



Digital Promise



2014 Annual Report

Inform. Innovate. Inspire.



Our Mission

Digital Promise is a nonprofit organization authorized by Congress to spur innovation to improve the opportunity to learn for all Americans.

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Letter From Our CEO

I am honored to share with you the Digital Promise 2014 Annual Report.

It has been a great privilege for me to lead Digital Promise for the past two years. During that time, we have introduced exciting new initiatives and expanded the scope of existing ones. We have added talented, passionate and amazingly hard-working people to our staff. We have strengthened our financial position through the generosity and support of both new and existing philanthropic funders and corporate partners. We have extended our reach to every region of the country.

Digital Promise works at the intersection of educators, researchers, and learning technology developers and entrepreneurs to ensure that our education system realizes the full potential of technology for learning. Educators must understand and know how to use technology to engage, motivate, and personalize learning for all learners; researchers must evolve new methodologies that produce results in ways that match the speed of technology; developers must be informed by education research to design products that improve student outcomes.

Most important, we all must work together to close the Digital Learning Gap, so all learners have access, acquire the skills to fully participate in a connected world, and feel empowered to achieve their life and work goals while contributing to society and their communities.

The theme of our 2014 annual report is Inform, Innovate and Inspire. Over the past year, we have informed through research, storytelling, and sharing ideas and best practices. We have supported innovation so learning can become engaging, relevant, and personal. We have sought to inspire everyone in our education system to work together to create opportunities to learn for all Americans.

Words and ideas can be powerful. But the way to achieve positive change is to take action. Through your support, you enable Digital Promise to make a tangible difference to millions of American learners at all stages of their lives.

I am deeply grateful and humbled by your confidence in us. Thank you for everything you do.



Karen Cator
CEO and President

Closing the Digital Learning Gap

The problem with education in America is not lack of excellence: it's lack of equity.

American education has pockets of excellence that outshine the best of the best around the world. All across the country, students are designing, coding, composing, animating, and publishing. They are experimenting and solving problems of water and energy, creating local community guides, and connecting across cultural and national borders through virtual exchanges. All across the country, innovative education leaders and classroom teachers are engaging, motivating, and nurturing students to develop mindsets for lifelong learning.

And yet, huge gaps exist between learning outcomes, graduation rates, and college readiness of students based on race, class, and where they live. Gaps also exist between high-performing and under-performing schools based on differences in access to funding and resources, community commitment, and the willingness of school leaders to innovate. And gaps exist between the abilities of adults to be productive in a rapidly changing global economy, and good citizens in a democracy based on the quality of their experiences in school.

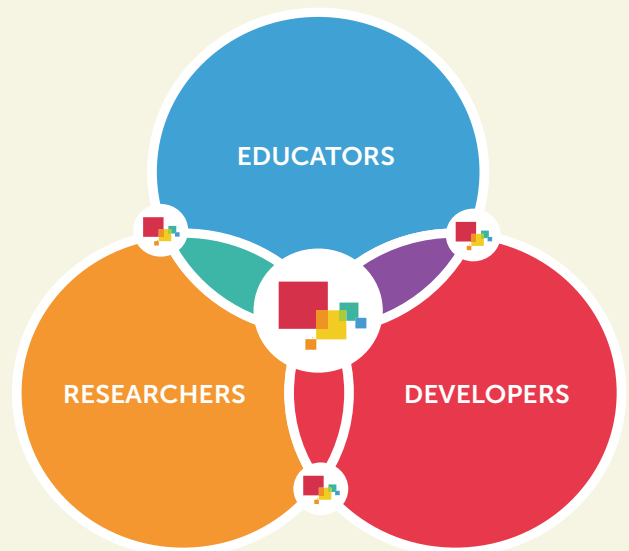
All of this could be about to change. A few hundred years ago, the printing press and free public libraries caused literacy rates in Europe to soar by making books readily available to all.

