We founded GreatSchools 15 years ago because we recognized the potential of the Internet to inform parents and engage them more deeply in their children’s education.

Today, we operate two programs:

GreatSchools is the leading source of school information for parents nationally, reaching half of all families with school-age children. **GreatSchools** helps parents find high-performing schools that are a good fit for their family.

Our new program, **GreatKids**, will inspire parents to raise their expectations for their children’s education and help parents get the skills and resources they need to guide their children to education success.

We partner with schools, nonprofits, and governments around the country to localize our programs and share information with large numbers of parents, especially high-need parents. Our GreatSchools e-newsletters help parents track the performance of their school, navigate educational issues, and get parenting tips and advice.

GreatSchools helps millions of parents find great schools, develop essential skills and access new resources. As importantly, we inspire parents to set high expectations for their schools, their children, and themselves.
At GreatSchools, we believe that parents are the foundation of children’s education success. Parents have the power to set high expectations and inspire their children to achieve. They are in the best position to help their children develop habits and character strengths that lead to success in school and life. And, increasingly, they have the opportunity to choose schools they believe will best serve their children.

Fifteen years ago, we began our quest to inspire and help parents guide their children to education success. We started with a focus on helping parents choose the best schools for their children. Today, GreatSchools is the nation’s leading source of school information for parents, reaching 44 million unique visitors and half of U.S. families with children.

GreatSchools provides information on more than 200,000 preK-12 schools and features our proprietary school rating system as well as more than 1 million parent, student and teacher reviews of schools. In a survey of parents who used GreatSchools to find a school last year, 67% said the site had an influence on their decision process.

Today, we continue to improve the information on GreatSchools to help parents better understand the quality of their school options. We are also launching a new initiative, GreatKids, a smartphone-friendly stream of personalized advice and activities to help parents raise children with the academic skills and character strengths they need to succeed.

GreatKids is designed to work for busy parents on the go. It provides parents with ideas and activities most relevant to their children’s situation. Infused with a compelling vision of education success, it helps parents acquire the knowledge, skills and resources they need to guide their children to excellence at every stage of the educational journey.

Thank you for reading this annual report and for your interest in our work. Together, we are building the strongest possible foundation for education reform in America: parents who expect, support and demand excellence from their children, their schools, and themselves.

Sincerely,

Bill Jackson
CEO and Founder
GreatSchools:
Helping families find great schools
Over the past year, GreatSchools made significant progress helping parents find high-performing schools that are a good fit for their families.

We continue to grow, and are helping more families than ever. We reached 44 million unique visitors in 2012, including half of all U.S. families with preK-12 children.
We are seeing more evidence that our connections with parents make a difference. Third-party research shows that children of parents who access GreatSchools information and services attend higher-performing schools. For example, preliminary findings from a study by Stanford University researchers begun in 2010 found “a meaningful, statistically significant effect” in Washington, DC, where, compared to a control group, parents who received detailed information from GreatSchools enrolled their children in higher-performing middle schools.

To continue this progress, we have dramatically improved the tools and information we provide to help parents understand all of their school options, and we encourage them to visit and apply to great schools that will be a good fit for their children. In the last year we:

• Completely redesigned our school profiles — surfacing richer and more recent information — to help parents, students and others.

• Improved tools to allow principals and administrators to tell the story of their schools by providing details about programs, services and extracurricular activities, as well as application forms, photos and videos.

• Piloted a new design for GreatSchools Ratings in select communities incorporating metrics for student improvement over time, college readiness and academic achievement.

• Created interactive maps that show school locations, attendance zone boundaries, district lines and ratings for all nearby schools on one map.

• Added new worksheets, articles, videos, and other tools to help families understand what to look for when they visit a school, what questions to ask and how to compare different schools.
In 2012, we released a mobile version of the GreatSchools.org website, which is accessible from 90% of smartphones. As a result, mobile usage of GreatSchools doubled by the end of 2012 and today represents 20% of our total traffic. This is especially significant because of the growing use of mobile devices: According to the Pew Research Center, 76% of Latino internet users, and 73% of African-American internet users, regularly use mobile phones or devices to access the internet.

Parents, Mr. Jackson believes, are an “underappreciated” part of a child’s educational success. “Families have the most skin in the game,” he said. “They need to understand their role in helping their children.”

