WELL-BEING BY DESIGN FELLOWSHIP

2024 CASE STUDY



The 2024 Well-Being by Design Fellows participated in a four-month professional development program for designers and producers of interactive kids' technology and media. They met online to workshop their current projects, network with other fellows, and gain insights from research and industry leaders as they worked to incorporate principles of well-being into their designs. We are delighted to share highlights from each fellow's experience.

Melissa Gedney



Melissa Gedney is a learning designer, media producer, researcher, and performer living in Washington, DC, and is passionate about supporting joyful spaces where people can connect and create. She is currently the Senior Manager of the Learn Together Project at PBS KIDS, supporting co-design of content and experiences to foster intergenerational moments between kids and their grown-ups.



PRODUCT: Learn Together Project: Facilitating intergenerational learning moments between kids and their grown-ups with PBS KIDS **TARGET AGE:** Kids ages 2-8 and their grown-ups

PBSKIDS.ORG

PBS KIDS is dedicated to creating entertaining, educational content that reflects the unique and diverse experiences of children living in the United States. We strongly believe in the power and potential of quality media to inspire meaningful conversations and playful moments between kids and their grown-ups; we also believe that these moments are essential to helping kids grow and thrive.

The Learn Together Project is a strategy that aims to support *more* of those moments and conversations by (1) creating engaging intergenerational content that nurtures these interactions, and (2) supporting features and platforms that enable PBS KIDS and PBS member stations to share relevant content with families and educators.

With support from the CPB-PBS Ready To Learn Initiative, funded by the U.S. Department of Education, we have experimented with multiple ways to support intergenerational interactions grounded in our media. As children make more and more of their own media choices, a focus of my fellowship was thinking about the specific ways we may support kids in initiating these interactions with their grown-ups, rather than defaulting to a grown-up led experience.

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HOW WE INCORPORATE WELL-BEING COMPONENTS NOW

In reference to our grown-ups and family-facing experiences, the Learn Together strategy centers on **relationships**, promoting relationship-building conversations, and moments to support a child's healthy development. Our content for children and grown-ups exist in **safe and secure** digital environments, creating a contained space to explore and learn in developmentally appropriate ways.

WHAT MORE CAN OUR PRODUCT DO TO ADDRESS CHILDREN'S WELL-BEING?

Promote autonomy: The offscreen intergenerational activities and interactions our resources promote are currently grown-up-led. What could messaging these activities in such a way kids could initiate (and also do alone, if a grown-up was too busy) look like? This could center iconography, voiceovers, and episode-specific bridges to related content.

Expand the creative possibilities of our experiences:

Our suggested materials for extending the learning of a show often drive toward making things; however, how could our audiences benefit from expanding the way we think about activities to promote more imagination and original ideas? One direction could be a design commitment to being less prescriptive about the output.

Grow our commitment to activities that center diversity, equity, and inclusion: We will need to continue to grow and learn with our audience on how best to include and support the experiences of all families in the United States. One specific way we need to continue to grow is expanding our Spanish language offerings. Continuing to expand our creator pool and co-design community, and providing multiple means of engagement that accommodate different families' unique strengths and circumstances is ongoing and critical work.

REFLECTIONS

Overall, I found the initial experience of auditing our work against the 8 components of the RITEC framework to be incredibly informative. Taking an honest look at the strengths and weaknesses of our strategy through the lens of well-being offered an invaluable opportunity to make a targeted plan of where we could grow - and also understand what we were already doing well, so we wouldn't lose that.

The Youth Design Team offered suggestions to provide more outside activities, and to incorporate kid-friendly navigation for activities on grownup platforms.



The Learn Together Project is a strategy that supports features and platforms that enable PBS KIDS and PBS member stations to share relevant content with families and educators.



LOOKING AHEAD

I am looking forward to sharing my experience and recommendations with internal teams connected to the Learn Together Project, specifically thinking about ways we could grow our design to include emphasis on autonomy, creativity, and diversity, equity, and inclusion.

For the organization writ large, I will co-host a department-wide presentation on well-being and invite the team to join me in a reading group, which will borrow from our assignments. I'm eager to build shared language and a community of designers internally that has access to the resources the fellowship team curated. I'm tremendously grateful for the opportunity I had to work with the Cooney Center; I am eager to share what I learned so that other designers on the team (and our audience) may benefit. 66

I was motivated by hearing industry peers' reflections on centering well-being in their design processes and measures of success. How would childhood be different if the landscape of kids' digital lives was designed by people obsessed with (and held accountable to designing for) wellbeing? I got a peek into what that would look like in this fellowship community — and spoiler, it's hopeful!

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KEY TAKEAWAYS

- + Start from where you are: Transparently, I found it difficult to imagine a product that adequately addressed all of the principles that comprise RITEC's framework at once; sometimes overperforming in one category leads to underperforming in another. However, I believe that using the framework to find out where you are and help shape where you want to go is powerful. The more designers that are centering well-being in their process, the better products will be, and the more balanced the landscape will be overall.
- + **Measure what matters:** With so many competing measures of success, it is important to set goals you can celebrate and motivate a team on that align to well-being; how do we change the rules of the game so that well-being wins? Something I really valued hearing from other industry peers was the ways they incorporated well-being into their design standards.





Joan Ganz Cooney Center

For more information about the Well-Being by Design Fellowship program, please visit joanganzcooneycenter.org/fellowship2024