Email from my professor

Hi Joshua. This is very cool. You put a lot of thought and effort into it. The concept is interesting and ambitious. It has the potential to give Purdue students a living laboratory for merging instructional design, AI, and game-based learning. Building partnerships is a key component of this proposal. You would need a champion who is full-time at Purdue. If you want to get this out further, I recommend narrowing the scope, simplifying the pitch, and clarifying a specific ask.

Here are my specific thoughts:

Strengths
Interdisciplinary alignment: You've mapped technical, pedagogical, and business components to specific Purdue departments and student engagement models. This gives the initiative credibility and demonstrates feasibility.
Grounding in learning theory: The blueprint explicitly integrates Cognitive Load Theory, Self-Determination Theory, and the affective domain. This alignment with theory strengthens the educational case.
Attention to sustainability: Including nonprofit formation, IP considerations, and leveraging Google for Nonprofits credits shows maturity in planning.
Areas to Strengthen
Executive Summary: The documents are long and detailed. A concise 1–2 page executive summary, highlighting the vision, goals, and immediate next steps, would make it easier for faculty or stakeholders to quickly grasp the project. You need something that someone can read and understand in under a minute.
Clarity of scope: The proposal sometimes reads as if it's trying to be everything at once: ITS, LitRPG game framework, generative AI integration, nonprofit formation. Consider framing the project as phased development (e.g., Phase 1: Authoring environment, Phase 2: AI tutor integration, Phase 3: Nonprofit structure). This makes the plan more realistic and fundable.
Evidence of feasibility: While the technical mapping is excellent, adding brief examples of potential student projects or prototypes already in progress (if there are any) would provide tangible proof of concept.
Focus on the learner's affective domain: You've emphasized psychological safety and narrative immersion. Expand on how you will measure this (e.g., Likert scales for engagement, reflection journals, or pre/post surveys) would strengthen the research angle.
Simplification for broader audiences: Parts of the document are written with heavy technical jargon. For non-CS faculty or administrators, simpler explanations of why these technologies matter for learning would help make the initiative more inclusive.
Best Regards
George Hanshaw, Psy.D.
(760)912-9242

My first response

Dear Professor,

Thank you very much for the timely and thorough feedback. I will work on building out that executive summary and creating some phase-based frameworks for conceptualizing how the daydream web app could be used for education, and how the daydream web app could be developed in a timely manner.

I know how important time is. I appreciate your time, and I would even be so bold to request more of it. If you have the space available for any form of mentorship or guidance on the most efficient way to build this out and get this going, I would be very grateful. I will do some research on what a champion at a university is and how this works on paper. I am not interested in monetary gain for this, I am more interested in creating a professional and safe product my kids could use in a timely manner.

I also think this is very cool for a lot of reasons. So, I'm excited to see what happens. I will send you that executive summary as soon as possible.

Joshua

My second response

Dear Professor Hanshaw,

Please accept my apologies for missing the Cassie case study due yesterday. I did not know, which is my fault, that it could not be turned in late.

Thank you again for your feedback on daydream. I look forward to seeing if this can become something useful for everyone. I talked to a local homeschool parent this weekend about the product, and she was very excited at the potential. I hope this idea, or vision, is as actionable as I believe.

Thanks again for your time.
Joshua

I added this attachment:

Executive Summary: Play Daydream
An AI-Powered Sandbox for Transformative Learning and Performance Psychology
Prepared by: Joshua Atkinson, Creator
Prepared for: Prof. George Hanshaw, Psy.D. | Learning Design and Technology, Purdue University
Date: October 28, 2025
The Vision: Modifying the Psychological Operating System
Current educational technology fails to address the foundational problem of internal narrative: the fact that we live out the self-limiting stories we construct. The Daydream Initiative solves this

by transforming screen time into an active, affective experience focused on narrative modification—a critical component for building mental resilience and high performance.
The platform has a dual utility for Purdue:
Transformative Learning: Embedding intellectual lessons (e.g., critical thinking, vocabulary) into engaging, choice-driven, "lite-novel" experiences.
LDT Research Sandbox: Providing LDT researchers with a customizable, first-of-its-kind tool to study AI-mediated human performance and the affective domain.
Psychological and Pedagogical Architecture
The system's narrative is structurally grounded in established psychological models to ensure both safety and developmental efficacy:
Framework
Focus
Daydream Application
Hero’s Journey (Campbell)
Macro-Template for Success.
Provides a safe, predictable structure for processing obstacles, ensuring the narrative always drives toward personal triumph and insight.
Archetypes (Jung)
Micro-Template for Insight.
Archetypal characters (Mentor, Shadow) facilitate complex dialog, prompting the user to explore and develop their own emotional intelligence.
"AI as a Mirror"
Metacognitive Mechanism.
The AI pivots from storyteller to Socratic guide, requiring the learner to reflect on their in-game choices and apply lessons directly to real-world performance psychology.

The Research Solution: Narrative-Anchored Assessment (NAA)
The primary friction point—long-term, non-intrusive evaluation—is solved by introducing the Narrative-Anchored Assessment (NAA) model, which measures longitudinal skill application over rote recall.
Formative Review is replaced by Reflection Quests, where the AI assesses the quality of the user’s self-analysis and the contextual application of new knowledge (like using a specific term correctly in a reflection journal). Summative Evaluation concludes with the Hero’s Journey Debrief—a quantitative and qualitative report summarizing the user’s decision-making patterns, tracked archetype tendencies (e.g., when they prioritized Ally behavior over Warrior), and overall growth in the affective domain across the entire novel.
Evidence of Feasibility & The Immediate Ask
The core logic of Daydream is already operational and demonstrated by a modular Python prototype (code provided). This prototype validates the technical feasibility of quest sequencing, narrative extensibility, and vocabulary tracking—making it ready to be formalized as a research tool.
Phase 1: The Performance Psychology Sandbox
Goal: Establish a secure, cloud-hosted, open-source authoring environment for LDT students and faculty.

Outcome: A functional "Sandbox" where researchers can rapidly swap out Content Banks, AI Pedagogical Personas, and Archetype Maps to conduct high-impact, testable research on AI-mediated instruction.

Specific Ask: We request a follow-up meeting to launch Phase 1 development by securing dedicated Purdue LDT program resources (e.g., a Graduate Assistant or capstone student team) to formalize the existing prototype into a Minimal Viable Product (MVP). This step immediately positions LDT at the forefront of AI-enabled affective research and allows Professor Hanshaw to champion an innovation born from within the Purdue community.

The Daydream Initiative is a continuously evolving laboratory for AI, learning design, and performance psychology.