Today, digital learning represents a similar and no less dramatic chance for people everywhere to acquire the knowledge, competencies, and drive that can prepare them to continually learn new skills for a future we cannot predict.

But to realize the full advantages of digital learning, we must ensure **access**, **participation** and **empowerment** for all learners; we must close the Digital Learning Gap.

- **Access:** All students and educators must have access to personal technology and the Internet, both at school and at home.
- **Participation:** All learners and educators must have sufficient digital literacy to participate fully and responsibly in a connected world.
- **Empowerment:** All learners and educators must be empowered to use technology to solve complex, real-world challenges.

Join us in our efforts to improve the opportunity for all Americans to learn.





Sharing Stories



Connecting rural students in Piedmont, Alabama

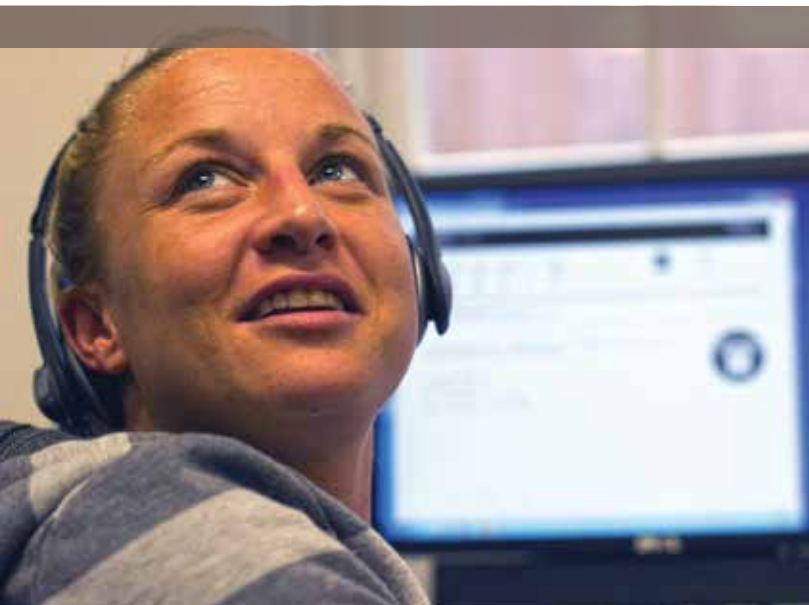
League of Innovative Schools District

To restore hope in a community hit by hard times, the public school district is working to provide an education that prepares students for a modern global economy. Through its [mPower Piedmont initiative](#), all students in grades 4-12 receive a laptop with home Internet access. Thanks to the program, ACT scores have risen, students have taken online courses enabling them to graduate on time, and data suggests that students need less remedial help with English and math when they reach college. Piedmont High has been ranked the second-most connected school nationally by *U.S. News & World Report*, and was recognized by Apple Inc. as an Apple Distinguished School—one of 56 in the nation and the only one in Alabama.

Closing the Digital Learning Gap in Vista, California

Digital Promise Schools

When the [Vista Innovation & Design Academy \(VIDA\) Middle School](#) in Vista, California opened in 2014, it incorporated design thinking as a core learning principle. It also set out to level the playing field between students who have digital learning access and opportunity and those who do not. Through Verizon and Digital Promise, in the fall of 2014, every one of VIDA's 680 students and their teachers received an iPad with a free 4G connection to ensure always available access to the Internet with the goal of transforming learning for students and their families. In classrooms, students are learning how to be problem-solvers, creators and researchers. At home, families unaccustomed to using technology for educational purposes are beginning to understand its power to change their lives.



Forward-thinking in New York State

Adult Learning Beacon Project Site

The [Orleans/Niagara Board of Cooperative Educational Services \(ONBOCES\)](#) in upstate New York encourages digital collaboration between school districts in a region where industries that once fueled the economy have diminished or disappeared altogether. Its adult learning division serves more than 1,600 students each year, offering classes that range from literacy to citizenship to high school equivalency. Digital tools are helping migrant laborers, those who are incarcerated, and many other students build confidence and gain skills that will help them improve their lives.

