

COONEY CENTER SANDBOX

Planet Agora

Partner

Mrs Wordsmith



Product

Planet Agora is a social networking app for kids aged 8-13. Designed with gamified moderation to strengthen social-emotional learning and promote *pillars* such as body positivity, gender equality, and diversity, the app provides a safe environment for young people to develop social-emotional skills and confident digital citizenship.

Goals

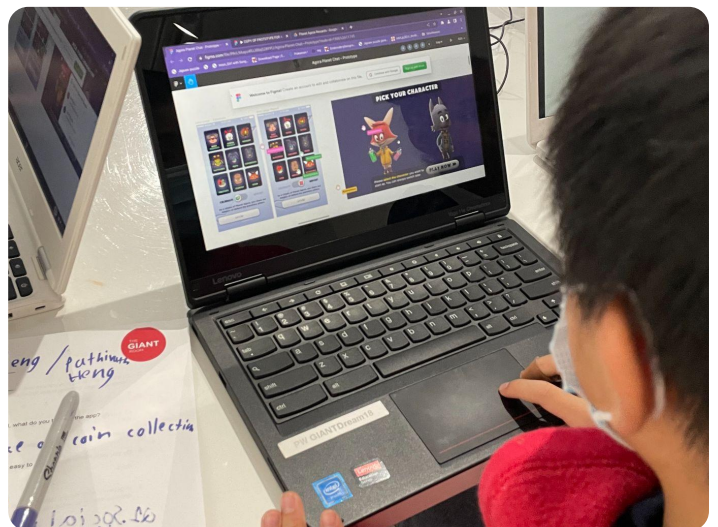
Planet Agora aims to empower kids with skills including self-awareness, responsible decision-making, and creativity through a community rooted in kindness. The app enables kids to champion positive behavior, reduce harm, and distinguish nuances in complex concepts such as diversity, body positivity, and gender equality.

Research questions

The Mrs Wordsmith team sought kids' input on the app around social-emotional skills building, enjoyment and ease of use, rewards and motivations for engagement, and robust ideas for creative features.

Child-centered Approach

The Joan Ganz Cooney Center partnered with The GIANT Room to conduct four in-person sessions in New York City with 20 children ages 8-13. We held 2-hour workshops where children playtested a paper prototype version of Planet Agora based on their current digital wireframe and content.



Findings & Recommendations

1

Finding

All kids enjoyed moderating content on Planet Agora. Participants enjoyed flagging content that broke a Planet Agora pillar, as well as celebrating content that aligned with a pillar. Some content was easier for kids to moderate than others. For example, kids could readily spot examples of body shaming, sexism, and racism, but content with hate speech was more challenging to identify.

Recommendations

Introduce content categories gradually so that children have time to understand the nuances of different pillars and can “level up” at their own pace.

2

Finding

Kids like to be asked for their opinion and are thoughtful in providing their feedback. They paid attention to the notifications to review content, analyzed the content carefully, and decided if the content was appropriate or inappropriate.

Recommendations

Have a comment section where kids can exchange their rationale for red-flagging or defending a message—to debate their truth and establish the shared standard for their own community.

“I would like him to participate in this program because it speaks to his interests and social awareness. It would also give him an opportunity to recognize sexist and derogatory behavior in the digital medium and learn how to express his empathy.”

—Parent of Planet Agora playtest participant

3

Finding

Kids posted kind comments, and flagged inappropriate content to get points for rewards and avatar customizations. When reflecting on their play experience, some kids said they didn't like it when others were mean but they liked that they could flag such behavior. They were keen to track their points, and were excited to redeem “coins” for customization rewards for their avatars.

Recommendations

Give points to users whose content gets celebrated (to encourage them to post more appropriate content), and remove points from those whose content gets flagged, enabling more point-generation opportunities for avatar customization.

When asked if they would invite friends to join Planet Agora, almost all participants said yes.

[The Cooney Center Sandbox](#) is a design and innovation lab that helps digital media innovators create products that are good for kids.

 **SESAME WORKSHOP**

Joan Ganz Cooney Center

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