TeachShare

TeachShare focuses on solving a central problem: how do we strengthen formal and informal knowledge-sharing relationships amongst those on the frontlines of education, teachers. TeachShare's mission is to make these relationships and knowledge-sharing pathways more accessible to facilitate highly connected, durable, local networks of teachers.

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Pitch

Presented by Charlie Dillon **, University of Chicago**

01 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

TeachShare is a local, teacher-led platform that strengthens cross-school connections, enabling educators to share practices, build trust, and drive grassroots innovation through everyday collaboration.

What is TeachShare?
TeachShare is a platform designed to strengthen local teacher-to-teacher networks. It facilitates informal, peer-led knowledge exchange across schools in the same neighborhood, filling the structural gaps that isolate teachers from one another.

Why it Matters?
Teachers are frontline decision-makers, not passive implementers. As street-level bureaucrats (Lipsky), they navigate competing demands daily, but often do so in isolation.

TeachShare addresses this by building the relational infrastructure teachers need to share, adapt, and refine practice. Drawing on social network theory, the platform strengthens weak ties between educators across schools, enabling local knowledge to travel farther, faster, and with greater relevance. The result is strengthened, non-intermediated connection between those on the frontlines of education, helping make teacher-led innovation more accessible.

Benefits

- Teacher-verified accounts only

- Teacher-led governance and moderation

- School-to-school sharing board

- Lightweight discussion threads by grade/topic

- Locally bounded peer groups

- Building online and offline connections between those on the frontline of education

02

PROBLEM → SOLUTION

PROBLEM

- Teachers are professionally isolated, even within the same neighborhood

- No structured way to share lessons, strategies, or challenges across schools

- Professional development is impersonal, top-down, and time-consuming

- Teacher-led innovation is throttled by a lack of relational and other forms of capital relative to outside groups

SOLUTION

- TeachShare creates a local digital commons where educators can:

  - Share "what worked for me"

  - Ask questions without fear of formal scrutiny

  - See and adapt ideas from other neighborhood schools

  - Build ties through low-stakes collaboration

WHY NOW?

Teacher Burnout is Rising → **Teachers crave connection and efficiency**

PD Fatigue is Real → **Teachers are exhausted by one-size-fits-all training**

Post-COVID Realities → **A renewed appreciation for local problem-solving and digital collaboration**

03

WHAT I SAW: Insights from My School Visit

Observations

- Teachers work in relative silos, even within the same building, with little visible cross-classroom collaboration, especially through formal channels.
- Teachers are severely constrained based on time, resources, formal and informal responsibilities, etc
- Few formal channels for sharing materials, routines, or innovations across schools.
- Strong relational capital inside schools, but no structure for cross-school trust or coordination.

Implications for Design

Insight	Design Response
Teachers want to share, but don't have time or structure to do so.	TeachShare reduces friction by making sharing easier: brokered relationships, informal reflections, peer upvoting.
Collaboration is local and relational, not district-wide	Platform builds neighborhood-scale networks, not system-wide mandates
Discretion is powerful but under-leveraged.	Platform makes everyday practice visible, encouraging replication + recognition.
Innovation exists, but it's isolated	TeachShare helps teachers see and borrow from peers across schools

Theoretical Link

1. Teachers are "street-level bureaucrats" (Lipsky).

2. But policymakers need networks.

3. TeachShare is the missing infrastructure to connect **discretion** with **distribution**.

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WHY IT WORKS: *Theoretical Foundations*

Grounded in classroom-tested theoretical anchors, TeachShare is a practical response to the enduring problem of reform disconnected from classroom life.

Theory	Core Insight	TeachShare Response
Lipsky, *Street-Level Bureaucracy* (1980)	Teachers act as policy-makers in practice, but are constrained by time, structure, and oversight.	TeachShare gives teachers greater professional autonomy by enabling peer-driven reform, not top-down mandates.
Grossman et al., *Redefining Teaching* (2009)	Real teacher learning is relational and contextual; teachers improve most through collaborative, practice-based knowledge sharing.	TeachShare fosters teacher-to-teacher communities of practice rooted in real classroom tools and dialogue.
Tyack & Cuban, *Tinkering Toward Utopia* (1995)	Lasting reform must adapt to existing school culture and teacher practice, not override it.	TeachShare amplifies what's already working by spreading small-scale, teacher-generated innovations organically.
City et al., *Instructional Rounds* (2009)	Sustained instructional improvement requires shared language and inter-school visibility.	TeachShare provides visibility into what teachers are trying across schools, promoting a shared reform vocabulary.

Reform should not bypass teacher discretion, it should amplify it.