Digital transformation in Southern California's Coachella Valley

League of Innovative Schools District

One of the poorest school districts in the country, [Coachella Valley Unified School District](#) near Palm Springs, California is committed to closing the Digital Learning Gap for its 19,500 students. The district rolled out a learning technology initiative that equipped all students from pre-K through high school with an iPad to broaden their worldview and personalize learning. They increased Internet bandwidth and even installed Wi-Fi routers on school buses. These buses are parked in neighborhoods in the evening, and serve as hotspots to ensure that under-served students can get online so they can finish their homework. President Obama applauded the school district's effort in a speech to hundreds of education leaders at the White House ConnectED Conference in November 2014.

Our History

Digital Promise is a non-partisan organization conceived, authorized, and launched across the span of three Presidential Administrations from 1999 to 2011: President Bill Clinton, President George W. Bush, and President Barack Obama.



1999

Project launched

Carnegie Corporation of New York partnered with the Century, Knight, MacArthur, and Open Society Foundations to launch the Digital Promise Project to recommend policies that would harness breakthrough technologies to serve the public interest.

2001

Project recommendations published

Project co-chairs, former FCC Chairman Newton N. Minow and former NBC News and PBS president Lawrence K. Grossman, published their recommendations for the project in a book titled, *A Digital Gift to the Nation*.

2004

Roadmap developed

At the request of Congress, in partnership with the Federation of American Scientists—a group that includes most of the nation's Nobel laureates in science—Digital Promise Project developed a roadmap for applying advanced learning technologies to address America's urgent need for quality education and training in the digital age.

2008

Digital Promise signed into law

Digital Promise was formally authorized as the National Center for Research in Advanced Information and Digital Technologies through Section 802 of the Higher Education Opportunity Act, which was signed into law by President George W. Bush.



2011

Digital Promise formally launched

- President Barack Obama launched Digital Promise with a Board of Directors recommended by members of Congress and appointed by Secretary of Education Arne Duncan.
- First major initiative, League of Innovative Schools, launched with 25 district members.

2013

Two new major initiatives launched

- Marketplace: delivering research and solutions that result in smart demand, smart supply, and simplified procurement processes in the K-12 digital learning market.
- Educator Micro-credentials: building a system to provide educators with an opportunity to gain recognition for skills they master throughout their careers.

2014

Three major new initiatives launched

- Adult Learning: encouraging the design and development of digital learning tools that meet the unique needs of underserved adult learners.
- Research@Work: connecting education research with practitioners and developers to improve digital learning experiences and tools.
- Digital Promise Schools: partnering with U.S. middle schools to create innovative learning environments and fully document the process so others can learn.

