2021 Annual Report

Celebrating Digital Promise's 10th Anniversary and Setting a Path Toward Impact for the Next Decade



2021 Annual Report

North Star Goal: Knowledge and Tools

North Star Goal: Powerful Learning

North Star Goal: Lifelong Learning

About Digital Promise



In his book Outliers, Malcolm Gladwell wrote, “To build a better world we need to replace the patchwork of lucky breaks and arbitrary advantages that today determine success…with a society that provides opportunities for all.” In the last year, we at Digital Promise have asked ourselves, how can we more effectively provide better opportunities for all?

We marked a major milestone in 2021: Digital Promise’s 10th anniversary. While we took time to reflect on our history and recognize the many individuals and staff whose work has supported Digital Promise’s success, our decennial was more than a celebration. We took great pains to contemplate what our next 10 years of impact would look like; we took stock of where Digital Promise was, assessing what had been accomplished and where the organization needed to go to continue meeting the needs of the education sector. We also intended for our strategic efforts to play a critical role in shaping the narrative surrounding innovation and technology in education, especially due to the ongoing impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and our nation’s racial reckoning, while simultaneously repositioning Digital Promise at the forefront.

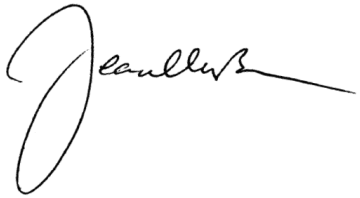
This work resulted in our new strategic framework, in which we broadened our definition of success. We took the opportunity to outline how our knowledge and tools can work to provide opportunities for all, especially those who have been historically and systematically excluded from full participation in our economy and society. (We lean on “excluded” as opposed to “marginalized” because it aligns with the UN’s Sustainable Development Goals, as well as the need for all people to have a sense of belonging in our society.)

In support of this work, we continued to bring amazing thought leadership to Digital Promise's staff and board, including former educators, learning sciences researchers, and senior leaders with global education experience. We increased our global assets and launched efforts that took us beyond the United States, making us truly Digital Promise Global.

We also have a substantial (and still growing) network of global practitioners. We marked 10 years of powerful networks in 2021 by welcoming 37 diverse districts to the League of Innovative Schools. We also welcomed the largest Verizon Innovative Learning Schools (VILS) Cohort ever, reaching nearly half a million students, more than 28,000 teachers in more than 500 schools. In addition, we celebrated the inaugural Student for Equitable Education (SEE) Summit and were named co-lead for the National Science Foundation Artificial Intelligence (AI) Institute for Engaged Learning. And the list goes on.

