

Title of Session: K-20 Science Resources - Whyville

Moderator: Jeff Cooper

Guest Speaker: Jennifer Sun

Title of File: 20040907scik20whyville

Date: September 7, 2004

Room: Science Resources Group Room

GailH waves to Jen.

DavidWe joined the room.

JenniferYS: Oh good people are starting to show up

JeffC: Glad you're here. I'd like to introduce you to Gail Hoskins from the Eisenhower National Clearinghouse.

DavidWe waves to Jennifer

DavidWe: Hi, Jennifer

JenniferYS: Hi!

GailH: Hello Jennifer.

JenniferYS: How do I do this cool wave thing?

JeffC: Gail, in advance of the meeting, could you show Jen that link you have for Whyville at ENC?

JeffC: Jen... to wave... type a colon followed by wave :waves

JeffC waves

JenniferYS wave

JenniferYS: thanks

JenniferYS: Gail, are you the one who ran a workshop on Whyville already?

GailH: We at ENC www.enc.org have thousands of web sites cataloged and those records searchable on our site. The record for Whyville (which may need updating after I learn more tonight) is <http://www.enc.org/resources/records/full/0,1240,026115,00.shtm>

GailH: No I think that was Pam Berger.

JenniferYS: oh that's right.

BJ Nods

JenniferYS: Someone on our team found the transcript to that meeting.

JenniferYS: We were very very pleased to see it.

JenniferYS: So I guess many of you already know about Whyville!

GailH: Here is one of hundreds of places on the ENC site where teachers would find out about Whyville: http://www.enc.org/resources/browse/0,,0-101-49-258_1_3-1-1,00.shtm

GailH . o O (No, I am here to learn about Whyville from one who really knows it!)

JenniferYS: I hope I don't disappoint!

JenniferYS: How many people usually show up to these meetings?

JeffC: Personally... I'd like to see more of the movers and shakers from science (and math) sites start to collaborate (here obviously!)... since you are all doing such great work... a number of symbiotic relationships should develop.

JeffC: Usually only a handful Jen... I'm hoping on a dozen or so for today's meeting. I'm going to send out a reminder right now for those who are online (but not necessarily at Tapped In).

JenniferYS: I made 12 guest accounts on whyville. I hope that will be enough

GailH raises her hand to be first in line.

JenniferYS: how did you do that?

JeffC: That will be just fine Jen.

GailH: Raise my hand?

GailH: type exactly what you see :raises my hand (that was a colon in front there of word raises.

JenniferYS: It says, "**GailH** raises her hand to be first in line" Is it a queue?

GailH: Try it. You are among friends.

JenniferYS: So if I do :raises my hand will I be second in line?

JenniferYS raises my hand

GailH claps and jumps up and down!

JenniferYS claps

JenniferYS: I see, it's not a queue system. You just use a colon to indicate all actions

GailH: maybe put that exclamation point afterwards.

GailH: And to think (like in the comics.

GailH: Type /th this is fun.

GailH . o O (this is fun.)

JenniferYS . o O (this is fun)

JeffC: OK people... let's get started!

GailH . o O (thought that we had....)

JenniferYS: okay!

JeffC: Well... yes and no... lol...

GailH will wait quietly for the speaker to be introduced.

JeffC: It's my pleasure and privilege that we have Jen Sun from Whyville here today...

lol Gail... Whyville is imho the most dynamic interactive website for students in Science.

Jen will be giving us a tour shortly... and let's have everyone else give brief intros.

JenniferYS: thanks, Jeff.

JenniferYS: Gail?

GailH: I am Gail Hoskins in Columbus Ohio with Eisenhower National Clearinghouse ENC Online www.enc.org. I am a former high school math teacher and do K-12 math and science for ENC.

JenniferYS: Cool.. what do you do at ENC?

DavidWe: I'm David Weksler. I help teachers learn more about technology for their teaching and learning. I used to work with the Math Forum - <http://mathforum.org>

GailH: I am outreach coordinator. My job is to talk (in all meanings of that word) about ENC to K-12 math and science teachers. I do presentations, conferences, etc.

GailH: David helps math (and other) teachers now!

JenniferYS: Great. so you guys are all going to be great mouthpieces for Whyville!

GailH . o O (we do know how to talk.)

