Computers for Youth
We Bring Learning Home

How does software support learning in the home? Hear for yourself!

Situation: This is a transcript of a conversation between an 11 year old girl (AC) in CFY's program and her mother (Mom). They are playing Real Lives™, a computer-based life simulation and the winner of CFY's 2006 Family Learning Software Award.

For her character in the simulation, the child chooses to be a boy who lives in Barbados, the country in which her mother grew up. The child and her mother then proceed to play the game. (See final page for example screen from Real Lives™.)

A CFY staff member (**KT**), set AC and her mother up on the computer. For the most part, **KT** is out of the room during their conversation.

AC: Now I am going to have to pick a job because I am getting older. You should help me mommy.

Mom: Go down and let's see what the choices are. Go down, wait! That's it, there are no more choices? OK so go back and pick the one that YOU want. You have to hold it and bring it down.

AC: Which one should I pick?

Mom: OK, so what happened to doctor? Or journalist or writer? Umm let's see, domestic helper. Wow!

AC: This is a point were I have to really sit down and think about which one I want to be.

Mom: Right! and I guess it is supposed to go together with your interest. Um! Where did we see doctor, that sounds very good.

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AC: I know right, I picked that before the last time I was in Barbados. Before that last time I was a nurse in school, a school nurse.

Mom: So where is that choice on here?

AC: No, that is not here anymore, because when you pick a country, there is a few different jobs.

Mom: OK

AC: Usually they have um, you can't pick...

Mom: How about travel attendant, for now, since you are having such a hard time...or fashion model?

AC: OH! Fashion model, yeah! that is good for me.

Mom: OK, go ahead and finish. What are you picking now?

AC: Cause I could not find another job right now. (reading) You are..

Mom: You just picked fashion model, Mari

AC: I know.

Mom: But why did you say you that you did not find a job, if you found a job as a fashion model?

AC: No, I cannot find another one!

Mom: Oh, you are being urged to find a job so you need to find a second one, and if the second choice that we had from fashion model...

AC: Doctor

Mom: had nurse, had nurse, no click on here...click on it.

All: (reading) Working as a nurse is typically a women's job.

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Mom: REALLY! Typically, yes it is, (Reading) they will not accept a male. Would you like to find another job? I keep on forgetting that your character is a male.

AC: I know right.

Mom: So go to doctor…

AC: Go to doctor or...

Mom: or scientist or something. Doctor OK. (Reading) You need a post grad degree to work as a doctor. Would you like to find another job? Yes! You definitely need a post degree, yeah , definitely need to get a degree for that. Just click Mari, you are going too fast, you are not looking at the choices so go back, go back and pick that and go! Wow, so basically all your choices, you need a college degree for the really good jobs and for the jobs like domestic housewife and stuff like that you do not need a college degree, so that's a strong message! Lets see here, hmm, I know nurse you need some kind of ...

AC: I can't be a nurse because I am a male.

Mom: Listen, they have male nurses because I work with male nurses everyday!

AC: Well, they don't let you do it on this computer. (laughs)

Mom: How about college professor?

AC: OK, professor sounds like a good....

Mom: You need a post…(laughs) you need a post degree, so this is really, you really need to really pay attention to this and the message it is saying.

AC: I have to age a year, and then when it comes up you wanna apply for um..

Mom: OK lets do this, this seems rather simple, you need a college degree, REALLY! Wow that's new. I did not know you need a college degree to be a librarian.

AC: OK, so click that and move over.

Mom: So Mari, just about everything you need a college degree here.

AC: I know, I learned a lot now. (laughs)

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Mom: Yeah...Yeah

AC: That is why I like this program because…..

Mom: 'cause you know what, odd temporary jobs. They can't tell me that I need a college degree (reading) while you are qualified to work as temporary, you do not get a job, would you like to find another job? My goodness...

AC: what's wrong with me?

Mom: This is really real life because, you know what? That happens out there Mari, it happens, it happens.

AC: And there was a time where my family...

Mom: Let's try this one and see.

AC: Mom, you know, there was a time where I played *Real Lives* and my family was poor and I had to choose to rob a bank so I could get money for my family or my family would probably die.

Mom: Um OK.

AC: And I robbed a store, and my family survived.

Mom: (reading) You meet a new girl named Brenda Tucker, whom you are attracted to. Would you like to get involved romantically? The first time you said yes, it said she was not interested. So we are going to say no. (reading) It's time for you to earn some money (laughs) please look for a job. Again, Oh!

