



Helping You **Learn** Using **Technology**
to **Reach** Your **Ultimate** Goal.

Venture Pitch

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Product

In Canada, about 1 in 10 Canadians have a learning disability; 35% of those individuals who are identified as having a learning disability end up dropping out of high school, a rate which is double that of their non-learning disabled peers.

The reason why dropout rates are so high is because these students are taught at a very young age that the school system measures success and intelligence by literacy and language skills, which these students struggle with daily. These young people are often ostracized and bullied by their peers and teachers for not being good enough and are regarded as being inattentive and deficient.



By the time they reach high school they are left with feelings of low self-esteem and embarrassment about their learning disability, and end up dropping out of school to get away from the negative attitudes. The result is a snowball effect, as it is difficult for these young people to get a job without a high school diploma or maintain a job as they are always in fear of being judged by others or about their learning disability becoming public knowledge.

Young people with learning disabilities need to be taught that it is acceptable to learn differently than their peers, and hopefully this will help reduce the dropout rate and help them achieve educational success. To do this, we have designed LearnTRU; a blend of a Learning Lifestyle and a High-Interest Lifestyle that creates the perfect after school and weekend learning environment for students with learning disabilities. LearnTRU is in the business of helping participants learn using technology to reach their ultimate goal by providing them with a learning and lifestyle strategy that will stay with them forever.

There are three aspects to LearnTRU. The first is to help our clients discover their learning lifestyle through a series of questions that determine how they learn best and which tool(s) can help them succeed with their academic pursuits and throughout their lives. The tools are different types of technology, from reading software like Kurzweil, voice recognition software like Dragon Naturally

Speaking, to learning methods that involve using multi-colored pens for studying, or the use of noise-cancelling headphones to block out distractions. It is during this initial phase that their Learning



Lifestyle is formed.

During the next phase, participants are taught how to learn by transforming any subject material so that it suits the learning style that was outlined during their initial assessment. They do things by bringing their class material, study material, or homework to our office to work on after school.

This is an on-going lifestyle where they learn that the more practice they have with the tools that work for them, the better they will be at discovering their own needs and figuring out what works best for them. This lifestyle also gives them the tools, confidence and the potential to learn anything.

The third and final aspect of LearnTRU is what differentiates us from our competition, the High-Interest Lifestyle. For students who struggle with academics, spending time completing homework and studying is of primary importance. It is also important for these young people to spend time enjoying themselves and exploring new and exciting things. As a part of our program, participants will be immersed in a variety of activities, from horseback riding, playing a musical instrument, to participating in a sports team or learning a winter sport like cross-country skiing, snowshoeing or snowboarding. The purpose of this aspect of LearnTRU is to help these young people find a hobby, sport or exercise that they enjoy, but more importantly one that will give them a sense of accomplishment. For students who struggle with academics, success in other aspects of their life tends to provide the motivation needed to help them stay in school even though they struggle with it. It is because of this that LearnTRU clients will spend equal amounts of time developing their Learning Lifestyle and their High-Interest Lifestyle to help them achieve success in all aspects of their lives.

Market

In comparison to a typically-developing student or a gifted student, the time and effort involved in teaching a student with a learning disability is quite high. With the limited time and resources available to teachers, they tend to focus on the students who learn through standard methods, which leave those who struggle feeling frustrated and discouraged. In addition, parents, who only want to provide the best education for their child, are left perplexed when they see their child struggling at school in comparison to the children of their friends and coworkers. It is the child who suffers the most because they know that they want to learn but they do not have anyone in their lives who has the time to teach them or the capability to show them how to learn.



The cycle is endless, with teachers wanting to see all of their students succeed but not having the time to help every student, parents wanting their child to get good grades and not knowing why it is so difficult, and lastly, the student with the learning disability who is left feeling disappointed in themselves because they do not believe that they can learn. It may be surprising that while they have difficulty learning, the majority of these young people have average or above-average intelligence. It is just that they have difficulty processing information in the traditional methods that are still taught in schools.

It is an ideal scenario for LearnTRU. We have participants who are willing to be taught how to learn in a way that they can comprehend; teachers who benefit because their students are equipped with skills and tools that can be applied immediately to their learning environment; and parents who are excited about their son or daughter achieving educational success.

Business Model

To prepare their LearnTRU lifestyles, the client will complete an initial assessment to determine which learning methods and tools are best suited to their Learning Lifestyle. The majority of clients



will require assistive technology, including a laptop and software programs designed to help with reading, writing, note-taking, concept-map creation or all of the above. Clients will have the option to purchase or rent fully-equipped laptops from LearnTRU as it is a requirement that the clients have access to all of the tools whether they are at home, in the classroom or at LearnTRU.

