

**Title of Session:** WebTools - Whyville

**Moderator:** Pam Berger

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Room: After School Online Room

**BJ:** welcome to tonight's WebTools discussion. Pam Berger is the leader.

**PamB:** Welcome Everybody

**PamB:** Let's start by briefly introducing ourselves.

**BJ:** I'm an art teacher in Pennsylvania and a helpdesk volunteer for Tapped In. I'm a HUGE fan of Pam's!

**PiyananN:** Hi. I'm a student in school of Information and Learning Tech at MU.

**PiyananN:** I'd like to learn more about creating online environment.

**DebraJ:** I am a student at the University of Akron. I will be student teaching in the fall. I am middle school science and social studies

**PamB:** I'm a educational technology/library consultant from New York. I was a school librarian for 18 years before I did consulting full time.

**VickiMa:** I teach jr. high in Minden, Louisiana, and primarily work in a computer lab.

**CandyM:** I am Candy Murphy - technology staff development coordinator in Bossier Parish Schools, Louisiana

**AvrilT:** I'm Ocile. I am a teacher that is trying to learn to integrate technology. I teach High School moderate students.

**SaraLa:** I just got licensed as a K-8 teacher and now I'm in an Ed M program for international education

**AvrilT:** I am from Bossier City, LA

**VanessaSa:** I'm Vanessa Saunders a third grade teacher working to integrate technology. Is this where we participate in Pam Berger's Whyville?

**PamB:** Yep

**PamB:** You're in the right place!

**VanessaSa:** Great. I was searching around. This is my first activity of this kind.

**PamB:** Tonight we are going to explore an online environment called Whyville...

**PamB:** has anyone been to Whyville?

**SaraLa:** what is it?

**VickiMa:** Not me.

**DebraJ:** no what is it?

**VanessaSa:** No I haven't

**PiyananN:** Never heard before

**CandyM:** I have not

**AvrilT:** No

**PamB:** It's a free virtual environment for middle school kids...

**PamB:** to teach science.

**VanessaSa:** I read in the description that it supports inquiry based learning.

**SaraLa:** for the kids to teach science? or for a teacher to teach science to kids?

**PamB:** I have put together a webpage on Whyville for a presentation that I'm doing for an online conference..

**PiyananN:** is it <http://www.whyville.net>?

**PamB:** I'll give you the URL to that page...

**PamB:** and you can get some background on it...

**PamB:** and then visit the site for about 10 minutes...

**DebraJ:** sounds interesting!

**PamB:** and then come back here and we can talk about it...

**VickiMa:** Okay!

**SaraLa:** good idea

**PamB:** it's a very interesting place.

**VanessaSa:** I want to see the Seuss like buildings.

**PamB:** the webpage that I have up is for an online conference in Australia for school librarians. I have them comparing Whyville and Tapped In...

**PamB:** but the info on this page will be helpful for us tonight to look at Whyville.

**PamB:** here's the URL..

**PamB:** <http://www.infosearcher.com/webinquiry/whyville.htm>

**BJ:** click on the blue hyperlink to open a new page

**VanessaSa:** Can we just click on it and then close to come back to the discussion?

**BJ:** use ctrl as you click if you have a popup blocker

**PamB:** yes

**SaraLa:** I have to leave, but thank you for pointing out the resource. I will definitely look further into it later.

**VickiMa:** I have a hand icon, but the link doesn't work - should I just type it in?

**VickiMa:** Got it!

**DebraJ** left the room (signed off).

**DebraJ** joined the room.

**DebraJ:** I somehow got logged out while I was exploring the web site, but I loved it! It seems like an excellent way for kids to enjoy learning

**PiyananN:** Yes. It's very impressive. I also tried to create my face :D

**DebraJ:** They are playing a game and I love that they are able to own their learning by creating their own face, house, and room

**DebraJ:** It also helps students to feel like they belong

**PamB:** it's so constructivist! Some of the activities are just wonderful...

**DebraJ:** Like they are creating their own little community

**CandyM:** I got caught up in so much at the beginning that I didn't get to the real resources, etc.

**PamB:** It takes a long time to really explore the town

**PamB:** I find something new every time I go.

**VickiMa:** Yes, I will be awake most of tonight!

**DebraJ:** I am going back after this session!

**CandyM:** I do know that after teaching 8th grade for 25 years, middle schoolers would take this and run! and want to go there all the time even if they accidentally learned something, too!!

