



Digital Promise

Accelerating Innovation in Education



Dear friends,

Last June, I joined Digital Promise and now am excited to share our 2013 Annual Report, encompassing an exciting year of growth and change for the organization. In 2013, we tripled our staff, raised more than \$2.5 million to support our work and became bi-coastal, opening an office in Redwood City, California.

In 2013, Digital Promise focused on expanding our funding base and ensuring our operations processes could withstand rapid growth. We explored research and strategic collaborations designed to support new innovations that hold promise to improve outcomes for learners of all ages.

A top program priority was the League of Innovative Schools, for which we accepted 12 new districts and hosted meetings in New York City and Utica, Michigan, showcasing innovative strategies districts have used to address the distinct challenges facing public education today. The League serves as our flagship initiative and our core network, and its members ground us in the realities and practical experiences of school leaders, educators, and students.

By interacting with our League members, we identified pressure points in education that could benefit from innovative and creative solutions.

For example, transitioning from awarding credit based on “seat time” to credit based on demonstrated competency was identified as necessary for both students and teachers. So, in 2013, we designed and introduced a project on micro-credentialing to support continuous, competency-based teacher development.

We also focused on the education technology marketplace from both the demand side and the supply side. We launched market research in order to gain more qualified insights and supported a “Teacher Wallets” project designed to learn about the approaches teachers would take if given a budget to spend on learning technologies for their classroom. We also worked on design specifications for a Consumer Information Service, a project we are continuing to develop today.

As always, we operate at the intersection of educators, entrepreneurs, and researchers. Our work engages and connects these communities, and uses the strengths of each to inform and accelerate the development and expansion of innovations that will create new and improved opportunities to learn for all Americans.

Stay tuned for continued evolution in 2014, as we take on adult education, work to make research more accessible to developers and practitioners, and embark on a new opportunity to work deeply with middle schools through the Verizon Innovative Learning Schools project.

Thank you for your interest and support,

Karen Cator
President & CEO



History

More than a decade ago, the Carnegie Corporation of New York joined with the Century Foundation to launch the Digital Promise Project, an initiative to recommend policies that could harness breakthrough technologies to advance the public good.

At the request of Congress, the Digital Promise Project, in partnership with the Federation of American Scientists, developed a roadmap for transforming teaching and learning with technology. This roadmap was the basis for Section 802 of the 2008 Higher Education Opportunity Act, authorizing the National Center for Research in Advanced Information and Digital Technologies, also known as Digital Promise.

Digital Promise is an independent, bipartisan nonprofit, signed into law by President George W. Bush and launched in September 2011 by President Barack Obama. Initial board members were appointed by U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan, whose department provided \$500,000 in startup funds and support. Since then, Digital Promise has raised more than \$6.1 million in private and philanthropic funding and in-kind contributions. That funding allowed us to launch several distinct but interrelated initiatives that support the interconnections between the work of educators, entrepreneurs, and researchers.

Mission

Digital Promise is authorized by Congress “to support a comprehensive research and development program to harness the increasing capacity of advanced information and digital technologies to improve all levels of learning and education, formal and informal, in order to provide Americans with the knowledge and skills needed to compete in the global economy.”



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League of Innovative Schools



The **League of Innovative Schools** is a national coalition of innovative superintendents collaborating to transform teaching and learning through technology, with the goal of improving student achievement. The League strives to demonstrate promising ideas, evaluate them rigorously and rapidly, and share and replicate what works – accelerating the pace of change in public education.

In 2013, the League added 12 new members, increasing the network to 40 superintendents representing **public school districts and education agencies** in 24 states, collectively serving nearly 3 million students. We selected new members from a nationally competitive pool of applicants based on their vision, potential to impact student achievement, and commitment to demonstrating new ways of reaching and engaging learners.

As the League grows, its strength is the aggregate experiences of its members, who reflect the national scope and diversity of public education in the U.S. In many ways, the League serves as both a professional learning network and an incubator for innovative educational practices. In 2013, we co-hosted meetings with the New York City Department of Education and Utica Community Schools in Michigan, where the collaboration, innovation, and engagement from our stakeholders helped set a meaningful agenda for the League.

That is an agenda with a growing group of national followers. In 2013, the League and its member districts were featured at national conferences, in mainstream press outlets, and by top policymakers – including President Obama – as shining examples of the potential for innovative learning.

