User Interface

As we move towards the end of the semester, we're making more progress on the aesthetics of our game. Until now, we'd been using the default Unity button style as we concentrated on finding the right mechanics and building the game. Now we've created our own custom user interface assets. Since we are targeting first graders as our demographic, using words for the UI would not be a good idea. Instead, we decided to use well-known icons to help illustrate what each button does. We looked at other tablet/mobile games to figure out some common symbolism that would carry over to our game. Some of these symbols are also commonly found in media devices such as dvd players, or mp3 players.

In terms of the color choices, we wanted to use colors that stood out from the game space, but still felt like they belonged in the game. The buttons themselves are fairly dark, with the icons being a brighter and more vibrant color that's inviting for the kids and makes them want to interact with them.

Refining the Experience

After halves, we got some good feedback regarding making the in-theme metaphor for the mechanics as clear as possible. The checkpoint system has been one example of this. We are using it to help guide the kids into building structurally sound structures, but the checkpoints still feel a bit arbitrary at the moment. Their role in connection with the blocks and the UFO could be better visualized. We added a feature in which the checkpoints shoot an energy charge to the UFO once it's placed on top of the structure, which seems to have helped clarify a bit. However, we still need more of a gradual change showing that the checkpoints are powering the UFO rather than it all being triggered at the end.

We've also been working on refining a clear way to visualize the goal: the proper height at which the UFO should sit upon the structure. Currently, the only visual indicators of how high the kids should build their structure are the cliff and the stranded alien themselves. But as a height requirement these are ambiguous. Should the UFO be at the alien's feet, slightly below his feet, up higher near his head? This is not clear from the visual cues provided. If the kids build a stable structure, but it's too high or too low, they won't win and it won't be clear why. So we've brainstormed a few ways to better visualize the proper "rescue zone," such as a measuring stick comparing current height to desired height, or visually tying the UFO's desired position to the look of the checkpoints.

Data Logging

We are now logging data for the game. We track each player's ID and what level they are on. For each level, we record the start position, end position, rotation and velocity of the blocks at the moment of mouse click and again at the moment of release. We will also collect the collision data of the blocks when they interact with other objects in the game space. The combined effect of this data should allow future analysis or reconstruction of the structure that a given player has built.

Calendar

November 28th

Soft Opening
-Faculty walkarounds to see near final build.

December 12th, 14th, 16th

Final Presentations