**VickiMa:** I teach jr. high, how well is the chat monitored?

**CandyM:** I wonder if our filtering system would even allow the chats to occur

**VickiMa:** I love the ability to earn and maintain a bank account.

**DebraJ:** It's a great approach for students today who are so interested in video games

**PamB:** the chat is monitored and the kids are taught to send a message to the town leaders if there is a problem

**VickiMa:** This is so new and exciting. My students will go bonkers.

**PamB:** It was designed for both boys and girls but middle school girls are in the majority

**DebraJ:** That could be a problem for people other than students trying to get to kids, so it's good that the children have somewhere to report a problem

**PamB:** read the newspaper articles on the side of the page to learn more about the girls issue.

**CandyM:** Is this something that they really have time to explore in a classroom setting or is this used best for out of class time?

**VickiMa:** I also like the fact that they are encouraged to conduct experiments outside of the environment, then report back.

**PamB:** the designers were surprised so many girls loved it...so is NSF.

**PamB:** probably out of class.

**DebraJ:** NSF?

**CandyM:** the fact that girls are in the minority really goes against the earlier studies about boys and science, doesn't it?

**CandyM:** I meant majority

**PamB:** they do activities until they figure it out and in the process learn science.

**DebraJ:** nice so far?

**VanessaSa:** I was very surprised by the 2/3 girl users. Science is always considered a boys subject.

**VickiMa:** They've found a way to interest our girls. Great!

**DebraJ:** I was surprised by that too.

**PamB:** Exactly!

**VickiMa:** Do all students contribute to the newspaper?

**VanessaSa:** I like the ideas for building community of learners, face, house, newspaper.

**PamB:** I think one reason is because there is not violence or shoot em up.

**DebraJ:** I think girls like designing, though. So the fact they can design their own face and home probably contributes as well

**PamB:** and no terrible consequences if you do not do an activity correctly...

**PamB:** you just try again.

**VickiMa:** Is there a way to make certain that science facts are not getting distorted? I mean do they have a way to check for accuracy...so to speak?

**DebraJ:** That sure does take the pressure off

**VickiMa:** Not as in a grade...but guide them in the right directions.

**PamB:** I think science teachers are writing the content.

**PamB:** I did another page comparing Whyville to Tapped In. Do you want to look at it?

**VickiMa:** Yes.

**PiyananN:** sure

**DebraJ:** sure

**PamB:** Maybe you can help me think of other features to compare the two. the url is

[http://www.infosearcher.com/webinquiry/learning\\_communities.htm](http://www.infosearcher.com/webinquiry/learning_communities.htm)

**DebraJ:** how do I look at it without logging out?

**PamB:** can you click on the blue url?

**PamB:** another window will open.

**DebraJ:** ok

**BJ:** Debra, go to the actions menu and highlight SEND TO PASTEBOARD

**BJ:** open a new browser window, copy the url from the pasteboard and paste to the new browser window.

**BJ:** o O ( or click on the blue hyperlink )

**VickiMa:** I'm new to Whyville and Tapped In. I appreciate the comparisons.

**VanessaSa:** Does the page talk about learning communities? Just checking to see if I'm in the right place.

**PamB:** yes. the question asks: how do learning communities support inquiry learning?

**CandyM:** The comparison table really shows the difference between student and adult uses, I think - I appreciate the succinct descriptions

**VickiMa:** I think I will explore Whyville with my students while gaining ideas to initiate a Tapped In environment for next year. This is amazing.

**PamB:** I think it interesting that both environments use real estate to help develop a sense of place and ownership....offices and houses.

**CandyM:** I will learn this best when I can spend my time browsing the Whyville site. I will probably go way into the night/morning hours if I am not careful.

**PamB** laughs

**VickiMa:** I agree - the ownership component will stimulate interest with my students.

**PamB:** That's exactly what happened to me

**PamB:** Kids in whyville pair up and help each other, just as we do in TI

**CandyM:** My mind is racing as to how I can incorporate Whyville into a workshop for our teachers

**VickiMa:** I'm showing my Science co-workers, tomorrow!

**VanessaSa:** The comparison table makes it easy to see how both of these communities support the users.

**PamB:** use my page if it's any help to you.

**VickiMa:** Thanks so much, Pam.

**CandyM:** oh, it will be of GREAT help - thanks

**PamB:** thanks. do you have any other ideas?

**VickiMa:** I need more time to review the site!

**VanessaSa:** I wish I had known about this site when looking for a good internet project for students that supports active learning.