DavidWe will be giving a presentation at the New Jersey math teachers' conference on 15 October

DavidWe wonders if Gail or someone from ENC goes to the AMTNJ meeting

GailH will be at the National Middle School Association event in Minneapolis in early November.

MichaelHo joined the room.

DavidWe waves to Michael

GailH: We have someone else doing stuff at AMTNJ (sort of for us).

DavidWe: Hi, Michael

MichaelHo: Good Afternoon!

JenniferYS: hi!

DavidWe will ask Gail for more handouts later on

DavidWe: Evening on the east coast, Michael

GailH will send to David.

MichaelHo: ;right David

DavidWe will tell Gail how many pounds of handouts he needs

DavidWe grins at Gail

GailH grins and sends more boxes that David expects.

JenniferYS: you guys all seem to know each other pretty well, huh?

GailH: Yes, but tell us about Whyville please!

DavidWe: We're kinda the three (or more) musketeers, Jennifer

JeffC: I'm going to recommend for this session that people detach their chat window, and tile it with a main browser window (separate from Tapped In), which will be used for the tour of Whyville. Here is an example of what I'm talking about.

<http://pic8.picturetrail.com/VOL250/1454969/2773851/66118048.jpg>

JeffC: If you click on the link, you'll see how I have detached and resized my window, as well as annexing it to the Whyville homepage (after login)... we'll all be going there shortly.

JenniferYS: So, if I may, I'd like to direct you all to go to <http://www.whyville.net> in your other browser.

JeffC: And for those who aren't currently members, Jen has created guest teacher accounts.

JenniferYS: Yes, I thought I'd first give a little background while we look at the pretty front island page of Whyville.

JeffC: Could you please tell those here who need them, the guest login and passwords? Ah... ok... I don't want to rush you!

JeffC: Absolutely

JenniferYS: You can also mouse over and click on some of the images here to see some animated intro clips.

JeffC hands the mike over to Jen and shuts up.

JenniferYS: Whyville has been online since 1999 as a virtual learning community for children.

JenniferYS: In particular, we were interested in creating a place they cared about, a place they would call their own.

JenniferYS: Many of the founders of Whyville came from a background of educational research.

JenniferYS: We wanted the science activities to be inquiry-based.

JenniferYS: In general, we wanted the entire environment to be learner centered.

JenniferYS: And so we made a virtual town where kids can become citizens. They invest their time and energy in creating their personas, their homes.

JenniferYS: They play learning games to build up their salaries. They start businesses. They vote. They write for the town newspaper.

JenniferYS: In short they have a lot of fun.

JenniferYS: Does anyone have any questions so far?

MichaelHo: No..not so far.

GailH: No, and I like your pace and content. Go for it!

JenniferYS: Okay, ready to dive in?

DavidWe nods

MichaelHo: Yep

GailH waits for login info.

JenniferYS: I've created a series of guest accounts.

JenniferYS: They are: tourist1, tourist2, tourist3, etc. to 12.

JenniferYS: The passwords are all the same: tappedin

DavidWe chooses 12

JenniferYS: **GailH**, you were in line for the first one: tourist1

MichaelHo: I took tourist10!

JenniferYS: Yes, sure, just grab a username and announce!

DavidWe . o O (Go! or "Enter as guest"?)

GailH: I am there.

MichaelHo: In

JeffC is already logged in and unfortunately lost all of his face stuff!

DavidWe smiles at Jeff

JenniferYS: Once you have a username, click on the island that says "Sign In" , type in your username and password, then click "GO", DON'T click "ENTER AS GUEST"!!

DavidWe: Thanks, Jennifer

DavidWe: oops, trying to quickly

DavidWe: I'm waiting for the countdown

JenniferYS: Let me know when you are in. You should see a bus on your left, and a page we call the "Greeting Page" on the right.

JeffC: One of the reasons Jen wants you to login is that you will have chat privileges. Guests do *not* have chat privileges, nor do members until after they've been approved by parents, and have passed a test and gone through a waiting period.

JenniferYS: Yes, there is an annoying 30-second wait if you mess up.

GailH wants to earn clams.

DavidWe nods and suffers through it

JeffC: They have a good set of controls there for students who behave inappropriately.

