

## Quarters Feedback

This past Monday, we had our quarters walk-around and feedback. Quarters is one-fourth of the way through the projects' cycle, and is a great time to get feedback from the faculty as well as any visitors that may be in the building that day.

The faculty suggested that our game's current goal might be too abstract and game-y for young kids to quickly grasp the problem they are meant to solve. There was a lot of confusion as to why a star is the goal, and why the player has to place a specified "star block" on it. The consensus seemed to be that a theme with more of a narrative premise would help give young kids a more concrete explanation of the goal. Since then we've focused on brainstorming and exploration of our narrative options, for example placing a UFO on top of a constructed tower in order to reach an alien that is stranded on a ledge. The UFO then serves the role that the star block did, but is more intelligible and enables children to help out characters in need.

Another suggestion was to go back to just one goal, and no sub-goals. In the previous week, we had replaced our checkpoint system with a set of smaller stars whose weight needed to be supported like the large star. Many faculty found it ambiguous whether these were really sub-goals or in fact secondary goals. This has led to discussion of possibly bringing back the checkpoint system, but in a way that is not required, just purely as an "extra credit" system.

## Children's School Visit



On Tuesday, our team went to visit the Children's School on Carnegie Mellon's main campus. The Children's School is a facility for pre-K and kindergarten children where psychologists and educators can observe classroom activities and do research on child development. The Children's School is a great resource for us due to its proximity and its flexibility in scheduling.

During our Tuesday visit, we were able to observe two rounds of a science activity in the kindergarten class. The teacher asked the students to predict which materials (flour, salt, rice, sugar, and coffee grounds) would dissolve in water, then the group would test for what really happens. Tactile learning and discussion were important takeaways: Some kids would make their guesses based on what their friends

would say, while others would use what they could see and feel of the materials in order to make a guess.

We returned to the Children's School on Friday to playtest our prototype. Our biggest question has been can our demographic actually use the mouse and keyboard to play our game. From our playtesting, we were able to discern that the mouse and keyboard are usable for some, not so much for others. Another large question was does the goal make sense for the students. They seemed to be willing to do it, but one did ask why, which reinforces our quarters feedback that we do need a stronger narrative to help drive the experience.

## Prototype:

As we work on the adjustments to the design, we've also been experimenting with different block behaviors and interface possibilities in the prototype. In the prototype for quarters, a block, once picked up, simply follows the mouse cursor and is immune to physics until dropped. As an alternative, we've been trying out something more tactile and comparable to how we would pick up objects in real life. This week we implemented appropriate force vectors on the block when the player controls it so as to get a natural feeling of dragging a real block.

One other alternative we are testing is whether blocks that touch should remain separate objects or should snap together. We made the program detect whether the dropped object is touching any other object after it comes to rest, and if so, we've used fixed joints in Unity to connect two or more objects.

We will continue to develop and test both these alternatives until we know which option(s) to pursue for the final game.



## Calendar

October 24<sup>th</sup>, 26<sup>th</sup>, 28<sup>th</sup>

Half Presentations  
-Mid-Semester Presentations.

December 12<sup>th</sup>, 14<sup>th</sup>, 16<sup>th</sup>

Final Presentations