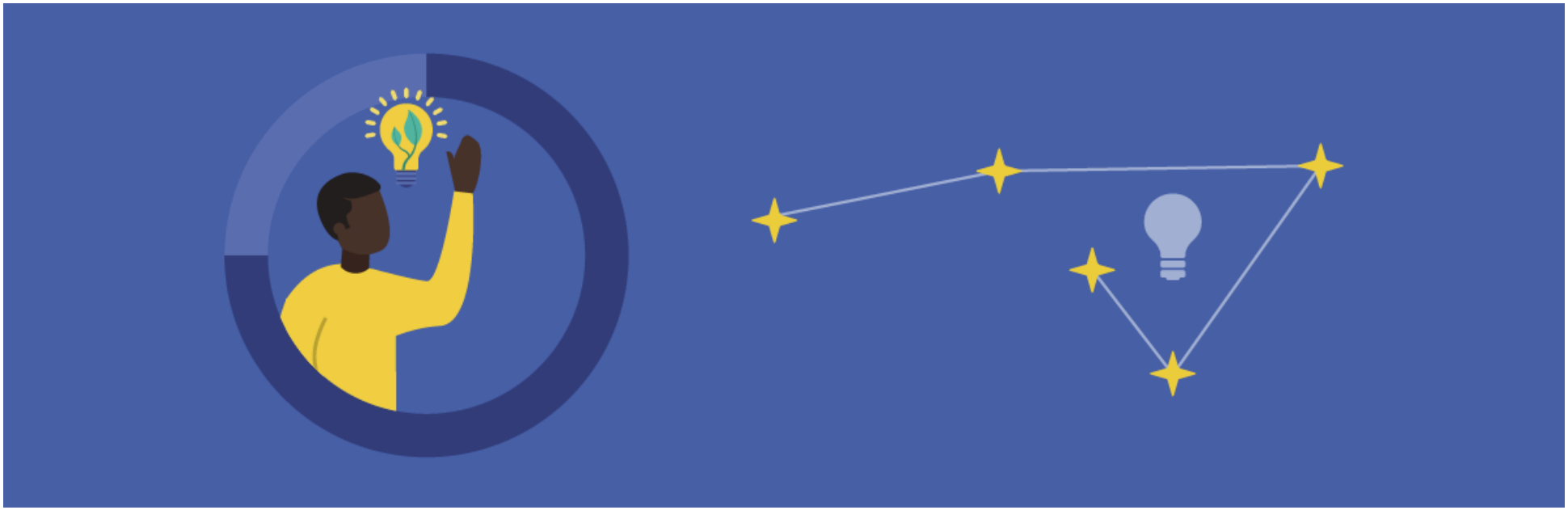
Digital Promise is a multi-faceted, multi-issue organization, in service of shaping the future of education and solving some of the most fundamental challenges facing the need to educate all people. The pandemic caught many of us in education underprepared for remote learning. Our staff is working hard with partners to outline what defines true digital transformation in education. We not only need to be better prepared, we must work to eliminate inequities in education outcomes.

We've made substantial progress this year and are now focused on a number of strategic investments internally and in areas of needs and growth in our organization and in education. These investments are made possible by our many partners, generous funders, and supporters, including a $20M unrestricted gift from McKenzie Scott. We strongly believe that we are well-positioned to have a great and lasting impact in moving an education agenda that will provide opportunities for all.



Jean-Claude Brizard
CEO, Digital Promise

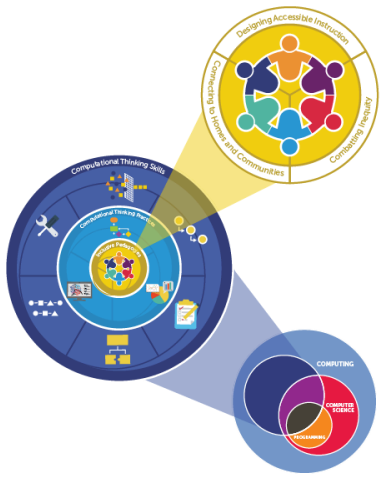
North Star Goal: Knowledge and Tools



Digital Promise is working to ensure that, by 2031, **75%** of systematically and historically excluded learners in America are learning in education systems with the **knowledge and tools** to create the conditions for them to succeed. Below is just a small sample of the work Digital Promise undertook in 2021 to move closer to this goal.

Computational Thinking

In our increasingly technological society, computational thinking skills and practices are fundamental to virtually every career path and generally in civic life. As such, opportunities to learn computational thinking



are important to all learners. Large inequalities continue to exist in access to equipment and learning opportunities needed to build computational thinking skills for students that have been historically and systematically excluded. We call all educators to integrate computational thinking into disciplinary learning across K-12 education, while centering inclusivity, to equip students with the skills they need to participate in our increasingly technological world and promote justice for students and society at large. Learn more in our report Computational Thinking for an Inclusive World and explore our CT Pathways Toolkit for school district leaders to learn how to create system-wide, K-12 pathways supporting equitable participation in computational thinking that is consistent across classrooms, cumulative from year to year, and competency-based.

