



Learner's Name: Mia Edwards

Age: 12

Location: Portland, Oregon

Can you tell me what your home and family are like?

I live with my mom and dad. They met when they were both in college and doing research in Japan, after one of those nuclear plants started leaking. They're both pretty cool, and they like to teach me new things. They work a lot, but they try to split their time between their work offices and their home offices so that they can be with me.

Can you tell me more about your family?

Well, my dad started his own computer engineering business, so he gets to be his own boss. He's really smart, and he's even written some computer programs for me so that I can explore different things that interest me. Like right now, I'm using a brain-computer interface to show how a playground could be built in our nearby park. All I have to do is sit back and imagine, and the program turns my thoughts into pictures on my computer screen. It's pretty awesome.

My mom is a learning researcher. She gets to pick and choose what she wants to research and who she wants to research for. She's worked with community centers, governments, and independent learning agents. Sometimes she even teaches a group of people. She says that her research helps her to be a better learning agent, and that working directly with learners helps her decide what needs to be researched better. Because she's always around it, she talks about the importance of learning all the time. She always stresses it to me, which I get, but it's so annoying.

How do you like to learn?

I really like to learn by doing projects. I like to have a goal, and then schedule my time to finish the different parts of the project, so that everything I do is leading up to achieving it. When I work on projects, I feel like everything has a clear purpose, and that it all fits together.

I also really like to use simulations when doing my projects. They help me see what would happen if I did this or that, or made certain changes. Ever since I can remember, I've loved using digital tools to learn things and see what might happen.

How would you describe your current learning experiences?

I love to learn, and I really like my learning academy. It's project-based, so almost everything we do revolves around them. And we get to pick what project we work on so it's always interesting to us.

Also, I get to pick projects I like from other places and fit them into my learning plan. Like I just got to be part of the community's Design Day. Everyone who wanted to could create a design for a new feature in the park. Some people designed better green spaces, some people designed sculptures or fountains, one of my friends designed a community vegetable garden. I designed a small amphitheater so that people could put on plays or concerts if they wanted. Our cross-academy theater program would be able to put on plays there, and maybe the local kids' bands could use it too. We don't know whose design is going to be chosen yet, but even if my design isn't picked I still get credit!

One of my favorite parts of learning, though, is getting to use really cool tools – stuff like the film we stretch over any object to turn it into a touch-screen computer. Not only is it really cool, but tools like that really help you share your ideas with your group members and learning agents. And based on what project you work on, you get to use different tools, whatever's right for you.

Can you tell me more about your learning experiences?

As long as I can remember, I've always liked my learning experiences. I mean, I've had some learning agents that I didn't really like, but mostly I've liked my learning experiences. My learning academies have always had the things I need to learn, like cool digital tools and ways for me to explore what I like. And our learning journey mentors make sure that we really grasp the concepts in our learning teams.

Plus I love how everyone helps each other out, whether it's at the academy or on other projects. We get assessed on collaboration and other steps along the way, like how well we learn from trying things out, even if they fail. My parents and learning agents support me, but so do the other kids.

What do you like best?

Knowing that everything I'm doing is contributing to a single goal really helps me focus and want to do well. When everything makes sense in my life like that, it really helps me see the benefits of doing my best. It also helps if the project I'm working on can have a real-world impact on people. What's the point of learning something if I can't use it to help people? Plus it needs to be something I connect with.

What you want to do when you get older?

I really want to use my digital skills to help make things for the community, like I did for Design Day. I think it'd be cool if I could figure out how to make parks and community centers better by running different project scenarios and then making things happen.

I also really want to travel around to different places and help design and create things for people who need them. I heard that when I'm older, I'll be able to propose a study abroad trip. So my mom's been helping me research different places I could go and different projects I might be able to do in those places. I'm so excited!

What worries you as you think about the future?

I know that I'm lucky because my parents and neighbors have money and so my learning academy has the best tools – but I know that there are lots of kids who don't have the same things. At Design Day, some kids had to learn the simulation tools, which put them behind at the start and made it harder for us all to work together. I wonder how they can catch up.