

Body Awareness Resource Network (BARN): Software Review

By Stephen M. Marson

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	Poor										Excellent											
Performance	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Ease of Use	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Error Handling	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Documentation	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Value for Money	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

INTRODUCTION

BARN is a multimedia product that consists of two series. Series 1 includes four titles. They are (a) Alcohol & Other Drugs 1: Drug-Free& Cool; (b) Stress Management: A Healthy Balance; (c) Smoking: The Addictive Truth; and (d) Body Management: Nutrition Power. Series 2 includes (a) Alcohol & Other Drugs 2; (b) Human Sexuality 1: A Healthy Me; (c) Human Sexuality 2: Respect & Responsibility; and (d) HIV/AIDS: It's Up to You. BARN was assessed over a period of a month and a half at Southeastern Academy in Lumberton, NC. Southeastern Academy is a private nonprofit school with grades Pre-K to 9. Three licensed teachers, the school's computer lab tech and I were involved in the assessment.

Several key points can be made about this product. First, it is "slick-looking." Each CD has been effectively produced to catch and maintain the interest of adolescents. Second, each CD functions independently from the others. This means that a school—particularly a home school—will not need to purchase or use the entire product at one time. In addition, a teacher can use a single CD that fits into her/his current lesson plan without having to consider the other CDs. Third, each CD offers hours of constructive learning activity for individuals or a group. Some of the interactive activities are more appropriate to be used individually, while others would function best in a group setting. Fourth, teachers will find that the CDs are most effective when they are used in conjunction with the Activity Resource Book and Student Portfolios. BARN is a very good example of successfully mixing technology with traditional learning.

Below one will find the list of titles within each series. Under the titles are options which appear as multi-colored floating balloons in the program.

SERIES I

Body Management

- Teen Views
- Nutrition Power Game
- Weight Control

Stress Management

- Fight or Flight
- Healthy Balance
- Talking Straight Talk
- Great Ways to Reduce Stress
- Assess Your Stress

Smoking

- The Truth About Tobacco
- Teen Views
- The Tobacco Game
- Dealing with Pressure

Alcohol & Other Drugs I

- Drug-free & Cool
- Should I
- Whiz Quiz
- Stand Up for Yourself

SERIES II

Alcohol & Drugs II

- Stay on Track
- You Bet Your Life
- How Dependency Happens

Human Sexuality 1

- Male Health
- Female Health
- Teen Advisor
- Just the Facts Game
- STD Advisor

Human Sexuality 2

- Myth & Reality Game
- Soap Operas
- Tough Choices
- Teen Views

HIV/AIDS

- AIDS Advisor
- HIV/AIDS Risk Assessment
- Tip of the Iceberg
- Maze Game

Although there are no instructions to indicate that one must use a mouse to click on one of the floating balloons; I see no need for such instructions. BARN is user-friendly and intuitive.

PERFORMANCE

Each professional who worked with BARN was impressed by the use of technology, the artistry and the ability to integrate the CD into lesson plans. However, one fundamental flaw exists that exasperated everyone involved in using it. There is no icon created for the desktop, and on the start/program menu only Series II (green) is listed individually. In order to run the Series I (“blue”), the user must click on “Start,” “Run,” type “C:,” click “OK,” double click on the name of the program (ex. “Smoking”), then double click on the name of the program again. Or, click on “Start,” “Run,” “Browse,” under “Look In” click “(c:),” click on the name of the program, click “OK,” click on the name of the program, then click “OK.” This makes accessibility to the Series I somewhat frustrating for teachers in the classroom. Since each CD requires the typing of a different code (ex. “Smoking”), teachers are likely to forget the code with a group of anxious students looking forward to the activity. If the software took advantage of the capabilities of the computer, then the installation process would install a “title” in the program menu.

EVALUATION

There are numerous (between 3 to 5 lengthy) options on each CD to assess. Reporting on each option in essay form would require an enormous amount of space and is simply impractical. As a result, following is a numerical assessment of each CD. The number presented represents an average (medium) of the faculty and staff of Southeastern Academy and myself for an overall assessment of each individual CD.

Series I	Terrible										Wonderful													
Alcohol and Other Drugs	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	6.5	7	8	9	10	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	8.5	9	10
Stress Management	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	8.5	9	10	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	8.5	9	10
Body Management	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	8.5	9	10	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	8.5	9	10
Smoking	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10		
Series II																								
Alcohol and Other Drugs	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	6.5	7	8	9	10	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	8.5	9	10
HIV/AIDS	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	8.5	9	10	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	8.5	9	10
Human Sexuality (Healthy Me)	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	8.5	9	10	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	8.5	9	10
Human Sexuality (Respect & Responsibility)	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10		

