Digital Promise
Accelerating Innovation in Education

2015 Annual Report

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Our Mission

Digital Promise was created with the mission to spur innovation in education and technology to improve the opportunity to learn. Our vision is that all people at every stage of their lives have access to learning opportunities that help them acquire the knowledge and skills they need to thrive in an ever-changing world.

Letter From Our CEO

2015 was a year of growth and expansion for Digital Promise. It was challenging and exhilarating. We loved every minute of it!

We expanded in ways you might expect. We grew in numbers and initiatives, and we have dramatically more stories to tell of districts, schools, educators, and developers transforming learning through technology.

We also grew in ways you might not expect. In our role as social entrepreneurs, we have begun to deliver on innovative solutions to challenges that include the most pressing problem facing education today: equity.

In the world we envision, every student and educator has access to personal technology and the Internet — at school, at home and in between. Every learner has sufficient digital literacy to participate fully and responsibly in a hyper-connected world. And, everyone is increasingly capable of using technology to solve complex, real-world challenges, and support their personal path to a productive future.

This vision will not happen overnight, so we are working enthusiastically with many organizations and individuals to accelerate our progress. Together, we are improving existing systems, inventing new approaches, and empowering education leaders and teachers to make incremental and systemic advances that, when implemented at scale, lead to profound change.

I am especially proud of these Digital Promise solutions from this past year. They include:

The Digital Promise Journey, a change management process for schools and teachers rolling out and using technology for learning in public schools. We bring the journey to life by sharing the challenges and solutions from 21 middle schools participating in our Verizon Innovative Learning Schools initiative.

Educator Micro-credentials, an online system that supports educators with a way to gain validated recognition for the skills and competencies they develop throughout their careers. This system allows educators to submit evidence, have it reviewed by experts and peers and, if successful, obtain a digital badge to share with colleagues.

Research Map, a data visualization of 150 education and learning science research topics based on nearly 100,000 scholarly publications. The map facilitates a way for educators and developers to more quickly and easily discover and use research to guide their work.

Ed-Tech Pilots, a national study conducted with the University of California at Davis to learn how K-12 public schools try out, evaluate and purchase technology that ends up in the classroom. Our report includes nearly a dozen tips and tools for schools to run more effective pilots—a collection we are continuing to enhance and expand.

This work and more would not be possible without the excellence and dedication of the Digital Promise team, funding from our philanthropic and corporate partners, and our many partners who collaborate with us to improve opportunities for everyone to learn.

Thank you for your belief in our vision and our ability to make it real.

Karen Cator
CEO and President, Digital Promise

Our Guiding Principles

Digital Promise works at the intersection of education leaders, researchers, and learning technology developers to support, engage, motivate, and personalize learning through technology. Our work is guided by the following principles:

Networks connect us with people and ideas

Connecting, convening, and working together on shared goals helps move from vision to reality. Our League of Innovative Schools is a national network of forward-thinking K-12 school district superintendents who together solve the challenges facing our schools through innovation and technology. Our Adult Learning Beacon communities are working together across multiple agencies to scale their partnerships to support learners.

Research informs decision-making

Research fuels innovation and continuous improvement. Through our Research Map, we make it easier for developers and educators to access existing research as they create learning technology solutions. We provide developers and purchasers with tools, data, and studies to ensure an education technology Marketplace with a smart supply of products and smart demand for excellence.

Stories inspire ideas and incent action

Nothing inspires, mobilizes, and builds capacity for change like stories. We continually document the progress of schools, educators, and students toward transforming teaching and learning and expanding opportunity. We share these stories through our blog, social media channels, and traditional media so others can learn from – and be inspired by – these experiences.

Engagement motivates learning for life

Engaging students with relevant, inspiring, and challenging work while in school helps them develop agency in their learning – the power to make choices and take action – for the rest of their lives. For example, we are working with schools and partners to expand Maker Learning opportunities around the country.

> “Closing the Digital Learning Gap ensures that learners have access, acquire the skills to fully participate in a connected world, and feel empowered to achieve their life and work goals.”

Karen Cator
CEO and President, Digital Promise

2015 Year in Review

Digital Promise continued to advance digital transformations in public education. Our **League of Innovative Schools welcomed 16 new district members, increasing the number to 73**. The League now serves more than **3.2 million students across 33 states**. By working together on shared priorities League districts and our partners are pioneering innovative learning and leadership practices.

