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HADM 4125

### Social Entrepreneurship Footprint Project

When I was 11, my family moved to an affluent town in California named Danville. The high school I attended received numerous benefits from many accomplished alumni or benefactors, which include Olympians, international pop stars, Philadelphia Eagle's (the most recent team to have won the Superbowl) Zach Ertz, and Cornell's own David Duffield – who provided the school with a brand new student center that replaced the old library (which was actually modeled after the Duffield Hall on Cornell's campus). Additionally, according to the U.S. News and World Report, many schools around the area rank within the top 1000 high schools in the entire country, while a handful even rank within the top 100. Objectively, there is no doubt that many families in this area are able to afford services to nurture their children that are unavailable to many others, and that these schools have an abundance of resources available to students. The point of these statements is not to boast about my good fortune or experiences, but rather to provide a background.

My family includes myself, my parents, and my sister who is 7 years younger than me. One year after my family had moved to Danville, my sister, Audrey, was diagnosed with Asperger syndrome. Asperger syndrome is a higher functioning version of autism that is classified as a developmental disorder, where one of the main results is that one's ability to effectively socialize and communicate is affected (Autism Speaks).

Audrey struggles to comprehend abstract concepts and the nuanced aspects of speech and social interactions, and because of this she has difficulties connecting with some of her closest friends. Although the public schools she has attended have provided some accommodations as required by the "504 plan", these accommodations are insufficient. These accommodations were provided at the request of my family, and moreover there are other types of accommodations that could be requested; however, overall the assistance that the school can provide is limited. The accommodations may vary depending on the student's needs in order to create the best learning environment for the student, e.g. allotting extra time to take tests, giving priority seating in the front of the classroom, or supplying audiobooks for dyslexic students. Well, if this is the case, then why do I mention that the accommodations provided are insufficient?

Firstly, the "504 plan" is based on federal rights stated by Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, which in essence, offers students with disabilities equal opportunity to participate in all academic and nonacademic activities offered by the public school district (U.S. Department of Education). It also requires that the school district responds to reasonable requests on a per student basis. Furthermore, the 504 plan only modifies a student's education plan in a regular classroom setting. However, this does not necessarily mean that the schools will be able to comply with the request even if the aid the student requests is within the scope of a 504 plan. Additionally, the 504 plan is something that had to be actively requested to the school district, and it is not something that is trivial information to many other families. For instance, one of our family friends that had a son with a learning disability did not know of what the 504 plan

entailed and how to set up one with the school district. Just within the scope of the school district that my family is apart of, there is a lack of information on its official website with regards to setting up a 504 plan and in general what it is (SRVUSD).

From my family's experiences, the main reasons for the inadequate support is a result of the lack of resources available to the school district and parents alike, teachers and counselors that are not well-equipped to handle these students, and that the ratio between students and faculty is large enough such that these educators inevitably neglect to support these students. Consequently, even though my sister receives some of the accommodations requested, it is difficult for teachers and counselors to adhere to all the accommodations that were guaranteed because of time limitations or inexperience with handling certain situations, e.g. supplementary notes for when she is unable to keep up with lectures, or how to placate her tantrums when she feels frustrated because she is unable to comprehend some of the material taught in class. In order to compensate for the shortcomings of the aid that the school provides, my family has paid various services such as tutoring or therapy sessions for my sister. Naturally, some of these services are resources that were not requested to the school because it is outside the area of expertise of the school's educators. Regardless, these services have provided my sister with tangible benefits, which include an improvement to her comprehension skills or positive changes to her behavior, but these services are not cheap. For reference therapy sessions are covered for the most part by medical insurance, but there is still a copay for every session. This copay varies depending on the type of insurance, but my family currently pays at least \$4,000.00 annually. Tutoring sessions, on the other hand, are more expensive because it is dependent on the prices that the tutoring services set, but are less frequently attended.

So given all of this information, here is the broad underlying issue: *if these highly acclaimed public schools are unable to adequately provide the support and assistance that these students with disabilities need, such that many of the families in these areas choose to go to expensive external services to compensate for the deficiencies in their children's learning environment, then how will many other families in the U.S. that are less well off financially and have children that attend schools that may not have as many resources (as the aforementioned schools) afford aid similar to that of the more affluent families?* To put this statement in perspective, the median household income between the town of Danville, and the average median household income in the U.S. can be compared. The U.S. Census Bureau reported that, within the past several years (2015 and 2016), the median household income in the town of Danville is more than double that of both the national and state average. This means that in order to even allow some of these students with learning disabilities to seek necessary medical assistance, these families would spend – at a minimum – close to 10% of their household income. This number does not include extra services that are pivotal to ensuring the student's success in an academic environment.