In addition to the assessment fee and any associated equipment purchase or rental costs, the primary source of income for LearnTRU will be through annual contract agreements. The programs offered by LearnTRU for both the Learning Lifestyle and the High-Interest Lifestyle run throughout the school year and are offered from grades 3 through 12. The minimum time commitment required to participate with LearnTRU is one evening during the school week and 4 hours on the weekend. The client may also choose to add additional evenings (up to 4) as a part of their Learning Lifestyle package. Additional packages offered by LearnTRU include: full-day summer programs for clients; funding assistance for LearnTRU packages that includes helping families complete paperwork for grants like the Special Education Grant (SEG) for early education funding and helping find private grants which are available through local businesses. LearnTRU will also assist clients with post-secondary education preparations; including determining which funding options are available for them and helping them navigate an academic system that may not be designed with them in mind.

With a flexible business model that balances an initial investment and optional and long-term sustainable income packages, LearnTRU is perfectly positioned as the solution for families who consider no price too high for their child's educational success, and those families who are on a budget. In addition, clients who join LearnTRU at a young age will be likely to continue to use our program throughout their educational careers.

Marketing & Sales

When a student is discovered to be struggling with their academic performance, it is not uncommon for teachers and guidance counsellors to suggest that they receive a psycho-educational assessment from a psychologist. As a part of the assessment, the psychologist provides the family with documentation that indicates the type of learning disability, which they present to the school, who then prepares an Individual Education Program (IEP). The challenge with an IEP is that the teachers do not have the time to teach the student their new educational program, which results in the child not receiving the type of guidance necessary for them to succeed. In marketing LearnTRU as the bridge between psychologists and school boards, it will be regarded as the solution that is offered to parents who want an immediate and definitive strategy for their child after they are diagnosed with a learning disability. In addition, LearnTRU will be leveraged as a way for teachers to decrease the amount of time and effort they have to spend with their learning disabled students.



In turn, LearnTRU will help refer their clients to local psychologists, as it is requirement for any student with a learning disability who is requesting funding or accommodations to keep their psycho-educational assessment up to date.

Industry

In Toronto, where LearnTRU will initially be established, there are limited options available for parents who are interested in getting help for a child with a learning disability. Tutoring companies



such as Oxford Learning, Sylvan Learning and TutorJam Academy specialize in tutoring specific subjects and teaching study strategies. The second option is to request assistance from the Learning Disabilities Association of Toronto District (IDATD), which has two programs available: Smart Kidz Tutoring and the Assistive Technology program.

LearnTRU is positioned to fill the niche between the tutoring companies that do not specialize in learning disabilities and require clients to choose a specific topic(s) and the IDATD that only has two options available for students.

Although there are limited options available for parents seeking assistance for their child, the companies that do exist are extremely well established corporations, which may make it challenging in our initial developing stages when acquiring clientele. However, LearnTRU maintains a competitive edge because we do not only specialize in learning strategies for individuals with learning disabilities, but we teach children how to learn any subject with the right blend of methodology and technology. The unique blend of a malleable learning style and non-academic pursuits provide LearnTRU with a unique product that allows us to compete in the existing educational markets while establishing a niche where no competition exists.

The combination of this niche and our understanding of how to properly support our participants will be what makes LearnTRU successful. It is this success that can bring rapid growth, and currently our team is extremely small. We realize that additional staff and resources are required if the business grows as quickly as we anticipate. It is also the primary reason for us seeking additional investment, so that we are able to hire new staff and have the capital necessary to expand as seamlessly as possible.

Team

The LearnTRU team is as unique as the product we provide. Ashley Ross, who is the President and CEO of LearnTRU, will complete her Masters in Educational Technology from the University of British Columbia in December 2011 and holds a Bachelor's Degree in Linguistics from Carleton University. She has worked with young people and adults with learning disabilities and has extensive experience designing learning and technology strategies. The second member of the team is Michael McNeil, Recreational Therapist and V.P.



of Recreation at LearnTRU. Mr. McNeil has developed programs for young people with a range of mental, physical and learning disabilities in Canada and New Zealand. In addition to his work with young people, Mr. McNeil designed training lessons, lesson plans and workshops as a researcher for the Heart and Stroke Foundation. In the coming months, LearnTRU will also be adding a V.P. of Marketing and Business Development.

With 10+ years of experience working with atypical students, the LearnTRU team can provide the right tools, motivation, support and activities to ensure success for their clients.