We expanded our **Adult Learning Beacon Project** to include the 80-branch **Chicago Public Library and St. Louis Community College**. As part of our effort to spotlight excellence and share information about how adults learn, we hosted a simultaneous five-city **Design Day** to collaborate on ideas for digital learning tools for under-served adult learners.

We launched our **Educator Micro-credentials** system with more than **100 micro-credentials** from more than 15 organizations addressing a variety of skills and approaches. Educators visit this site to learn about this emerging professional development strategy, which provides recognition for the skills educators gain throughout their careers.

We extended our Verizon Innovative Learning Schools partnership to **21 middle schools** across **10 states** to serve **12,000 students** and **1,000 educators**. We support our schools with extensive professional learning and classroom coaching. We also have produced and shared more than **330 videos, capturing** the progress of digital transformations in real time.

We introduced our **Research Map**, a data visualization of **150 education and learning science research topics based on nearly 100,000 scholarly publications**. The map is designed to facilitate a new way for educators and developers to discover and use research to guide their work.

We convened 30 existing and emerging **Education Innovation Clusters** from across the country to share strategies for partnership engagement, and set an agenda for advancing regional collaboration.

We published **dozens of blog posts** to inform and inspire education leaders and practitioners, and showcase excellence and promise in public education. Our work also was covered by articles in top traditional media outlets such as The Atlantic, TIME, The Philadelphia Inquirer, PBS Newshour, American Public Media Marketplace, and others.

We facilitated pilot studies of **12 products in nine districts with nearly 2,000 students and more than 500 teachers** to support evidence-based purchasing decisions in school districts. Published in print and online, the studies included useful checklists and tools to help schools navigate and conduct ed-tech pilots.