The League continues to prove that, despite what public discussion about education may suggest, throughout the country there are great examples of classrooms, schools, and school districts innovating and improving results for students. It is our goal to make sure these examples of excellence do not become islands – that if schools are adopting bold, forward-thinking, outcome-driven practices, they are in a position to share with others, learn from others, and scale adoption of what works. That is our goal for 2014 and beyond.

- 📍 **Bay Minette, AL**
Baldwin County School District
- 📍 **Towson, MD**
Baltimore County Public Schools
- 📍 **Overland Park, KS**
Blue Valley Unified School District #229
- 📍 **Charlotte, NC**
Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools
- 📍 **Charlottesville, VA**
Charlottesville City Public Schools
- 📍 **Chicago, IL**
Chicago Public Schools
- 📍 **Washington, DC**
District of Columbia Public Schools
- 📍 **Washington, DC**
E.L. Haynes Public Charter School
- 📍 **Columbus, OH**
Educational Service Center of Central Ohio
- 📍 **Elizabeth, PA**
Elizabeth Forward School District
- 📍 **Middletown, NY**
Enlarged City School District of Middletown
- 📍 **Orlando, FL**
Florida Virtual School
- 📍 **Atlanta, GA**
Fulton County Schools

- 📍 **Myrtle Beach, SC**
Horry County Schools
- 📍 **Houston, TX**
Houston Independent School District
- 📍 **Green Bay, WI**
Howard-Suamico School District
- 📍 **Aurora, IL**
Indian Prairie School District
- 📍 **Iowa City, IA**
Iowa City Community School District
- 📍 **Kent, WA**
Kent School District
- 📍 **Lincoln, NE**
Lincoln Public Schools
- 📍 **McAllen, TX**
McAllen Independent School District
- 📍 **Meridian, ID**
Meridian Joint School District No.2
- 📍 **Mooresville, NC**
 Mooresville Graded School District
- 📍 **Napa, CA**
Napa County Schools
- 📍 **Napa, CA**
Napa Valley Unified School District
- 📍 **Napa, CA**
New Tech Network
- 📍 **New York, NY**
New York City Department of Education

- 📍 **Onslow, NC**
Onslow County Public Schools
- 📍 **Piedmont, AL**
Piedmont City School District
- 📍 **Reynoldsburg, OH**
Reynoldsburg City Schools
- 📍 **Riverside, CA**
Riverside Unified School District
- 📍 **Roanoke, VA**
Roanoke County Public Schools
- 📍 **Rock Hill, SC**
Rock Hill Public Schools
- 📍 **San Jose, CA**
San Jose Unified School District
- 📍 **Springfield, NJ**
Springfield Public Schools
- 📍 **Tucson, AZ**
Sunnyside Unified School District
- 📍 **Sterling Heights, MI**
Utica Community Schools
- 📍 **Vancouver, WA**
Vancouver Public Schools
- 📍 **West Warwick, RI**
West Warwick Public Schools
- 📍 **Yorktown, VA**
York County Schools



Investing in Students' Digital Future from Day One

At [Utica Community Schools](#), located in the heart of the auto industry, it is readily apparent how expectations are changing for today's students. The job landscape of the region is transitioning from a traditional manufacturing system to one that requires understanding of complex, high-tech systems. Students entering the district will have a very different academic and post-graduate environment awaiting them than previous generations.

In 2011, with recent state legislative changes to [incentivize full-day kindergarten](#) and the [Common Core State Standards](#) on the horizon, Utica Community Schools [decided to modernize how and what its students learn](#), beginning with their first day in the district.

UCS uses a "rotational [blended model](#)" starting in kindergarten with plans to expand through 2nd grade. In the classroom, students progress through different "centers" based on a plan determined by the teacher, aided by adaptive software. Students can work on tablets or laptops at their own pace, collaborate with peers in small groups, and receive targeted face-to-face instruction with teachers who have become orchestrators of individualized learning.

Plans for the new model were devised by teachers and for teachers. Dollars that could have gone to devices instead are being used to offer professional development for teachers that is personalized and facilitated in online and face-to-face environments, the way same way students are now learning.



"I feel more personally involved with them," said one veteran teacher of 20 years. "I actually have more time with each student."

Any fears that technology would replace teachers appear to have given way to empowerment. Teachers said they are given more information on each student and are trusted to use it.

