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Studio 5

Ethnography Paper – Game Prototype

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 Unfortunately our group was unable to bring our flash game for the students to try out at the school so instead we made a PowerPoint that replicated the game along with a hands-on version. The goal was to get as much feedback from the students with regards to the concept of the game, the difficulty of the math skills and the graphics we had created so far.

 The hands on activity we created was simply the screen the kids would see but instead of interacting with the computer, they used cut sheets of colored plastic to fill the required fractions. When they successfully completed a colored fraction recipe, they were able to put a piece down in a tic-tac-toe game. This way we were able to test the difficulty of the game as well as the general game concept.

 The power point showed the general game play and story line of the game as it currently stands. The students were told that they needed to make certain colors based on a “recipe” to fill their palette. Each color required a different combination of red blue and yellow (Yes there is a bit of lying going on here with the differences between paint mixing and computer color mixing but this did not seem to phase the students at all.). Each scene shows 3 bars with a specific fraction marked off in each, the student must correctly identify which of the fractions matches up to each color based on the recipe given. When the colors have been selected the student presses a mix button the answers are checked if they are correct they get to move on if they are wrong the student must try again. As they correctly mix the colors, the palette gets filled up.

 Overall the students were very enthusiastic about the game. We used the knowledge that we gained about the student’s likes and dislikes to design a game that they could relate to. Luckily many of the students enjoy Art Class and when Paula explained the purpose of the game by relating it back to art they quickly understood. The students were excited about the first stage of the game not knowing that it would eventually relate to a more complicated game. The boys and girls were equally engaged throughout our time with them during the activity. There was only one very shy girl who was not engaged at all. She struggled with the math portion and made it clear that she was not interested in the art part, even when we sat down with her individually to help her through it.

 We were a little worried about the difficulty of the game for the students. We researched what the sixth graders would know in terms of fractions and lowest common denominator and its part of their state required exams. However we were still unsure. Judging by how fast the students completed each different color it was clear that colors containing certain fractions were more difficult than others. If anything we found that the game could use some more difficult levels which let us know that there is room for the game to grow. At first the students needed some assistance converting the given fractions to something they could count given the number of lines drawn on the worksheet. However as they got the hang of it they were able to both work in teams and work competitively against each other.

 A huge problem we found is how “culturally relevant” we could make our game without going overboard. We showed the kids three characters that we had come up with to guide them through the game and asked them what they thought. It was clear that they liked Paula’s character (Spray paint can with shutter shades and a gold chain) the best but they still had some ideas to improve it. For example they all liked the name T-Paint (a play on the popular rapper T-Pain known for his use of auto-tuning) and even helped us add to our current design with things like backwards hat and grillz.

 As usual going to the school gave us a lot of useful feedback that we make it easier to continue designing the game. While it is necessary for us to make some changes, overall the kids enjoyed our game. We’re looking forward to returning to the school for the final trip to show them what we have created.