- Education Week, April 4, 2012
To expand our reach and impact, we participate in leading national education events and partner with other organizations. In the past year, we have dramatically increased awareness of GreatSchools through collaborations such as:

- Showcasing GreatSchools at the Smart Disclosure Summit hosted by the White House and the National Archives.

- Participating in the White House Online Summit on Education with other leading education publications.

- Joining with Gallup to bring the voice of America’s students into national discussions about school quality and education success.

- Partnering with Zillow, the leading online real estate marketplace, to help families find great schools while looking for a new home or apartment.

- Working with the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development to help HUD-assisted families access local school information and make informed decisions about where to send their children to school.

- Taking second place at HackEd, a one-day “hackathon” at Facebook headquarters in Menlo Park, CA, sponsored by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. A GreatSchools team (pictured) joined developers, education experts and nonprofits to design Facebook apps that help low-income students get into and graduate from college.

From left to right:
Ben Rabidou, Marco Morales, Karissa Sparks, Gretchen Anderson
Founder and CEO Bill Jackson at the NBC Education Nation Summit in New York City.
GreatSchools Local:

Stronger community connections
Because every community is unique and has different school options, families looking for a great school need the most relevant and current local school information. In the past year, we’ve launched a new program to partner with local schools, community organizations, and city agencies to gather and deliver the best local school information to families.

**GreatSchools Local** partnerships combine the strengths of GreatSchools as a national media and technology platform with the local knowledge and relationships of community groups to bring better information and tools to families, such as:

**In-depth profiles of area schools, including local school ratings, details on programs and community insights.**

**Insights into school climate, including issues like safety, cleanliness, teacher collaboration and family engagement.**

**Filters that enable parents to search by characteristics such as before- and after-school services, transportation services, school focus and other criteria.**

**“Navigating the system” articles that provide information about school options, district enrollment rules and local application deadlines.**

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GreatSchools is a one-stop shop packed with services parents can access for FREE and information all families need to know when selecting a new school. The best part is the staff is always available to help, just a click or a phone call away.

– Regina, Milwaukee parent
In three communities, we are partnering with local organizations to create grassroots GreatSchools Local Campaigns that bring our information and support to families who need it most. Each of these partnerships — in Milwaukee, Indianapolis, and Washington, DC — involve customized local approaches. We produce bilingual School Chooser guides for each community to make school information more accessible, and we deliver information and services to families through community-based GreatSchools staff and collaborations with local partners.

As we expand GreatSchools Local to other cities, we will use the same approach to customize solutions for families, schools and the local community.
Milwaukee

- 20,000 print School Choosers distributed.
- 33% of families received information or coaching.
- 62% of families we reached visited two or more schools.
- 95% of families we reached applied to one or more higher-performing schools.

Washington, D.C.

- 20,000 print School Choosers distributed.
- 47% of families received information or coaching.
- 65% of families we reached visited two or more schools.
- 75% of families we reached applied to one or more higher-performing schools.

Indianapolis

- 15,000 print School Choosers distributed.
- 18% of families received information or coaching.
- Measurements of families visiting and applying to schools in Indianapolis are pending.

Indianapolis is a leader in education. There are many great options for parents looking for the right place to send their children. The GreatSchools Indianapolis School Chooser guide is the best resource available to help them make the right decision.

– Indianapolis Mayor Greg Ballard
GreatKids:
Parent smarter, not harder
Finding a great school is only one of many things that parents do to support their children’s education success. Among the other important things parents do: set high expectations, cultivate character strengths like persistence, talk and read frequently and ignite passion and purpose.

GreatKids is designed using lessons learned providing general advice and resources to parents on GreatSchools.org, as well as from a series of developmental projects undertaken over the past several years. Millions of parents already come to GreatSchools.org each year for advice and support on a wide range of preK-12 education issues.

Designed for busy parents, GreatKids provides advice and activities in bite-sized chunks that can be consumed in a few minutes on a smartphone or tablet. When it launches later in 2013, GreatKids will serve parents of K-3 children with a focus on cultivating early literacy skills.

GreatKids features unique, brief videos that help parents understand what education excellence looks like at every step of their children’s learning journey. Developed in collaboration with Student Achievement Partners, these videos help parents learn, for example, what it looks and sounds like when a first grader reads at grade level. Armed with this information, parents will be better able to support their children at home and advocate for excellence at school.

