

FAMILY TALK

Research & Design Process

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Choosing A Topic

Capstone projects must address a human need via communication design in a unique way.

“Addressing a need” most often takes the form of “solving a problem”, but can also involve promoting shared values such as education, cultural awareness, civil engagement, etc. Whatever the chosen issue is, it must have a clear need for designerly form-making.

What Interests Me?

When it came to choosing my topic I started off by identifying some large topics that interested me and that I felt I could impact in some way with design. Some of my top choices that I explored included:

- Cultural Awareness in Cincinnati
- Adoption
- Women Empowerment
- Mental Illness & Stress

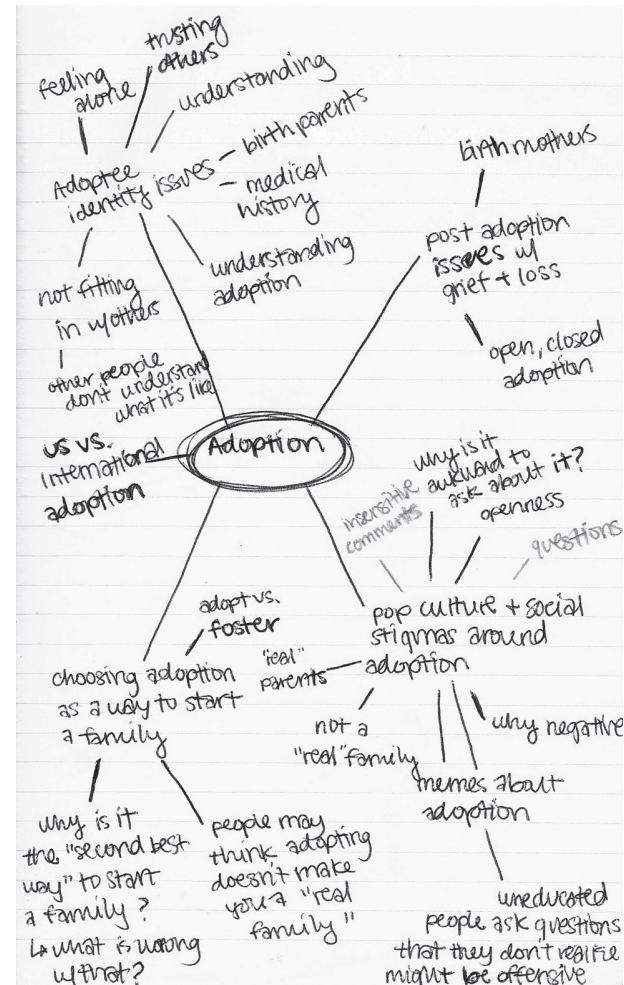
In the end I chose to do adoption, a topic that is very close and personal to me. After creating a word map to explore all the possible subcategories within my topic, I decided I wanted to focus on parents and families helping teen and young adult adoptees understand and cope with post-adoption issues.

Topics:

- cultural awareness - cultural connections in Cincinnati
 - learning languages
- homelessness and jobs
- adoption / foster care *
 - world hunger + poverty
 - education - cultural
- women empowerment * (gender equality)
- art education
 - cultivating Cincinnati activities/events in an app (like stash)
- nature conservation *
- mental illness + stress
 - is the rise in tech. making people's attention span short (less focused)
- poverty + world hunger edu.

Adoption - bonding w/ an adopted child

- telling them they are adopted
- preparing to adopt - what to expect
- age + adoption - how to deal w/ older adoptees
- dealing w/ grief + loss
- birth mother / parents
- target age? ~~foreign~~ foreign adoption
- game to understand adoption process?
- video testimonials





Research & Analysis

To find out what the big issues with post-adoption were I looked at a lot of online articles, blogs, and videos about adoption and the mental issues and questions that may arise during the teen and young adult years of an adoptee. The big issues that I decided I wanted to cover included:

- Personal Identity
- Understanding and Coping with grief
- Talking with others about adoption

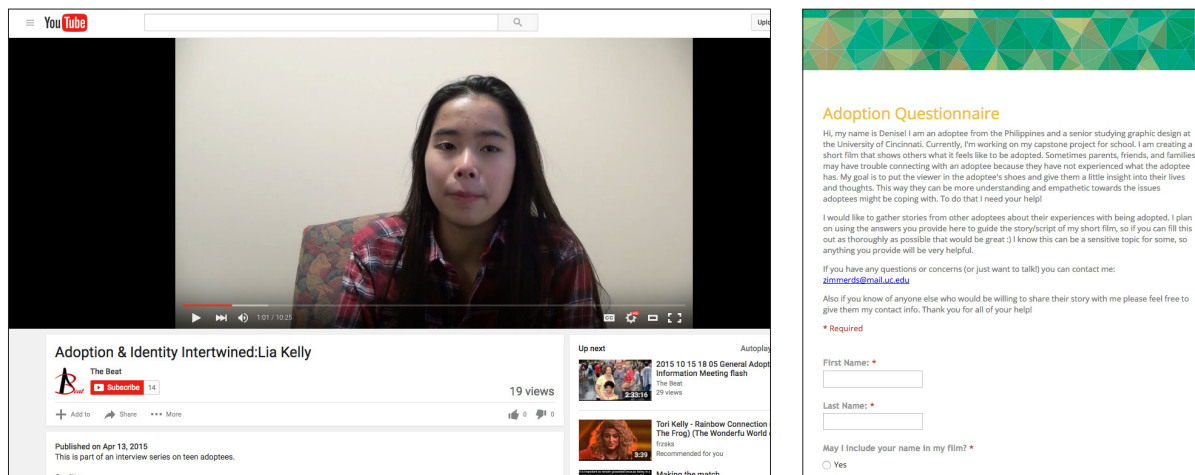
One thing I noticed while researching was that the adoption resources that are available for adoptees and parents were mostly either geared specifically towards the parents or to the child, there wasn't much cross over.

