

Lilian Neuman

Grade 12

*TransAid*

Commercialization Plan

Elevator Pitch: In school, transgender students often lack needed resources that cisgender students provide. I intend to fill that gap with a website for trans students to use to get the resources and support they need.

## **Part 2: Executive Summary**

I will create the TransAid website, designed to provide the users, trans students, with helpful transition information, contact information for LGBTQ+ and trans youth focused organizations, a donation page if the user wants to donate money, and a form to fill out to get in contact with the school counselor to get advice for their transition. It is not intended for profit, only meant to be used by those who need it for free, but they can still donate if they want. It is focused on helping specifically transgender students, an often overlooked demographic within schools. It will have a minimal cost of \$16/month to run and nothing on advertisements since it will be a local product to start.

## **Part 3: Problem summary and proposed solution:**

Trans students need more resources and support within the school system because I learned that, not only are resources unavailable to students, staff members are often unprepared and lack the resources needed to prepare them to deal with and properly support trans students, therefore leaving these students to mostly fend for themselves and figure it out on their own. Admittedly, this is a small group of students within the school, but they are still part of school culture and need to be looked after. My solution is the TransAid website, where trans students can get important information about being trans and their transition, as well as contact a school counselor for advice on the steps they should take in their transition or what to do about their in-school experience with being transgender.

## **Plan Part 4: Summarize the STEM Concepts and Principles Underlying the Overall Plan.**

Creating a website that keeps users, in this case trans students, comfortable and feeling safe while using it requires the incorporation of color psychology to make the right atmosphere. Green is often considered one of the safest or most comfortable feeling colors because it “[evokes] mainly positive emotions such as relaxation and comfort because it reminded most of the respondents of nature” (Kaya & Epps, 2004). However, the color combination of green-yellow should be avoided because “it [is] associated with vomit and [elicits] the feelings of sickness and disgust” (Kaya & Epps, 2004). Every color has some kind of effect, though, with red drawing attention and being exciting, yellow creates energy and happiness, orange draws attention as well, blue is non-invasive and is associated with dependability, purple is relaxing and soothing while also inspiring feelings of wealth, and more (Bowman, 2014).

General web design is important as well, as the organization of information and aspects of the website is important to making a user want to come back. Space is important because it “plays an important role in any type of design work, especially Web design, because it visually gives a resting place for the visitor” (Turner, 2014). Typography, or the font and organization of the text, also plays an important role in web design psychology. There are thousands of options to use, and while that can be overwhelming, it also gives so many more options. The ideas of leading (space between lines) and kerning (space between letters) are especially important, even though they’re small details, because they create white space while you are reading the information (Turner, 2014).

This ties into the STEM concepts of Science and Technology, using technology to actually create the website, but using the science of psychology to design the organization and layout of the website, and how the colors and white space are used. It’s important to keep these concepts in mind when designing as they deeply influence the end product, the result has to be easy to use while being aesthetically pleasing and soothing to use for the specific task the website is trying to accomplish, being a safe space and database of information for trans students.

## **Part 5. Commercialization Assessment of the Overall Plan**

Trans students need more resources and support within the school system because I learned that, not only are resources unavailable to students, staff members are often unprepared and lack the resources needed to prepare them to deal with and properly support trans students, therefore leaving these students to mostly fend for themselves and figure it out on their own. Not only do I face this problem directly, I also interviewed multiple trans students in my school, in other schools, and those who have previously graduated, and I found that this issue was something present for just about everyone I asked, especially non-binary and questioning students who didn't know a whole lot about their identities and had less support from the staff at their school. A big part of this issue is the comfortability of the students, as they have to feel comfortable enough to say anything about their identity to those who can provide them with resources. This makes anonymity something to keep in mind when designing my proposed solution, which led me to what I did choose.

I plan on creating a website with a few different parts to it designed to provide the user with multiple different resource options. The first option is a database of term definitions, studies on and about trans people, and general information about being transgender so that anyone questioning or new to the label can learn a bit more about it. Second, it will include a form you can fill out, anonymously or named, to talk about possible dysphoria or issues being faced within school, as well to ask for anonymous advice from the school counselor, as the forms submissions will be tied to them and they will be able to see. The final option will be contact information for a few different things, including your school's counselor, hotlines such as the National Suicide Hotline, and any organizations in your area for LGBTQ+ and/or specifically transgender people.

The target user for this is transgender people, specifically students. It's intended for them to be able to get support and advice while being able to stay anonymous, but it would not be helpful for adults, though, as it works based on the school counselor and adults wouldn't have one of those. Cisgender students also wouldn't really benefit from most of this website, except for the database of information, as then they could learn more about the label to be a better ally.

