New Network Led by Digital Promise to Catalyze Large-Scale Research on Equitable Digital Learning

SEERNet will coordinate opportunities for research on five major digital learning platforms

OCTOBER 22, 2021 | Washington, D.C. – At an event commemorating the 10th anniversary of the League of Innovative Schools, Digital Promise announced the creation of [SEERNet](#), a new network intended to catalyze research on equitable digital learning at scale. Equity in digital learning is a big problem, but most of today's research occurs on learning technologies used by 1,000 or fewer students. Over the next five years, SEERNet will coordinate opportunities for researchers and emerging scholars on five digital learning platforms, each of which currently serve 100,000 or more students.

The new, $3 million effort, which will officially [launch at a public webinar](#) today at 3 p.m. ET, was funded by the U.S. Department of Education's Institute of Education Sciences (IES) under its competitive grant program, "Research Networks Focused on Critical Problems of Policy and Practice." Through SEERNet, Digital Promise will organize a community of educators, researchers, and developers to design and study changes to digital learning platforms that increase equitable student learning.

"This work should reduce the time and cost of conducting rigorous research and help identify what interventions work for whom and under what conditions," said Mark Schneider, director of the Institute of Education Sciences. "We hope that this work will increase the relevance of the research questions asked, enhance the potential for improving education practice, and most importantly, lead to the improvement of learner outcomes."

Dr. Jeremy Roschelle, executive director of learning sciences research at Digital Promise, will lead the SEERNet network. As the network lead, Dr. Roschelle and his team will help platform developers, researchers, and educators share ideas, build knowledge, and strengthen dissemination.

Dr. Roschelle said, "Research on learning during the pandemic is making it crystal clear that today's large-scale digital learning is not equitable. For example, Black students, Latino

students, and low-income students faced greater barriers to mathematics learning before the pandemic, and this only intensified during the pandemic. To achieve equitable digital learning, we need to not only bring evidence-based learning technologies to scale—we also need to shift researchers' attention away from designing novel but small-scale technologies, to investigating how we can improve learning on the large-scale digital platforms that students already use frequently."

In addition to supporting Digital Promise through the SEERNet grant, IES awarded $2 million to each of five digital learning platforms to engineer opportunities for external research on student learning. The five learning platform teams include:

1. **The ASU Learning at Scale (L@S) Digital Learning Network** (Principal Investigator: Danielle McNamara)
   - This platform team will develop a digital learning network platform with the capacity to connect, access, and examine undergraduate student data and courses within the scope of Arizona State University (ASU) online and digital classrooms (ASU Online).
2. **The Canvas+Terracotta LMS-Based Experimental Education Research Platform** (Principal Investigator: Benjamin Motz)
   - This platform team will develop Terracotta, a plug-in to Canvas that enables a teacher or researcher to collect informed consent, assign different versions of online learning activities to students, and export deidentified study data.
3. **Efficient Education Research via the OpenStax Learning Platform** (Principal Investigator: Richard Baraniuk)
   - The platform team will build OpenStax Labs (Labs), a rapid iteration and testing learning environment integrated with OpenStax digital platform designed to conduct research faster and at scale, cultivate an inclusive research community, and deploy insights to improve student outcomes that lead to equitable student success.
4. **MATHia: A Digital Learning Platform Supporting Core and Supplemental Instruction in Middle and High School Mathematics** (Principal Investigator: Steven Ritter)
   - The platform team will integrate MATHia with UpGrade, an open-source platform that supports fair and rigorous randomized field trials that compare innovative practices with current approaches.
5. **Revisions to the ASSISTments Digital Learning Platform to Expand Its Support for Rigorous Education Research** (Principal Investigator: Neil Heffernan III)

- ○ The platform team will build the infrastructure to enable researchers to run studies using open education resources (OER) within the ASSISTments platform.

Empirical Education, a Silicon Valley-based research and development firm, will also work closely with Digital Promise. Empirical plans to engage its deep knowledge of education and its expertise in analytics, research design, and engineering to help educational systems to improve their programs and processes by using the data and experimental capabilities of the large-scale platforms.

For more information on SEERNet, visit SEERNet.org.

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About Digital Promise
Digital Promise is a nonprofit organization that builds powerful networks and takes on grand challenges by working at the intersection of researchers, entrepreneurs, and educators. Our vision is that all people, at every stage of their lives, have access to learning experiences that help them acquire the knowledge and skills they need to thrive and continuously learn in an ever-changing world. For more information, visit the Digital Promise website and follow @digitalpromise for updates.