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UNC MEITE
Application for Khayrallah Innovation Fund 2023

SchoolEase

Public school teachers have a hard job. K12 teachers' time spent in their roles as leaders and mentors of 30 or more students in a classroom must be balanced with administrative duties, grading and student feedback, parent interactions, school committees, extra-curricular activities, and sports. Then, teachers need to find time to create meaningful learning experiences that will lead to positive academic outcomes. SchoolEase aims to be the first one stop shop for K12 public school teachers. SchoolEase will be an online database for lesson plans, pedagogy, multimedia, as well as student resources that will enable teachers to make the most efficient use of their limited time. Any teacher across the US will be able to upload a lesson, entire curriculum, or other content that they have created and taught before. The website will utilize a tagging system so that content may be filtered by grade level or age range, subject, concept, and type of lesson or technology used. Teachers will have the ability to view, download and provide feedback on lessons in order to create a community-based system that will continuously improve the content that is available to its educators. SchoolEase will also provide helpful analytics data on lessons that will minimize the time that is spent searching for materials such as the number of times teachers have marked content as having used it before or how many times the content has been edited. This lesson database and collaboration platform will be completely free to educators across the US, supported solely through advertisements.

I am currently in my seventh year as an educator. It can still be hard for me to find the time and inspiration for creating entirely new lessons from scratch. I remember all too vividly what it was like as a first-year teacher, coming home from work to spend three more hours in the evening creating my lesson for the next day. I hope that by creating this valuable resource that beginner teachers will especially be helped and that they can start their career with experiences that have already worked for their peers who have taught similar concepts.

I am requesting \$5,000 to get SchoolEase off the ground by creating a prototype website. Digital lessons and curriculums can take up a significant amount of space. Most drag and drop website builders cap their web-hosting storage at 50 GB, which, if SchoolEase plans to host all of its users' content then additional hosting or a dedicated server may be necessary. I also plan to compensate a core group of experienced colleagues covering different subject matter to help get our first few hundred lesson plans up on the website as well as provide continued support and feedback on the website's design and user experience. With lessons up on the website I will be able to do more large-scale user research within my school as well as reach out to previous colleagues at other schools that I have been employed.

There are currently three steps in place that will help determine the desirability and feasibility of SchoolEase. Beginner Teachers (BTs) will be one of the most likely returning users who will search for completely new lesson plans due to having a lack of existing lessons. I have already spoken with the Beginner Teacher mentors at my current high school, and they are willing to share out a survey during their next monthly meeting in March. I hope to obtain information from BTs such as how much time they are spending on creating new lesson plans, how difficult it has been both finding existing lessons from colleagues or online, and how they have been managing their time. BTs will also be asked if they spend any money on possible competing platforms such as *TeachersPayTeachers.com*. The survey will include questions that will gauge their likelihood to use or edit the resources on the SchoolEase website and prompt for any specific features or insight they might have to help inform further iterations of the website.

The second piece of SchoolEase's user research will come from interviewing colleagues who are veteran teachers. In order to grow a daily user base, there must be an incentive for veteran teachers to frequent the website, even when they may not be looking for new lesson ideas. Their insight will be crucial in discovering how to build the community aspect of SchoolEase and what would incentivize veteran teachers to spend time either critiquing, providing feedback, or uploading some of their own lessons to the website.

I am also an active member on several teacher community websites on both Facebook and Reddit. I hope to use both existing, vibrant communities to poll a larger target audience to confirm that teachers experience hardship in acquiring instructional materials, and then gather additional data and insights from SchoolEase's target audience.

With your assistance, we can help educators Ease into a brighter tomorrow.

Sincerely,

David Russo

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