To further broaden the scope of this issue, according to the National Center of Education Statistics, within the last 5 years, there are 6.6 million students in the U.S. alone that require special education services. That's 13 percent of all public school students. Over 60 percent of these students with disabilities spend 80 percent or more of their time in general classrooms, meaning that they are not receiving the proper education services they need to learn effectively. 35 percent of these students have severe learning disabilities, making it even more important that they're receiving specialized help. To reiterate, the 504 plan places too much of the burden on

school counselors and teachers, who are already overloaded with the work from standard classrooms. These plans and the requested accommodations are hardly followed up on. More specifically, the problem is that the education system lacks an effective infrastructure and programs for students with disabilities due to their typically costly nature and the limited resources of public schools.

In order to create a potential solution to the issue, there were couple other factors that I wanted to consider beforehand. The first factor was to consider how to solve the social issue mentioned previously. With regards to this, before I had even started the remainder of this assignment, I originally thought that trying to gather funds in order to give to school districts extra resources would be able to fix the shortcomings of the accommodations that are being provided to these students with disabilities as well as alleviate some of the costs and responsibilities that fall on the families of these students. However, I realized that there are complexities with this “solution. The school may still be ill suited to help these students because of the lack of experienced personnel, not enough real estate to fit extra learning environments, or most importantly, if they treat these students differently then these students potentially end up being isolated from many of their peers. Furthermore, it is logical to find that the families of these students that are more invested in creating opportunities for their children, at least more so than the schools the students attend. Consequently, I believe it is more beneficial to create a solution to the question: *How might we create an affordable educational supplement that focuses on the needs of students with disabilities without isolating them?*

With this in mind, the next factor to consider was if there were other other ventures or efforts that are attempting to address this problem. The Individualized Education Program, or IEP, also falls under the same broad federal civil rights law (the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act or IDEA) that the 504 plan does. The difference between the two is that the 504 plan provides more of a general outline for what accommodations should be granted to students with disabilities, whereas the IEP plan gives individualized services and education to these students; however, IEP for these students is only granted under stringent standards, which means that if a student does not have a “major” disability, then the student typically will not qualify (U.S. Department of Education).

There are two other organizations that were related to helping people with disabilities, but with a broader scope (not necessarily helping just students): Federation for Children with Special Needs, or FCSN, and Parents Helping Parents. Both the FCSN and Parents Helping Parents organizations focus on community building, and helping families understand and empathize to better support whoever may have a specific disability in their family through a variety of educational programs. While FCSN is more established than Parents Helping Parents, both of these organizations seek to give an identity to these individuals with disabilities, meaning that they try to give these individuals the perspective that their disability is an integral part of who they are and not a limiting factor in their lives.

There are several aspects from these organizations that I would like to incorporate into my own solution. One of the aspects that I had not initially considered was to empower individuals. The importance of this is that it allows individuals to feel both accomplished and gives them the opportunity to move further in an education setting. This may give these students the confidence

or ability in the future to contribute back to their own community and to help others that are in a similar situation as them. Another aspect is being able to provide a wealth of options to these students so that an individual can seek help in a personalized way that is far more beneficial than what a generalized environment can provide.