Understanding Adoption From An Adoptee's Point of View

Adoption is very subjective and situational. Each adoptee is going to approach issues differently. Parents, family members, and friends can't read an adoptee's mind and if an adoptee doesn't want to open up about the adoption issues that they are struggling with, it may be hard for their loved one's to help them out. I wondered if there was a way to put the adoptee's parents, family members, and friends in the adoptee's shoes, giving them a different perspective of the issues adoptees struggle to cope with. This would allow them to be more empathic and understanding of what the adoptee is going through.

Gathering Stories

I reached out to other adoptees and watched lots of adoptee testimonial videos to gather their stories and insights on their adoption experiences. I also took into account my personal experiences as an adoptee and used these to further understand what issues how I may go about solving my problem.



The image shows two side-by-side screenshots. The left screenshot is a YouTube video player for a video titled "Adoption & Identity Intertwined: Lia Kelly" by "The Best". The video shows a young woman with long dark hair, wearing a red and black plaid shirt, sitting in a chair and looking directly at the camera. The video has 19 views and was published on April 13, 2015. The right screenshot is a form titled "Adoption Questionnaire". It contains text explaining the purpose of the form, which is to gather stories from adoptees for a short film. It includes contact information for Denise (denise@gmail.uc.edu) and a section for the respondent to provide their first name, last name, and whether they want to be included in the film.

Adoption & Identity Intertwined: Lia Kelly

The Best

19 views

Published on Apr 13, 2015

This is part of an interview series on teen adoptees.

Adoption Questionnaire

Hi, my name is Denise! I am an adoptee from the Philippines and a senior studying graphic design at the University of Cincinnati. Currently, I'm working on my capstone project for school. I am creating a short film that shows others what it feels like to be adopted. Sometimes parents, friends, and families may have trouble connecting with an adoptee because they have not experienced what the adoptee has. My goal is to put the viewer in the adoptee's shoes and give them a little insight into their lives and thoughts. This way they can be more understanding and empathetic towards the issues adoptees might be coping with. To do that I need your help!

I would like to gather stories from other adoptees about their experiences with being adopted. I plan on using the answers you provide here to guide the story/script of my short film, so if you can fill this out as thoroughly as possible that would be great :) I know this can be a sensitive topic for some, so anything you provide will be very helpful.

If you have any questions or concerns (or just want to talk) you can contact me: denise@gmail.uc.edu

Also if you know of anyone else who would be willing to share their story with me please feel free to give them my contact info. Thank you for all of your help!

* Required

First Name: *

Last Name: *

May I include your name in my film? *

☐ Yes

☐ No

Sources:

Eldridge, S. (1999). Twenty things adopted kids wish their adoptive parents knew. New York, NY: Dell Pub.

Patricelli, K. (n.d.). Long-Term Issues for the Adopted Child. Retrieved July 7, 2015, from <http://www.amhc.org/11-adoption/article/11455-long-term-issues-for-the-adopted-child>

Johnson, L. (2013, March 13). 10 Things Adoptees Want You to Know. Retrieved July 7, 2015, from http://www.huffingtonpost.com/lesli-johnson/adoption_b_2161590.html

Being Adopted, and Being Me. (2007, November 16). Retrieved July 7, 2015 from <http://relativechoices.blogs.nytimes.com/2007/11/16/being-adopted-and-being-me/?scp=10&sq=adopted%20from%20China%20teenagers&st=cs>

Project Shift

As I was researching and hearing other adoptee's stories I found it increasingly harder to consolidate all adoptee stories and experiences. I realized there were many external factors that played a role in how an adoptee approaches or reacts to a certain situation. Being able to say all adoptee's feel a certain way would be hard to do. So I decided to shift directions.

I ran into a more controlled issue when researching and that was the lack of education about adoption when it came to talking about family in the classroom. Through reading parent stories about situations regarding adoption that their children experienced inside and outside the classroom, I noticed a lot of kids are uneducated about different family types. This can lead to them asking insensitive questions about adoption and making adopted kids feel singled out.

Without being properly educated on unique family circumstances teachers may not be able to appropriately address these issues in the classroom. While they can't control what kids learn outside of the classroom and at home, they can control what they learn inside the classroom.

Changing The Way Students Learn About Family in the Classroom

Initially I wanted to focus on adoption education, but realized many of the issues can pertain to all types of non-traditional families, not just adoptive ones. So I decided to expand my solution to educating students about all non-traditional families including adoptive, foster, and blended families, as well as families with single, same sex parents.

“

Adopted children may face challenges other children do not, but I am sure that to many adopted children hearing that they are the exception to the rule when it comes to a simple family tree may be disheartening....I don't think a 7th grade History teacher is the person that should point out how they are technically different from their classmates.

”

“

This isn't the first time my kids have been questioned on the “realness” of their family by their peers. I suspect it won't be the last. I know I can't expect every single kid to have been educated on adoption, and inevitably my kids will be the ones educating their peers.