There are plenty of online databases available that have information and resources for trans people, such as from the GLAAD Media Institute, an LGBTQ+ organization that works to help with the acceptance of the community, and Trans Student Educational Resources, a youth-led organization that works to provide resources for trans students to address the same

issue that I am. There are also a couple of live chat rooms available online that can be used to get support and advice such as TransAdvice and the live support chat from Transgender Support.

These options are viable, however, my product is designed to include both options and then a little bit more with the contact information for different organizations and hotlines you can call. The live chat rooms are good for getting advice, but they would just be general advice from other trans people and not from people directly involved in your school who would know about the workings of the school, and while these groups are competitors, I don't think that having my resource be an option would be bad. The more options that these students have, the better.

This will be non-profit, so it's not going to be a paid service of any kind. I do not intend to use any advertisements on the page because I'd prefer that the website stay clear of any outside products and just be dedicated to providing help to trans students. I will, however, have a donation page for anyone to donate money if they wish, but it isn't a requirement and the intended purpose of my product is not for profit.

To get this started and have my website set up, I have a few different options, all of which cost some amount of money to run. With a paid website builder like squarespace, it would cost \$18 per month to run my website with the capabilities that I need, and after the website is made, I have to keep paying for the service to keep the website running and to be able to do any maintenance. Another option is WordPress, which is a similar website builder to Squarespace, and it has a couple of different options to pay for. If I went that route, I would do the \$14 per month version, which is obviously cheaper than Squarespace, but the services have different functions provided, so it would entirely depend on which one I would want to. I'd prefer to use Squarespace, so that will end up being \$18 per month, or \$216 per year to keep the website running. For now, I would only have this being run for my school in particular to make sure that it works and successfully addresses the issue before I expanded, and that would take a bit of work and some kind of integration with other schools, so I won't need any kind of advertising to let people know about my service as I can just directly advertise within the school.

## **Part 6: Science and Technology Proof of Concept**

This is an important resource for these students due to the fact that they often deal with increased bullying for their identity in school, and especially with higher rates of suicide. While these issues are already bad on their own, trans students often don't get a lot of resources to help them with their transition, especially questioning students who aren't sure yet if they're trans or not. They tend to be an overlooked group of students and when trans people in general deal with gender dysphoria, bullying, and suicidal ideation, it can be made far worse when they get no help with dealing with it in school.

According to the Centre for Suicide Prevention, 22% to 43% of trans individuals, youth and adult, said that they have attempted suicide in their lifetime. Along with that, trans people are 2 times more likely to think about and/or attempt suicide than lesbian, gay, or bisexual people.  $\frac{2}{3}$  of trans people report that they have recently self-harmed within the last year. Despite all of this, trans people make up approximately 0.5%-0.6% of the population (Centre for Suicide Prevention, 2015). On a deeper level, when looking at just youth that have attempted suicide, 14% of the adolescents surveyed by Toomey, Syversten, and Shranko (2018) reported attempting suicide; this 14% includes cisgender, transgender, questioning, and non-binary people. Along with that, they found the percentages of the people surveyed from each demographic that have attempted VS those who have not, finding that trans boys made up the highest percentage (50.8% of that group), with non-binary people having the second highest (41.8%), then trans girls (29.9%), followed by questioning people (27.9%), and then the demographics with the least percentage of their population having attempted being cis girls (17.6%) and cis boys (9.8%) (Toomey et al, 2018).

According to actual trans students, schools have next to no resources available. At my school, NIHF STEM High School, we have Patchwork Diversity Club, which is our Gender-Sexuality Alliance, but many other schools don't have that available, such as Firestone High School and Barberton High School. Plus, trans students find that teachers aren't very educated on trans issues and so they don't feel as much support. However, graduates of these schools do say that they grew in support over time.

I hypothesize that if I create this website for trans students that keeps comfort and anonymity for the students while allowing them to learn more about their identity and be able to

vent their issues to do with their gender, then they will be able to understand their identity and more effectively know what steps to take in the future to be comfortable.

My product will be a website designed to be comforting for the user and easy to use, with different pages for what the user is looking for. The 5 E's of user experience are how the user interacts with the product, and they are Entice, Enter, Engage, Exit, and Extend. The user will be enticed to use my site through minor advertisements, and since this will start out localised at my school, it will be advertisement done on my own to the school as a whole. To enter, the user will just open up their web browser and go to the site. Once there, they will be able to engage with the site by using the different pages available. Firstly, they have access to the database of information that has general terms and definitions, as well as more in-depth scientific articles. Secondly, they have access to a form to fill out that will be submitted to their school's counselor that can be filled out anonymously if they wish. This is so that they can ask for advice on what they need to do with their transition and talk about the issues that they're experiencing. Thirdly, they have a page of contact information for different LGBTQ+ and trans organizations and hotlines that the user might need. Finally, there will be a donation page if the user wishes to donate, but it isn't required. This is all illustrated in my wireframing diagram, Figure 1. Once finished, the user will exit just by closing out the tab or the browser entirely. To submit the form, the user will need to use a personal email, that way they can receive a response back. The email does not need to include their name, that way they can remain anonymous, and this email that they get back is what will extend the experience for them, possibly bringing them back if they need more help.

