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What do you do in Detail?

Developed under the guidance and mentorship of Scholars such as Dr. Michael Brenner (Harvard University) and Dr. Richard Zare (Stanford University), and funded by the National Science Foundation, our AI empowered educational platform utilises an integrated pedagogical strategy focusing on children’s healthy eating, social emotional intelligence, and sustainability consciousness to aid teachers in elementary schools teach the subjects of math, science and engineering in a gamified, gender and culturally sensitive manner. Our game incorporates a sociocultural perspective on learning from an early age that emphasises building empathy for our environment that is experienced within the family and cultural context, as a basis for curriculum provision. The game begins when a child learns about a country and begins to cook healthy recipes from that country. During cooking, the application presents math and science concepts to the players. The game guides children on the culinary heritage and norms around consumption, sustainability, and health in their daily practices-- creating a social and physical learning environment around food that will help to tackle current challenges in health and sustainability. Furthermore, our curriculum helps children and especially girls connect to engineering concepts in a less ambiguous way. Kids classify, measure, count, estimate, and recognize numbers in a practical setting. The science is integrated as kids need to ask questions, observe, investigate and experiment while incorporating concepts of physics and chemistry. Our technology allows students to predict and compare outcomes, and for teachers to keep track of student progress.

What's different/interesting about your Startup?

We have a patent on our technology and strong endorsement from the National Science Foundation and the US Department of Education.

Why is your team uniquely qualified to build your startup?

We are a family-owned startup. We have found it to be our strongest unfair advantage. Our now ten-year-old daughter and official cofounder, Delarai experienced a problem at school, had an idea of how to resolve it, and recruited us to help. Our solution was born. Both my partner Antoine and I, had passion and experience in education before launching our careers in tech. Having cofounded previous businesses with our ex-partners where we failed, we knew exactly what we had to do to make Chef Koochooloo a successful venture. Being married and supporting a family, we focused on making a profit from the very beginning, simply because we had no other option. Living together and working together meant we always have someone to talk to. We are each other’s cheerleaders and life coaches. Every time we experience a set -back, we are mindful of how we respond (versus react) as our daughter is watching our every move. Being so passionate about what we are doing, and the positive impact we are making in schools, we never feel guilty about working late, and every minute on the job is counting as fun quality family time. Our daughter, being an end-user and one of the cutest tech founders you can find, has students and teachers at her fingertips that provide us with input on our product, and constant support. To this date, we have never had to pay for user testing sessions. With my strong background in Business Development and Go To Market in Enterprise software, I have deep experience in successful product launches. With Antoine’s background as a STEM teacher and engineer, he keeps our enthusiasm in check and lets us take more calculated risks.

We also have a diverse team of paid employees, as well as passionate volunteers from top notch schools. Some of our best talent have refused to take a salary, preferring to help us pro-bono until institutional funding comes through. Our Sr Technologist Eric Herberholz, a UC Berkeley graduate in Computer Science, was one of our very first volunteers, piloting our recipes and cooking classes in underprivileged schools in Northern California. Our advisor in machine learning, Dr. Ashkan Yousefi (a Post Doctorat from UC Berkeley) has a deep passion and knowledge for best and most ethical ways of incorporating AI in educational settings.

What problem are you trying to solve, and how does your product uniquely solve this problem?

Globally, the number of overweight children under the age of five is estimated to be over 41 million. Overweight children are likely to stay obese into adulthood and develop noncommunicable diseases. Societies that are transitioning to westernized lifestyles are experiencing substantial increases in its prevalence. You can’t tackle hunger and the paradox of the obesity crisis among hungry children without educating children on healthy eating. As proven through our academic validations funded by the National Science Foundation, we know that educating children on these topics at an early age, is crucial in contributing towards a solution. It is the parent's responsibility to teach children healthy eating habits. But the demographics that suffer most from obesity are often children of working-class immigrants, whose parents are working more than 2 jobs to make ends meet. Teachers understand the need for teaching nutrition to children and want to step in, but their time and budget in the classroom are limited, and their priority as an educator is to ensure children are succeeding in school subjects. By aligning nutrition and sustainability subjects (which are not mandatory in elementary schools) with math and science learning (which is mandatory), we have presented a way for teachers to obtain the budget and approval needed from Districts and Principals to fund our project and make time in the classroom for teaching these valuable lessons. Through our validation piloted studies by the National Science Foundation, we have also proven that by introducing cooking in the classroom, we have succeeded in improving math and science test scores by 50%. A healthy school community sends children the same message in the home. Children who attended our gamified cooking lessons have made informed, healthy decisions that affected their own lives and the lives of their families.

What's new about what you're making? What substitutes do people resort to because it doesn't exist yet (or they don't know about it)?

When we think of innovation, we immediately think of technology. However, in education, it's just as important to focus on innovations in areas such as child psychology, learning theories, and teaching methods. Our solution truly addresses all of these areas, in addition to bundling it up via a cool technological game. Currently, the United States is ranked 31st in the world in the focus areas of STEM. (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics), and less than 16% of Latino and ⅓ of girls are able to succeed in STEM topics at school. As a result of addressing this, an array of coding and math games have been launched to schools, most of which have a strong focus on improving education for white boys, simply because the curriculum and technology have been designed by white male founders, who are successful in obtaining 98% of the VC funding. Most of these founders are young and do not have children, thus they are designing the curriculum and games in a way that they know is best, and how it is most relevant to them. It’s well known that everyone has different styles of learning. Some students are visual learners, while others are verbal or auditory learners. Given the diversity of our team, both in age, cultural background and areas of expertise, our game is inclusive of all learning styles and has a focus on making STEM fun and relevant for girls and minority students.