”

Sources:

“Talking About Adoption In The Classroom.” - Blog. 28 Oct. 2011. Web. 12 Apr. 2016.

“Rage Against the Minivan: Parents, Please Educate Your Kids about Adoption so Mine Don't Have to.” Rage Against the Minivan: Parents, Please Educate Your Kids about Adoption so Mine Don't Have to. 27 July 2012. Web. 12 Apr. 2016. <<http://www.rageagainsttheminivan.com/2012/07/parents-please-educate-your-kids-about.html>>.



Problem Statement, Deliverables & Project Goals

In today's society non-traditional families are becoming more common. As a result, many children that are in school are not just coming from traditional family* backgrounds, but also from diverse family backgrounds. These include adoptive, foster, and blended families, and families with single and same sex parents.

Currently, the common elementary classroom lesson plans about family pertain to traditional families. Because of this students who come from a non-traditional family may feel excluded.

**A traditional family is made up of a mother and father and their biological children.*

Deliverables

My solution to this problem is to create a resource for teachers that gives them the tools to educate students on different family backgrounds, ultimately helping to foster inclusion among all students within the classroom. The main deliverables I plan to focus on are:

- Educational animated video series - features kids of various non-traditional families who explain how their family was formed and give a basic overview of each family type.
- Creating the introductory animated video for an adoptive family.
- Designing the layout of the potential website that would house the featured videos and secondary informational links and adjusted family activities.

Project Goals

- Spark discussion about family and help address questions that kids might have about different types of families.
- Teach kids to respect and appreciate all types of families that may be different than their own. In addition, help students empathize with kids of different families and reinforce their understanding and awareness.
- Dispel stereotypes kids might have about types of families.
- Help make all students feel included in the lesson.



Audience & Users

Audience

My primary target audience are kids in 2nd and 3rd grade. I chose this age because I think that kids will be more susceptible to the material that is presented.

At this time in their life kids are starting to figure out who they are and tend to be more curious, asking their peers personal questions that could be insensitive, without their knowing. Educating kids about family diversities early on allows them to understand, respect, and appreciate all types of families that may be different than their own.

Users

Teachers will be the primary users of Family Talk. They can use the site to prepare lesson plans for family units in class. In addition they can further educate themselves on different family types and learn how to approach difficult topics/questions about family that may arise in the classroom.

Parents can also use the site if they are home schooling their children or if they want to teach their kids about different families outside of the classroom.

