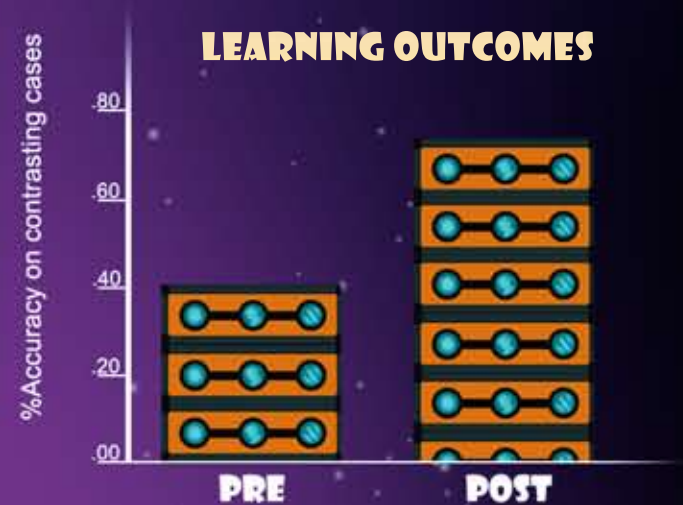
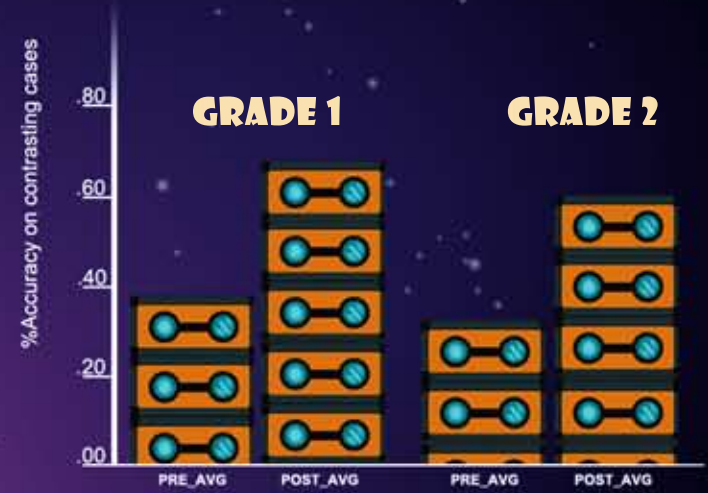


RumbleBlocks Playtest @ Propel

On March 8th, we held a playtest session in conjunction with HCII in one of the Propel Schools with first and second grade students. The Propel School is a system of charter schools in Western Pennsylvania designed to transform public education in the area. Currently there are seven locations in Western PA. This playtest served two functions: the first was to test the learning effectiveness of RumbleBlocks with new integrated changes (new contrasting cases and the block removal). We gave the children a series of game levels to play before the main game (pre-test) and a series of similar levels after the main game (post-test) in order to get a good set of comparison data. The results were very encouraging: the accuracy of the students nearly doubled from the pre-test to the post-test in identifying stable structures. The time taken to solve the solutions also significantly decreased from the pre test to the post-test, which is also very encouraging.

The second function of this playtest was to get an early exposure to our in-development game, Beanstalk. We wanted to get an early insight into whether or not the kids understood the interaction of growing the beanstalk to help Jack reach his goal. We also wanted to get a sense of how the children reacted to the art style. The feedback from this playtest was also very positive. The kids understood the interaction of watering the beanstalk to make it grow to help Jack reach the goal. They also enjoyed the art style and liked being able to correct their mistakes without having to restart the level. The girls that playtested the game wished for a girl avatar, since they would connect more to her instead of Jack. Overall, this was a very beneficial and enlightening playtest that will certainly help us on our next steps in development.



Development Progress

We've reached the halfway point of the semester, and we have made significant progress on our two products thus far. In regards to RumbleBlocks, we have integrated the new contrasting cases provided to us by HCII as well as levels of block removal. Our next steps are to create a final level sequence that creates both a fun and measurable game. This includes finalizing the data structure for better integration into HCII's DATAShop as well as allowing for a maximum of 25 levels per world if needed. HCII is planning to run a larger research study measuring the learning effectiveness of RumbleBlocks in early April so we want to finalize these changes in the upcoming weeks.

Our development on Beanstalk is coming along as well. We have the basic gameplay built into the game, and are working on assets for further polish. We've designed the UI for the variables of the game and we have Jack in the game, with Jill in progress to be implemented next as another avatar option for the users. We've also been thinking about a new way to incorporate the teaching of balance more explicitly in our game. While it is being taught through the game indirectly, we wanted an experience that teaches it explicitly. HCII will be developing the experiment cases for our question > experiment > conclusion section of the game as they have a better sense of what is a good case for students to learn from. We look forward to the next steps in Beanstalk development.



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