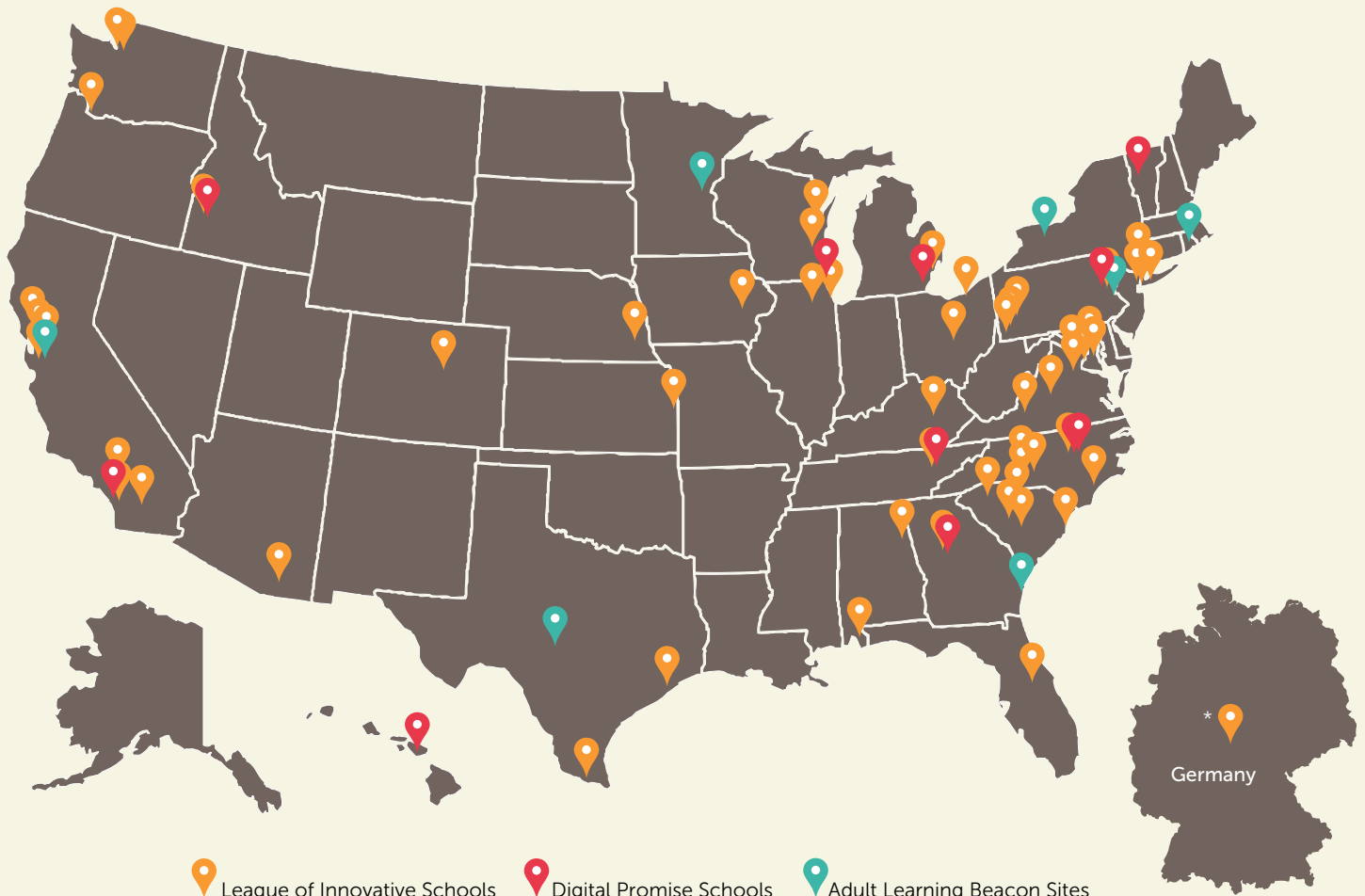
2014: Year at a Glance

- Welcomed **11 new members** into the League of Innovative Schools, increasing the number of **districts to 57**. The League now serves over **3.2 million students across 27 states** and reflects the wide diversity of public education in the United States.
- Partnered with Verizon to launch Digital Promise Schools and collaborate with **eight middle schools** (now 21 schools) serving **4,500 students** (now 11,750 students) and **350 educators** (now 1,120 educators) to create innovative learning environments and professional educator learning networks and document the process.
- Initiated the **Adult Learning Beacon Project** to highlight a select group of **seven communities across the country working to raise adult skills** through the innovative use of digital learning tools.
- Created Research@Work, a **network of researchers, developers, and educators** seeking to connect research on how people learn to the design, development and practical use of digital learning technology.
- Developed **40 educator micro-credentials** to recognize teachers' ability to engage students in Deeper Learning experiences to support the skills, understandings, and mindsets necessary for success in college and career.
- Released the report: "**Preparing Teachers for Deeper Learning: Competency-Based Teacher Preparation and Development**," in partnership with Getting Smart.
- Published the results of "**Improving Ed-Tech Purchasing**," a market research study conducted in partnership with Johns Hopkins University Center for Research and Reform in Education. Survey responses from district leaders, educators, and learning technology developers provide insight into obstacles and potential solutions for the personalized learning marketplace.
- Produced over **75 video stories and articles** to inform and inspire education leaders and practitioners.
- Supported **five research projects** on digital teaching and learning with districts in the League of Innovative Schools and research organizations including the Harvard Education Lab, SRI, and Pearson's Research Innovation Network.