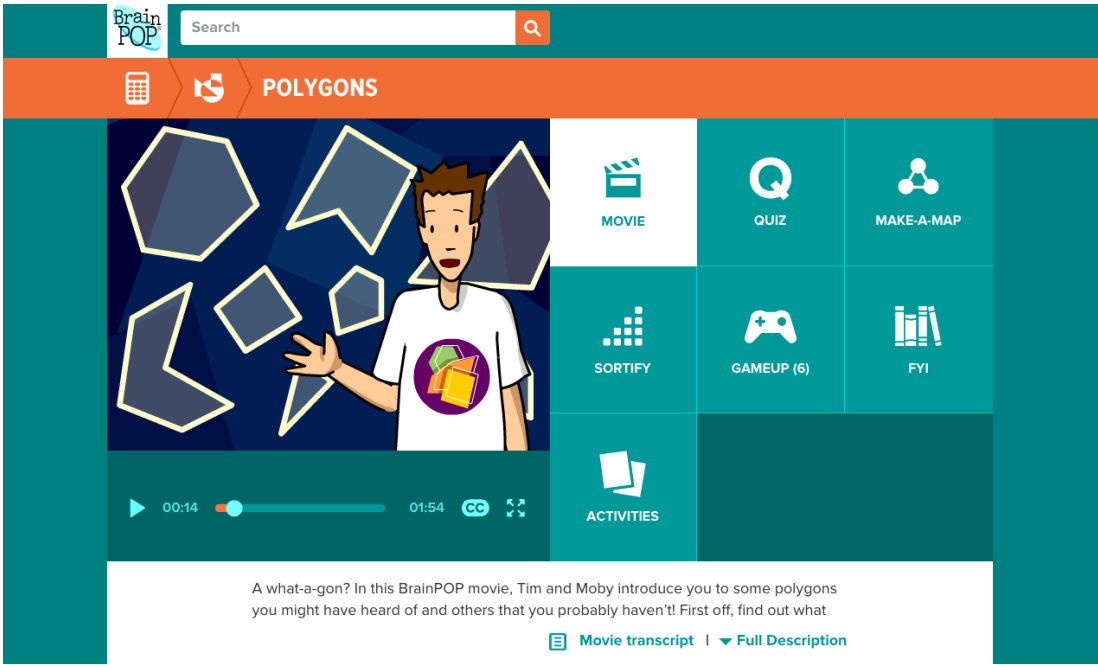




Benchmarking

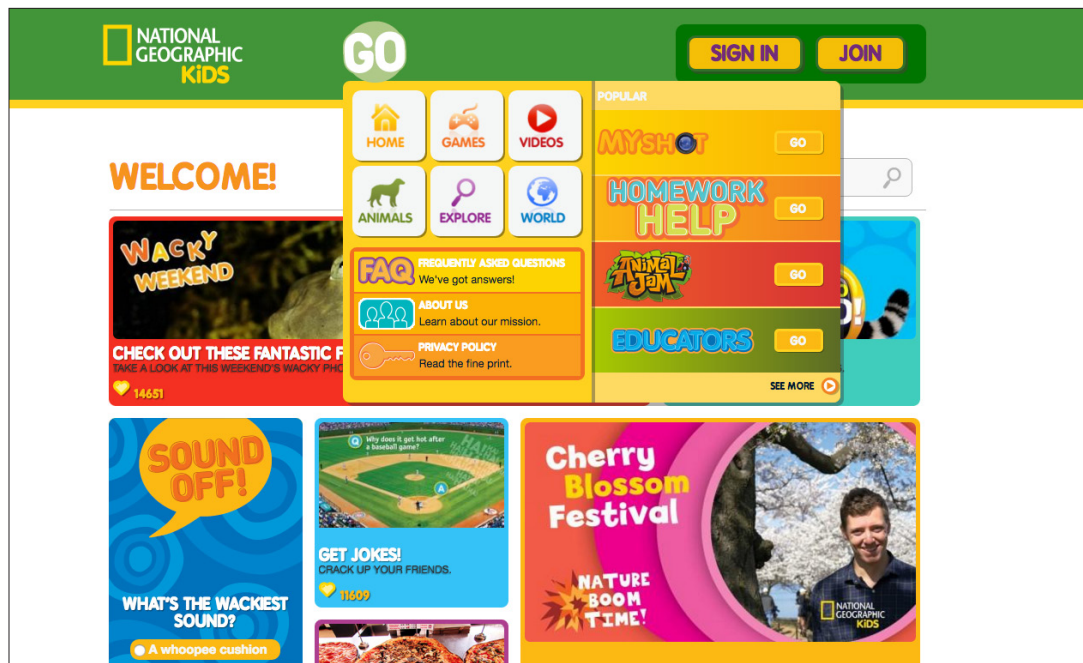
BrainPop

BrainPop is an educational site for kids of all ages that features mini lessons on a variety of school subjects like Math and English. Each unit features a video lesson along with a quiz, activities, games, and other educational information to reinforce what was taught in the video. I really liked the set up of this site and the inclusion of the extra activities.



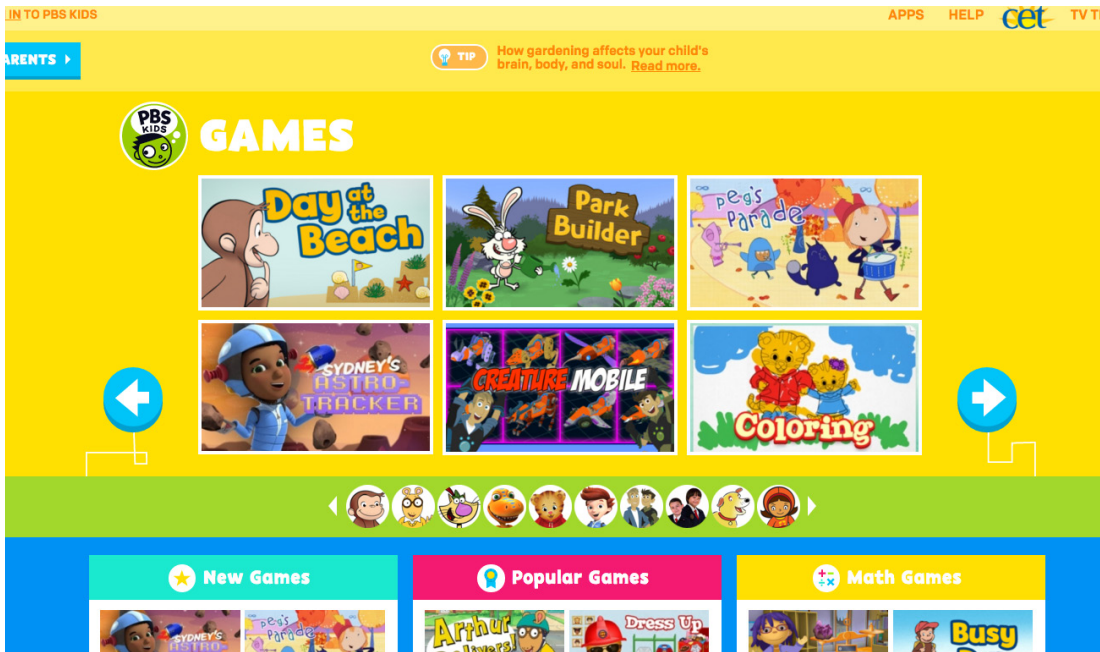
National Geographic Kids

This site does a great job of presenting information in a fun and interesting way for kids. The colors and fonts are welcoming and the overall style of their brand is something that is attractive to my target audience. The site also includes fun educational games and videos.



PBS Kids

I really liked the bright, fun, inviting style that this site has. One of their main vehicles for presenting information is through fun animated educational videos. Interactive games and activities also available.



Current Lesson Plans

I also bench marked some of the current resources out there that are available for teachers to use to create family lesson plans. One thing I noticed was that many of the sources just gave suggestions on ways to implement words like adoption into a lesson plan, provided activities, and suggested books to read, but they lacked more in depth information on the various types of families. How can teachers educate students on various family types without more information on them? What if the teacher doesn't know anything about adoption or what it's like to live in a blended family?