Mom: OK. Mari ,all of these things you need some kind of secondary education, you know you really do, you need to be in college basically.

KT: I like this. Mom is taking over the mouse a little bit…

Mom; Oh sor....

KT: No, No, No. it's good, you're interacting.

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(laughs)

Mom: Nurse and you need a certified nursing...

AC: I am a MALE!

Mom: Oh, that's right!

AC: Oh my goodness!

KT: You can be a nurse and be male.

Mom: but they are rejecting us, they are saying that's typically not...

KT: Oh, in Barbados! Right!

Mom: Oh right! You know what? You are limited in, really limited ...

AC: You should know mom.

Mom: How about sales person? you don't need a degree...

KT: Amari, why did you choose to be a male?

AC: Oh! It just came up, I picked country…

KT: Um Hmm!

AC: and right after that it just went to…

Mom: and you could have changed it to female, you know?, because I think it would have been a bit easier. (Laughs)

AC: want to change it? I am glad I am female.

KT: You know what though, save this life. OK? So we have this one.

Mom: how do you save it?

KT: OK cancel, then go to "save," to "life," and then go to "save," "save as," and then

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you, “Amari” or something so I know it's you and your mom. And then you can make a new one as a girl. She [AC] always plays girl. I've never seen her play boy before.

(Mom and KT Laugh)

Mom: OK, you want to find another country, we don't have to be in Barbados.

AC: No, I want to be in Barbados, I just want to be a female, please! OK, I should be my name , that's surname, is just like...

All: Last name.

Mom: OK Mary, Mary is a female, or you can choose another one, go down.

AC: There's Mary.

Mom: You are going to fast, Mari.

AC: (Laughs) Andrea Campbell, Andrea Parker.

Mom: Whatever, Mari. Andrea Carter, how about Carter?

AC: Oh, I didn't even see that. Yay! all right.

Mom: OH wait not Spightsou, ah I like St. James, or Bridgetown, either one. It went back to Mary Smith.

AC: I already clicked it. (Mumbles)

Mom: Father is Sean, Hmmm, I don't think I would pick a Sean. St. James Barbados, I love St. James.

AC: OK now lets age...

Mom: Look how small Barbados is on the whole map. It's like a tiny little dot, it is really very small. It only has 11 parishes, which is like Boroughs here, like you would say Bronx, Manhattan and Queens. It’s like 11 of those and St. James is one of them.

AC: (reading) Your sister Betty has Epilepsy.

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Mom: what is Epilepsy?

AC: Let's learn more. Epilepsy is...

Mom: It's a seizure. It's the nerve cells, is misfiring in the brain and it causes you to have all these different jerks and sensations.

AC: Oh, like that.

Mom: Yeah, combustionis.

AC: Oh, that's happened to me before.

Mom: No it has not.

AC: No, not in real life. You have Measles. Wow!

Mom: OH NO!

AC: (reading) Measles is a contagious disease...

AC & Mom (reading together): …that is found throughout the world. It is caused by a virus and is spread by breathing in the virus after someone sneezes, coughs, or talks.

Mom: (reading) Symptoms include high fever, rash, runny nose, watery eyes and coughing. Approximately one million people die from measles due to complication of brain inflammation, Pneumonia, diarrhea, or combustionis. About one in 20 people in Mary's age group, sex and social economic class in Latin American comes down with Measles each year. Calculated estimate based on sources, blah blah blah. Oh you have whooping cough. Wow you are a sick, sick woman. You're sick! They got you with all kinds of diseases in Barbados.

AC:(Laughs)

Mom: Whooping cough is also called Proctitous. It is an infection of the respiratory trap, which is very contagious and can be dangerous. (mumbles)... also produces chemicals that damage inflame the airways. Symptoms include, cold light symptoms, please give way to prolong, productive coughing. And coughing that can go on a long time causing the sufferer to gasp for air usually making a whooping sound. Oh, that's why it's called Whooping Cough.

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Mom: Complication include Pneumonia, seizures, and brain damage. The disease is treated with antibiotics. A vaccine provides immunity that fades in several years. About one in every 17 people in Mary's age group, sex, and social economic class, in Latin American comes down with that each year.

AC: Didn't I get Measles when I was 4 years old?