Parent Smarter, Not Harder is the GreatKids message. In addition to providing fun learning activities for parents and children to do together, the program helps parents internalize attitudes and habits that add up to a big positive influence on their children’s learning. Step by step, GreatKids parents learn how to expect, support and demand educational excellence from their children and their schools.

I also loved that the program gives so many tips to help parents be more interactive with kids. It provides more strategies for parents to be creative in helping their kids learn instead of becoming frustrated.

– Parent, Grant Elementary School
Summary of Audited Financials for the Year Ended December 31, 2012

**Support and Revenue**

- **Earned income** $2,835,000
- **Contributions** $6,670,000
- **Other** $118,000

**Total** $9,623,000

**Expenses**

- **Program services** $8,973,000
- **Management and general** $946,000
- **Fundraising** $362,000
- **Other** $118,000

**Total** $10,281,000

**Net Assets, End of Year** $6,696,000
Board of directors

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Principal, Francisco Partners

Anthony J. Colón, Secretary
Cofounder, AVANTI Strategy Group
President, A.J. Colón Consulting, LLC

Ann Fuell, Vice Chair
Board Member, Almaden Country School

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Dr. Karen Hill-Scott, Director
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Bill Jackson, Director
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Chancellor Emeritus, University of Colorado Denver and University of Colorado Anschutz Medical Center

GreatSchools staff

Bill Jackson
CEO and Founder

Matthew Nelson
Chief Operating Officer

Gretchen Anderson
Vice President, Product

Lilly Fu
Chief Financial Officer

Carol Lloyd
Executive Editor

Samantha Brown Olivieri
Director, Data Strategy

Candice Santomauro
Vice President, Local Engagement

Karissa Sparks
Vice President, Marketing

Vidya Sundaram
Vice President, Business Insights

Venkates “Swami” Swaminathan
Vice President, Business Development
2012-2013 funders

**National funders**
Laura and John Arnold Foundation  
Goldman Sachs Gives  
The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation  
Robertson Foundation  
The Walton Family Foundation

**Local funders**
The Lynde and Harry Bradley Foundation  
The California Endowment  
Fight for Children  
The Joyce Foundation  
The Kern Family Foundation

**NewSchools Venture Fund**  
The David & Lucile Packard Foundation

### Partners
We are grateful to our partners, including:

- 321 Fast Draw  
- 50CAN  
- Algonquin Books  
- American Promise  
- Ashoka Foundation  
- Automated Housing Referral Network  
- Bay Citizen  
- Brain Pop  
- CafeMom  
- California Watch  
- Center for Education Policy Analysis at Stanford University  
- College Board  
- Common Sense Media  
- Data Quality Campaign  
- Digital Map Products  
- DK Publishing  
- DonorsChoose.org  
- Dunn & Bradstreet  
- Families Empowered  
- Fannie Mae  
- Film Sight Productions  
- Forbes  
- Gallup Education  
- Google  
- Hearst Corporation  
- Hillsborough County Public Schools  
- Iridescent Learning  
- KIPP  
- Learning Ally  
- Learning and Leadership Center  
- Miami Dade County Public Schools  
- Michael & Susan Dell Foundation  
- Microsoft, Mom’s Homeroom  
- Mind/Shift  
- Move Sales, Inc.  
- National Association of Charter School Authorizers  
- National Center for Learning Disabilities  
- NBC News Education Nation  
- Onboard Informatics  
- Parent Teacher Association  
- Parenting.com  
- Policy Map  
- Reading Rockets  
- Realtors Property Resource  
- Rocketship Education  
- Rockman et al  
- Scholastic  
- Stand for Children  
- Step Up for Students  
- Strategic Data Project  
- Student Achievement Partners  
- SurveyMonkey  
- Tandem  
- Target  
- The Bully Project  
- Treasure Bay, Inc.  
- UCLA Department of Psychology  
- Univision  
- U.S. Department of Education  
- U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development  
- Walmart  
- WolfNet  
- Zillow

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_You’re the best example of a non-profit doing social media really well. You’re really interactive and have a huge amount of followers. Your blogs are awesome – you are rock stars._

– Melissa Taylor, Pinterest superstar and blogger
Thanks to the families who submitted photos to our "First Day of School" photo contest, featured on the front cover.
Our mission

Help millions of parents get a great education for their children.

Our vision

All children will have the family support they need to succeed in school and life.