Consolidating all resources into a site similar to BrainPop, National Geographic Kids, or PBS Kids, and providing educational videos/resources that dive into depth on educating students about family diversities would be more helpful to teachers.

The screenshot shows the homepage of the Teaching Tolerance website. At the top, the logo features three hands in red, blue, and green, with the text "TEACHING TOLERANCE" and "A PROJECT OF THE SOUTHERN POVERTY LAW CENTER" below it. A search bar is on the right. A navigation menu includes links for Magazine, Professional Development, Classroom Resources, Film Kits, Mix It Up, Publications, Webinars, and Perspectives. On the left, there are filters for Search by Keyword, Type of Resource, Select Topic, Grade Level, Anti-Bias Domain, and Subject. Social media icons for Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest, YouTube, and Google+ are displayed. A "NEW" banner advertises "THE TEACHING TOLERANCE WEBINAR SERIES". Below that, a yellow banner says "TEACHING TOLERANCE SPRING 2016 READ OUR". The main content area features the headline "Every Family Is the Same. Every Family Is Different." followed by Classroom Resources, Anti-Bias Domain, Grade Level, and Subject filters. It lists Objectives and Activities that will help students, such as understanding similarities and differences, and exhibiting pride in their families. Essential Questions and Materials Needed are also listed.

TEACHING TOLERANCE
A PROJECT OF THE SOUTHERN POVERTY LAW CENTER

Magazine Professional Development Classroom Resources Film Kits Mix It Up Publications Webinars Perspectives

Search by Keyword Type of Resource

Select Topic

Grade Level Anti-Bias Domain

Subject

NEW
THE TEACHING TOLERANCE
WEBINAR SERIES

TEACHING TOLERANCE
SPRING 2016
READ OUR

Every Family Is the Same. Every Family Is Different.

Classroom Resources: [Family](#)
Anti-Bias Domain: [Diversity](#)
Grade Level: [Pre K to K](#) [Grades 1 to 2](#) [Grades 3 to 5](#)
Subject: [Reading and Language Arts](#) [Social Studies](#) [Arts](#)

Objectives:

Activities will help students:

- understand, appreciate and respect similarities and differences
- exhibit pride in their own unique families
- learn about different types of families
- identify specific similarities and differences between their family and their classmates' families

Essential Questions:

- What makes a family a family?
- How can someone who looks different be the same as me?
- How do you feel when you visit a family that is different from yours?
- What does it mean to accept someone's differences?
- How can I be more accepting of someone who is different from me?

Materials Needed:

- Question Cards ([K-2](#), [3-5](#)) (cut out and placed in a pile)



Telling The Story

Introduction to Adoption

The script I wrote is for the introductory video in the adoptive family series where Theo, an adopted child, shares how his family was made. He covers the basics of how adoption works while talking about how they played a role in his story. The other videos in the series would dive a little deeper into the adoption process, discuss the people that play a role in an adoption, and explain the different types of adopted families.

Script Reviews

Since my audience is 2nd and 3rd graders I had a friend of mine, who is a 2nd grade teacher, review my script to ensure that students would be able to understand what was being said. In addition, I sent my script to a fellow co-worker who is a copywriter. With the help of their feedback I was able to tighten up my script and make sure that it was appropriate for my target audience.

Storyboarding

Once I had my script set I storyboarded out my video to figure out what the visuals would be. I wanted the story to have a reflective feel to it, yet visually show the story of how Theo was adopted.

Family Talk!

Adoption Video Script

Voice Over Directions:

I would really like the VO to sound very natural and spoken at an even pace. This video is ~~automatically intended to be viewed~~ by kids in 2nd-3rd grade. Pretend like you are Theo and you are sharing this story about your family to your classmates!

(voice: excited)

Hi there! I'm Theo and I'm going to tell you about how my family was made. This is my family! These are my parents and our dog Milo. My family story is special because I was adopted!

(voice: sentimental and hopeful)

When I was born my birthmother was very young. At the time she didn't have the money or support she needed to help take care of a baby. She wanted me to have the best life possible, but knew that she could not give me that life. That's why she decided to put me up for adoption. Adoption is letting someone else take care of your baby. Putting me up for adoption meant that another family who was ready for a baby could take care of me, because she could not. So I was brought to an orphanage. At the orphanage I was taken care of until I was adopted.

(voice: happy)

That's where my mom and dad came in! My mom and dad wanted to create a family, but they could not have a baby of their own. They wanted to have a child very badly so they decided to adopt! Adoption is one of the many ways that a family can be made.

Before my parents could adopt me they had to do lots of homework and fill out lots of papers. They visited different orphanages and met with a social worker, who helped match them with a baby. After several months of waiting my parents finally got the news that they could adopt me!

They were very excited to meet me and immediately started preparing for me to come home. They decorated my bedroom and bought lots of things that parents need to take care of a baby. Just like your parents might have done when you were born!

The day that my parents came to pick me up at the orphanage I was nervous, but also very excited to meet them! When they arrived the caregiver handed me off to my parents, and that was the first time they hugged me. We were finally a family! They took me home and the rest of my family was waiting to surprise us! We had a big celebration and everything. I was so happy to finally be with my forever family!

Adoption brought my family together and I am very thankful and happy to have a mom and dad that love me very much! But I'm not the only one who is adopted. Lots of people are adopted! You may even have a family member or friend that is adopted.

