Client Brief

The Client

My client is Joseph Tuton, the Head of Skinners' Academy's Science Club. He is a specialist in Human Movement, teaching science at all levels of secondary education. He started working in this school in the year starting on 2012, as an addition to the science department's biology team. Originating from Australia, he both obtained his degree and previously taught there.

As a teacher, he hates boring lessons. He has been voted in and successfully won awards as "Teacher who provides the most interesting lessons". His outgoing personality has made him popular with students. Amongst his students, he is known as the one teacher that enjoys experiments more than the pupils do.

As for the club itself, there are two main reasons that he does this club. The first reason is as an excuse to run experiments that he usually would not have the chance to attempt due to strict lessons planning. Personally, this just reinforces his passion for the subject. The more advertised reason is to promote science in a fun and hands-on way; in the hopes of attracting younger students with a love for science and nurture it for GSCE.

The club runs after school on Wednesday- from 3:00pm to 4:00pm. The usual layout of these sessions consists of a display that is done by the teacher; this is usually followed by questions to get the students thinking. After that the main practical experiment of the day begins. I have been informed that Mr. Tuton tries to plan practicals that allow the students to take something home. Finally, with the recent addition of a garden to promote biology in a set of two extended sessions, they go down a water plants, then get dismissed.

He stated that they are currently heading to the end of a successful second year of Science Club, with a turnout of around 18-25 students every session. It is on that figure, that he feels that there is a large number of students in many schools that have a genuine love for science, but is unable to act in it.

The Problem

The problem my client has identified is the increasingly competitive nature of education. He feels that this is making education as a whole a less enjoyable experience for students. He has also shown concerns that this then dulls student's interest in certain subjects.

Background

I decided to do some research on the negative effects of education on students, just to see the scope of the problem. From my findings, it seems that it can be broken down into two similar, but different effects:

First off is stress. Stress is a natural bodily response to something that is threatening or frightening. In students of all ages, it seems that stress occurs most often before or during exams. Some studies show that levels of stress are also increasing in class. This is due to an increase of standardized

testing- this then managed to perform as a platform in which to compare students with a numerical measurement. This has led to teachers at all key stage levels to *"orient students to performance goals and comparative standards of excellence instead of internal mastery goals," [Scott Paris, a professor of psychology at the University of Michigan].* This emphasis on external goals has created an' unhealthy classroom' scenario in which, *"standardized tests provoke considerable anxiety among students that seems to increase with their age and experience."*

Secondly, as this seems to be a more long term effect of the 'unhealthy classroom' scenario, there is depression. Teenage depression can be triggered in the same way adult depression can, but could also be triggered with things such as; social rejection, family turmoil or problems with school work or exam pressure. Depression can lead to a large list of negative effects (those of which I will not list). With this in mind, the need for students to start enjoying education and having fun in class seems to be more of an important issue.

Interpretation

While I have researched in depth about stress and depression, those issues have little to do with the given solution, but rather have products of the problem. Rather than directly trying to tackle the issue of the negative views of GCSE science by the students, it would be more computable to prevent the problem rather than face it. The shape of such solution is moulded by my client stating: "Getting an online thing to…", although he wasn't able to put his wishes fully into words, I interpret the start of this statement as a wish for an online interactive learn resource.

There are many examples of pre-existing learning resources, examples of a few different ones are:

Channel4learning.com- SOS: Energy Quest

Unlike most interactive learning resources this one is actually called a game. The premise of the game is that:

"You are on a trip to Buzz Archipelago - a group of islands set thousands of miles from home.

You have been roped into helping Buzz Archipelago's boss: the owner of Club 11-14!

Before the holiday season starts, you must fix all the energy problems on the island."

The game then tasks you with providing energy to different islands each one with different environments, fuels and energy needs. While it is certainly an entertaining game, I feel it has sacrificed some of its educational capabilities to be more of a game.

Teaching and Learning Resources for KS2 (ages 7-11) from Diane Hawkins

Unlike the previous example, this learning resource sticks a lot more closely to education, but at the cost of being a fun game. It is very clear that this is a learning resource first and a game second. This is something I seek to avoid as my client stated that education should not be shoved down the student's throat.
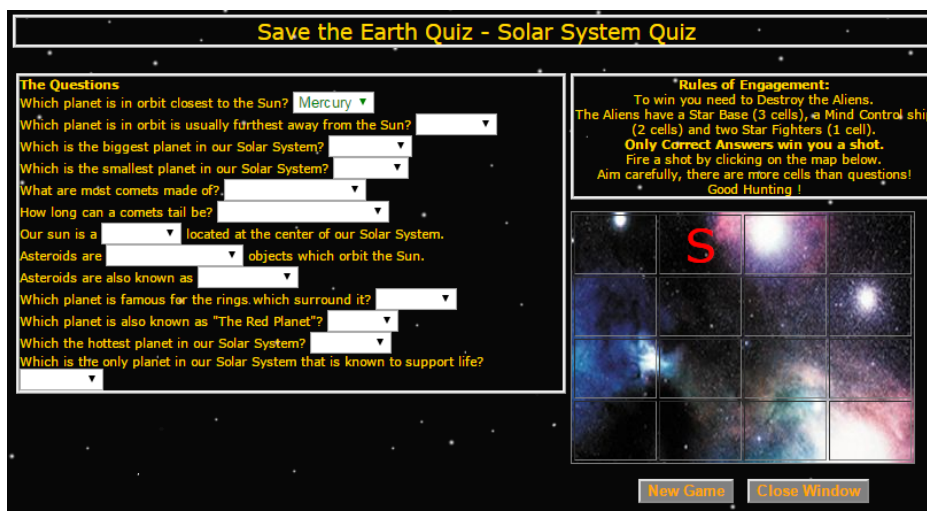
Going from key ideas that my client stated, it is important, to not only be educational, but to not "shove it down their throats". This then addresses the existing market of educational games. They all seem to either be a reskin of a method to apply a quiz, or don't really educate in the long run.

Therefore my project is to create a resource that will either educate or promote an interest in science. Breaking this down more, it must also do this subtly, to leave a long lasting imprint without being blatant about education. I have also decided to avoid any use of a quiz, as anything that can quantify intelligence can lead to stress.

This idea really helps to give the problem a bit more direction, as it will not follow the tangent of a flash quiz with a gimmick behind it. It is also important to note that the project doesn't even need to be fully educational, as it only has to promote an interest in science.