MichaelHo Michael is with Gail on that

JeffC . o O (and teachers too... so watch out David!)

GailH: I read about that earlier today prepping for this-- silence and 911, etc.

JenniferYS: Wow. You prepped for this; I'm scared!

DavidWe: Pardon me for asking this, but Jennifer, where are you or with who do you work?

JenniferYS: We work out of Pasadena. The company that owns Whyville is Numedeon, Inc.

DavidWe looks over his shoulder for whatever Jeff was warning him about.

DavidWe thanks Jennifer for that information

JenniferYS: That's Pasadena, CA.

DavidWe: Rose Bowl

JenniferYS: yep

DavidWe: Norton Simon museum

JenniferYS: I guess you know Pasadena!

JeffC: OK... who isn't "at the bus" yet?

JenniferYS: Caltech.

DavidWe grins

DavidWe: Yeah, that tech school, too!

DavidWe grins

JenniferYS: We are a caltech start-up.

DavidWe: David Baltimore is the president of CalTech, yes?

JenniferYS: Yes!

DavidWe . o O (Swarthmore class of 1960 and Nobel Prize winner)

JenniferYS: actually I think he is the provost

DavidWe will check

JenniferYS: okay, is everyone here?

JeffC: yes

MichaelHo: Yes

DavidWe nods

JenniferYS: The greeting page is here to help orient you a bit

JenniferYS: There are suggested activities, a calendar about the weeks' events

JeffC: Are you there yet Gail?

JenniferYS: Messages from city hall, programming news, random Whyville tidbits.

GailH: I am here and have been looking around. How to get back to main page?

JenniferYS: do you mean the island page you saw before?

GailH: please.

JenniferYS: That you only see when you are not logged in.

GailH: no not that

JenniferYS: If you want Whyville Square, here we go...

GailH: the one that I got to after I logged in.

JenniferYS: Oh. don't worry, we're leaving there now.

JenniferYS: Check out the Destination menu on your bus.

MichaelHo: Yes..see it

JenniferYS: Pull down to see the many places you can visit

GailH: wow

DavidWe: Are we heading for any particular destination?

JenniferYS: It's alphabetical. I'll meet you all in "Whyville Square".

DavidWe nods

MichaelHo: Big Place that is!

GailH: This is really impressive.

MichaelHo: Ok..there.

DavidWe: Did you work at Caltech, Jennifer?

JenniferYS: Once you are in the Square, you should see heads floating in.

GailH: Jen, you are cute with that red hat!

JenniferYS: Click anywhere on the screen that doesn't trigger a bubble note to move there.

MichaelHo: Yes...I do.

GailH: So I know which I am.

DavidWe: Cool, Jennifer

JenniferYS: Are your heads making trails behind them?

JenniferYS: Mine is, I think my browser is running out of memory...shoot

JeffC: Lynee seems to know you

JenniferYS: Oh well.

DavidWe: May I ask a question, Jennifer?

SusanR joined the room.

DavidWe waves to Sue

DavidWe: Hi, Sue

JenniferYS: As some of you have discovered, you just type to start talking in Whyville.

SusanR: Hi David

DavidWe smiles

JenniferYS: Yes, question, David?

DavidWe: What's the engine behind this? What's the software that's driving the chat?

JenniferYS: We run on java

DavidWe nods

JeffC: Hi Sue! Jen... could you please give her a tourist name.... we're at Whyville Sue ...

<http://www.whyville.net>

DavidWe: Sue, do you want to catch up with us

GailH: My me cannot talk. What am I doing wrong?

DavidWe: Take a number between tourist1 and tourist 12 - I'm 12

JenniferYS: Yes, I think tourist8 has not been taken.

DavidWe: Click first, Gail. Then type

GailH: I am 1

JenniferYS: the password is tappedin

SusanR: Thanks, I will just audit.

DavidWe: It's fun to see, Sue

GailH: where?

DavidWe: Click on the image

SusanR: ok

DavidWe: click once, that's what I've been doing and then immediately typing

JeffC: How do I "wear" the stuff that I just bought?

DavidWe slows down

DavidWe wonders how Gail is doing

SusanR: tourist9

DavidWe will wait to ask Jennifer another question

DavidWe . o O (password: tappedin)

JenniferYS: her Q?

JenniferYS: another Q?

