



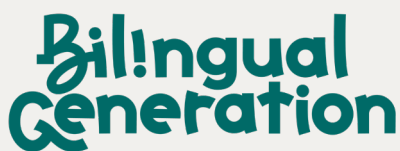
CASE STUDY

The 2025 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.

Maried Rivera Nieves



Maried Rivera Nieves is Senior Director of Operations and User Experience at Bilingual Generation. New to product management and UX, she brings a background in educator professional development focused on culture, race, and equity. Raised in Puerto Rico and Minnesota and now living in NYC, Maried is also an artist who brings her creativity and bicultural perspective to designing joyful, culturally rich bilingual learning experiences for children.



Bili is a joyful, research-based bilingual learning app designed to help young children develop their bilingualism and biliteracy while fostering pride in their language and identity.

PRODUCT: Bili **TARGET AGE:** 3-8 → [THEBILIAPP.COM](https://thebiliapp.com)

The *Bili* app is designed for emergent bilingual (EB) children ages 3-8 – starting with Latine learners – whose home languages and cultural knowledge are too often sidelined in traditional American classrooms where learning English is positioned as paramount. Built with families, educators, and artists, Bili offers bilingual content in languages like Spanish and Aymara in the form of stories, wellness activities, games, and community connection—all designed to build bilingualism and biliteracy alongside early literacy, numeracy, social-emotional learning (SEL), and science skills. Our goal is to affirm and sustain children's languages and identities from the start.

We call our approach “abuelita and science-approved”: rooted in everyday family and ancestral knowledge, backed by research, and always culture-forward. Our content meets children in context and honors who they are, where they come from, and how they learn best. Every part of the experience is designed to spark joy, pride, and language development in young children, while strengthening connections between home and school. Through Bili, families reclaim their stories, and children grow up knowing that who they are, and how they speak, is powerful.

Our long-term vision is to grow a sustainable, replicable model that other heritage language communities can adapt to their own needs, wisdoms, and dreams.

WHAT COMPONENTS OF WELL-BEING DOES MY PROJECT ADDRESS?

Bili supports children's well-being by affirming their identities, building their competence across multiple learning domains, and celebrating linguistic and cultural diversity across the Latinx diaspora. Through bilingual read-alouds, affirmation and conversation cards, and simple games focused on early literacy, and numeracy, *Bili* offers low-stakes ways for children to build key skills. Featuring regional Spanish dialects, gender-inclusive Spanish, and eventually indigenous-language stories, every element is designed to foster joyful biliteracy development in a calm, safe, ad-free environment and help children build a sense of belonging rooted in culture, language, and community.

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Participating in this fellowship opened up a whole world of research, resources, initiatives, organizations, and individuals doing exciting work around digital play, well-being, and co-design in children's media. Chief among them are my co-fellows, all of whom are kind, brilliant people working on creative and enriching projects our kids need.

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HOW CAN MY PRODUCT BETTER ADDRESS CHILDREN'S WELL-BEING?

- + **Emotions & SEL Integration.** While social-emotional learning is already a critical component of *Bili*, we could do more to extend it across the app, not just in our Wellness and Community sections. Fellowship conversations around well-being metrics have shaped our current work with a coach to rethink SEL measurement and inspired ideas for how our *Bili* character could model emotional regulation through play.
- + **Creativity & Expression.** We plan to offer children the opportunity to personalize avatars and are exploring ways for them to contribute original writing or artwork. We want kids to feel like *Bili* is theirs by customizing their experience and expressing themselves through creative arts—key for language development and identity formation.
- + **Relationships & Social Connection.** We'd like to explore shared play inspired by group games played en familia or comunidad—aligning with *Bili*'s goals around numeracy, social-emotional growth, and designing technology that encourages real-world connection. Our Community section offers the most opportunity for innovation, and pilot users have suggested rich ideas for cross-cultural and intergenerational connection.





REFLECTION

I learned three key things about designing a product with well-being at the center: 1) Co-design is essential. Children, families, and educators must be design partners, not just testers. The Youth Design Team shared actionable ideas to improve our game onboarding and reinforced the power of user voice in design conversations. 2) Surveys are not developmentally appropriate for young children. Behavioral metrics may offer more meaningful, accurate ways to assess well-being (e.g., social-emotional skills). 3) Digital hygiene and AI literacy are foundational to product design, since children are growing up in a world where healthy tech habits are essential for their well-being.

LOOKING AHEAD

The fellowship affirmed that well-being should be a core design goal—not a secondary benefit, and equipped me with frameworks to help make that a reality. I'm looking forward to bringing what I've learned to our product team and proposing paths forward in making co-design a standing part of our development process, establishing separate more tailored design goals for our preschool and early school-age users, and reworking our approach to metrics. We invite educators, researchers, community organizations, and funders to join us in piloting and shaping *Bili*, so together we can create joyful, culturally rich bilingual learning experiences for kids.

+ **Prioritizing co-design.** We've partnered with families and teachers in the early stages of concept development and ongoing testing, but I now understand the value of engaging in co-design as an ongoing practice. Fellows past and present have shared exciting ideas about youth and caregiver advisory boards and other methods for creating regular feedback loops and co-design opportunities with our stakeholders, especially children.

- + **Refining developmental targets.** I'm learning that designing for ages 3-8 is both a strength and a challenge! In this early phase, we're focusing on building a strong technical and content foundation for bilingual learning. As we grow, articulating target outcomes (and design goals) by age group, especially for social-emotional skills and language development, will be increasingly important to ensure *Bili* supports users' well-being at every stage.
- + **Evolving our measurement strategy.** We're already re-examining how we measure social-emotional learning on *Bili*, and we recognize that well-being (in our context, strengthening children's cultural identity, sense of belonging, and confidence in their language skills, etc.) is a crucial but complex dimension to capture. We can build on our existing metrics by co-defining with children, families, and teachers what well-being looks like in practice. Co-defining success with our users will help us ensure our measurements reflect what truly matters, not just to us, but to our users.

We're also developing our logic model, and this provides a timely opportunity to embed well-being more intentionally across our platform. The frameworks introduced through this fellowship (like RITEC, Playful by Design and the Digital Thriving Playbook) offer valuable guidance to ground our design goals and methods. I see this as a long-term shift, but I'm excited to bring these ideas into our work and see how they can help us better support the children and families we serve.



Joan Ganz Cooney Center

For more information about the Well-Being by Design Fellowship program, please visit joanganzcooneycenter.org/fellowship2025