**CandyM:** I need time with it - it will be so easy to sell to teachers because once their students see it, they really won't have a chance to not use it

**VickiMa:** That's true, Candy.

**VanessaSa:** I noticed a lot of girls in the graphics of Whyville. This could be another reason it is appealing for so many girls.

**PamB:** the whole idea of clams is novel. kids earn clams for doing things and learning.

**CandyM:** Vicki - maybe we can collaborate on a workshop - no need reinventing the wheel

**PamB:** then they spend it on new features for their faces and items for their houses.

**VickiMa:** It's so amazing the wealth of online resources. And free.

**DebraJ:** Well I got logged out again! But I viewed the site and it looks like both Tapped In and Whyville are similar, they both provide individuals with freedom in their learning. Whyville focusing on students and Tapped In on educators

**VickiMa:** Sure, Candy.

**PiyananN:** Just curious. after I create a house. Will it add into the website?

**VanessaSa:** So how would you use this in the classroom setting. How would this be integrated into the curriculum. Are the 10 week science units compatible with what teachers must teach?

**VickiMa:** I bet this could also be an awesome learning center for independent study.

**PamB:** before you build a house you have to buy bricks so you have to earn clams first by doing science activities AND then yes it will be part of the website.

**CandyM:** because kids will want to spend so much time on the site, an independent study will work just great

**PamB:** good question, how can we integrate this site into the curriculum, Any suggestions?

**VanessaSa:** It looks like students also learn a lot of economic principles while participating in the activities.

**PiyananN:** Yes. Very good idea for independent study and for those students who have problem understand subjects from textbooks

**VickiMa:** That's good. Keeps students focused on the science - having to participate for clams.

**PamB:** there is also social studies...

**CandyM:** and we have some teachers who like to recommend activities for students/parents over the summer, too

**VickiMa:** SS? Where, where?

**PamB:** I joined a trip to go around the world...

**VickiMa:** That's a great idea, Candy.

**DebraJ:** That sounds like so much fun. I love that they have to "earn" bricks in order to build the house. It gives them a sense of responsibility for the things they earn

**PamB:** and my task is to identify a location by the description and event and put the 5 locations in order of the date of the event...which I have to research.

**VickiMa:** Do they supply links to online resources?

**VanessaSa:** I wonder if teachers can have students join, participate in a particular game/activity that may be related to their curriculum and have them reflect and share their experience, learning, etc.

**DebraJ:** You mentioned something about this being an Australian web site. So can student communicate with others from other countries?

**DebraJ:** It could be like a pen pal game as well?

**PamB:** my first clue is French-speaking city where the national currency is the dollar. The event is: This country's last legal ties with a former empire were dissolved

**PamB:** The webpage with the info about Whyville is one that I created. It has nothing to do with Whyville...

**PamB:** I'm a presenter at an online conference that is starting in two weeks and this is part of my presentation. The conference is being run by the Australian Association of School librarians.

**PamB:** it was just a good way to look at whyville this evening...sort of killing two birds with one stone.

**DebraJ:** So the site can not be accessed from the states

**VanessaSa:** How long will the conference participants be online? Is there a set time for participating and did they pay for this conference?

**PamB:** <http://www.asla.org.au/onlinecon.htm> this is the conference site. It will answer all your questions

**VanessaSa:** Thanks.

**VickiMa:** What is the link for the SS site?

**PamB:** the conference runs for about two months, it costs about \$100 or less. It has five strands and about 25 papers from people in five different countries.

**VanessaSa:** I noticed the registration fees are payable in Australian \$ only.

**PamB:** the social studies is an activity in Whyville.

**PiyananN:** In Whyville, does a free member have a same feature as a paid member?

**VickiMa:** OH

**PamB:** Whyville is free but

**VickiMa:** Pam, I appreciate you sharing this with me. Thank you, again.

**PamB:** you can pay a little to get automatic access when you log in.

**PamB:** It's used by kids a lot between 3pm and 10 pm and sometimes it's difficult to get in during that time.

**PiyananN:** ok.. I c...

**PamB:** You're welcome. this has been fun. I hope to see you next month.

**CandyM:** thanks - it is time to begin exploring

**DebraJ:** Thanks Pam, this has been fun!

**PiyananN:** Thanks a lot.. This is a really good resource

**PamB:** good night!

**VickiMa:** Night!

**PiyananN:** Have a great night all :D

**VanessaSa:** Good bye to all.

**DebraJ:** bye everyone!

**PiyananN:** wave to all

**PamB** waves to everyone