05

SCALING PATH: *From Local Pilot to Systemic Change*

Phase 1: Local Prototype – Hyde Park, Chicago

- **Context:** ~12 schools in close geographic proximity, but limited inter-school connection or collaboration
- **Need:** Teachers want to share what works, but lack low-friction, trustable pathways
- **Intervention:** Launch TeachShare as a hyper-local digital commons, grounded in neighborhood identity
- **Goal:** Strengthen informal ties, identify organic leaders, and build a proof-of-concept network

Phase 2: Cluster Replication

- **Target:** Expand by school district clusters, charter networks, or professional learning communities
- **Approach:**
  - Use teacher-reported value ("This saved me time," "I tried what I saw and it worked," etc) as the scaling trigger
  - Focus on low-cost, high-trust design: self-organized groups, local moderation, and platform-based tacit knowledge sharing
- **Foundation:** *System Wise* (Parrott-Sheffer et al., 2024) emphasizes scaling via routines that are simple, adaptive, and educator-centered.

Phase 3: National Adaptation

- **Geographic + Role-Based Filtering:** Enables teachers to connect across distance and context—by grade level, subject, or school type.
- **Decentralized Governance:** Teachers moderate their own sub-networks, reducing overhead and increasing legitimacy.
- **Flexible Alignment:** Can be embedded in district systems, union portals, or PD initiatives, without requiring them to change core operations.
- **Low-Cost, High-Trust:** Operates on relational capital rather than compliance logic; cost-effective and emotionally intelligent.

06 PLATFORM MODEL

Teachers don't need more PD. They need smarter social infrastructure, spaces that are closed to outsiders, grounded in lived experience, and governed by educators themselves.

- **Platform Type:** Peer-to-peer collaboration platform with geographic and professional boundaries

- **Core Interaction Unit**: A teacher shares or requests a classroom-tested practice, resource, or reflection (lesson plan, tool, question, tactic)

- **Access + Privacy Design:**
  - Teacher-verified accounts only (.edu or district-issued email required, etc)
  - Private by default: Local sub-networks are visible only to approved educators
  - No administrator oversight or surveillance. protects autonomy
  - Student data is never collected or visible

- **Same-Side Network Effects:**
  - More local teachers → richer pool of usable strategies → greater daily value → Adoption grows by word of mouth, not compliance

- **Governance:** Teacher-led moderation within neighborhoods, districts, or affinity groups ("Chicago Middle School Math Teachers," etc)

- **Trust Layer:**
  - Formed through shared identity + local proximity ("5th grade teachers in Hyde Park," etc)
  - No external incentives, only reputation, reciprocity, and respect.
  - Mirrors the informal networks teachers already use, but makes them durable and discoverable

Before

School 1   School 2

School 3   School 4
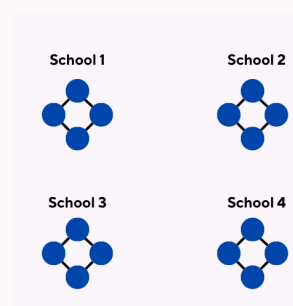
After
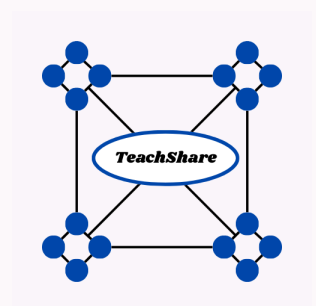
TeachShare

07

PILOT IDEA: *Hyde Park K-12 Educators Conference*

Purpose:

- To create a foundational gathering where teachers:
- Build cross-school relationships grounded in practice, not policy
- Co-design the TeachShare platform as a local tool for their real needs

What It Is: Hyde Park K–12 Educators Conference

A half-day, teacher-led event bringing together public, charter, and private school educators from the Hyde Park neighborhood.

Three Core Goals:

1. Share What Works

- Lightning Talks – 5-minute success stories and classroom hacks
- Resource Swap – Bring one thing you love using → leave with five new tools
- Roundtables – Facilitate content-specific or issue-based clinics

2. Broker New Connections

- "TeachTwin" Pairing – Match teachers across schools with similar roles or challenges
- Affinity Meetups – Special sessions for new teachers, SPED, ELL, and department chairs
- Network Mapping Activity – Visualize where collaboration is missing and how to fill gaps

3. Co-Create the Platform

- Pain Point Mapping – What slows sharing down today?
- Feature Design Sprints – Teachers sketch + vote on what the platform should do
- Trust Wall – Anonymous prompts: "What would make this space safe, not performative? What should NOT be allowed on the platform? Etc"

Why it Matters?

- Before we build the platform, we build the network it serves.
- TeachShare shouldn't just be built for teachers. It should be built with them.

Success Metrics

- At least 30 teachers across 6+ Hyde Park schools attend
- 3+ actionable design features voted in
- 80%+ report new professional connection

08 NEXT STEPS

Continuing the Work at UChicago (2025–26)

As I begin a Master's program at UChicago, I plan to use institutional resources to further develop and expand TeachShare:

- *Rustandy Center for Social Sector Innovation* – Explore sustainable, educator-owned models for scaling the network without institutional capture.
- *Office of Civic Engagement* – Coordinate to pilot the platform and conference model with Hyde Park schools and community partners.
- *UChicago Lab Schools* – Partner to coordinate conference, test early design features, and build trust with teachers across school boundaries.