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For a closer look at Utica Community Schools' blended learning initiative in early elementary, check out the Digital Promise case study, ["Investing in Students' Digital Future from Day One."](#)

Bridging the Digital Divide for Low-Income Students

[Sunnyside Unified School District](#) is an economically disadvantaged district in a state that already ranks near the bottom of the country in per-student funding. More than 84 percent of the district's 17,265 students are eligible for free or reduced lunch and 16 percent are English Language Learners (ELLs) from a home where the primary language spoken is Spanish. Six percent are homeless.

In the fall of 2008, his first year as superintendent, Manuel Isquierdo launched ["Project Graduation: Digital Advantage,"](#) leveraging nearly \$1.2 million in contributions from local companies to purchase netbooks for students at the district's two high schools. The approach worked, helping raise the number of graduates from 598 to 821 by 2010.

What began then as a small pilot to see if technology could help reverse the troubling academic trends at Sunnyside is now an evolving district-wide initiative called ["One-to-One"](#) that provides students in grades 4-12 with their own netbooks or laptops to take home.

For students, it's raised expectations from an education that may not reach beyond high school, to a clear sense of college and career success. For administrators and teachers, there is evidence of the breakthroughs that come with a connected learning environment, and the challenges to be expected from such an ambitious and transformative approach to education.

For families, technology has helped create a valuable bridge between home and school that previously did not exist.

That engagement is possible because Sunnyside decided not only to provide students with laptops, but also to connect its students with powerful learning opportunities and resources beyond the school day. Students can take their devices home and families have options for low-cost Internet through business partnerships developed by the district. A May 2013 survey showed that 76 percent of the district's households were connected, up from roughly 20 percent three years earlier.

For a closer look at Sunnyside Unified School District's 1:1 learning initiative, check out the Digital Promise case study, ["Bridging the Digital Divide for Low-Income Students."](#)



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New Initiatives



Educator Initiatives

Micro-Credentials for Teachers

Problem: Professional development for teachers is provided, but not personalized.

Solution: Digital Promise is building an ecosystem of educators and partners to identify, recognize, and reward innovative teaching practices with competency-based micro-credentials. Through this project, teachers will be empowered to customize their learning pathways and pursue credentials that meet their needs and goals. We will leverage an online platform to develop, assess, and share these credentials with peer and professional networks. Consulting with a panel of experts and grounding each micro-credential in established research will increase their rigor as well as potential for market worth and professional value.

Marketplace Initiatives

Digital Promise Content and Data Exchange

Problem: It is difficult – and sometimes impossible – for teachers to try digital tools with their students before their school or district decides which programs to acquire.

Solution: The Digital Promise Content and Data Exchange (previously known as DOCENT) allows teachers and students in the League of Innovative Schools to discover, try, and evaluate education technology products free of charge in a “digital sandbox” before deciding whether to adopt the products on a larger scale. The platform uses a single

login, making it easy for teachers to assign modules and view usage and assessment data from multiple programs without requiring students to remember multiple logins. In partnership with the University of California, Davis, and participating schools and providers, Digital Promise will harness the exchange data to inform teachers and developers alike, and support broader research efforts that will reap benefits beyond the League.

Teacher Wallets

Problem: Teachers often have little say in the instructional materials acquired on their behalf by their school or district.

Solution: Teacher Wallets is a pilot project designed to evaluate what happens when teachers are given the opportunity – and the funding – to buy education technology products for their classrooms. Three hundred teachers in four League of Innovative Schools districts received up to \$6,000 for the 2013-2014 school year to purchase learning technology products that facilitate personalized learning. The research firm SRI International is administering surveys and conducting interviews with participating teachers to learn how these teachers found, selected, and implemented the programs they purchased with their funds. The final report will provide unique insights into opportunities and challenges for implementing procurement practices led by teachers.

Procurement Research

Problem: While anecdotes are ever present, there is little rigorous analysis of the challenges and best practices among districts and providers in navigating educational technology procurement.

Solution: Digital Promise is undertaking an ongoing and multi-pronged project to capture key insights into the educational technology procurement process from the perspective of both sides of the market: school districts and education technology product providers. In spring 2013, Digital Promise and the internationally-recognized design firm IDEO convened stakeholders from across the country to participate in a human-centered design workshop. Several themes were captured in the resulting [report](#), including increasing pricing transparency and the importance of involving teachers in the process.