Learner Variability Project



With an eye toward learner variability, we elevate research that has an impact on students who have been historically and systematically excluded. This year we conducted a refresh of the Learner Variability Navigator with a lens toward equity by soliciting perspectives and feedback from educators and edtech teams. We've added a Sense of Belonging factor to our Learner Models, as well as culturally responsive practices for learners, such as building empathy, developing cultural awareness, and discussing race. We also developed a Culturally Responsive Practice Guide, led by Kelisa Wing, one of our advisory board members, to provide educators questions and protocols to apply culturally responsive instruction as they address learner variability. Our 2021-2022 season of webinars included

National Teacher of the Year, Juliana Urtubey, on Creating a Sense of Belonging: A Critical Need For Student Engagement and Success.

Product Certifications



Digital Promise's Product Certifications signal to education leaders, educators, and communities which products are intentionally designed to provide powerful learning opportunities for each unique learner. We partner with context and content experts to identify the expectations the field has for specific competencies within edtech products. Once we establish those expectations—or certification criteria—we build an application that requires edtech companies to submit evidence to demonstrate that they've met those expectations. We've worked with the field to develop a Research-Based Design and Learner Variability Product Certification, and we are working with partners to develop Universal Design for Learning, Data Interoperability, and Prioritizing Racial Equity in AI Product Certifications. By making it easier for educators to identify high-quality tools, the initiative accelerates the adoption of powerful learning practices with edtech.

Project Topeka

Project Topeka is helping historically and systematically excluded students get access to instant feedback to improve their argumentative writing. Their teachers also receive access to resources and training to lead their students in a high-quality, iterative writing process. We've also teamed up with Greater Good to explore what the future of student-driven, artificial intelligence (AI)-powered writing instruction should look like.

