

Matthew C. Hartman | Creative Strategist & Content Designer

Bridging the gap between Learning Science, Game Design, and Performance.

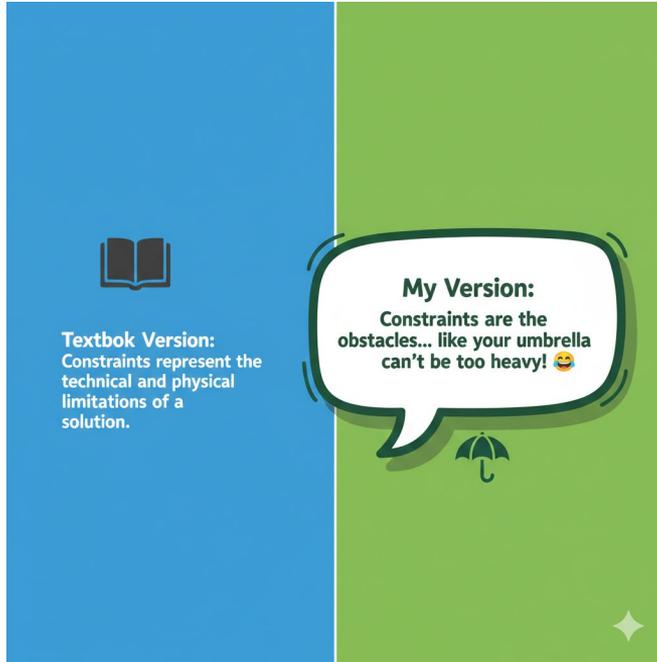


"With an M.Ed and a background in professional improv, I don't just write instructions—I design experiences that capture and hold attention."

Translating Complex STEM for a Digital Audience

The Problem: Dense academic standards (NGSS) are often intimidating for 6th-9th grade learners

The Content Design Win:



The image shows a comparison between a textbook version and a digital version of content. On the left, a blue vertical bar contains an icon of an open book and the text: "Textbok Version: Constraints represent the technical and physical limitations of a solution." On the right, a green vertical bar contains a speech bubble with the text: "My Version: Constraints are the obstacles... like your umbrella can't be too heavy! 🤔" Below the speech bubble is a small icon of an umbrella. A small white star icon is located at the bottom right of the green bar.

Textbok Version:
Constraints represent the technical and physical limitations of a solution.

My Version:
Constraints are the obstacles... like your umbrella can't be too heavy! 🤔



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IJZ20Wajtow>

I simplify complex definitions without losing scientific rigor.

The Science of the Start: A Pedagogical Framework for FTUE

After contributing to a mobile game FTUE, I synthesized my observations with my M.Ed background to author a definitive strategic playbook for player onboarding.

 **Prior Knowledge Connections:** Linking new mechanics to familiar gaming tropes to improve retention.

 **Scaffolding & Fading:** Dynamic supports that retract as mastery is demonstrated and return if a player struggles.

 **Cognitive Load Management:** Using multi-modal delivery (visual + audio) to protect limited working memory.

 **Contextual Meaning:** Introducing features within the specific game situations where they are actually needed.

 **Safe Failure Zones:** Low-stakes environments for practice, allowing players to learn through iteration without penalty.

 **Self-Efficacy Building:** Designing for early "wins" to foster intrinsic motivation and the belief that they can improve.

 **Strategic Belonging:** Creating an inclusive environment from the first screen to drive long-term user connection.

 **Actionable Feedback:** Shifting from general praise to task-focused, specific guidance for improvement.

I build the "playbooks" that turn passive users into active learners.

Designing Engagement: From Classroom Theory to Professional Play

Authoring and facilitating a specialized workshop that bridges the gap between improvisational theater and pedagogical effectiveness.

Building on 10+ years of facilitating teacher professional development (PD), I designed this "Improv for Educators" curriculum to solve the problem of teacher burnout and classroom management through the lens of performance.

Modular Learning: Architected a series of interactive "scenarios" that allow teachers to practice **Cognitive Agility** and **Active Listening** in a low-stakes environment.

- The "**Yes, And**" Framework: Translated the core tenet of improv into a classroom strategy for fostering student belonging and psychological safety.
- **Pilot Success:** Successfully piloted the refined workshop at a local school, receiving feedback that the experience was "uniquely illuminating and immediately implementable."

I take complex behavioral theories and design them into interactive experiences that change how people think and act.



Performance is the Science of Engagement

My parallel career as a professional actor and improviser is not a hobby—it is my **Design Methodology**. It allows me to bridge the gap between "technical instructions" and "human engagement."

Performance as Design Tool:

- **Improv:** I apply "Yes, And" thinking to rapid design iteration. It allows me to accept user constraints and build creative solutions without friction.
- **Acting & Hosting:** My experience as a professional emcee and actor has honed my ability to identify the "emotional core" of a user's journey, ensuring every script or lesson has the right pace and tone.
- **Voice-Over:** I write for the *ear* as much as the eye. This is critical for mobile learning (like Duolingo), where the rhythm of the language determines user success



Let's build something engaging

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