

Panacea Challenge Submission

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Submitted August 5, 2022

Education is a fundamental right, just as important as freedom of speech, assembly, and the press. Without education, every other right that Americans have is diminished in importance and stature. It is only with education that one can control their life and participate in the public's debates and discussion. Unfortunately, for far too many in America education is not available, or, even if it is, it is low-quality. This is a problem: a report by the OECD found that people losing a school year's worth of education in the United States lost 9.1% of their individual income in 2020. **(Hanushek & Woessmann, 2020)** The point remains: individuals with less education lost more from the pandemic. As a result, fixing educational inequity is an important issue that must be resolved. I propose a solution for North South Foundation: providing educational kits (boxes or through email) to promote interactive learning in underserved communities.

The system is relatively simple from the user's point of view. North South Foundation will examine data annually about educational access gaps in the United States, and send forms through the mail to all persons living in the most affected counties in the nation. Any student and/or their parent(s) can fill out these forms. Filled forms should contain basic contact and optional demographic information, as well as an indication of whether the student(s) have access to a computer. This form will be sent through the mail back to the North South Foundation, which will send electronic textbooks and resources via email to students with a computer and a package of printed educational materials and products. These products will be made in-house by an NSF team of educators from all grade levels and with expertise in all subjects, and will aim to engage students in interactive learning appropriate for the student's age. Resources will be equivalent in all regards except in format – online or physical. Further, for assistance, a team of well-trained teachers and volunteers will be stationed in community areas of underserved cities, towns, and neighborhoods: libraries, community centers, fitness centers, public squares, etc. In all, this approach will maximize student engagement and learning in underserved communities.

The main advantages of this approach are multifold. For students and their parents or guardians, this strategy allows all to receive low-cost or free educational packages depending on their access to a computer; as a result, students who may be unable to access electronic devices will be able to receive a high-quality education.

Further, as NSF will develop all resources in-house with a board of qualified experts and teachers, there is no need for NSF to enter into expensive contracts or to vet companies to provide outside resources. Students will not only receive the best education possible, but they will also be able to learn actively, and gain an interest not just in content but also in the art of learning itself.

To conclude, NSF should invest in educational packages, drafted by the best teachers and experts in learning, delivered to the homes of underserved children. These packages will be delivered online or physically depending on responses to a form sent through the mail or electronically. The packages will contain educational materials that will facilitate active learning: not only books but also items such as experiment kits, gateways to online resources, and other items. This solution will require upfront investment, but I envision that the cost of the program should eventually be covered almost entirely by donations. More importantly, however, I envision that students across the United States who cannot access education will now be able to do so more easily and better. What was once a luxury will then, finally, be a right that every student in America will have.

References

Hanushek, E. A., & Woessmann, L. (2020, September 10). *The economic impacts of learning losses* | en | OECD. OECD.org; OECD.

<https://www.oecd.org/education/the-economic-impacts-of-learning-losses-21908d74-en.htm>