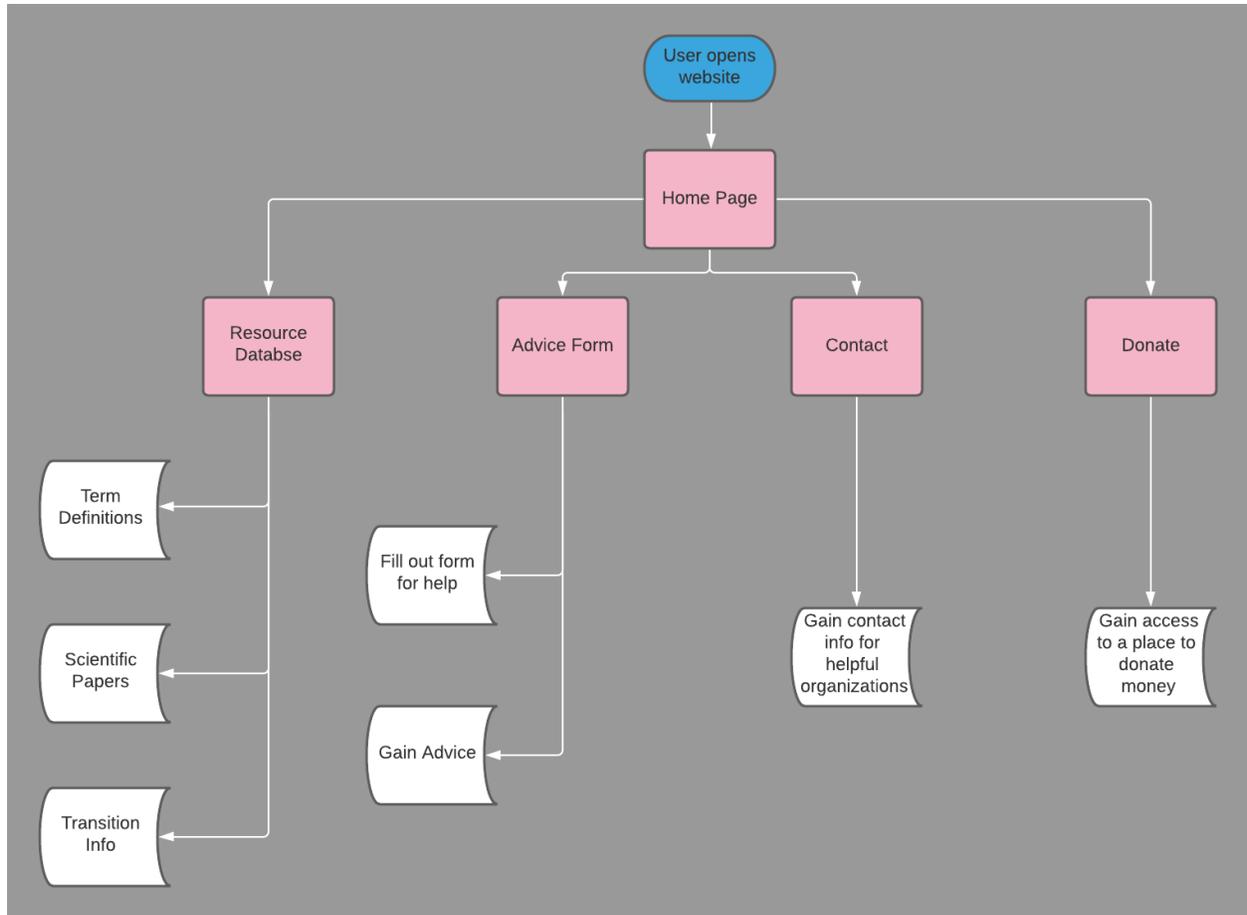


Figure 1: Wireframing diagram that shows the paths that users can take when engaging with the website. Once getting on, they go to the home page, and then they can go from there to the other 4 pages. Each of the pages has different options provided, such as the database having transition info, scientific papers, and term definitions.

## **Part 7: Acknowledgements**

I wish to acknowledge Kathleen Metcalf for guiding me through the whole process and providing me with the tools to build this plan and come up with a workable solution to my problem. I would also like to thank and acknowledge Jonathan Holtz for helping me brainstorm and evaluating everything I came up with to help with my design process. Finally, I'd like to thank my fellow trans classmates that I interviewed for providing me with important information and other perspectives on the issue.

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