ALPHA BUILD PROGRESS REPORT

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Early Birds is a web application that allows teachers to integrate computers into elementary education. The goal is to prepare younger students in using computers for writing assignments. Early Birds aims to achieve this goal by primarily focusing on guiding students in writing formal science lab reports. Early Birds eliminates the need for complicated word processors, can be accessed from any computer with Internet, connects teachers and students, and is extraordinarily easy to use. The alpha release demonstrates significant progress toward these goals.

Currently, the website is very far along in regards to its visual identity and design. The interface is well refined and is looking close to the final product. Users can access almost every page and get a sense of what the website looks like and what it is supposed to do.

The most fine-tuned aspect of the website is the splash screen. It uses JavaScript™ to create a sleek, simple, and easy to navigate interface. Teachers can also login and register on the splash screen, but login and registration is not yet fully completed. A MySQL™ database as well as PHP programs to add a user to the database, encrypt a user's password, and search for a user by email and password are currently in place, but we still need to add a login session.

The student hub contains jQuery UI tabs, and each tab represents a lab section. The jQuery UI tabs have been styled to match the website's design. Additional JavaScript™ is also in place to style individual tabs as a user moves between lab sections and saves his or her work. For example, when a user saves his or her work for a particular lab section, that section's tab turns green.

Eventually, teachers will be able to create assignments and view student labs, and students will be able to save their work and access their previous labs. The rest of the database, including the assignments and labs tables, as well as the PHP programs needed to implement these features have not been created. The database, however, has been installed locally on both our computers and remotely on both our servers - weblab and earlybirdswriting.com. Feasibility tests were also conducted and verified connecting, adding, and obtaining information to and from the database is possible.

Generating assignment codes will also be implemented. Feasibility tests proved generating assignment codes using the DinoPass API is easy. Automatically saving a student's work in the database has yet to be tested for feasibility. This feature is listed as a 'nice to have feature' in the proposal. We, however, feel this feature is important and have allocated some time in our revised schedule to conduct feasibility testing providing we are on track with our primary goals.

Although we have already achieved great success implementing the website skeleton, we have come across a few new issues. For example, we anticipate adding validation error messages on the login and registration forms will be challenging for several reasons. First, it is unclear where to place and how to style error messages on the forms. The input boxes are currently placed too closely together; therefore, it is likely these forms will be restyled to create more space for the error messages. Second, we must determine how to display error messages without reloading the page. The login and registration forms are on 'slideable divs,' and when the splash screen reloads, the page does not reload to the login and registration divs.

In addition to these issues, we find it challenging to develop a website that is consistent in different browsers on different operating systems. We find it imperative to build a website that looks its best across varied platforms because Early Birds will most likely be used in schools, and schools may have various browsers and operating systems. We have encountered several scenarios where a button looked fine on Chrome for Mac OS X, but did not even appear on Firefox™ for Windows 8™.

At this point, we are not looking to implement any contingency plans. We set out to get the database working locally on both our systems, complete the visual design for each page, and implement a basic skeleton for the website before the alpha release, and we have met our goals. The database is working locally as well as on the servers - weblab and earlybirdswriting.com. Also, the website is visually established. We did, however, update our schedule because we originally overestimated the amount of time we would spend on backend work, but we still plan on completing everything listed as a 'minimum feature' in the proposal. If we are unable to resolve any issues by our own means, we plan to meet with Jesse or Curran for help. At this point, the only 'nice to have feature' we consider implementing is auto-saving student work.

We do not need any extra resources at this time. We acquired the domain earlybirdswriting.com because we felt like this would be professional and necessary if the project continues beyond GUI II.

We feel that we do not have to scrap anything listed as a 'minimum feature' because we are on track with our schedule. We have reevaluated our schedule, and we believe all our primary goals are feasible. It is unlikely that we will be making any database changes if we do have time to implement any 'nice to have features.' Major database changes will also require major UI changes, which is not reasonable to complete during a semester.

Date	*Task*	*Will*	*Kate*
3/11	• Implement footer in studenthub w/ Learn More link • Learn more page on teacherhub (also with How to use in Classroom)		

3/13	• Login/registration fully implemented
	  • Message to alert user they logged out (lightbox)
	  • Non-logged in users can't access certain pages
	  • Store login information in login session		

3/23	• New Assignment lightbox w/ styling (Will) • Generate assignment codes using DinoPass API (Kate) • Link teachers with assignments generated (Kate)		

3/30	• Demo w/ AJAX, if successfully works then implement auto-save; otherwise, implement manual save (Kate)
	• Teachers can access student labs
	  • Database - Kate
	  • UI (lab page printable) - Will		

4/6	• Giving students access to the labs they've been working on		
4/13	• jQuery validation w/ error messages styled • Database error messages styled, as well		
4/20	• Make information sheet for students (Will) • Edits (Kate)		
4/27	• Clean up website (learn more, information, etc.) for grammar • Bug fixes		