Verizon Innovative Learning Schools

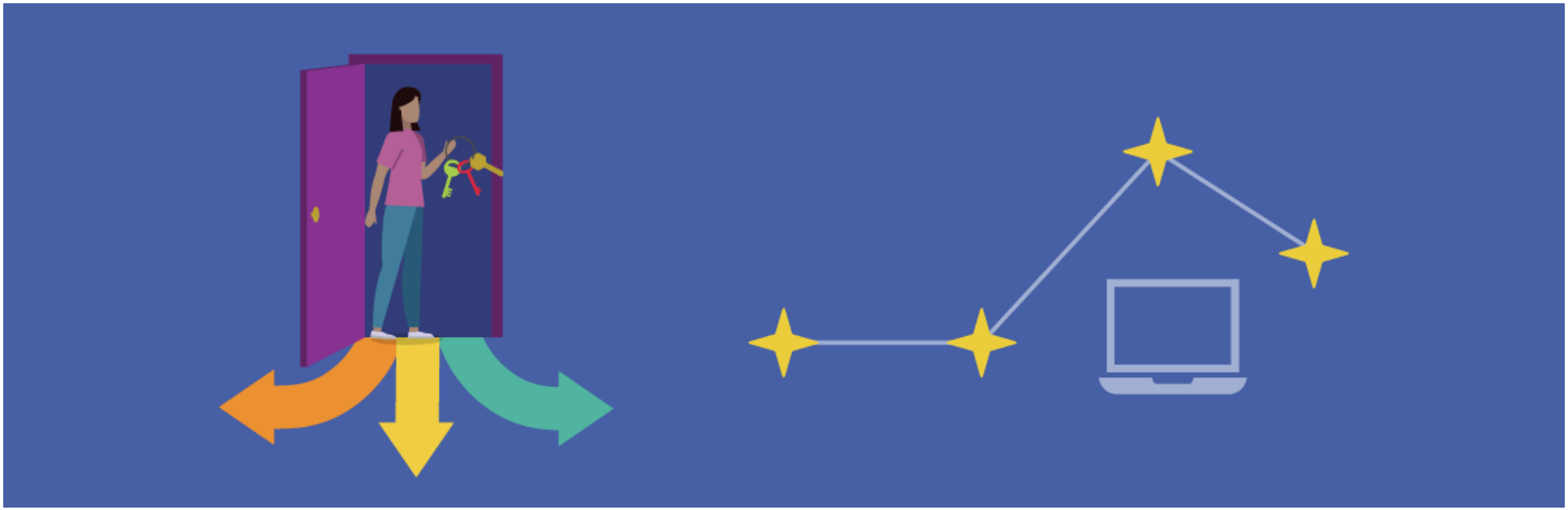




Through the Verizon Innovative Learning Schools (VILS) initiative, we ensure historically and systematically excluded students have reliable high-speed internet access to deeply engage in learning. The VILS 1:1 model provides every student and teacher at select Title I middle and high schools across the country with devices and data plans. Additionally, a new hotspot model provides mobile hotspots with data plans to students who have dedicated devices, but lack reliable internet access at home. With the addition of 246 schools during the 2020-21 school year—the largest cohort to date—the program has reached a total of 511 schools in eight years.

Letter from the CEO

North Star Goal: Powerful Learning



Over the next decade, Digital Promise has set out to ensure **30 million** systematically and historically excluded learners have sustained and meaningful experiences of **Powerful Learning**, putting them on a path to postsecondary completion. In 2021, Digital Promise created Powerful Learning opportunities for teachers and learners around the world.

Ciena Solutions Challenge

From a rural school in Matenge Village, Botswana to an after-school community organization in the Bronx, New York, educators and students around the world overcame school lockdowns and travel restrictions to



design solutions that mattered to them in the Ciena Solutions Challenge. Using the Challenge Based Learning framework, students have opportunities to connect to their learning in ways that are authentic and personal, learn through inquiry, collaborate with their community and take positive action to make a difference in their local communities.

Ciena Solutions Challenge educators are equipped with a variety of resources like live professional development webinars, an online resource library, and biweekly newsletters. These provide educators with guidance on how to facilitate the Ciena Solutions Challenge in support of their student teams' ideas and designs.

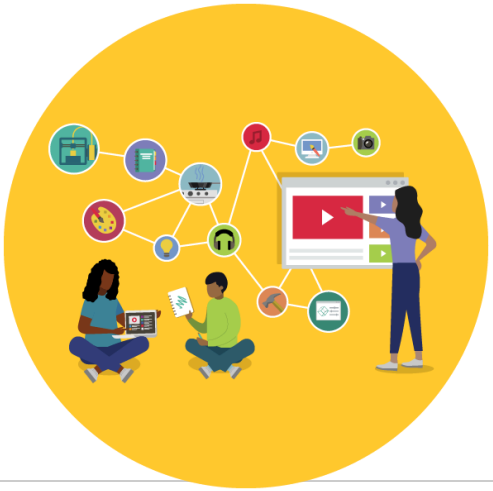
The Challenge makes room for both educators and students to explore,discover, connect with each other, and build problem-solving and critical thinking skills to use throughout their lives.

Edcamp

The Edcamp Community supports educators to organize and participate in powerful professional learning designed by and for educators. Edcamps leverage the knowledge and experiences of attendees by allowing educators to collaboratively determine topics for discussion. Administrators and teachers agree that the Edcamp model is more productive and valuable than traditional, presentation-oriented professional development. Close to 97 percent of Edcampers say they developed beneficial contacts at Edcamp, making it one of the most rewarding networking events for educators out there. Digital Promise

hosted the Edcamp: Design for Learning and Edcamp: Powerful Learning at Home Series to model virtual Edcamps and keep participant-driven learning and networking thriving during the pandemic and beyond.

Maker Learning



The Maker Learning @ Home cohort directly catalyzed numerous maker learning programs that could be accessed anywhere, anytime, in multiple ways. This experience generated a toolkit to help educators in both formal K-12 and Out-of-School Time programs to design and facilitate maker learning experiences, giving more learners access to opportunities in which their agency and interests are at the center. By increasing access to maker learning opportunities, learners can tap into learning experiences and fields of study they may traditionally be excluded from.