DavidWe: What's the goal here, if I may be blunt?

DavidWe bows respectfully to Jennifer

JenniferYS: The goal is to create an environment that is engaging for kids.

DavidWe nods

DavidWe: And then that leads to...?

JenniferYS: In a way that is educational and fosters creativity and interaction.

DavidWe nods

JeffC: You haven't begun to see the cool stuff yet Dave...

DavidWe: Like a real classroom?

JenniferYS: Given that, then we believe we can start sticking all sorts of educational activities in.

DavidWe understands that Jeff is ahead

GailH: I scrolled right and have a world to myself.

DavidWe . o O (for example?)

JenniferYS: For example, let's look at one.

DavidWe nods

JenniferYS: I'll meet you in the Spin Lab.

DavidWe nods

DavidWe: Sounds good

JenniferYS: Come inside the lab, rather than the geek speak lounge

JeffC encourages everyone to go to the Spin Lab now.

DavidWe is there

GailH: I am spinning a ballet kind of person.

JenniferYS: My connection is really slow today.

DavidWe nods

JenniferYS: So, here we have a couple of activities that allow you to explore concepts in angular momentum.

JeffC: Where would you like us in the Spin Lab Jen?

DavidWe: Happens when you are trying to do a demonstration - law #5 of Internet presentations

JenniferYS: You can click on the skater doll to try that simulation.

GailH: opps I fell down b/c I spun with my ankles crossed. Bummer.

JeffC: For those who aren't in the spinlab: 1) Click the "Destination" drop down menu 2) Click the Spin lab 3) Enter the Spin Lab

JenniferYS: You can also click on the lab manual to get a sense of the process we try to facilitate.

JenniferYS: There is some background reading materials

JenniferYS: Based on a question that was asked by a kid, "How do skaters get spinning so fast?"

DavidWe: Jennifer this is aimed at elementary students or...?

JenniferYS: Our users are 9-14.

DavidWe nods

DavidWe: Local schools near Pasadena?

JenniferYS: We encourage kids to watch some skating competition, for example, and observe.

JenniferYS: Then to come on here and test out their observations using the simulation.

JenniferYS: The point is that we try to encourage more observation, testing, and making conclusions, rather than just reading about science.

GailH: 9-14 is years, not grade level right. I know we need to correct our info on ENC about Whyville about that.

JenniferYS: No, we are really an afterschool phenomenon.

JenniferYS: Yes, 9-14 years old.

DavidWe: Hours of 3-6pm

GailH: I learned how to spin pretty well.

JenniferYS: So, the sweet spot is middle school, with some kids younger and some older.

DavidWe nods

JenniferYS: Yes, we see usage spike as soon as school goes out on the east coast.

JenniferYS: We try to steer away from multiple choice.

DavidWe smiles

JenniferYS: Our games are mostly designed based on mathematically correct simulations.

JeffC: Anybody else spinning stuff?

JenniferYS: Let me show you another activity.

JenniferYS: Unless you want to stay here more?

GailH waits to hear.

JeffC: BTW... there are cheat codes on the net that kids have set up to "help" people how to spin the fruit can, etc.

JenniferYS: Yes, there are entire sites devoted to how to cheat on Whyville.

JeffC: In other words... the kids think enough about the site to figure out how to cheat at it.

GailH: Like what is one?

JenniferYS: Mostly we make it so that if you can tell people how to do the cheat, you must've learned something.

DavidWe: Are there sites for cheat codes for most games, though?

JenniferYS: Yes, most games that a big enough community cares about.

JeffC: <http://www.gamefaqs.com/computer/online/game/34142.html>

DavidWe smiles

JenniferYS: Check out www.whyville.tk -- we love these kids...well at least they are a riot.

MichaelHo: What have you learned if you figure out how to cheat though? Science, or manipulation of a code?

JeffC: Here's an anti-cheat site: <http://d.whyville.net/smmk/whytimes/article?id=3247>

DavidWe . o O (the forces and good and evil)

JenniferYS: It's best that you don't cheat, but it's hard to prevent. When we learn about it, we punish the kids.

GailH: Those people that come in briefly and I can't really read it-- does it say that they cannot talk for some amount of time?

JeffC: I think one of the things this demonstrates is that kids will go both ways, and the fact that there is an anti-cheat site shows that kids are involved.