My story is just one of the many ways children can be adopted into a family. In the next video I will tell you more about what birthparents are and the different types of adoption. Thanks for listening to family story! See ya later!

STORYBOARDS: Family Talk! PP. 1-2

1. *new video*

2. *"Hi there! I'm Theo and I'm going to tell you about how my family was made."*

3. *"This is my family!"*

4. *"There are two parents and a dog called Milo. My family story is special because I was adopted!"*

5. *"When I was born my birthmother was very young. At the time she didn't have the money or support she needed to help take care of a baby. She wanted me to have the best life possible, but knew that she could not give me that life. That's why she decided to put me up for adoption. Adoption is letting someone else take care of your baby. Putting me up for adoption meant that another family who was ready for a baby could take care of me, because she could not. So I was brought to an orphanage. At the orphanage I was taken care of until I was adopted."*

6. *"That's where my mom and dad came in! My mom and dad wanted to create a family, but they could not have a baby of their own. They wanted to have a child very badly so they decided to adopt! Adoption is one of the many ways that a family can be made."*

STORYBOARDS: Family Talk! PP. 3-4

1. *"Before my parents could adopt me they had to do lots of homework and fill out lots of papers. They visited different orphanages and met with a social worker, who helped match them with a baby. After several months of waiting my parents finally got the news that they could adopt me!"*

2. *"They were very excited to meet me and immediately started preparing for me to come home. They decorated my bedroom and bought lots of things that parents need to take care of a baby. Just like your parents might have done when you were born!"*

3. *"The day that my parents came to pick me up at the orphanage I was nervous, but also very excited to meet them! When they arrived the caregiver handed me off to my parents, and that was the first time they hugged me. We were finally a family! They took me home and the rest of my family was waiting to surprise us! We had a big celebration and everything. I was so happy to finally be with my forever family!"*

4. *"Adoption brought my family together and I am very thankful and happy to have a mom and dad that love me very much! But I'm not the only one who is adopted. Lots of people are adopted! You may even have a family member or friend that is adopted."*

5. *"My story is just one of the many ways children can be adopted into a family. In the next video I will tell you more about what birthparents are and the different types of adoption. Thanks for listening to family story! See ya later!"*

6. *"My story is just one of the many ways children can be adopted into a family. In the next video I will tell you more about what birthparents are and the different types of adoption. Thanks for listening to family story! See ya later!"*

STORYBOARDS: Family Talk! PP. 5-6

1. *"Before my parents could adopt me they had to do lots of homework and fill out lots of papers. They visited different orphanages and met with a social worker, who helped match them with a baby. After several months of waiting my parents finally got the news that they could adopt me!"*

2. *"They were very excited to meet me and immediately started preparing for me to come home. They decorated my bedroom and bought lots of things that parents need to take care of a baby. Just like your parents might have done when you were born!"*

3. *"The day that my parents came to pick me up at the orphanage I was nervous, but also very excited to meet them! When they arrived the caregiver handed me off to my parents, and that was the first time they hugged me. We were finally a family! They took me home and the rest of my family was waiting to surprise us! We had a big celebration and everything. I was so happy to finally be with my forever family!"*

4. *"Adoption brought my family together and I am very thankful and happy to have a mom and dad that love me very much! But I'm not the only one who is adopted. Lots of people are adopted! You may even have a family member or friend that is adopted."*

5. *"My story is just one of the many ways children can be adopted into a family. In the next video I will tell you more about what birthparents are and the different types of adoption. Thanks for listening to family story! See ya later!"*

6. *"My story is just one of the many ways children can be adopted into a family. In the next video I will tell you more about what birthparents are and the different types of adoption. Thanks for listening to family story! See ya later!"*

STORYBOARDS: Family Talk! PP. 7-8

1. *"Before my parents could adopt me they had to do lots of homework and fill out lots of papers. They visited different orphanages and met with a social worker, who helped match them with a baby. After several months of waiting my parents finally got the news that they could adopt me!"*

2. *"They were very excited to meet me and immediately started preparing for me to come home. They decorated my bedroom and bought lots of things that parents need to take care of a baby. Just like your parents might have done when you were born!"*

3. *"The day that my parents came to pick me up at the orphanage I was nervous, but also very excited to meet them! When they arrived the caregiver handed me off to my parents, and that was the first time they hugged me. We were finally a family! They took me home and the rest of my family was waiting to surprise us! We had a big celebration and everything. I was so happy to finally be with my forever family!"*

4. *"Adoption brought my family together and I am very thankful and happy to have a mom and dad that love me very much! But I'm not the only one who is adopted. Lots of people are adopted! You may even have a family member or friend that is adopted."*

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6. *"My story is just one of the many ways children can be adopted into a family. In the next video I will tell you more about what birthparents are and the different types of adoption. Thanks for listening to family story! See ya later!"*



Branding, Style, & Character Design

Inspiration



Branding & Color

When it came to naming my project I decided to go with “Family Talk” because one of the main goals of my project is to spark discussion about family in the classroom. For the logo design I wanted to match the character style so I created my own chunky letters that were both fun and inviting. In addition, I chose a bright saturated color palette.



FAMILY
TALK



FAMILY
TALK



FAMILY
Talk!



FAMILY
TALK
theo's story



FAMILY
Talk!

Gotham

A B C D E F G H I J K L M N O P
Q R S T U V W X Y Z

Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetur
adipiscing elit, sed diam nonummy nibh
euismod tincidunt ut laoreet dolore magna.



