CS0: Flowchart Programming

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Overview

The aim of the project is to make learning to program easier and more enjoyable for students at all different skill levels.

In this talk I will cover:

- **Why** learn to program with Flowcharts?
- **What** is programming with flowcharts?
- **How** does it work?
- **Results** so far, and **ideas** for the future
WHY

Flowchart Programming
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student %</th>
<th>CS1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>50%</td>
<td>Fails</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25%</td>
<td>Succeeds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25%</td>
<td>Excels</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Addition of CS0

- What exactly to do?
  - Problem Solving?!

- How / What? What kinds of Tools?
  - Raptor
  - Google Blockly (maze)
  - Online materials / courses
  - Scratch
Addition of CS0

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student %</th>
<th>CS0</th>
<th>CS1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>50%</td>
<td>Struggles</td>
<td>Fails</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25%</td>
<td>Challenged</td>
<td>Succeeds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25%</td>
<td>Bored</td>
<td>Excels</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Why do students Fail / Succeed?

• Not sure…

• Some of the students that I was able to save
  - Hadn't understood the flow of execution
  - Trouble with loops and if statements

• Idea:
  - Make everything clearer
  - Show more clearly how things work
Bored Students

• Special Projects
  - Depends on student interest / motivation
  - Requires a lot of faculty creativity / overhead

• Project Euler
  - Great problems, starts easy, gets hard
  - Lots and lots of problems
Scratch

• Great tool
  – lets students quickly create visual / fun things

• Limitations
  – No functions (plugins?)
  – Data types are mostly abstracted away
  – Not easy to do project euler problems
Raptor

• Started thinking about raptor again
  – A more traditional programming model + ✓
  – Limited to windows only –
  – Max amount of params per function –
  – No return from functions (out params) –

• Why not build my own?
  – Web based
  – Without these limitations
Section: Why

- Lower half struggles and fails
  - Not clear why they fail
  - Can we reduce the amount that fails?

- A certain amount is challenged
  - But at the lower end seems to need more clarity

- A certain amount is bored
  - Need something useful to do while others struggle
WHAT

Flowchart Programming
Web-Raptor
Separation of data and instructions

- Often found students stuck trying to add instruction(s) when needing to add variable(s)
  - When stuck, try adding something to the other side
Data Types

- Start thinking about the reality of types early on
  - Going to have to deal with it sooner than later
Basic Instructions

- Clearly indicated where they can be added
  - Programming reduced to 5 options
  - Plus one piece of syntactic sugar (call)
Debugger Like Execution

- Lets make a “hello world” with name input
  - See it running, step by step
  - Assigning values to variables
  - Evaluating expressions
Code Generation

• To prepare them for the eventual reality
  – Hand in assignments in code, not as flowchart
Code Execution
Turtle Graphics
Functions and the Stack

Turtle TriForce

```
triangle(object Turtle)
```

```
move();
t.rotate(-120); forward(50)
t.rotate(-120); forward(50)
t.rotate(-120); forward(50)
return 0
```
Recursion

```
number count(number n)

if n != 0
  true
  OUTPUT "n" + n
  count(n - 1)
  return 0
```

Stack 1

- count(1) n 1
- count(2) n 2
- count(3) n 3
- count(4) n 4
- count(5) n 5
- main()
Section: What

- web-based tool for programming with flowcharts
  - Simple instructions and data types
  - Debugger like execution, stepping through code
  - Code generation and code execution
  - Turtle graphics module
  - Functions and recursion
HOW

Flowchart Programming
CSS, JavaScript, PHP

- 1205 lines of Sass CSS
  - HTML and CSS a better fit than canvas or SVG

- 2739 lines of JS (using jQuery)
  - I do not actually parse expressions
  - Exec them inside a sandbox

- 1381 lines of PHP / SQL / HTML
  - I built a little IOC framework for MVC separation
Normal web server

Page.html

Model
SCE
View
HTML
Control

File system

page.html
Web Development with a Framework using a Front Controller (FC)
GitHub
Results / Future

Flowchart Programming
## Results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>CS1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>50%</td>
<td>Struggles</td>
<td>Still Fails? (new theories)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25%</td>
<td>More clarity</td>
<td>Succeeds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25%</td>
<td>Engaged, great output</td>
<td>Excels</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The video I mentioned about machine learning and novelty search:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dXQPL9GooyI
Future

• Fix Bugs:
  – While making this presentation I even found that I broke passing objects (turtle) into functions
  – Bugs related to side effects

• Features:
  – Image manipulation (canvas)
  – Drag and Drop editing
  – Code editing & easier code execution