For more than two decades, 360KID has been involved with the development of many successful interactive activities, apps, web games, and other digital media products specifically designed for children. Early on in our history we created a development process to help all key stakeholders understand the different stages of the software development process. Our process can be segmented into seven distinct phases, which we refer to as:

7D Development Process:
Discover, Define, Design, Develop, Debug, Deliver and Deploy.

DISCOVER / DEMYSTIFY

During this first stage of the project, the entire team (artists, engineers, content experts, producers … everyone!) works together to create a shared vision of the product. What are the specific product needs? What is the message? What are the learning goals? What are the business goals? Who is the primary audience? Is there a secondary audience? How will that experience differ? What kind of experience do we want the user(s) to have? How will we define success for the project? What are the product expectations in the market currently? This is the time to mix creative brainstorming, child development theory and business savvy together, keeping in mind the realities of a project's budget, timeline and technical parameters.

DEFINE

Once the team has an understanding of the overarching goals for the project, it's time to clearly define on paper what that final product will be. At this stage it's important to have a "user-centered" design approach, ensuring the needs of the end user are met during every step of the interactive experience to be defined. With that in mind, determine each user's navigational flow through the product. Spec out the interactions of each screen. Create the functional, design, and technical documentation to help define not only *what* the product will do, but *how* (technologically) it will be accomplished. Once documentation is complete, it essentially places a "soft freeze" on the definition of the product, and allows a team to move forward with its development.

DESIGN

Throughout the definition phase many issues of design are considered. What will the screens look like? How is this product going to be branded? Are there characters? If so, who are they? What do they look like? How do they interact with the end user? Is the look of the project going to be edgy? Cuddly? Businessy? How will the user navigate through the experience? These are all questions that will be answered during the Design portion of the project. This is also where the design team will determine the final look/feel of the project … the project's *style*. Through the process of sketches, storyboards and interactive examples, the design team will develop the graphical user interface (or GUI) for the project as well as pull together all necessary assets for the final product, including illustrations, animations, photos, videos, and audio.

7D DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

DEVELOP

The development portion of the project is when all of the vision, definition, design, and understanding of the project come together. It's a time when the artists, programmers and content experts work feverishly to create workable, interactive prototypes of the final product. This portion of the project is filled with "alpha" deliverables, small snippets of working prototypes that allow the team to see the project in action. The goal is to build these alphas as "solidly flexible" as possible. That is, while you will want the alphas to be solid building blocks for the final product, they also need to be created in such a way that it allows for minor tweaks and adjustments that the development team feels will enhance the overall user experience.

DEBUG

As any designer will tell you … you are never *truly* done designing. There are always improvements and changes that can be made. But, there are also budgets and timelines that need to be adhered to, which is why the Debug phase is so import in the process of completing a project. As the Debug phase begins, the development team will lock down the functionality for this release of the project and focus on ensuring that there are no technical issues standing in the way of a successful product launch. This version of the project is its "beta," and is functionally complete (everything works!) and content complete (no placeholder art or content). The beta will be tested on a variety of platforms and any issues ("bugs") will be defined, cataloged, prioritized, and addressed.

DELIVER

Once the team is confident that the most robust and stable beta has been achieved, the development team will deliver a "release candidate." The release candidate is a version of the project that key stakeholders feel is ready for launch. The goal of this phase of the project is to take one last look at the product to ensure that all of the bugs previously defined have been addressed to everyone's satisfaction. Once everyone is in agreement that the product is complete, it will be considered "gold."

DEPLOY

You're done! The final product is released to the target audience and the team begins work on the debrief process (How did development go? What can be done to make the next project work even better? What was the greatest success during the project? What should be done differently?) Capturing this information after a product is deployed can be of great value when you begin to develop your next product.

NOTE:

This 7D Development Process document briefly defines the common phases of software development. However, there are additional phases that can be included during development. For example, some projects include paper prototype creation, user testing, vertical slice deliveries for marketing and promotional needs, brand review, and many other specific phases outside of core development. These additional phases have a very specific end goal that helps increase product success in particular markets once deployed.

7D DEVELOPMENT PROCESS