Our Reach in 2015

By the Numbers

25

Digital Promise staffers

12,000

middle school students engaged in innovative learning environments

3.2

million preK-12 learners served

73

preK-12 League of Innovative School districts served

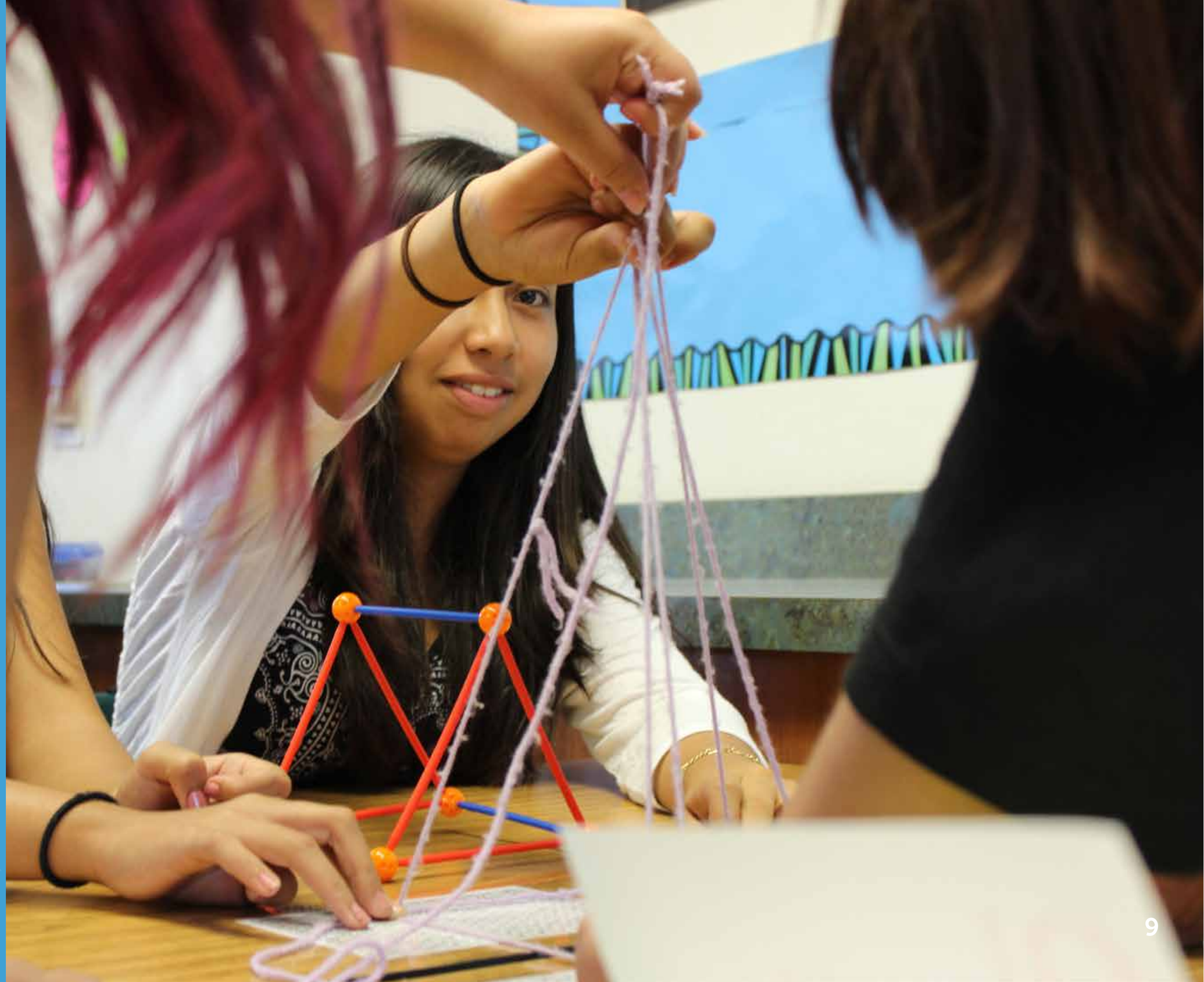
36

states including the District of Columbia, with a Digital Promise presence

$7

million operating budget*

*does not include in-kind donations



High School Senior Christina Li and Superintendent Dr. Christine Johns

Inspiring Future STEM Leaders

Christina Li's family chose to send her to high school in Utica Community Schools, known nationally for its innovative STEM programs. Interested in computer science since the third grade, Li learned the C++ programming language as a high school freshman and served as lead programmer for her school's FIRST Robotics team.

Inspired by her own experiences, Li wanted to help other girls feel the same "adrenaline rush" she always experiences when a program she has written suddenly works. Halfway through her junior year in 2015, she began planning a coding camp for junior high school girls in Utica Community Schools. Li called it "Hello, World" after the first line programmers often type out when they are learning a new programming language. Held during spring break, 30 girls attended.

Li credits the opportunities available to her in high school for giving her the expertise and confidence to take on the ambitious project. Utica Community Schools Superintendent Dr. Christine Johns in turn credits Digital Promise with inspiring and guiding the district's efforts through the district's participation in the League of Innovative Schools, of which Utica Community Schools is a charter member. Says Dr. Johns, "Through the League, we have access to research, case studies and what's working in other districts to support the great work our administrators and teachers are doing in their schools."

Extending computer science coding experiences to all K-12 students is one such program. Li is one example of the impact of the district's STEM efforts. The girls who attended the first "Hello, World" coding camp are another. At the end of the camp, Li asked the girls if they want to pursue computer science in the future. Says Li, "Every single girl responded with an enthusiastic 'Yes!'"

