TRANSCENDENCE

OPENING

Hello again everyone; it's been a while! We took a couple of weeks off for spring break and to attend the Game Developer's Conference held in San Francisco last week. This week we focused on conducting our second playtest, as well as compiling an effective presentation of our progress this semester to present at halves. We evaluated our development path thus far, assessed what we learned from our new playtest, and planned out our steps for moving forward. Then we presented our findings to the faculty, students, and guests in attendance today, the publication date of this newsletter.

BREAKDOWN

Over spring break our character artist worked to finish all of our character design models; and our environment artist drafted backgrounds to be implemented into the game for our then-pending playtest. They also refined and added new UI elements to reflect our new game design, and enable its navigability.

Once we returned from the Game Developer's Conference, we jumped right into integration. Once we determined the date of our second playtest (this past Wednesday, March 26, 2014), we planned out our development tasks for the week. We focused on prototyping the first 3 levels of the game (which includes the in-game tutorial) so that we could conduct an effective playtest that would answer our questions concerning game design, intuitiveness, navigability, and of course, fun.

We conducted our test on middle school children currently attending the Elizabeth Forward Middle School. We had a total of 21 students, all between the ages of 10 and 13. We provided each of them with either a tablet or smartphone on which to experience our game. After allowing them to play through the prototype, we gave each of them a questionnaire so that we could capture their feedback.

Our playtest proved to be quite successful. Through our own observations of the students as they played, we noted that our navigation (i.e. movement) controls were intuitive; and that players had no issues understanding the concept of platform jumping.

Our questionnaire asked several important questions; however, the most important thing we wanted to know was if they found the game design fun. We were quite happy to read that identifying thoughts, feelings, and behaviors on the in-game cognitive triangle was one of their favorite parts, second only to the platform jumping. The results of our playtest indicate that changing to our new integrated game design approach was the right decision.

BRIEFING

Challenges we faced this week included: integrating enough assets and gameplay programming to be able to conduct a useful playtest on such short notice, and incorporating the results of that playtest into our mid-semester presentation. We accelerated our development process by prioritizing playtest-critical game elements and discarding non-essential elements for creation and implementation as we move forward after the playtest. Given the feedback we wound up receiving, we were able to determine our development approach for these final weeks of the semester.

CLOSING

This next week will be dedicated to generating and refining finalized art assets, implementing new gameplay levels, and incorporating new sound effects, background music, and animations in order to bring the game to life. Once again we are Team Transcendence; until next week!