How many potential customers are there and how large is the market?

Our market fits into several categories within the mobile learning and elementary classroom technology markets. The global market size of the mobile learning product category was approximately USD $12.2 billion in 2017 and is expected to grow to USD $37.8 billion by 2020. Within the broad mobile learning category, the niche market of educational games alone is expected to reach USD $13 billion by 2020 (McKinsey, 2013). The global market size of the mobile learning product category was approximately USD $12.2 billion in 2017 and is expected to grow to USD $37.8 billion by 2020. Within the broad mobile learning category, the niche market of educational games alone is expected to reach USD $13 billion by 2020 (McKinsey, 2013). The Education Market segment, which includes educational gamification in the form of simulations and digital learning platforms, is expected to grow at a high compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 24.85% in the US with a projected global growth of 68% by 2020. An increasing focus on experiential and inquiry-based learning to operationalize theoretical concepts using interactive technologies is a primary driver of his growth. Thus far customers have been finding us organically and through the promotion of the US Department of Education who finds our pedagogy and approach to education refreshing and innovative. Thanks to our successful pilot studies that were supported by the National Science Foundation and evaluated by advisors from Stanford Research Institute, we have proven that we make a true impact on student learning, thus gaining the trust of customers has been easy. We plan to leverage standard customer acquisition techniques in scaling our product -market fit, such as presence in conferences, email campaigns, and partnerships with thought leaders in the education space.

Tell us about your competitors and explain why you are dramatically better than them.

***Competition in the Education Space***. Kahoot! is a game-based learning platform used by teachers in their classrooms to create mini games (a series of multiple choice questions) that students can answer on their tablets or laptops. The class plays along, in a “quiz show” format allowing the teacher to see which students understand the material. Kahoot! has been adopted by approximately 20M elementary schools in the US, with 1 billion users over the past four years (Singer, 2016; Jan Kamps, 2017).

Dreambox Math, offered by Dreambox Learning is an educational technology tool that contains a variety of interactive online math tools that are aligned with the common core. Each student’s progress, strengths, and weaknesses are tracked, providing an individualized user experience. Dreambox Learning has an approximate Net Asset Value of $2.3M, and is used by over 1.5M students, and more than 75,000 K-6 teachers (GSV Capital, 2017; Fricke, 2015)

Khan Academy is a non-profit educational organization that provides free educational content including video lessons and supplemental practice exercises with an associated mobile app. Lessons for a variety of STEM fields and levels are available, and many exercises are aligned with NGSS and common core standards. Khan academy has had widespread success: reaching 31M registered students, 1M registered teachers, and has 15M site visits per month across 190 countries (Kashyap, 2016).

Polyup is a global for-profit gamified learning platform that is free for all schools. Through online modules called “machines,” Polyup helps provide early exposure to computational thinking and problem solving skills. Polyup is used by over 100,000 students and educators worldwide and has generated over $3.6M in revenue.

Though these apps and programs help teachers to track student progress and some gamify STEAM content, none are linked to real hands-on classroom activities and experimentation. While reading from a screen, or doing quizzes on a laptop may be more engaging than reading from a textbook or doing work on paper, none take the extra step of exposing students tangible hands-on experiments, which have been found to be most effective at increasing student interest in the STEM fields (Holstermann, Grube, & Bögeholz, 2009).

One potential competitor that does include a hands-on experimentation component is Full Option Science System (FOSS). FOSS is a research-based science curriculum for grades K-6 with a focus on inquiry based and hands on learning. FOSS provides packaged NGSS aligned modules that contain material kits, teacher guides, student readings, and journals with a website for additional activities. FOSS does not have an app, cooking modules, or a student login or profile option; meaning it is used primarily by teachers, and does not allow for students to use it outside of the classroom. Module prices vary by topic, but cost around $1,000 for a classroom kit, and include all of the materials needed to cover one topic (e.g. electromagnetic force, solids and liquids, air and weather).

As the field of classroom educational technology is rapidly expanding, we anticipate that there will be other competitors over the next few years. However, given that we are the first to market in the segment, we will have the strategic advantage of having relationships with schools, our presence in classrooms, and our ability to address various pain points of our target market, as illustrated in Table C. Additionally, another strategic advantage is that as part of our team, we have Dr. Michael Brenner, a professor of applied mathematics and applied physics at Harvard University, who has developed a popular class "Science and Cooking.” As we grow, we plan to continue to attract thought leaders in the segment to continue to provide the best product and experience for the students.

What do you understand about your business that other companies in your industry just don't get? Despite the relative success of digital games improving self-management and healthy behavior, the field of nutrition and dietary behavior has received little attention in terms of game design. The focus of commercially available games is placed largely on entertainment. In the afterschool program and home use cooking program field: Radish Kids is a potential competitor. Radish is a monthly subscription club where kids receive a kit each month with lesson plans and activities related to math, science, geography, history, and culture. They also have a kit for a 9-week school program available, however the program does not have an associated technology, and does not have NGSS and CCSS aligned activities, nor does it Link Recipes, STEAM concepts, and nutrition through machine learning and automation to deliver customized curriculum, track and monitor progress, and measure outcomes.

How much monthly revenue do you currently have, and how quickly are you growing? (Biotech companies please describe your data).

On average we have a monthly revenue of $10,000 and we were growing at 100% year over year.

What is your current monthly burn rate? We are break even

How much money have you raised, from who, and at what valuation? Include SBIR/NIH funding (If you haven’t raised put N/A)

We have raised 1Million dollars in SBIR grants from the National Science Foundation.