Designing a Better Future for Adult Learners

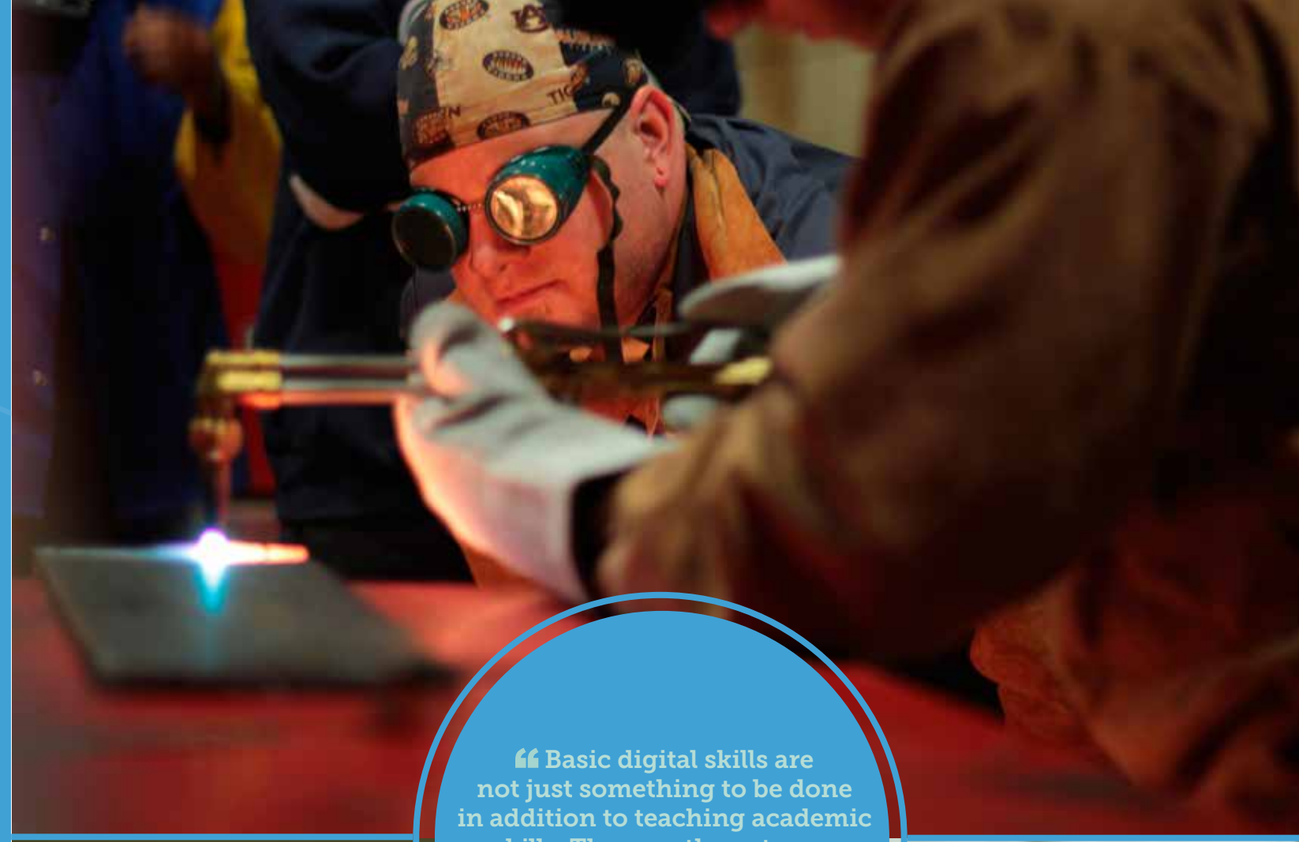
It's a staggering statistic: 36 million adults in the United States read at a 3rd grade level or below. Of these, more than two-thirds are employed, but most don't have the skills for advancement. Those who are interested in developing their skills struggle to find and gain access to adult education programs, which typically have long waiting lists. Even those who get in have trouble completing programs as schedules, transportation, and family responsibilities can make attending classes on a regular basis difficult or impossible.

To raise awareness of the problem and brainstorm how technology can be used to help adult learners, Digital Promise convened its first-ever "Designing a Better Future for Adult Learners" in November 2015. Held simultaneously in five cities via a simulcast web conference, the design challenge brought together educators, researchers, developers and investors to think deeply about ways to use technology to create quality, supportive learning experiences that would expand career pathways and improve quality of life for these learners.

