Virtual Learning Environment: **Whyville**

**Our Reflections**

The VLE that Susan and I chose to review was Whyville. Whyville is a virtual reality world with educational games geared towards pre-teens and teens (according to the description). The website is somewhat user friendly. Constructing an avatar was very simple and easy. Whyville has limited but appropriate head and shoulder avatars. Although the avatars are not sophisticated, they do provide much needed presence in the VLE. The Navigation through Whyville was not complicated and very easy to maneuver. Whyville is colorful, but we felt it was childish. We would have thought it was for young elementary students, but its "About" page actually says it is for pre-teens and teens. Teens seem too old for this VLE. Also, what we feel is the age level to play some of the games seems too young for the information that is presented within those games. We are not sure if a fourth grader is ready for the career information, but a seventh+ grader is. We think the graphics might be a turn-off for the older students.

One positive about Whyville is that before anyone could chat they have to obtain a chat license. In order to get a chat license you have to pass a Q & A about Internet and chat safety. Not only did it review appropriate and inappropriate conversation, but they also went over what to do if the student encounters the inappropriate conversion.

It will be extremely hard for us to talk about how we would use this in our class because we were never able to obtain the teacher’s permissions. We both signed up and four days later are still waiting on the verification process to take place. My partner found some reviews that revealed that there were several complaints about inappropriateness and even more disturbing suggestions that the creators may have abandoned the site. These were very concerning issues for us that would make us very skeptical about using this site with our students.

**Scenario**

Even though, overall, we are not endorsing Whyville because of our previously stated concerns below is a scenario of how it could be used in class.

Part of our technology class requirement for 8th grade is career assessment. There is an ACT building in Whyville that focuses specifically on that (more information is provided in our Jing tutorial). We would use Whyville and the ACT building to give students a real-life look at possible career paths. After registering and introducing the students to Whyville, we would instruct them to go to the ACT Career Club via the bus dropdown menu or the map overview. The students can then play the game to explore different careers. We would use this as a pre-activity to help them narrow down a career that they would choose to research for their final project. The final project would, of course, be more in-depth about the career of their choice.
Within Whyville’s Career Center in this “Club,” there are forums for discussion. Depending on the permissions we might receive as teachers, we could create a discussion board for our class to post what they have learned about careers and to reply to their classmates. We could also require that they explore the link to act.org and use the information they find in their final project. Due to some of our concerns and issues we would have to monitor the students’ activities very closely.

[Whyville Jing tutorial Part I](#)

[Whyville Jing Tutorial Part II](#)