Evolution Path

This will evolve into an open source strategy and toolkit for seeding local teacher networks, which can then grow or replicate based on demand and local capacity.

Once launched, TeachShare can evolve in two directions:

- *Deeper locally:* Ongoing neighborhood cohorts sharing and refining practice.
- *Replicated laterally:* Other neighborhoods adapt the structure without relying on a central org or top-down buy-in (TeachShare New York, etc).

Long-Term Vision

Decentralized by Design: TeachShare is not a static platform but a platform framework that teachers can adapt. Each local network (neighborhood, district, or charter cluster) operates independently, shaped by its own needs and relationships.

Open-Source, Teacher-Owned:

- Intentionally lightweight infrastructure: Core principles, not prescriptions
- A modular, open-source tech stack that developers can build on and flexible branding, so localities can make it their own
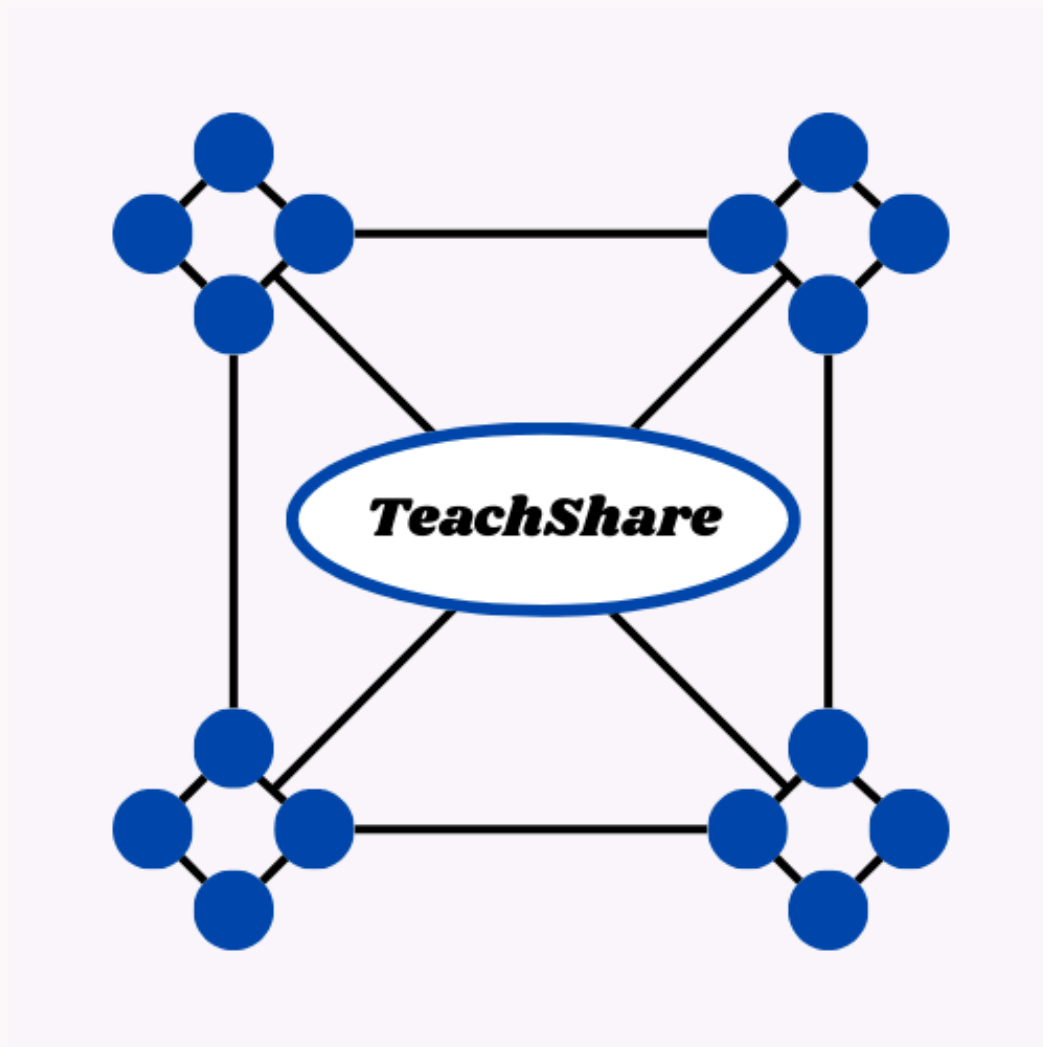
Community-Led Development: We'll open the platform to contributions from the open-source community, prioritizing developers with ed-tech experience. The goal is to grow a shared ecosystem of flexible teacher network building tools.

Organic Growth Model:

- Start with one neighborhood (Hyde Park)
- Document and share the pilot model
- Invite replication, not through franchising, but through shared learning and open templates

If you're curious, critical, or interested, let's talk.

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Teacher wisdom, networked.