Character Design

I wanted my characters to be approachable and realistic to some extent so that my audience can empathize with them. I took a lot of inspiration from Disney style characters and popular kids animated television shows.



Initial Iterations

I started off by creating my main character, Theo, and testing out design styles with him. I originally wanted to do all digitally drawn characters so that they had a hand done personalized feel to them, but decided vector designs would be easier when it came to rigging and animating. I focused on making the faces expressive to add life to them. At first I made the eyes simple and round, but moved to a more realistic design because it made them seem more relatable.



Additional Characters

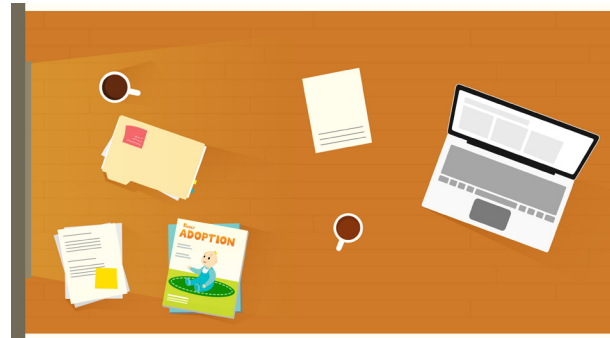
Once I figured out the character style of Theo I went on to create the rest of his family, and any additional characters that appear in the video, in the same way. I made sure to incorporate the colors that I had picked for my branding so that everything is cohesive.

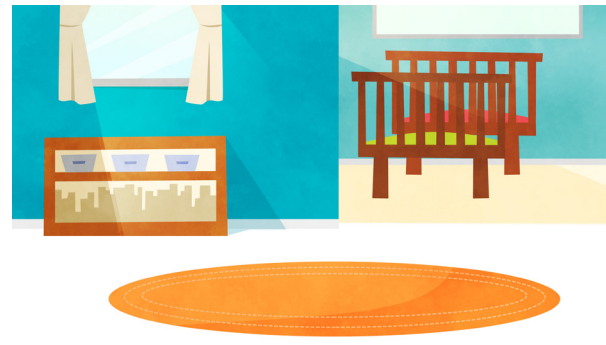
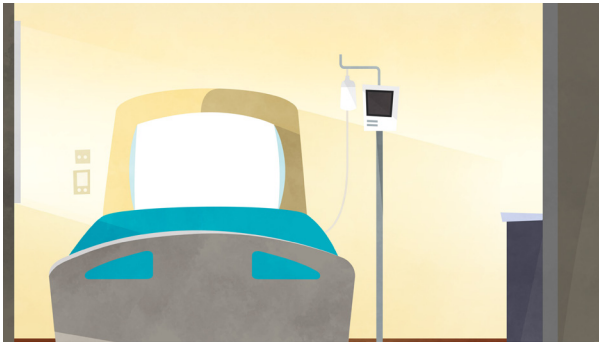




Scenery

For each scene I wanted them to feel warm and inviting. I created everything with vector shapes, but added some asymmetry to all of the assets so that they didn't seem so rigid. By doing this it made the scenes seem more playful and “hand done”. I incorporated my color palette to tie the scenes and characters together.



