

SKYLIGHT

November 14, 2014
ISSUE 12

OPENING REMARKS

Hello again everyone! This week we iterated on Project Arc-Fall, our game designed to help middle school students practice reading notes on a musical staff. We also added more polish to Project Radius, our game designed to help lower school students (grades 2 - 5) practice rhythm, notation, and note values. We tested both games in our largest playtest to date, having a total of 30 children test across both games.

Our playtests went well. Children responded positively to both games and our observations, coupled with their responses to our questionnaire, indicate that they understand the game, what it's trying to teach them, and enjoy playing. Over the next week, we will apply the final polish to Project Radius and complete development of Project Arc-Fall. Be sure to stay updated via our website at <http://www.etc.cmu.edu/projects/skylight/>

WEEKLY BREAKDOWN

As stated in the opening remarks, we polished Project Radius. Specifically, we altered the player interface to include visual cues that more clearly indicate when they should initiate and release a given note. We added animations to the snail bodies to make them more lively. We also added environment animations that make the game feel more dynamic. Lastly we began creating a tutorial that will be used when teachers introduce the game.

With regard to Project Arc-Fall, we iterated on our game's user interface design so that it fits within the display area of the SMALLab at the Elizabeth Forward School. We created a visual threshold that tells players when to match one of their creatures to an incoming note. We also adjusted the note trails to visually reflect the ratios of their respective time values. Lastly, we created and integrated a new, contemporary pop song that is more familiar and appealing to our target age group.

CHALLENGES

Our greatest challenge this week was iterating on visual feedback design for both Project Radius and Project Arc-Fall. Though we stopped creating new assets and features for Radius, our final development playtest for it told us that we needed to further consolidate our player feedback. As a result, we iterated on the feedback system and tested the entire game again this week. Feedback was positive. Based on their questionnaire responses, children seemed to grasp the visual representation of musical beats, as well as the visual cues for when to attack and release.

For Project Arc-Fall, we needed to create a visual cue to tell players when their creature should be in position to eat an incoming note. Therefore, we created a marker that turns green when a note reaches it (and the player is expected to have chosen their monster). Our observations that that players better understood when to hit a note, and in the case that they missed, why.