The environment in which the CDs are presented must be taken into consideration. Learning Multi-Systems (LMS) notes that BARN was designed for students in grades 6 through 12. The experienced teachers and I disagreed with LMS’s recommendation. However, there was no consensus on what grade is appropriate for each CD. For example, one teacher concluded that grades 6 through 12 were appropriate for Series I and the Alcohol and Other Drugs CD in Series II. However, she noted that the HIV/AIDS and Human Sexuality I CDs were appropriate only for grades 8 through 12, while the Human Sexuality II CD was appropriate only for grades 9 through 12. The second teacher indicated that both Human Sexuality CDs were appropriate for grades 9 through 12, while the all other CDs were appropriate for grades 8 through 12. The third teacher stated that Series I was appropriate for 8th and 9th graders, while Series II was appropriate for 9th through the 12th grades. Clearly, teachers will not agree with LMS on the age appropriateness of the BARN CDs. I asked if the teachers thought that the CDs in question would be more appropriate for grades 6-12 in urban rather than rural environments. The teachers concluded that the rural/urban dichotomy was not relevant to the grade appropriateness of the BARN series.

The consensus of our group suggested that of all the CDs, the weakest was Drugs and Alcohol I and II. Some of the material may appear “corny” to most high school students. It reminded me of Nancy Reagan’s “Just Say No” drug campaign. Some empirical studies suggest that the “Just Say No” campaign achieved some degree of success among some sectors of the youth population. However, the campaign would have been much more successful if someone *other* than Nancy Reagan said, “Just Say No.” A perky teenage girl with a high school quarterback-looking companion comments on the evils of drugs and alcohol. LMS needs to get someone who looks like Frank Zappa to provide the case against drugs and alcohol. In addition, the youthful actors spoke as if they were

reading a script. They simply were not at all convincing to the professionals assessing the CD. Will adolescents be able to pick up on this weak performance and perhaps interpret it as insincere? At that age, I liked Clayton Moore's melodramatic *The Lone Ranger*. Today I find Moore's overacting quite embarrassing. Perhaps today's youth are just as unsophisticated as I was.

Although we did not present any of the CDs to the students at Southeastern Academy, the 8th grade class (all boys) expressed strong interest participating in the two Human Sexuality CDs. All teachers agree that the presentation of the Sexuality CDs must be thoughtful. Not all classes of children should see the CD in the same manner. The consensus among the teachers included the idea that one must know one's class prior to presenting the Sexuality CDs. In addition, the soap opera section found in Human Sexuality II was considered a bit corny. However, the "sophistication" of adulthood may contaminate one's perspective of corny.

Lastly, not all school systems will be able to use or purchase parts of the BARN CDs. For example, schools that have abstinence as the single focus for sex education would not allow the HIV/AIDS and the two Human Sexuality CDs as part of their curriculum. Again teachers must consider the environment prior to using the CDs.

SUMMARY

Five adults reviewed BARN. They included three teachers, a lab tech staff person and a college professor. All were impressed with this multimedia device and applaud LMS for their efforts and fine work on the production. The technology in concert with written materials and guidance of a concerned teacher/adult can shepherd students toward a more positive life style.

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Source: Learning Multi-Systems (LMS), 320 Holtzman Road, Madison, WI 53713 Phone: 800-362-7323 or 608-273-8060 Fax: 608-273-8065 E-mail: orderinginfo@lmssite.com.
<http://www.lmssite.com/>

Product Detail: Learning Multi-Systems offers several options for purchasing their product. A school or agency can purchase the CDs as single units, single series, multiple sets of units, or multiple sets of a series. The Activity Resource Book is included with the purchase of a series but not a single CD. Additional books are \$15 while Student Portfolios are \$30 for a pack of 10.

Single CD:	\$95	Series 1 or 2	\$295
5 CD Lab Pack:	\$195	5 sets of Series 1 or 2	\$595
10 CD Lab Pack:	\$295	10 sets of Series 1 or 2	\$895
20 CD Lab Pack:	\$395	20 sets of Series 1 or 2	\$1195

Computer Type: BARN Version 4.5 is available for Macintosh or Windows. Macintosh Systems minimum requirements: 68040 CPU or higher; 2X CD-ROM drive; 8MB of installed RAM; 256 color display. NOTE: Virtual Memory can be used to increase free RAM (largest unused block), if needed. Windows Systems minimum requirements: 80486 CPU or higher; 2X CD-ROM drive; 8MB of installed RAM; 640 by 480 VRA (256 colors) and sound card.

Reviewer Hardware and Software: BARN was tested in a computer lab. The computers can be described as: Pentium III, 600MHz; Memory: 64MB 100MHz SDRAM; Monitor: EV500 15" Color Monitor; Video: Integrated 3D Graphics; Hard Drive: 10GB 5400RPM Ultra ATA; CD-ROM: 17x min./40X max; Sound System: Integrated Business Audio; Operating System: Windows 98 (2nd Edition).