive Adaptive Technology Database” are very important in that they promote access to affordable technologies that can help students with all types of disabilities do academic work.

In the near future, the Adaptech Research Network plans to further improve the database by including an additional feature. This new feature offers students and college staff the opportunity to ‘converse’ (read and post comments) about the software and hardware that they use (ex. cost, how easy it is to learn, key features and how it can be used to succeed at school)

We would really like to see a reduction in the price of the “high end” ICTs that the experts propose to students with disabilities. While we are waiting for this to happen, free and inexpensive ICTs are a viable alternative.

Please have a look at what we have to offer at <http://adaptech.org/en/downloads> and please let us know of any new items that could be added to the database at [info@adaptech.org](mailto:info@adaptech.org).

As well, you will find on our site videos demonstrating certain free and inexpensive adaptive resources. As an example, the video explaining WordQ is below:



The presentation of WordQ, one of the videos on free and inexpensive adaptive technology, produced by the Adaptech Research Network

*Share your impressions in our Comments Section below!* ©