// What you find out very quickly as teachers is that it is not just the power of using technology in the classroom, but the power to extend learning, to carry it beyond just the school day. //

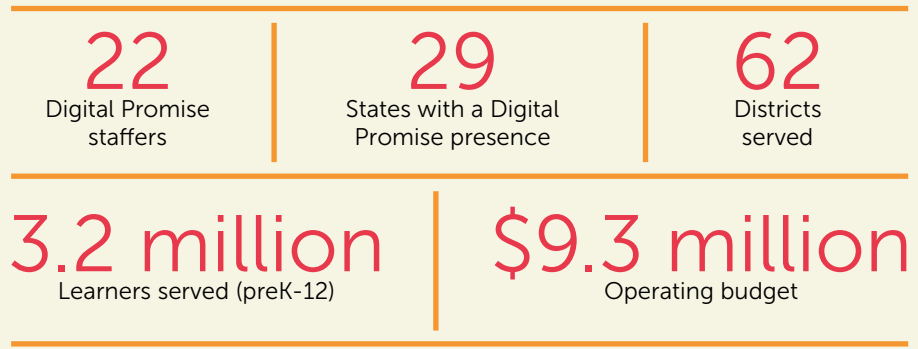
—Brian Nicol, Howard-Suamico School District, Green Bay, Wisconsin

Our Reach



* Department of Defense Education Activity, Kaiserslautern District, Germany

2014 By the Numbers





League of Innovative Schools

Advancing digital transformation in public education



// The League helps to shape and validate our journey toward a digital transformation in our schools. Having the opportunity to network and learn from each other has been invaluable.//

—League of Innovative Schools Superintendent

The Challenge

How can we build a movement in U.S. public schools to advance leadership, teaching, and learning practices that leverage technology to improve student outcomes? Many public school districts are up against the same challenges, yet they often work in silos. Those district leaders can benefit from informed and innovative thinking, inspiration, and collaboration to solve some of the most pressing challenges in K-12 education today.

Our Approach

Digital Promise created the League of Innovative Schools to connect and rally the most forward-thinking leaders of the nation's school districts around our mission to improve learning opportunities for all Americans through technology and research. By working together on shared priorities—and partnering with top entrepreneurs, researchers, and education leaders—League districts are pioneering innovative learning and leadership practices. Digital Promise documents and shares these districts' stories so others can learn from their experiences and adopt their promising strategies, with the goal of accelerating the pace of change in public education nationwide. The League creates opportunities for collaborative work across League districts on a range of topics, including research, product pilots, procurement, and competency-based education, among others.



// This [Improving Ed-Tech Purchasing report] is a powerful study that really helps break down the walls between innovators who are genuinely trying to create levers for powerful improvements, and those who are searching for those tools.//

—Education Technology Company CEO

Marketplace

Fostering a dynamic, efficient K-12 market with informed purchasers and innovative developers

The Challenge

How can we get the right learning technology products to teachers and students based on their learning goals and needs? With more than 14,000 school district “consumers” in the U.S., educational technology companies struggle to learn what school districts need and how they operate. At the same time, teachers and school leaders lack useful information about which products are most likely to help them achieve their goals.