Mom: Yeah. Oh man! OK! So far we have measles and Whooping cough.

(Laugh together)

[FAST FORWARD TO FINAL COMMENTS]

KT: (laughs) So, I am going to have to take you guys back down stairs soon, because they are starting to go now, but do you have any questions...?

Mom: I like it, I like it , I like it because it reinforces school, it reinforces the importance of getting a good education. Every field that we went to for a job, you HAD to be in college.

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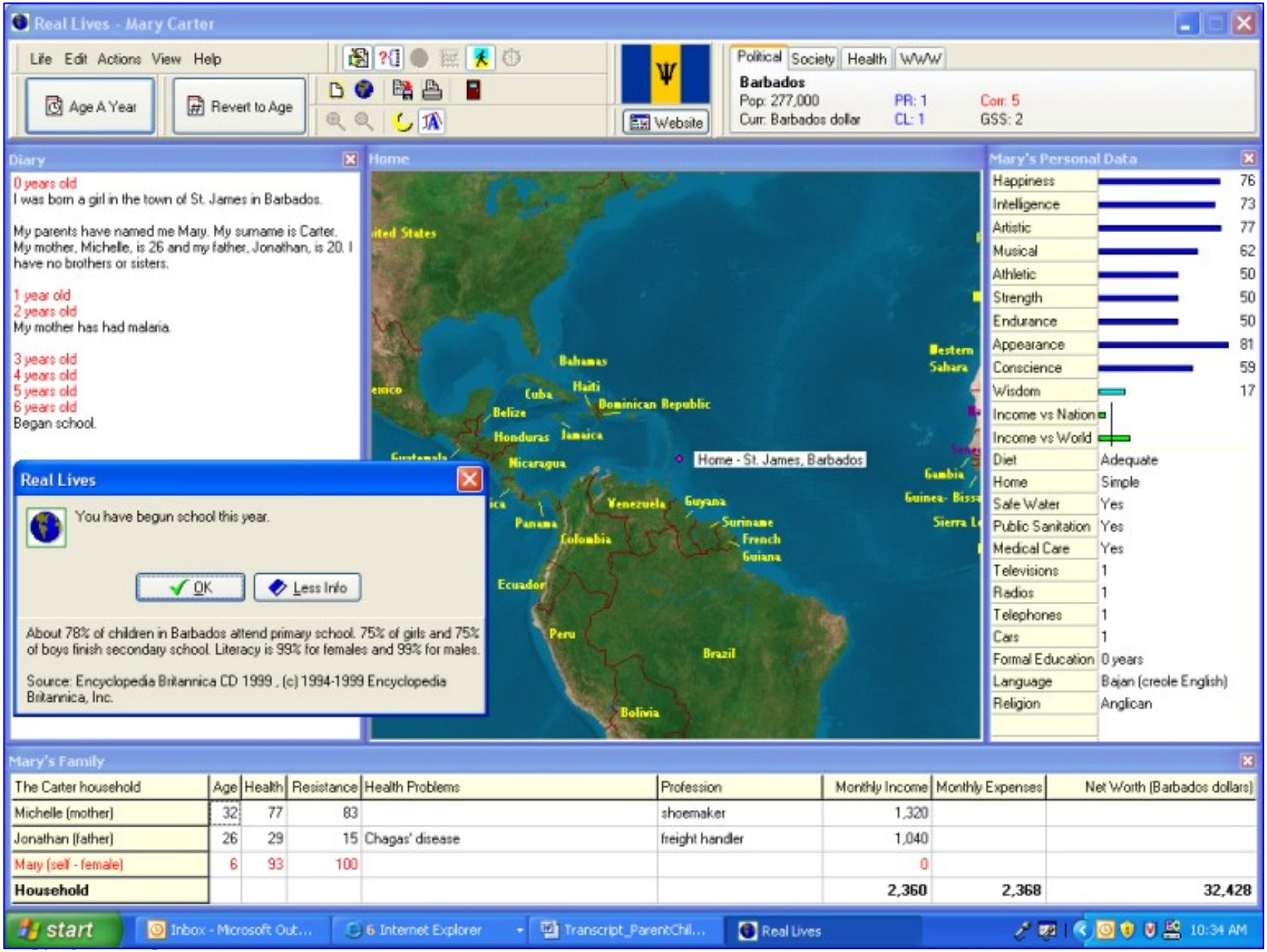
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