



DigiEduHack Solution

Aalto Main Event - New tech, models and applications for future learning

Challenge: The future of learning - think like a human

HelpSquirrel

Teacher's virtual assistant

A virtual assistant that takes in the teacher's preferred resources and materials to provide a digital and communicative way for students to retrieve information without giving them the answers, but rather hints and pointers to the referenced materials.

Team: HelpSquirrel

Team members

Yousif Abdullah, Daniel Stafford, Karishma Jain, Mariah O'Mara

Members roles and background

Yousif - ICT Systems Architect, Daniel - Data Scientist, Karishma - UX/Design, Mariah - Marketing/Education

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Solution Details

Solution description

Teachers have too much on their plate and digital learning solutions rarely consider the teacher.

HelpSquirrel allows the teacher to personalize the virtual assistant with preferred resources and materials, which will be used in the app made for the students to communicate with the assistant to look up information and receive hints and pointers pertaining to the referenced materials for a particular class or lesson. Additionally, feedback collected from the assistant becomes useful data for the teacher to track the progress of the students and even get notifications if a student requires a check-in or is struggling with a particular subject.

Solution context

We need teachers in the classroom more than ever, as there's years of pedagogical experience backing up the established understanding of teachers curating the learning offer for the students by picking the books, materials, links, and even videos for the students to use. Teachers however have too much of a workload. That's what HelpSquirrel helps solve while respecting the position of the teacher and, in fact, augmenting it.

Solution target group

Teachers and educators in K-12, but the solution can also be marketed to schools directly.

Solution impact

HelpSquirrel is a tool to augment teaching and its impact comes to light especially in the long-term when the virtual assistant is better understanding the needs of the students as well as allowing the teacher to learn more about the learning of the students.

Solution tweet text

Wouldn't it be nice if every teacher in every classroom had their very own teaching assistant?
Introducing HelpSquirrel.

Solution innovativeness

On the market, several players are trying to tackle the classroom with gamification or focus on the learner. However, by opening up the learner to the entire internet as a resource and to learn to their heart's content, which of that content is good or even valid? Other solutions did not incorporate the curation aspect or think about the teacher as an afterthought, when in fact the learning problem is also (and especially) a teaching problem.

Solution transferability

HelpSquirrel can be adapted very easily to different contexts and already provides for the form of out of classroom support for the students where their learning is augmented even at home when the teacher is unavailable. Further, the virtual assistant could be adapted to facilitate learning beyond the teacher's preferred resources and materials. Focus on K-12 was also chosen for its importance, but applications for higher education are possible as well.

Solution sustainability

At first, the solution revolves mostly around the virtual assistant and helping out the teacher especially in the classroom, but also providing the students with support at home if/when needed. An interactive dashboard for the teachers to be able to further to solution into a more comprehensive learning platform is the clear path forward. Beyond that, designing the assignments and tasks directly in the platform would be a possible avenue in the future.

Solution team work

Team was perfectly rounded with talent and diversity from all across the spectrum! Enthusiastic and decidedly passionate brainstorming resulted in a HelpSquirrel that the team could be proud of and definitely working on in the future as colleagues and not just hackathon team members!

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