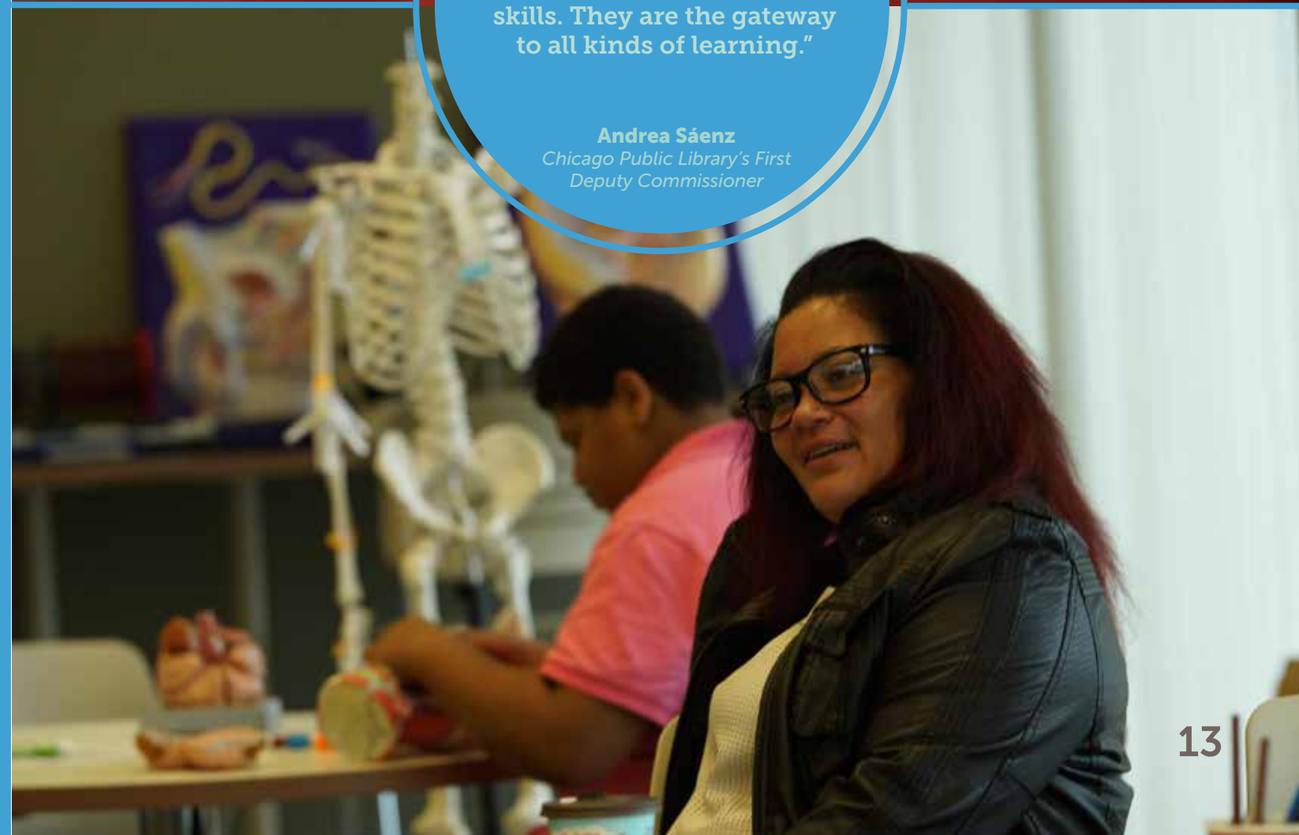
Dozens of ideas were generated as teams tackled ways to teach literacy skills on mobile devices, provide coaching services online, create peer-to-peer networks to support adult learners, and integrate literacy and language skills with relevant job skills as students learn.

Following the design challenge day, 14 teams chose to develop and test their solutions for adult learners by entering the Barbara Bush Foundation Adult Literacy XPRIZE competition.

Says Sholmy Kattan, Senior Director of the Adult Literacy XPRIZE, "The Digital Promise Adult Learning Design Challenge was a productive recruitment channel for the competition for our Adult Literacy XPRIZE. Fourteen of 109 registered teams either participated in or came to us through the design challenge, and the ideas generated by participants demonstrated a unique degree of creativity and empathy for adult learners."



> "Basic digital skills are not just something to be done in addition to teaching academic skills. They are the gateway to all kinds of learning."
>
> **Andrea Sáenz**
> *Chicago Public Library's First Deputy Commissioner*



Helping Districts and Schools Develop Smarter Ways to Test Ed-Tech Products

Under the leadership of Aileen Owens, Director of Technology and Innovation, the South Fayette Township School District in McDonald, Pennsylvania has created digital learning programs that are models for other districts around the country. So when Digital Promise and Johns Hopkins University launched a Pilot-to-Purchase Research Project, the district was one of the first to sign on.

Says Owens, "We have a vertically aligned computational thinking curriculum in our district. Students start with block-based code in kindergarten, transition to text-based code in 7th grade, and are on a continuum of learning through high school. We believed our middle school students were ready for more complex projects, including using simulations that require students to program robots to solve challenges, so we decided to pilot a new robotics product in 4th, 5th, and 6th grades. We hoped to learn where the product might fit into our computational thinking sequence and whether we could create deeper learning experiences with this product compared to others we have used in the past."