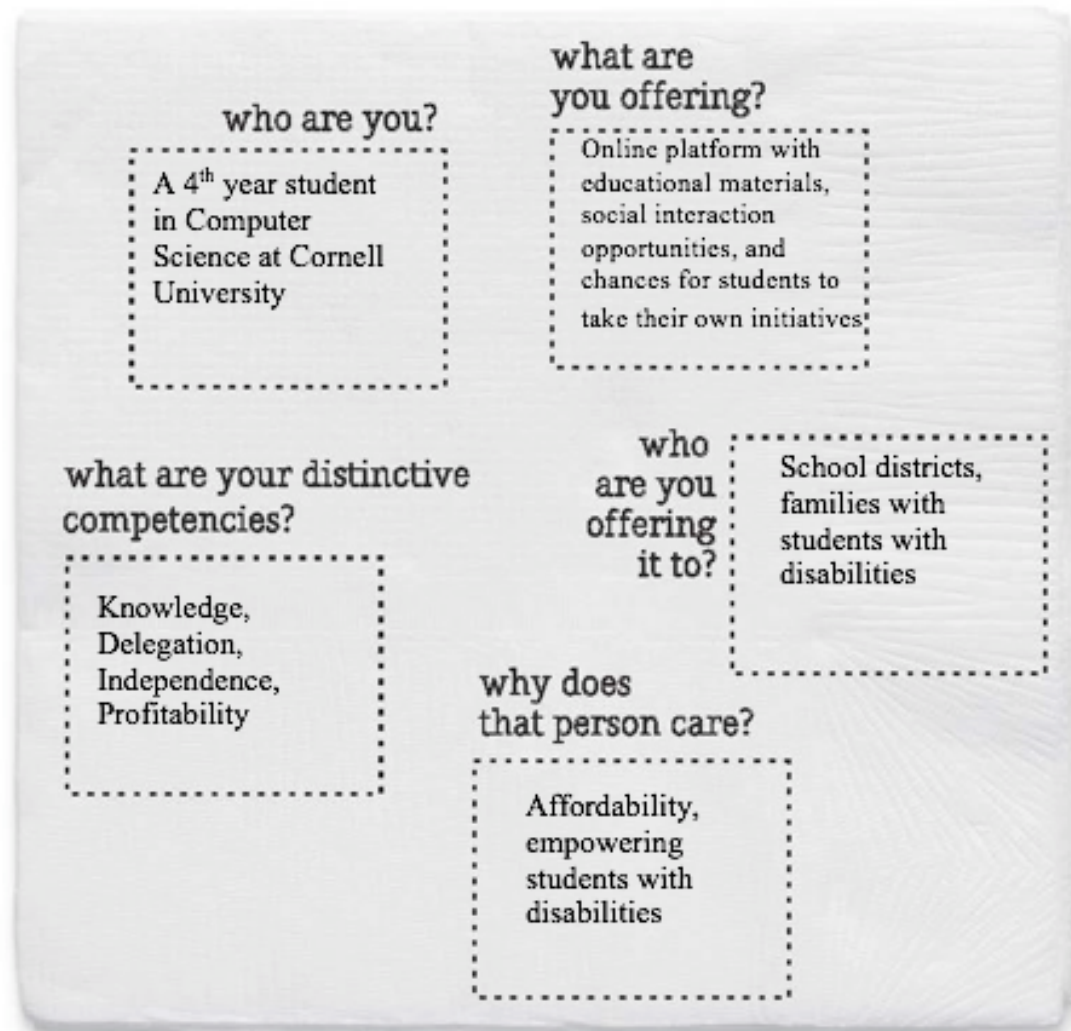
The idea that I believed answered the question posed was to create an online platform that acts as an educational supplement that can connect all of the students involved with this service. In essence, this platform will provide students with educational accommodations such as audio or visual aids, an initiative to create a 504 plan for the student, and opportunities for students to socially interact with other students in similar situations through forums or other modes, which may allow them to feel more comfortable engaging with unfamiliar people and circumstances. Furthermore, by making a website, features and materials can easily be added later on. This also allows for the fact that this service does not necessarily have to be decoupled from school districts. In fact, by partnering with schools, efforts such as creating a 504 plan and it ensures the validity of certain educational materials provided as well as the breadth of materials given. Additionally, there could be certain programs involved with the school that are paired with our service, which allow these students to act as mentors through our service. The most important cost structure and resource to this idea, however, is human resources. In order to ensure that this idea truly works, it is critical to have experienced and qualified people (both from an education and medical background) because without them, the service we provide would be no better than what is currently being given through the current accommodations in schools now.

With regards to The Really Big Critique Pad, I've summarized and compressed the information that people gave me into a single instance of the critique pad, which I've provided below. I've scrapped out any trivial comments, such as "good idea" or "I like the idea", and have consolidated the information that posed good questions or highlighted parts of the idea that corresponded to components of a business model canvas. Lastly, I've computed the averages of the scores that were provided to me and put them into text format as part of the single critique pad as well.