To build on this work, Digital Promise is partnering with the Center for Research and Reform in Education at Johns Hopkins University and the Education Industry Association to conduct a [national study](#) focused on the discovery and acquisition of education technology. In 2013, we also conducted research into the development of a Consumer Information Service that would adapt to the fluidity of an emerging market. This system would create deep information and transparency around education technology products and services in order to elevate the quality of products and better inform education consumers seeking appropriate products and services to meet their needs. We continue to explore this work and advance these initiatives addressing the key challenges inherent to the education technology marketplace.

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“The traditional procurement process is time intensive, bottlenecking the ability to stay current with the latest technologies and curricular offerings.”
- Superintendent at IDEO design workshop

icon

“Almost \$3.2 billion was spent on K-12 teacher professional development for the 2012-2013 school year.”
- [Education Market Research](#)

Funding

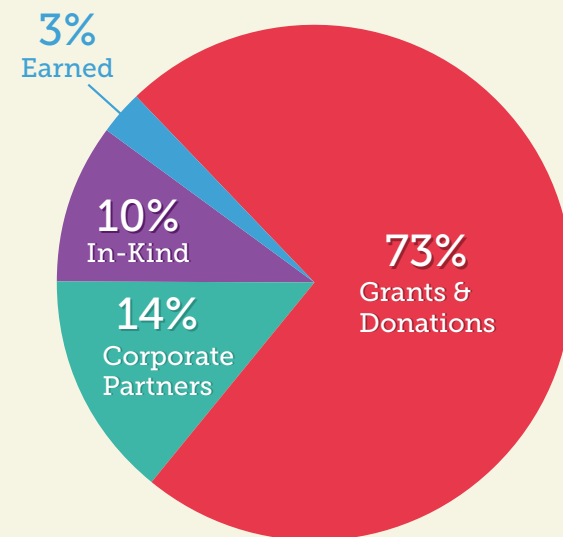
Philanthropic

Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation
 Carnegie Corporation of New York
 Innovations for Learning
 John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation
 Joyce Foundation
 Laura and John Arnold Foundation
 Morgridge Family Foundation
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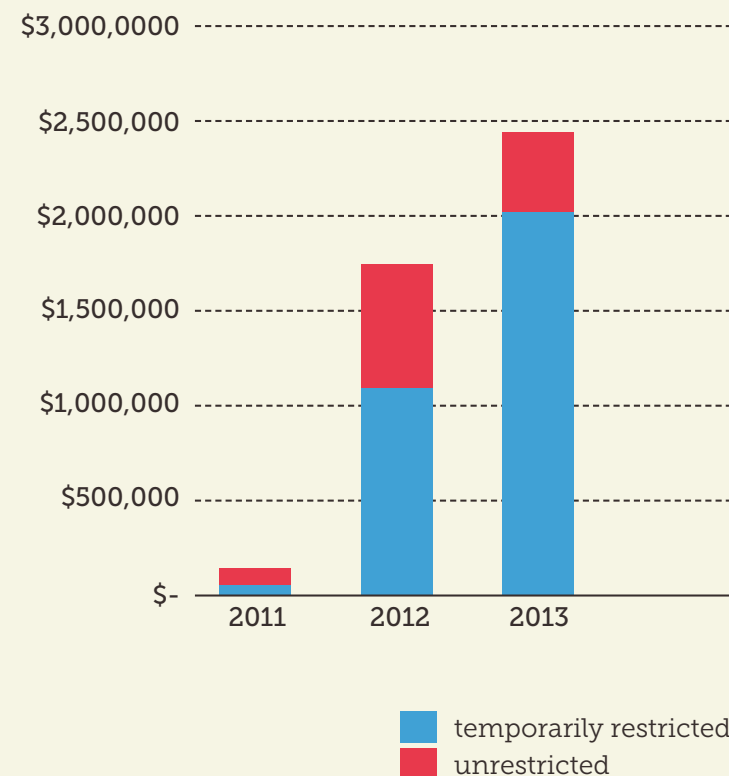
Corporate

Adobe Systems Inc.
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 Cisco Systems Inc.
 Commonsense Media
 Discovery Education
 Follett Library Resources
 Intel Corporation
 Knowledge Delivery Systems Inc.
 McGraw-Hill Education
 Microsoft Corporation
 Pearson PLC
 Promethean World PLC
 School Improvement Network
 Verizon Communications Inc.

Digital Promise 2013 Revenue, by Source



Digital Promise Net Assets, by year



Our Team



Courtesy of Mooresville Graded School District

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