Owens worked with Digital Promise throughout the pilot to use a variety of tools and assessments to evaluate the product, including outcome matrixes, pre- and post-testing and focus groups with teachers and students, in addition to standardized test scores. The results of the pilot showed significant gains for 6th graders. Results were less promising for 4th and 5th graders.

According to Owens, the use of multiple measures provided the district with both a well-rounded view of the product and more nuanced insight into which students, and which contexts it might be useful for. Says Owens, "The mentorship Digital Promise provided was invaluable. If we had relied on just one type of assessment, we might have discontinued a program that was working for some of our students. Based on our discoveries, we continued this project for a second year. This year the results show a significant increase in computational thinking skills in both 5th and 6th grade. We are thrilled with the progress we are making."

> “It plants a seed and gives direction that’s right for our districts. Hopefully seedlings will grow into forests and change public education.”
>
> **Dr. Michael Nagler**
> *Superintendent and League of Innovative Schools Member*

Bridging the Digital Divide for Students from Low-Income Families

Four years ago, Vista Unified School District in Vista, California was lagging behind in its adoption of technology for learning — a situation that deeply concerned district superintendent Dr. Devin Vodicka and other district leaders.

Vista Unified has a diverse student population that includes children from urban, suburban, and rural communities, and families from all socio-economic strata. To address the various needs of all students, the district wanted to provide them with access to the Internet, mobile devices, and learning personalized to their specific needs and interests.

Today, Vista Unified is a member of the Digital Promise League of Innovative Schools and has middle schools participating in the Verizon Innovative Learning Schools program, directed by Digital Promise. According to Dr. Vodicka, through these initiatives, the district has access to the best practices and resources that have enabled district leaders and educators to “move faster and better to meet to the needs of our students than we could have without this support.”

While all Vista Unified students benefit from access to digital learning, Dr. Vodicka says that children from low-income families are most profoundly affected. As an example, he cited an English Language Learner who used to struggle in school because his non-English speaking parents were unable to help him with his homework. Because he is now connected to school educators and resources through a tablet device and the Internet both at home and at school, he has “a feeling of belonging.”

Says Dr. Vodicka, “It’s really humbling. Our kids are no longer marginalized.”

Developing Teacher-Leaders Through Micro-credentials

Giving educators a voice in their own profession is a priority for Barnett Berry, founder and CEO of the Center for Teaching Quality (CTQ). To help make this vision a reality, CTQ has developed "teacherpreneurs," teacher-leaders who are given the time, space, and incentives to incubate and execute pedagogical and policy ideas that improve public schools, while they continue to teach.

According to Berry, one key to preparing teachers to be teacherpreneurs is to personalize professional development, including skills not typically taught in pre-service teacher training or in traditional professional development programs for in-service teachers. Berry believes that micro-credentials can play an important role. CTQ recently partnered with Digital Promise to develop 16 educator micro-credentials that focus on leadership, collaboration, and community-building skills.

Digital Promise and CTQ worked closely with several teacherpreneurs to create the micro-credentials. Together they determined particular observable competencies, identifying core research and resources, and designing evaluation rubrics and scoring guides.

"Everyone is talking about personalized learning for not only students, but also teachers in ways that have never happened before," says Berry. "Micro-credentials are an invaluable tool to making this personalization possible."

Developing Partnerships to Implement Innovative Programs

Charlottesville City Schools in Virginia, a charter member of the Digital Promise League of Innovative Schools, leverages strategic partners from both academia and the business community to prepare students for academic and career success. Just one example is a partnership between the district and the University of Virginia to establish the nation's first Laboratory for Advanced Manufacturing Technologies, which is housed at the district's Buford Middle School and Charlottesville High School.

Students in the lab schools work to solve both practical and academic problems with advanced technologies such as 3-D printers. For example, an anthropology class used 3-D printers to create replicas of skulls for early humanoid beings.

Superintendent Dr. Rosa Atkins credits the League with giving her and other district leaders opportunities to enrich and expand their thinking about how to develop innovative programs to fit their particular district context. In fact, the inspiration for the district's lab schools came from a League-sponsored visit to New Tech High School, a project-based learning school in the Napa Valley Unified School District in California. "It turned on a light for me about how to get all students, regardless of their backgrounds and previous experiences, using sophisticated tools and methods to solve real-world problems," says Dr. Atkins.

