Update on changes to game relevant to previous assignments:

The use of iconography on the cards and the player/enemy HUD. HP, atk mod and def mod is represented with a heart, sword and shield respectively. This helps the player better see information and reduces the number of words on screen.

Assignment 3 - Level design Analysis

Intent

Mechanically, the game is very simple. There is a single button to draw a card and then the player must play said cards. The engagement comes from various dynamics that can arise in a single level(round) of the game. There is a certain amount of skill needed to understand the complexity and how to manipulate the cards in any given scenario. The use of strong communication and UI design introduces the players to the mechanics, how to interact with the elements and what the card data means.

For this prototype I have created 3 levels, each with individual micro goals as well as overarching macro goals. The core focus of these levels will be to build certain interactions, and to create a structure where the player can learn the mechanics, with an intermediate introduction to various dynamics.

Process

Level 1 micro analysis

The first levels micro goal is to introduce and ensure the players understanding of the mechanics and different game elements is concrete. The scene within the level is the enemy AI. It is a very weak player- it picks up cards until it has a full hand, only when the hand is full does it randomly play a card.

The enemy picks up for 5 turns before it plays a card, this gives the player time to understand the mechanics and what different cards mean without potentially taking damage. There is also an aspect of pacing(this applies to all levels); if you do not beat the current enemy you cannot move on to the next level, this is indicated by a text prompt at the end of the level. It is important that the player can overcome the current levels' scene before moving on to the next level with a harder scene.

Level 2 micro analysis

The second and third level micro goal is to introduce the player to different possible dynamics that can arise in the game. The second level AI plays defensively- it draws until a full hand and then plays cards in a priority order, this order is Healer, Caster, Soldier and Brawler. This AI introduces the player to a defensive play style enemy. This allows the player to start to explore new tactics to beat this AI. The defensive nature of this AI also gives the player room to explore without the anxiety of taking high damage. In order to efficiently beat this AI the player should focus on the attack and defence modifiers to increase their attack or decrease the enemies healing capabilities. Here also pacing is used to control player advancement.

Level 3 micro analysis

By the third level the play should have a good understanding of the cards and the core mechanics of the game, they would also have had exposure to 2 different game dynamics and started developing

a deeper understanding of the system. The third level AI has an aggressive play style. It draws three cards and then plays cards in a priority order, this order is Brawler, Soldier, Caster and Healer. This AI focuses on attacking and putting pressure on the player. The player will have to focus on attacking and healing in order to beat this AI.

Macro analysis

Throughout the three level process the player goes through. The first goal is to ensure concrete understanding of the mechanics and information presented to the player. The second goal is to introduce the player to three different types of play styles and in turn three different game dynamics that arise from them. The aim is to start showing the complexity and strategies that can arise, with the intent that the player will start to think about other strategies and playstyles they think can work.

Reflection

The level design follows a thought out process which creates a good structure for players to learn the mechanics and develop an understanding of strategy as well as get a feel for some possible dynamics that can arise.

Each micro level journey contributes ,in a linear fashion, to a broader macro level process designed to educate the player. Ideally If the game had better balanced cards we could see the different dynamics taking shape in a clearer manner, but due to time constraints and this being a rough prototype, the card data is not balanced. It would require multiple hours of play testing in order to balance the card data. In future, each level scene(the AI's) should also be balanced and adapted to keep the player in the desired flow state of the game.

The future of the game can be taken in a multitude of directions. Since this is a prototype and proof of concept, it is important to think about the next step of the game development process. If this game was to become an online multiplayer game, in terms of level design, these 3 levels that have been made can be considered as a tutorial level, where players cannot access online play until completing.