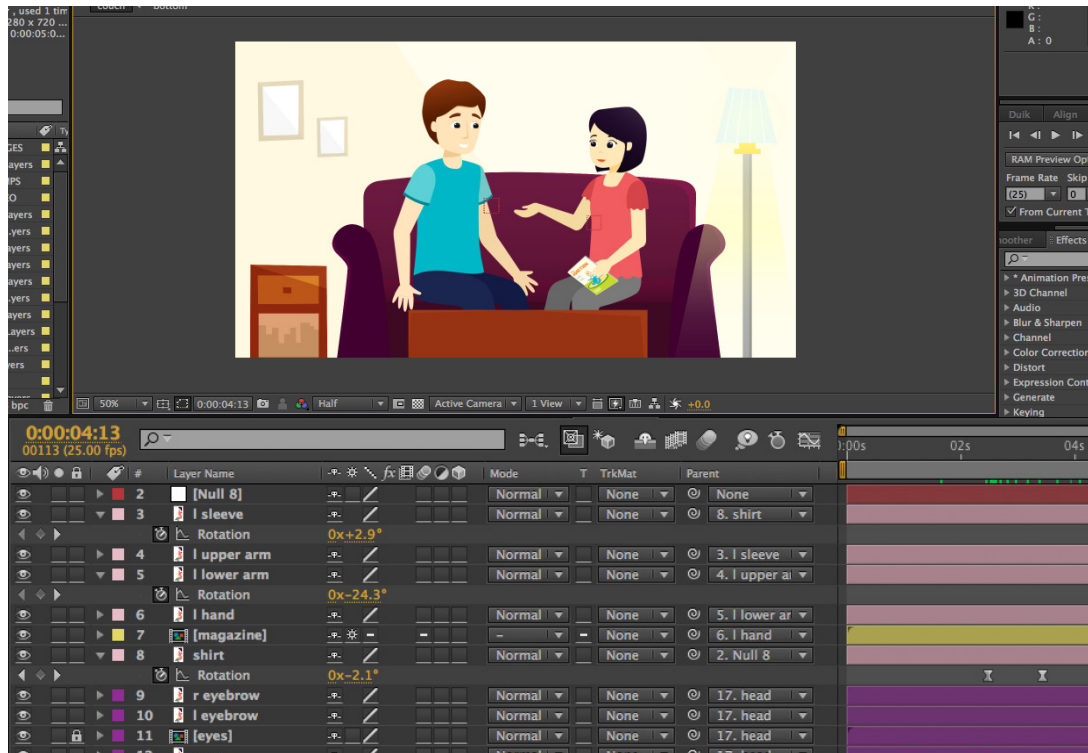


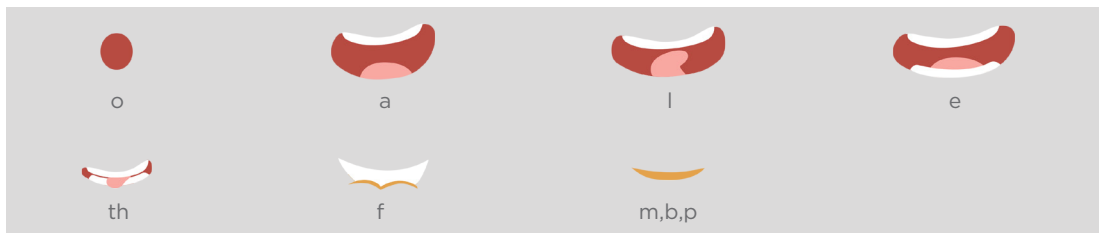
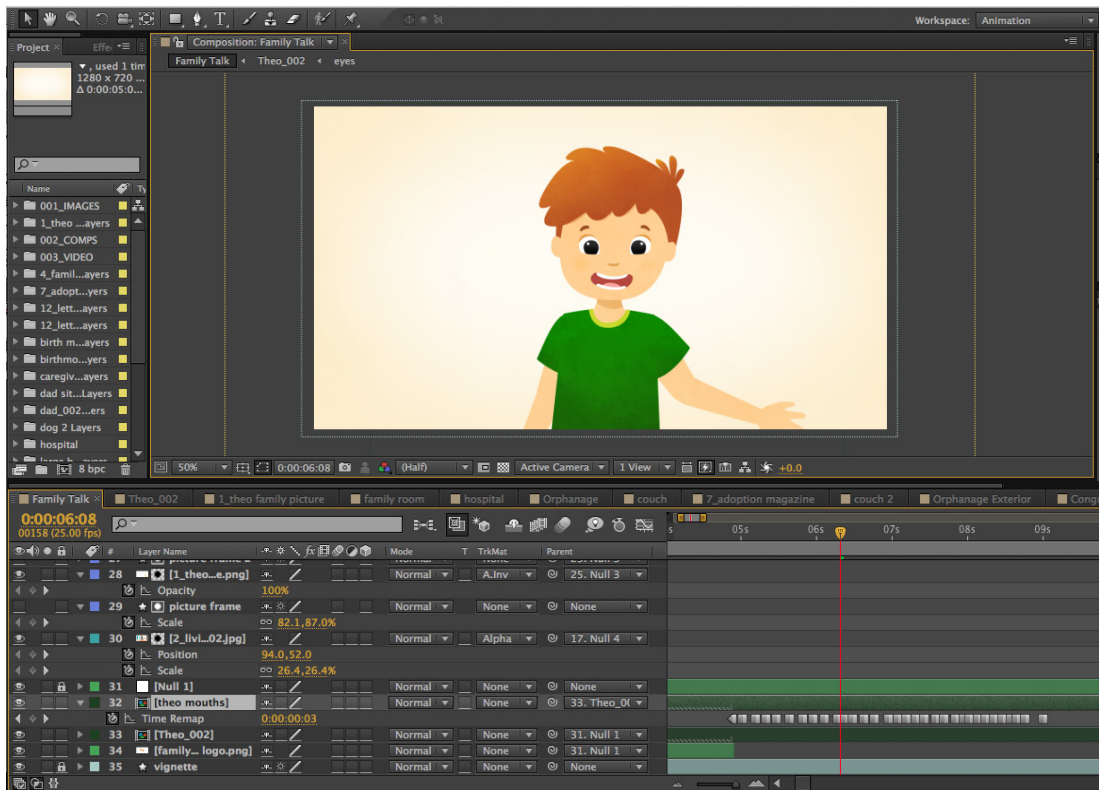


Animation Process

Character Rigging & Lip Syncing

To bring my characters to life in the final video I manually rigged their body parts so that I could move them around and animate the scene. I also pre composed various mouth shapes and cycled through them to make it look as if Theo was speaking along with the voice over.



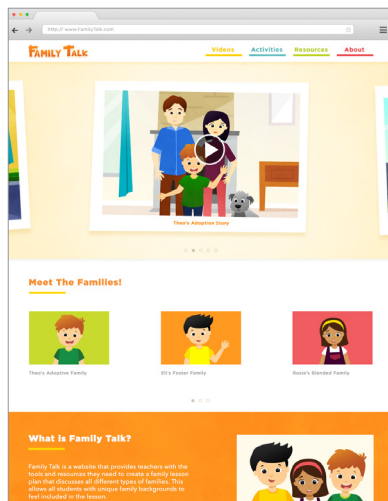




Website & Implementation

Website

The final website features the educational videos on the home page. The secondary features are the classroom activities, informational resources, and a blurb describing what Family Talk is and how to use it, which users can access with the top menu bar.



Introductory Video for Adoptive Family Segment