Reinvent the Classroom

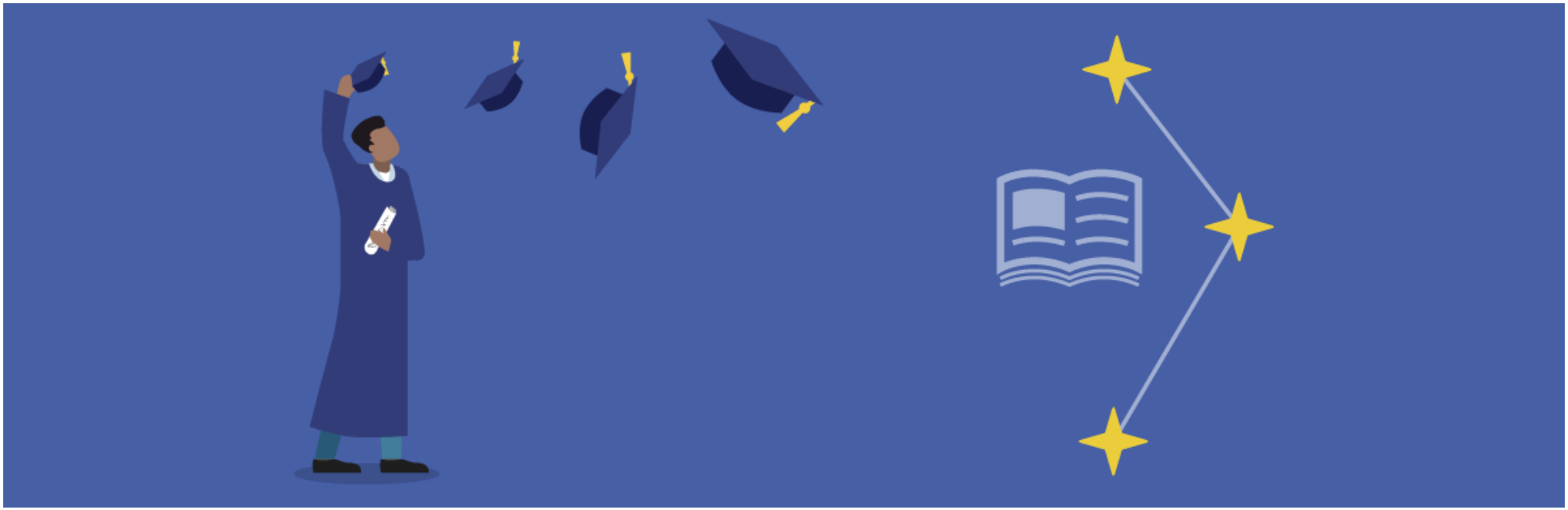
Our HP Teaching Fellows take part in professional learning that highlights to the broader education community how powerful technology use can contribute to and make Powerful Learning experiences possible. From games-based learning to 3D design and fabrication, the educators involved in Reinvent the Classroom are tapping into student interests and the future of work, creating the conditions for learners to find their “on-ramp” for a path to success.

League of Innovative Schools



In 2021, the League of Innovative Schools team and 9 school districts hosted the inaugural Students for Equitable Education (SEE) Summit, a national social justice summit envisioned and led by students. The purpose of the SEE Summit is to elevate student voices, provide a platform to student leaders who may not have had previous leadership opportunities, and represent the needs and demographics of the whole student body. The League also hosts biannual meetings for members that feature school visits, guest speakers, cohort workshops focused on specific challenges, and collaborative problem-solving. League Cohorts are collaborative League learning communities focused on discussing challenges and sharing best practices and resources. They provide district leaders knowledge and tools to create conditions for success for their students.

North Star Goal: Lifelong Learning



By 2031, Digital Promise is working toward ensuring **30 million** historically and systematically excluded learners are enabled to **achieve postsecondary credentials** that offer economic security, well-being, and agency. See how Digital Promise has been tapping into the power of credentialing, research, and Inclusive Innovation in supporting learners.

