

Test prep at your fingertips : Local startup aims to squeeze the classroom into mobile devices

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Photo Ellie Van Houtte/Town Crier

ArcadiaPrep co-founders Wens Gerdyman, left, and Jing Wang recently launched an SAT preparation app in partnership with Kaplan.

with Los Angeles-based test-prep publisher Nova Press. Since then, he noted, the company has added WestEd – a San Francisco-based education agency – and Kaplan Test Prep, among others, to its ranks.

Gerdyman said one of his company's most recently unveiled projects is Kaplan's SAT Quiz U, which he called "a big step" for ArcadiaPrep.

The free and premium content offers users multiple-choice quizzes for each testing section and access to more than 450 practice questions. Additional features include performance-tracking reports and walk-through video tutorials for certain questions and access to Kaplan discussion boards where users can receive feedback from the company's SAT teachers.

The challenge, Gerdyman said, was to create an experience that fosters an atmosphere for learning that can hold a student's focus.

"When you're trying to acquire knowledge, how do you make it engaging and how do you make it exciting for the students?" he said.

Gerdyman added that for ArcadiaPrep to achieve long-term success, the educational content marketplace would have to view the company as more than just a technology provider. So the company continues to experiment with various business models to make it more sustainable.

"Test preparation is a very unique market," Gerdyman said. "In terms of size, it's small and there are already established players. But we'd like to try this because there's always an immediate need – people want to pass tests. Every year there's a new batch of people who want to pass tests, whether it's LSAT, SAT, GRE or GMAT. There's always a turnover."

In addition to standardized testing, Gerdyman said ArcadiaPrep is developing product concepts with WestEd to provide reading and writing apps for elementary school students. In the future, he added, ArcadiaPrep aims to expand its platform to include higher education and corporate training apps.

For more information, visit www.Arcadia-Apps.com.

Los Altos resident Wens Gerdyman believes preparing for a standardized test like the SAT should start by simply turning on a tablet or smartphone.

"Our vision is to make learning mobile," said Gerdyman, co-founder of ArcadiaPrep, a Los Altos startup that creates iOS and Android-based apps for exam preparation. "You should be able to learn and study everywhere. We're looking to turn mobile devices – like phones and tablets – into learning devices, not just gaming devices."

Gerdyman said the idea for his company came about when he and business partner Jing Wang – also a Los Altos resident – were in the midst of creating an LSAT preparation app.

"We realized that we could turn this into a platform instead of just creating a single app," he said.

Working in partnership with educational content publishers, ArcadiaPrep offers SAT, LSAT, GRE, GMAT and MCAT apps – so far. Gerdyman said the company hopes to expand its reach in the world of education.

Gerdyman conceded that finding a willing content partner initially proved to be more challenging than he anticipated before linking up