Our Approach

Digital Promise works with both education consumers on the demand side and providers on the supply side to better understand perspectives and barriers within the marketplace. We identify the challenges, conduct research, and develop solutions that result in smart demand, smart supply, and simplified procurement processes in districts and schools across the country.



// The old saying goes that teachers teach as they were taught. This might provide a level of comfort and familiarity for us all, but it doesn't account for the changing times, tools, and learning standards that challenge schools today. The excitement about Research@Work is that we are intentionally helping teachers (and developers) break the old rules and supporting their efforts with the most recent and best research on learning.//

—Dr. David Dwyer, Former Research Professor and Katzman-Ernst Chair in Educational Entrepreneurship, Innovation and Technology, USC Rossier School of Education



Research@Work

Making research findings accessible to those who can implement them in practice

The Challenge

How do we communicate education research in an effective and engaging manner to developers and educators who can use it to improve learning products and teaching practices? While education researchers provide valuable information about how and where people learn best, findings don't always influence teaching practice or the design of learning tools. Most research findings are published in academic journals or papers that are inaccessible to those outside of academia. Developers do not always have access to information that will allow them to create products informed by research. Educators lack access to these insights that could help them make informed decisions on how to improve learning opportunities for students.

Our Approach

Through our [Research@Work](#) initiative, Digital Promise is identifying ways educators and entrepreneurs can better access and put to use the research findings that shed light on how people learn. By [engaging with researchers](#) and effectively communicating education research, we seek to improve learning products, teaching practices, and student outcomes.



Digital Promise Schools

Developing and documenting innovative learning opportunities

The Challenge

How do we ensure that all of our nation's schools have the capacity and know-how to implement digital learning technology in ways that provide engaging and relevant learning opportunities for all students? Many districts are experimenting with innovative approaches and practices designed to help students gain the knowledge and competencies that will prepare them for success in a connected global economy. However, if they are working to close the gap between students who have access to effective digital learning and those who do not—they rarely share their outcomes or experiences so the journey is clear to others.

Our Approach

Digital Promise and Verizon partner with [middle schools](#), providing all teachers and students with always available access to technology and empowering them to be content creators, adept problem solvers, and responsible consumers of digital media and learning content. We document each school's process and progress, and publish a unique, behind-the-scenes online guidebook that spotlights victories and lessons for others seeking to close the [Digital Learning Gap](#).

// This [program] gives students, who are not able to afford the newest technology, a chance to learn and feel good about themselves. This shows us that people really do care about our education. This makes me want to learn all I can and be able to give back to society. Thank you, Digital Promise!//

—Student at FDR Middle School,
Bristol Township, Pennsylvania



Adult Learning

Advancing opportunity for under-served and under-skilled adults



//I didn't think anyone cared about people like me. I'm just a guy who works and is trying to be better for my family. But I am more hopeful now that I know that people like you want to help us get more attention.//

—Adult learner at a Beacon Program site

The Challenge

How can technology address the unique needs of under-skilled, under-served adult learners? According to a report from the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, an estimated 36 million American adults lack the basic skills in reading, writing, math, and digital literacy necessary to succeed in a global and highly competitive 21st century workforce. Advances in technology hold promise for improving learning opportunities for adult learners, but investment in this sector does not match the demand.

Our Approach

Digital Promise is raising the profile of adult learning among developers and entrepreneurs by informing constituents about communities and organizations that are improving adults' skills and competencies through digital learning. We are inspiring developers and entrepreneurs to create innovative digital learning tools that provide adult learners a learning pathway. With access and supports for participation, these learners can strengthen their skills to ultimately improve their lives.



// I think the **Deeper Learning** micro-credentials that Digital Promise has developed are an exciting method for articulating and showing what crucial skills aspiring, developing educators really need. It lays out an elegant framework for how to have really useful conversations that drill down into meaningful, deeper learning.//

—Dan Brown, Co-Director,
Educators Rising

Micro-credentials

Inspiring educators to continuously improve their teaching

The Challenge

How can we support and recognize the accomplishments of educators as they develop as professionals throughout their careers? Educators participate in formal professional development, but not every class is useful, and not everything learned is through formal channels. As opportunities for professional learning expand, new ways to support and recognize career-long accomplishments are needed.