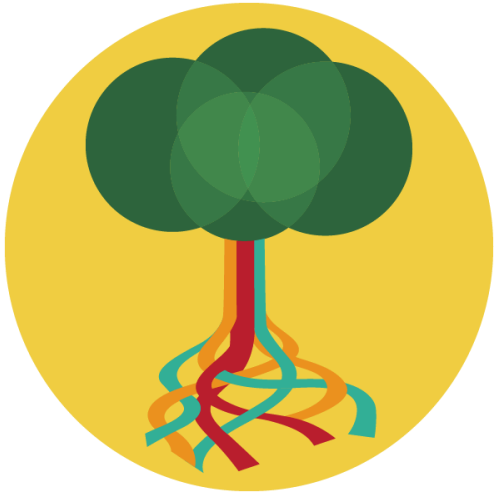
Adult Learning

The future of credentialing is digital. The Adult Learning team is expanding efforts to identify and promote digital literacy skills and supports—foundational and/or occupational—among historically and systematically



excluded adult learners. Over the last year, we produced research exploring the use of micro-credentials on the social mobility of rural learners, prioritizing those impacted by poverty, particularly Black, Latino, and Indigenous populations. We found that micro-credentials can (and sometimes do) lead to job promotions, higher wages, and an increase in self-confidence for rural learners. As we continue moving toward a skills-based future of learning and work, we are committed to exploring the factors, skills, and supports that workers need to successfully pursue postsecondary credentials, especially non-degree credentials through the lens of racial equity.

The Center for Inclusive Innovation



The Center for Inclusive Innovation reimagines education research and development (R&D) by resourcing the creative ingenuity of communities to create powerful learning opportunities for students furthest from opportunity, including students who are Black, Brown, and Indigenous, experiencing poverty, multilingual learners, and/or experiencing learning differences. The Inclusive Innovation model amplifies voices that have been underrepresented in education innovation to solve education challenges in partnership with school districts, families, and community partners. Through this work, students are increasing student voice and choice in their curriculum by redesigning social studies curriculum and writing assignments; building digital tools to showcase student voice, facilitate peer feedback, and promote civic engagement around topics relevant to students; increasing student agency and addressing authentic challenges that are personally meaningful for them through developing and leading professional

development for educators on mental health and racial trauma, racial equity, and social justice; and leading advisories, design sessions, and feedback loops with partners in their community.

Learning Sciences Research

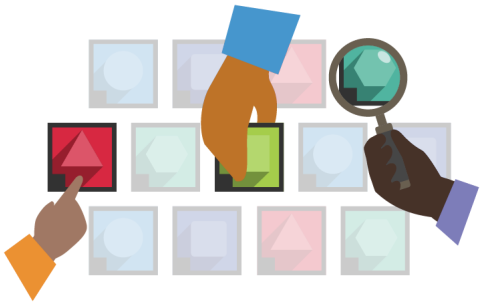


Introductory courses in postsecondary education function as gateways for degree attainment, especially for historically and systematically excluded students. The Learning Sciences Research Center of Excellence has been addressing this issue through a research-practice partnership with five, mostly minority-serving, institutions of higher education. The partnership has provided professional learning and research support to faculty-centered project teams working to redesign high-enrollment introductory courses, many of which continue to be offered online even after the abrupt transition to remote learning during the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. Implementing research-based teaching practices focused on equity and digital learning and informed by student feedback, the college teams have redesigned 14 introductory courses to achieve more equitable outcomes for historically and systematically excluded students.

Micro-credentials

The Micro-credentials Platform has multiple offerings designed to help educators better support their students on their postsecondary journeys, including College Access Coaching and Advising for Digitally Enabled Careers.

In 2021, we hosted more than 550 active micro-credentials on our platform. With a catalog representing more than 50 issuing organizations, more than 8,000 new learners joined our platform to pursue their professional goals. In this year alone, almost 5,000 educators were awarded micro-credentials. Micro-credentials continued to offer educators flexible, virtual avenues to earn recognition for the many ways they have grown their instructional practice.



