Microworld Product Review Assignment
ISLT 9467 Technology to Enhance Learning, Spring, 2009

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Product Information:
MicroWorlds Jr. (demo version)
- *Ages:* Pre-K to Grade 4
- *Operating System:* Win 98/ME/NT/2000/XP/Vista or Mac OSX 10.3.9 or higher
- *Source:* Logo Computer Systems, Inc. (LCSI)
  - P.O. Box 162, Highgate Springs, VT 05460
  - http://www.microworlds.com
  - 1-800-321-5646
- *Cost:* Single User - $49, 6-user Lab Pack - $249, Site License - $699

Product Description:
MicroWorlds Jr. is a Logo programming environment. It is a modern version of the Turtle Logo Language Seymour Papert and colleagues developed in 1967. The original Logo became commercially available in the 1980's for use on the Apple and Apple IIe.

Designed based on constructivist theory, MicroWorlds Jr. gives children opportunities to program simple animations while developing math, problem solving, and thinking skills.   LCSI claims it "Puts your child in full control. No reading necessary."

Important Features and Functionality: 50-75words
Important features include painting tools, stamp-able shapes, multiple pages, buttons, text, music and sound. These features are all accessed through an icon menu. The documentation that accompanies the software includes sample projects, activity starters and a resource book. Technical support is also available.

The product functionality is intact. I did not encounter any issues or problems.

Product Strengths from Teacher and Student Perspectives:
MicroWorlds, Jr. has several major strengths. The first is that it gives children an avenue for creating and thinking using the computer. Users control the turtle and teach it to move, pivot, pause, etc. They can change the turtle to other available choices or even create their own character. They can integrate music and audio into their project.   I believe the list of projects and products that could be created with this program is only limited by ones creativity and imagination.

The second strength of MicroWorlds, Jr. is its value for use in all subject areas and all ages. Upon first trial of the software it is obvious that it is useful for math and science. The projects book opens your eyes to uses for language arts and social studies. Projects can be developed

across the curriculum across a spectrum of difficulty for students for 4 years old up to 4th or 5th grade.

A third strength is that it is conducive of and promotes collaboration and higher order thinking.

Product Limitations from Teacher and Student Perspectives:

MicroWorlds has a few limitations. The main limitation is that students would initially need some instruction on operating procedures. Although no reading is necessary, the icons' functions are not self-evident.   However, I believe after the initial instruction of how to work with the program, students would be able to work independently.   On the positive side of this limitation is the fact that the Projects Book included with the product includes activities for introducing the students to MicroWorlds and project ideas. It includes instructions for teaching the features needed for a project plus a list of prerequisite skills, an introductory activity and a main activity with curricular links.

Summary and Recommendation:

MicroWorlds, Jr. is a fun and challenging program that will enable students to use the computer as a "creativity and thinking tool." It develops creativity, problem solving, logic and critical thinking. It promotes collaboration and can be used across the curriculum to provide opportunities for meaningful learning. I would highly recommend this product to teachers and parents.