After the visit, Dr. Atkins approached close neighbor and frequent partner, the University of Virginia, with the idea for the lab school. Together, the university and the district secured multiple sources of funding and over the course of a few years, built the program.

Says Dr. Atkins, "The League has helped our vision become reality."

> "What we want to do is create opportunities for children, andcreate environments for children where they're excited about learning."
>
> **Dr. Bart Rocco**
> *Superintendent and League of Innovative Schools Member*

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.

1999-2001

Carnegie Corporation of New York partners with the Century, Knight, MacArthur, and Open Society Foundations to **launch the Digital Promise Project**

Co-chairs former FCC Chairman Newton N. Minow, former NBC News and PBS President Lawrence K. Grossman, and Anne G. Murphy publish their recommendations in a book titled, ***A Digital Gift to the Nation***

2004

In partnership with the Federation of American Scientists, the **Digital Promise Project develops a roadmap for applying learning technologies to education**

2008-2011

President George W. Bush signs the Higher Education Opportunity Act formally authorizing Digital Promise

President Barack Obama launches Digital Promise with a Board of Directors recommended by members of Congress and appointed by Secretary of Education Arne Duncan

The League of Innovative Schools launched with 25 district members

2013

Marketplace initiative launched, delivering research and solutions for smart demand, smart supply, and simplified procurement processes in the K-12 market

Educator Micro-credentials initiative launched to build a system enabling educators to gain recognition for skills they master throughout their careers

2014

Verizon Innovative Learning Schools launched to partner with 8 U.S. middle schools to create digital learning environments and document the process

Total number of members of the **League of Innovative Schools grew to 57**

Adult Learning initiative launched to encourage digital learning tools that meet unique needs of under-served adult learners

Beacon communities identified are **raising adult learning skills** through the use of digital learning tools

Research@Work initiative launched to connect practitioners and developers with education research, in order to improve digital learning experiences and products."

2015

Verizon Innovative Learning Schools adds 13 new schools, bringing total to 21

Total number of members of the **League of Innovative Schools grew to 73**

Education Clusters convened to connect schools, corporations and communities to **improve student engagement and outcomes**

Educator Micro-credentials platform launched with more than 100 micro-credentials; hosted by BloomBoard

Professional Services initiative launched to help districts through coaching and mentoring, professional development, and storytelling services

Research Map published to help developers and educators discover existing research as they develop digital learning experiences and products

Supporters

Philanthropic

Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation
Carnegie Corporation of New York
The Grable Foundation
John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation
Ewing Marion Kauffman Foundation
The Joyce Foundation
The Michael & Susan Dell Foundation
Morgridge Family Foundation
Verizon
The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation
The Overdeck Family Foundation
PriceWaterhouseCoopers

Corporate

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Professor and President Emeritus, Payson Center for International Development and Technology Transfer, Tulane University

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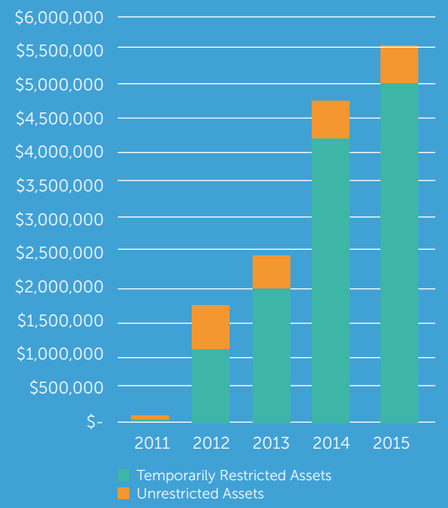
Former Senior Vice President, Human Resources and Administration, The Boeing Company