As we look to the future, the Micro-credentials team is exploring workforce development opportunities in partnership with the Adult Learning and Learning Employment Innovations teams.

About Digital Promise



Digital Promise is a global nonprofit working to expand opportunity for every learner. We work with educators, researchers, technology leaders, and communities to design, investigate, and scale innovations that support learners, especially those who've been historically and systematically excluded. Digital Promise was originally authorized by Congress in 2008 through the Higher Education Opportunity Act, signed into law by President George W. Bush, and formally launched by President Barack Obama in September 2011.

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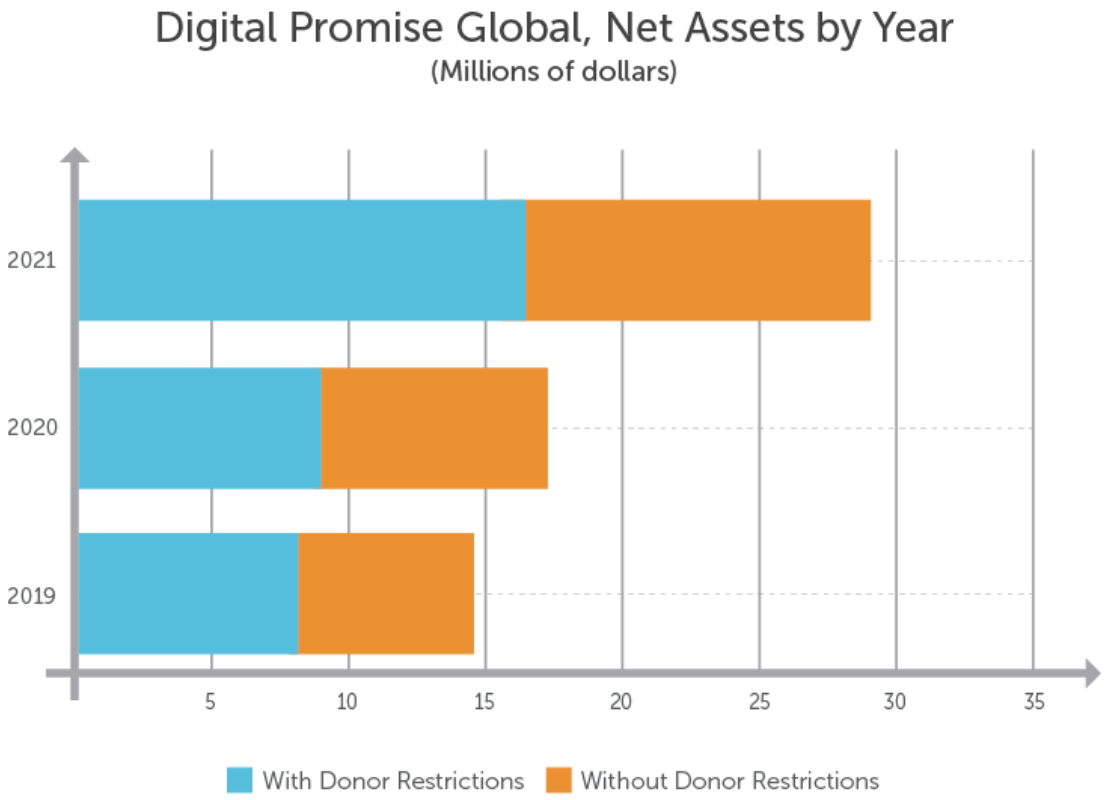
PowerSchool

Promethean

SMART Technologies ULC

Zoom

Digital Promise Financials


Digital Promise Global, Net Assets by Year
(Millions of dollars)
2021
2020
2019
5
10
15
20
25
30
35
With Donor Restrictions
Without Donor Restrictions

Digital Promise 2021 revenue, by source

Total 2021 Revenue = $181.5 million

Cash = $85.2 Million

Contributed goods and services= $96.3 Million

