



## **Blink: A Social Dialogue Network**

*February 2022 Project Update*

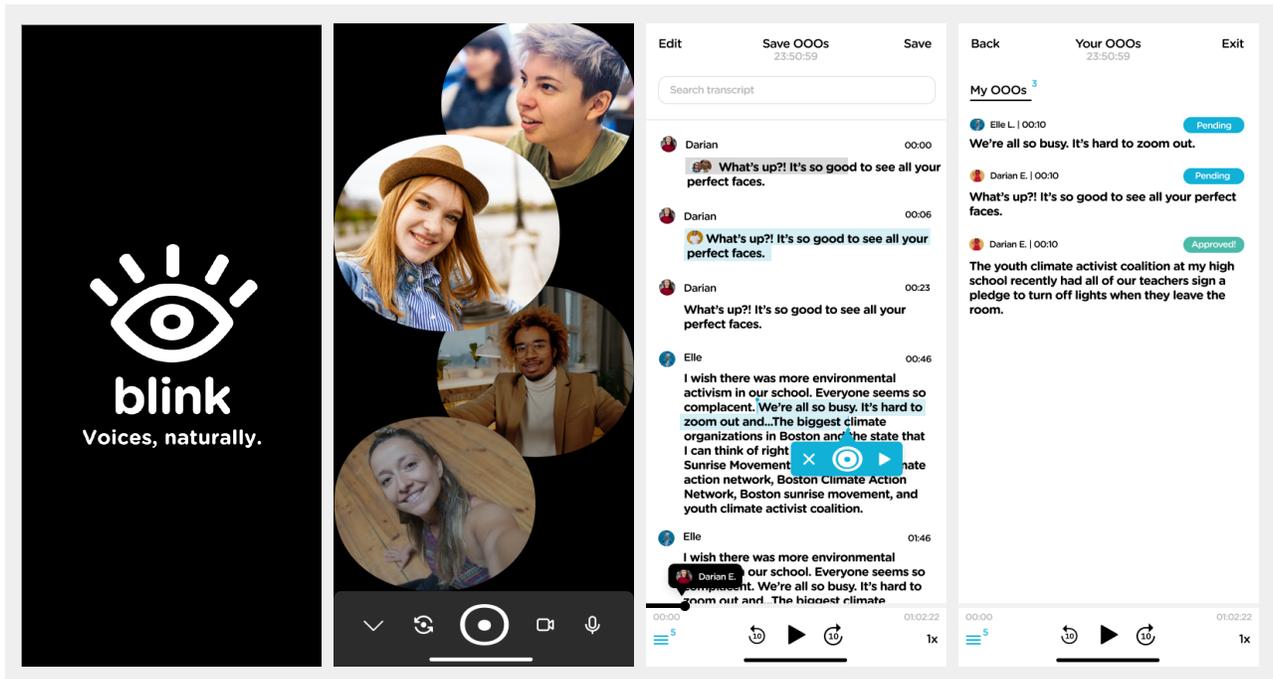
Today's teens are the first generation to join social media in middle school. During their most formative years of development, they are consumed by platforms like Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube, and it's shaping their self-worth and identity. While young people are more "connected" digitally than ever before, traditional social media leaves many young people feeling emotionally and spiritually alone. Social media is not going away, but teens need a new space where they can forge more intimate connections around the topics that meaningfully impact their lives and identities.

The CCC team aims to research, design, and deploy a new social platform for young people that promotes a sense of belonging, meaningful connection, and peer support. We believe that environment shapes behavior and that toxic online environments are by design. This new online space will challenge the harmful design conventions of traditional social media — such as vanity metrics and its broadcast nature — that has resulted in shallow social connections, inauthentic self-expression, and erosion of self-worth.

Starting in the fall of 2020, the CCC team engaged in a human-centered design process, working closely with teens and experts to design, test, and iterate potential solutions. We conducted in-depth qualitative research, hosted co-design sessions with teens from across the country, and engaged experts in the field of youth development and media. After generating and testing dozens of platform ideas, we have narrowed in on a new type of online space that we're calling a "social dialogue network." This new type of space is centered around live, small-group conversation about the topics that matter most to teens. Ultimate success for our team is developing and testing a platform that has a positive, measurable impact on wellbeing.

In late 2021, the CCC team transitioned from concept exploration and definition to prototype design. Our prototype, Blink, will be a mobile app that gives young people a safe space to connect, interact, and discuss the topics and issues they care about most. Using Blink, young people will gather in small groups intended to foster a sense of trust and safety where they can share and witness one another in an unedited way. With these groups nested within a meaningful intimacy gradient, we aim to create a "brave space," fostering constructive communication across divides. The design of the Blink prototype will prioritize meaningful connection and discussion through small group interactions, co-presence, common interest, and the cross-pollination of voices and perspectives across conversations. Designer Elle Luna is leading the prototype design and plans to have wireframes of the first version of the Blink prototype to handoff to the engineering team in early spring 2022 (see Figure 1 for early wireframes).

**Figure 1.** Early Blink wireframes, an app that gives young people a safe space to connect, interact, and discuss the topics and issues they care about most.



In the coming months, the Center’s engineering team will begin to build the Blink prototype. As features are developed, we will test them with teens to gather rapid feedback about what resonates and where we need to consider making adjustments. The team is in the process of hiring an application developer to join the engineering team who will take the lead of developing the prototype. As this happens, the team is also exploring partnership opportunities to pilot Blink and build a social dialogue network in the second half of 2022. To do this, we are having conversations with organizations that focus on working with youth and that have a robust teen network (approximately ages 15-17) to partner with so we can work together to understand how they gather, connect, and share using Blink.