



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.

# Grace Collins



Grace Collins is the Founder of Snowbright Studio, an award-winning LGBTQ+ game studio dedicated to publishing heartwarming games and experiences. Grace previously led games and education policy at the US Department of Education and later coordinated federal game policy across the executive branch. Prior to serving at the Department, they managed and developed educational game projects at the Smithsonian Institution. Grace has taught computer science and game design at multiple levels and was profiled by the Associated Press for founding the first esports team in the nation at an all-girls' high school.

## EMPOWERING STUDENTS TO ENGAGE WITH CIVICS

*Time Tails: Civics* is a digital game and set of connected experiences that help students bridge the learning gap between low civics educational attainment in the classroom and high interest in civics issues and practice. Students, particularly young women, want to be involved in civics and to take action in advocacy—but they lack the education to succeed. The National Assessment of Educational Progress has shown that only 22% of American students reach the “proficient” standard of civics knowledge at grade 8 and only 24% reach proficient at graduation in grade 12. A significant number of underserved students, particularly girls, broadly lose interest in civics and other areas of study at the age of 15. *Time Tails: Civics* aims to help empower these students by providing clear pathways to develop deeper interest, confidence, and connections to civics education and careers at the time in their lives when it matters the most.



**PRODUCT:** Time Tails: Civics!  
**TARGET AGE:** 13 to 16

Explore history and save the timeline with Ari & Zoe in *Time Tails: Civics!* Players will travel from Ancient Greece to 1776 and beyond as they learn core civics concepts, the history of democracy, and put civics into practice through unique classroom activities that change the outcome of the game.

→ [SNOWBRIGHTSTUDIO.COM/TIME-TAILS](https://snowbrightstudio.com/time-tails)

## HOW WE INCORPORATE WELL-BEING COMPONENTS NOW

*Time Tails: Civics* addresses **Competence** (keeping students in the zone of proximal development), **Creativity** (leading students from digital to in-person activities and exploration), **Empowerment** (through roleplay and guided peer interactions), and **Emotional Regulation** (through guidance and practice in navigating difficult topics in peer settings).

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

**Social Connection:** We are looking for ways to further define and guide student behaviors to help them “level up” from guided conversations to more freeform conversations as they learn the skills necessary to engage with each other.

**Self-Actualization:** We aim to find more ways to insert self-reflections and self-affirmations into the work being done.

**Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion:** History has been written by the conquerors, and that often means that marginalized voices are left out of the history books. The broader *Time Tails* series has made it a goal to uplift what remains of those voices and will continue to do so.

## REFLECTION

We found that the Youth Design Team shared many values and expectations with our own team about what they would like to see in a game-like experience like *Time Tails*. What we didn't expect was the urgency and immediacy that they ask for from these experiences. This has helped shape our thinking about how we can better signal and communicate content early on in the game which then more quickly addresses their anxieties about expectations. That is particularly important in experiences where divisive and difficult topics may be broached.



*Two of the program's Youth Design Team members jumped in during a session to debate the merits of tyranny versus democracy in Ancient Greece. During that debate, one high school student explained to her peer that “Even though tyranny may be efficient, it isn't the best for society because only one person decides what is best for others to do.” Our team was excited to see this moment emerge as a student processed the concepts that they had been exploring in the game, formed an opinion, and expressed a polite, well-reasoned argument to their peer. Helping teens find moments to express themselves and explore the difficult topics of our shared democracy is the fundamental driving purpose behind *Time Tails: Civics*.*





### LOOKING AHEAD

*Time Tails: Civics* is currently in a prototype phase. We will be developing the game series over the next two years to both refine the experience and integrate content from every standard in the National Standards for Civics & Government. *Time Tails: Civics* can help fill that civics education gap in classrooms by being a guided learning experience that covers everything young teens need to know to develop core civics concepts and practices. Thanks to the fellowship, we hope to continue integrating student co-design practices into the development of the game series and setting milestones where we consider each iteration of the series through the different well-being component lenses.

- + With *Time Tails: Civics*, we hope to provide every classroom with the ability to have a fun time while engaging with content aligned to the full National Standards for Civics & Government
- + Our goal is to provide research data on the impact of our narrative-heavy, game-based intervention as compared to “business as usual” civics education. Studies show that students learn and care more when there are narratives, opportunities to practice, and opportunities to play. Our hope for all of Snowbright’s games is that we can continue to build this body of evidence.
- + The *Time Tails* series is an effort to tackle the challenges of hybrid digital and in-person learning through games. We hope that our success here with civics allows us to adapt this hybrid model to other subject areas and to showcase those methods and design processes to others in the field.



Joan Ganz Cooney Center

For more information about the Well-Being by Design Fellowship program, please visit [joanganzcooneycenter.org/fellowship2024](https://joanganzcooneycenter.org/fellowship2024)