



Weekly Newsletter

10/19/2012

Playtest at the Thelma Lovette YMCA:

The week started with a playtest at the Thelma Lovette YMCA, in Pittsburgh's Hill District. These were kids of lower socio-economic status – we were excited to see how they responded to our prototype, and how these kids might be similar or different than the higher-SES kids we'd tested with at the Children's Museum.

In terms of their interaction with the game, the words of ETC faculty member Jesse Schell held true: "kids are kids." That's not to say we didn't notice differences, but they were subtle or not related to their interactions with our game.

Most of the kids were at least familiar with iOS devices, as many of their parents or siblings had iPhones, while a very small number had seen or used an iPad before. But even in the case of those kids with no previous experience with a touchscreen, they were flying through our game after a very small adjustment period of less than a minute. There was one child that was reluctant to even touch the screen, but loved it once we encouraged him to go ahead. And there were a few kids who would press down so hard while dragging that they would actually drag the iPad around on the table.

However, the more significant differences were outside of game interaction. These kids did not have their parents with them, though there was a YMCA staff member in the room with us. The kids were much more shy than we had observed at the Museum, so it was a little harder for us to carry on a conversation with them before or after their play sessions. We also noticed that these kids were much more engaged with the game – we had made only slight changes in the game since our Museum playtest last week, but this change may have been environmental. We were in a fairly boring room when compared to the bustle of the Children's Museum.

Next Steps; Halves:

Next week is our Halves Presentation – basically, our "midterm" as we present our project is to ETC guests, faculty, and fellow students. It's also a great opportunity for us to receive some feedback from our mentors and peers as we go into the last half of our semester-long project.

Where we're not preparing for that presentation, we're moving forward to make our final edits to the introduction and egg portions of our game. Now that we have a solid idea of who we're making this for and how they use it, we're making sure to consciously insert more advanced vocabulary, a shorter time between player interactions, and also making sure that our story is easily understandable and fun!

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