JenniferYS: Yes, you can't chat until you've come to Whyville for 5 days.

MichaelHo: If I figure out how to cheat in a real laboratory..that is, get it over very quickly, or skip some steps...I haven't learned more about the science.

MichaelHo: Just playing the devil's advocate from a scientists perspective.

JenniferYS: We've tried to make our games harder to cheat since we found that people were building so many cheat sites.

GailH: But we can, right-- b/c you gave us that power. So kids coming here don't have this first experience the same as we do. Can they spin stuff?

JenniferYS: Yes, you can play the games, just not talk for 5 days.

JenniferYS: Let me show you another game. It's harder to cheat at.

DavidWe wonders how coming to spin lab compares with sitting on a rotating chair and holding a gyroscope

GailH: I went in the Geek Speak room -- are all of the "fancy faces" real kids online now?

DavidWe smiles

JenniferYS: Look for WASA on your bus destination menu

JenniferYS: Yes, the kids are on line and yes they do have fancy faces!

JenniferYS: Then from WASA, click on the Ion Engine Office.

DavidWe: okay

JenniferYS: in the ion engine roll to the far right, and click on the doorway that glows a dark blue

DavidWe . o O (Charge Simulator?)

JenniferYS: Yes, charge simulator

DavidWe: thanks

JenniferYS: Here, you have to place charges to direct the test charges into the goal.

JenniferYS: You start off easy, but harder levels have obstacles.

JenniferYS: The test charge is positive.

GailH: I can't find the charges.

JeffC: tourist 10 is in the box

JenniferYS: This simulation allows you to explore how electric charges behave around one another.

JeffC: there are three of us in the room... tourist ten needs to play.

JenniferYS: yes, when someone is in the box, this person is controlling the game. You can watch and comment and learn from one another.

JenniferYS: If you want to play by yourself, you go to a different room (see bottom)

GailH: should I be able to see charges.

DavidWe is a bit confused

JenniferYS: If whoever is in control (in the box) plays, then you should see the charges he/she places.

JenniferYS: Go to a different room to look for an empty one so you can play yourself.

DavidWe: What do the charges look like when they are placed?

JenniferYS: They are blue or red dots depending on the charge.

DavidWe: okay

JenniferYS: Maybe I should've sent you guys to the tutorial first. Sorry.

JenniferYS: If you want, back out to the office that you were in just now.

DavidWe: I'm sorry for not taking a look earlier, Jennifer

JenniferYS: The girl scientist is holding the "tutorial" on her lap.

JeffC: oh... missed it by that much

DavidWe smiles

DavidWe: I see three faces, one is in the orange box area and the man with the beard

JenniferYS: I can tell you guys are playing...good.

GailH: I found out how to launch and I think I know what I am shooting at.

DavidWe: Something is getting shot from the top left of the blue part of the screen

JeffC: right... you need to select the right number of ions

JenniferYS: The guy with the beard is supposed to tell you some instructions and help you out. He is our MC.

GailH: I am in the office now

JenniferYS: Click on the laptop on the girl scientist for a tutorial.

DavidWe nods

JeffC: who is tourist 12?

DavidWe doesn't see (I'm 12)

DavidWe ...a girl scientist with a laptop

JenniferYS: So, I wanted to show you this game because of two things:

GailH: The bearded guy is with the launcher I think.

JenniferYS: 1. we think it's neat when you can watch each other play.

DavidWe: My refresh of windows is getting slower as I flip back and forth between Whyville and TappedIn

JeffC: ... and work together.

JenniferYS: Yes, I think there is something incompatible about running the both. I'm not able to see Whyville at all.

GailH: I would have been lost in those places though without the Tapped In window to ask you guys stuff.

JenniferYS: and 2. this is a game that is hard to cheat at.

JeffC nods

JeffC: Jennifer... I'm willing to let this run overtime as long as you're willing to stay and discuss things.

GailH . o O (we need to try something easier next time.)

JeffC: I just want to know how to wear the face parts I bought!

DavidWe needs to get his nephew Alex, who is 10, to help him

GailH: ;wants to find out where everyone is. I am lonely in Whyville.