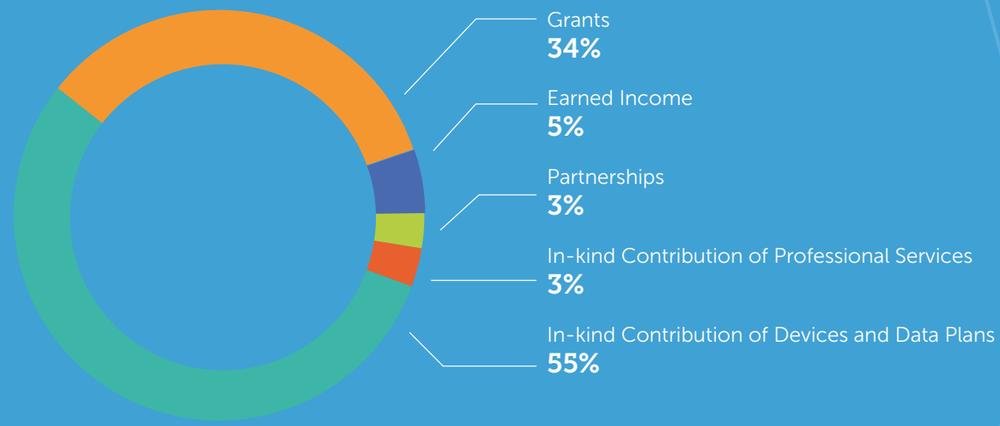
Financials

Digital Promise Net Assets, by Year



Digital Promise 2015 Revenue, by Source

Total Revenue = $18.1 million



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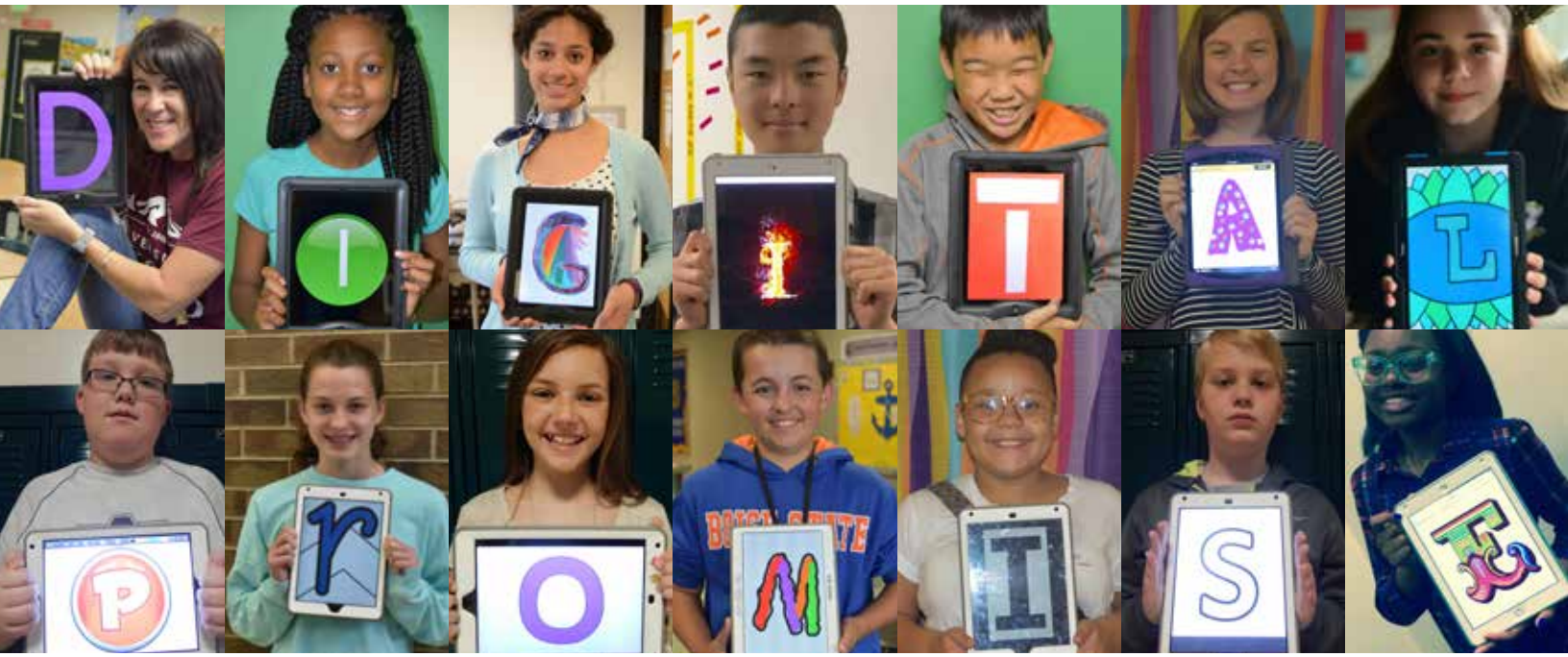

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Accelerating Innovation in Education

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