

URL: <https://ecorner.stanford.edu/clips/equitable-access-to-technology/>

Dave Vasen, founder and CEO of brightwheel, explains how his company works to serve customers across the early childhood education market, regardless of wealth. For example, he has brought in impact investors in every round of funding to hold the company accountable.



Transcript

Inquirer Given the long history of inequality in EdTech 00:00:05,790 and how it can sometimes be something that really exacerbates existing inequalities, how is Brightwheel, or how have you made Brightwheel not something that's just for wealthy preschools? - That's a great question. 00:00:18,450 So, there was a lot of skepticism I had early on, whether it was folks interested in impact or even investors. And they thought, oh, this is gonna be a Silicon Valley wealthy preschool product that certain demographics will buy. And, I felt confident enough early on that the pain that we were solving was gonna be universal. And, I had to test that, you know, throughout different markets throughout the country, and different demographics throughout the country. And, every round of funding that we've taken on, it's been really important to me to bring on an impact investor who actually is gonna help us think about this and help hold us accountable. Hopefully, you heard from me, it's been a big part of my life and my work and so, you know, having them around the table is a part of it. And a part of it is just what we care about and what we prioritize. And, I think that the main thing I can say now is, Brightwheel is in, literally, if you took a paint can and like, threw it against the wall, we're in every type of school across the country. Certainly, all 50 states and global.

But all types of schools, all pedagogies, all price points, all demographics. And some of the biggest impact that we have actually is in schools in disadvantaged areas where, you know, for them, it's actually less a question of funding. We're not a super expensive product, but the impact is outsized, because they don't have access usually to tools like this. And a big part of what we want to do is actually democratize really great tools. And so, and then in some cases we have partnered, like, we serve a lot of non-profit organizations and head starts, where we work with them to discount in the right ways. But, the really rewarding thing has been, you know, for us, we have kept price low in a number of ways and focused on the value that we add. And I really, you know, what we hear and what we see is at Brightwell, really, is accessible to everybody and we're able to then measure the impact. And so, if you go into a tough area and you're able to save them measurable time. So, we save up to an hour per staff member, per day, and give them time back to spend time with the kids, or to even frankly just go home on time. And then, if you're helping on the parent's side as well, it has a huge impact, and frankly, an outsize impact in those types of scenarios...