DavidWe thinks Jennifer did a great job handling all of our questions

JeffC: Let's meet at Grandmas

DavidWe will join Gail

JenniferYS: I'd love to come back to answer questions.

JenniferYS: But I'm running out of time. My babysitter just left...

JeffC: OK Jen... thank you very much for giving us a hands-on demo.

JeffC: I'd love to have you back at your convenience.

JenniferYS: I suggest that you guys go around in Whyville a bit and come back with questions?

JeffC: I'm still trying to find out how to wear my face parts that I bought

GailH: This has been very helpful. Can I exchange email with you sometime about possible collaboration between Whyville and enc. I am <mailto:ghoskins@enc.org> if you wish to get in touch.

JenniferYS: I was going to go over a lot of other stuff: our economy, our newspaper, our political system, our multiplayer games like checkers, etc.

JenniferYS: Reach me any time at jen@whyville.net

JeffC: Everytime I played checkers the kid would leave when they were losing!

GailH . o O (This is typical of events at Tapped In. Things go slower than you expect sometimes.)

GailH: Great job Jen, although I still feel lost. Will our logins work for while.

JenniferYS: Your log ins will work. though I recommend that you make your own account and go through the normal process to see what it's like.

JeffC: Definitely set up your own account there.

JenniferYS: Jeff, I'd be happy to coordinate to come back for another session. I don't feel like this is nearly finished!

GailH: Do you have data on positive outcomes of students--even anecdotal -- from this ?

JeffC: Not by a long shot... it's just barely started, but I think that people have started to get an excellent intro to Whyville.

JenniferYS: yes, we have lots of anecdotal stuff.

JenniferYS: There's also a research study funded by NSF.

JenniferYS: Email me, I can send you the NSF report.

GailH: Will do.

JeffC: Jen... do I have to be in a particular room to get my face parts "worn"?

JenniferYS: We are now working with University Elementary School to bring Whyville into the classroom and have it supplement an existing curriculum.

GailH: o O (that Jeff -- at least he has face parts. I feel left behind!)

JenniferYS: You need to click on your face on the bus to "pick your nose"

JenniferYS: Please, feel free to email me with any questions!

JenniferYS: jen@whyville.net

GailH: I am positive that kids would be far less frustrated than we are.

DavidWe agrees with Gail and needs a handy 10 year old

GailH: I like it. I just can't do it right, yet.

JenniferYS: It's less hard if you go through the process properly.

JenniferYS: There is an intro, a tour for newbies, etc.

JenniferYS: there's a newbie center with helpers.

DavidWe: That sounds like a good intro

GailH: Is there a chat room like this, or do you just chat where you are.

JenniferYS: Yes, a crash course like this is harder.

DavidWe: Any sort of feedback from teachers?

JenniferYS: Send me your emails. I'll send you out a PDF tour guide.

MichaelHo: Good question Gail..I was wondering that. It would be difficult to have real dialogue in the environment.

JenniferYS: Yes, we have lots of good responses. Although use in classroom is a bit hard -- kind of disruptive.

GailH: But we are not 9-14 either.\

JeffC: Even though we're not 9-14, we still might be able to figure it out.

DavidWe: Do you demo this at science education meetings, Jen?

GailH: Will you be at NSTA in Dallas?

JenniferYS: We've been to NSTA and CSTA and FETC before.

JenniferYS: I don't know yet if we'll be at NSTA this year.

JenniferYS: Formal ed is not our big push.

GailH: How about the middle school conference NMSA in November-- that is your age target, right?

JenniferYS: yes, middle school would really be a good idea.

JenniferYS: Well thanks everyone for being open-minded!

GailH: Presentations there are w/o Internet though, so a challenge. Hard to talk about, when can't show

MichaelHo: Thank you Jennifer

JenniferYS: I've got to go. We'll have to meet back here again and discuss some more.

GailH: You have done great job. Thanks so much.

DavidWe: Take care, Jennifer

JenniferYS: thanks!

DavidWe: Thank you for the demonstration

DavidWe: We'll practice!

GailH: Thanks for arranging this Jeff.

DavidWe: Well done, Mr. Cooper

JeffC: Thanks for coming... and thanks to Jen!

JeffC is still looking for a face

DavidWe likes Jeff's face

GailH will take her face back to her office and head home.

GailH: Good night all.

JeffC: gnite Gail