The main critiques focused on the flaws and weaknesses of the venture idea, which mostly lie in the accessibility of the service. Ideally, I would like to believe that all students have access to a device that can connect to the internet. However, this may not necessarily be true for less financially stable families and school districts. In this case, would the service provide these devices to the school or families? Furthermore, it may be possible that touch screen devices are more effective at providing a versatile learning experience when coupled with the services that are provided, but again, these devices are even less common to be found in schools than normal desktops. Similarly, there are difficulties with accumulating educational materials to import into the platform, and the difficulty of verifying the quality or validity of such materials. With regards to this feedback, it is apparent many people stressed that I need to consider how the venture will be able to accumulate the necessary materials for the schools and from the schools that would be partnering with the service. One such way to gather devices would be to gather donations, either monetary or the device itself from benefactors. This would require this venture to increase marketing efforts, which is an added cost structure, but it could also give us partnerships with commercial enterprises that contribute to social causes. As for the educational materials, if the school districts do partner with the venture or buy its services, I think that a requirement would

be for the school district to provide relevant course materials as it would be accessible to their students anyway. This also guarantees the validity of the materials if they were provided directly by the school district. This information would be readily available to other users of the service as well.

Idea Napkin



# The Really Big Idea Sketch Pad v2.

These are the parameters to change when creating or refining a venture or project idea. Think of it as sketching your idea.

name: \_\_\_\_\_  
name of this idea: \_\_\_\_\_

Who are the people involved in starting this venture?

Myself, J.P. Singh, Michael Wang, David Tom, other educators or those with medical backgrounds

Teaching, Therapy, Engineering, Entrepreneur

What relevant experience do they bring to the table?

Creating online platforms, teaching students with disabilities, startup that partnered with school districts

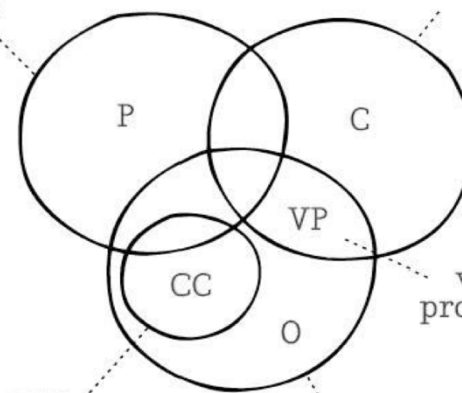
What specific knowledge do they bring to the table?

## directions

1. Write the answers to each question on Post-It Notes.
2. Put them on the sketchpad in the marked areas. e.g.
3. If you don't have enough room, then simplify.
4. Assess your idea using the "really big idea critique pad".
5. Repeat and replace Post-Its liberally.

people

customer



value proposition

core competency

offering

Understanding scalability of a technological product as well as being able to create the platform itself

Do you have any core, differentiating competencies, such as a technology or science?

Service and experience

What type of offering is envisioned? i.e. commodity, good, service, or experience?

Service includes personalized help to students, while experiences include the social interactions with other students and educators

Name and describe it...

Sketch it or otherwise help people visualize it ...

Who is the user or beneficiary?

Students with disabilities and their families, and schools

How does the user use your offering?

Through an online account on the platform or portal

Families of the students, or school districts.)

Ideally as many schools districts that exist in America

Who is the economic buyer or decision maker?

How many buyers are there?

Why is the offering important to the user?

Allows students to learn in the best possible environment to them (auditory, visual, etc.), allows schools to better provide to their students

Why is the offering important to the buyer?

Families of the students benefit when the student benefits, while school districts are able raise the values of their schools with better student performances.

## notepad:

capture notes,  
feedback and  
critique

### Critiques and Concerns:

- Hardware limitations? Schools not enough resources, will they have laptops or devices to allow students to access service?
- Acquiring educational materials. How to verify the validity or quality of materials?
- ~~Pricing?~~How to make it affordable?
- How to guarantee that your service is making a difference?
- How will you partner with school districts?
- How do you ensure that people will use your service?
- Scale?

### Compliments and Comments:

- Creating a digital service or platform, which does make it more readily available than certain physical resources
- “Upcycling”, e.g. giving students that used this service the opportunity to contribute back to other students through the service as a means
- Empowering as a value proposition. Too often we see that companies with a “social cause” really just throw money at the issue, but do not try to look at other components to the problem
- “I like the idea of the students being able to connect with other students, it reminds me of something that I had in my high school called the ‘Buddies Club’ where there were student volunteers that would help tutor and just interact daily with other new (and older) students”

### Averages:

- 1) C: 9.0
- 2) VP: 9.5
- 3) OCC: 8.5
- 4) P: 8.5



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