Our Approach

Digital Promise is joining forces with educators and partners to develop an innovative system of [micro-credentials](#) that provides educators a new way to gain recognition for the skills they learn throughout their careers. This system allows educators to submit evidence of their competence and earn micro-credentials. As an emerging professional development strategy, educator micro-credentials enable our public education system to continuously identify, capture, recognize and share the best practices of America’s educators so all teachers can hone their existing skills and learn new ones.

Philanthropic Funders

Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation
Carnegie Corporation of New York
Charles and Lynn Schusterman Family Foundation
The Grable Foundation
John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation
The Joyce Foundation
Laura and John Arnold Foundation
The Michael & Susan Dell Foundation
Morgridge Family Foundation
Nellie Mae Foundation
The Verizon Foundation
The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation

Corporate Partners



// We believe innovation is not only aided by, but is dependent on, stakeholders working together to solve challenges in education. //

– Eamon Kelly, Ph.D.,
Chairman, Digital Promise

Board Members

Eamon M. Kelly, Ph.D., Chairman
 Professor and President Emeritus, Payson Center for International Development and Technology Transfer, Tulane University

Shirley M. Malcom, Ph.D., Vice Chair
 Head, Directorate for Education and Human Resources Programs, American Association for the Advancement of Science

Mark Dean, Ph.D.
 Fisher Distinguished Professor, College of Engineering, University of Tennessee

Lawrence Grossman
 Former President, NBC News/PBS

Shae Hopkins
 Executive Director & CEO, Kentucky Educational Television

Vince Juaristi
 CEO & President, Arbola, Inc.

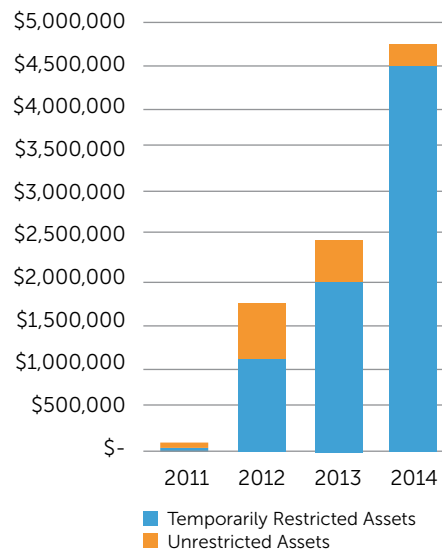
Gilman Louie
 Partner, Alsop Louie Partners

John Morgridge
 Chairman Emeritus, Cisco Systems Inc.

Richard Stephens
 Former Senior Vice President, Human Resources and Administration, The Boeing Company

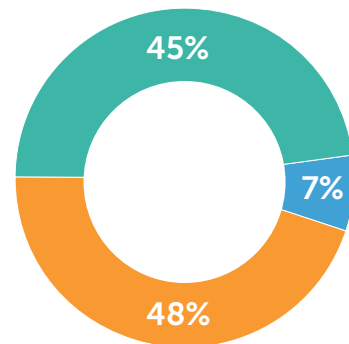
Financials

Digital Promise Net Assets, by Year



Digital Promise 2014 Revenue, by Source

Total Revenue = \$11.6 million
 \$6.2 million cash
 \$5.4 million in-kind contributions



- Devices and data plans
- Corporate partners
 - Event Income support
 - Earned Income
 - In-kind contribution of professional services
- Grants and Donations

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Digital Promise

1001 Connecticut Avenue, NW
Suite 830
Washington, DC 20036

425 Broadway St.
Redwood City, CA 94063

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