

# Common Sense Media Annual Report 2011-2012

the balanced voice.

the respected choice.

the champion for kids.



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OUR MISSION

Common Sense Media  
is dedicated to improving  
the lives of kids and  
families by providing  
the trustworthy  
information, education,  
and independent  
voice they need to  
thrive in a world  
of media and technology.



JIM STEYER, CEO AND FOUNDER



Dear Friends,

Common Sense Media has come a long way with your support. Today, we reach tens of millions of kids and families who use our ratings and reviews, more than 20,000 educators who deliver our K-12 curriculum in schools in all 50 states, and thousands of national, state, and local policymakers who look to us for nonpartisan leadership and a strong voice for kids.

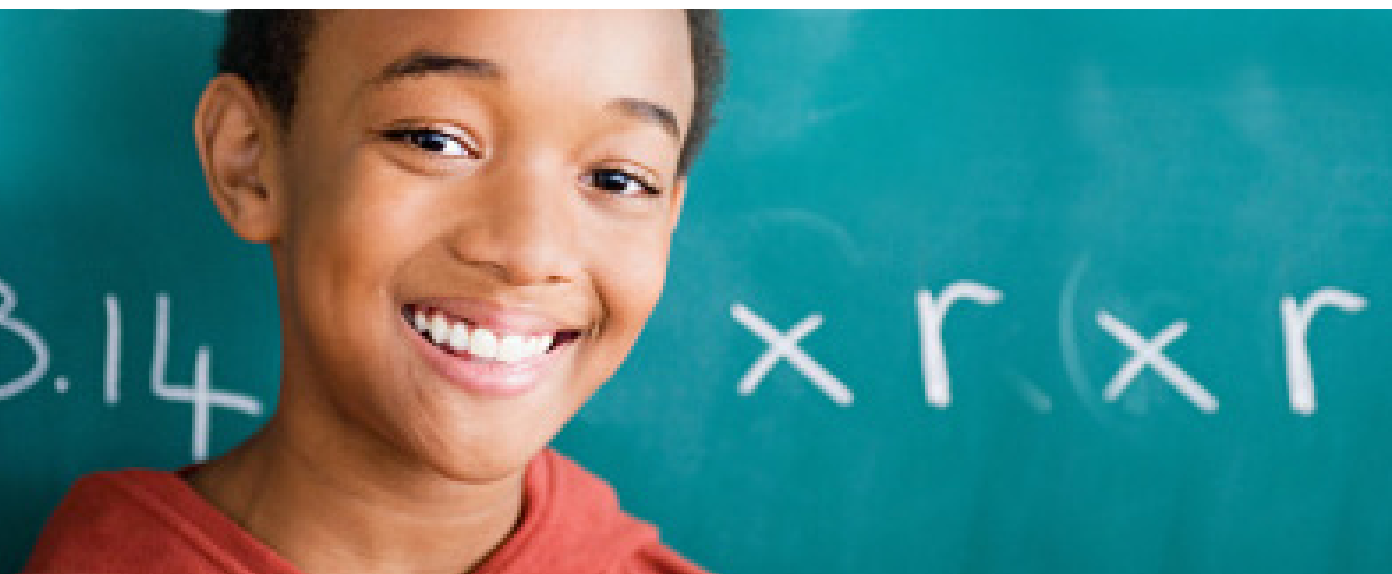
As we've said from day one, we created Common Sense Media to give parents, educators, and young people a choice and a voice in the media and technology that's everywhere in our lives. Today, with our kids growing up in a 24/7 media environment, our mission has never been more important. This is truly a watershed moment for kids, media, and education issues in the United States, not to mention for children and families across the globe. We face extraordinary challenges... and equally extraordinary opportunities.

This annual report comes to you at a time of remarkable growth and success for Common Sense Media. Just eight short years after our launch, we are the leading nonpartisan organization in our field. We reach countless families, teachers, and policymakers with our unique “sanity, not censorship” approach. This report details the impact that Common Sense has had on kids and parents—in their homes and in their schools—as well as on important policy issues such as digital literacy and kids’ online privacy. It also presents our vision for continued success and growth – because as we all recognize, our work is just beginning.

Your ongoing support makes an enormous difference in our ability to achieve our goal of putting Common Sense into every home and classroom in this country. At this critical juncture of growth and opportunity, we truly appreciate your continued commitment to our work, not to mention your thoughtful input, as we change the world for kids and families every day.

Thanks and all the best from everyone  
at Common Sense







## WHAT WE DO

Today, kids spend more time with media and digital activities than with their families or in school. Common Sense Media is the only leading non profit that provides the trustworthy information and tools needed by parents and educators.

.....

# We: **Rate** your media

We offer America's largest, most trusted library of age-appropriate media ratings and reviews, covering nearly all kids' and family media.

# We: **Educate** and advise

We provide advice and education about kids' issues for parents, educators, and policymakers, ranging from digital citizenship to limiting violence and commercialism.

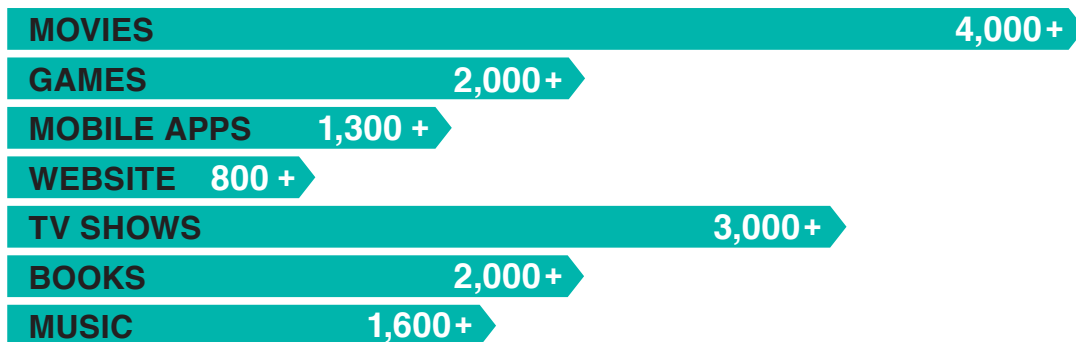
# We: **Advocate** change

We are an authoritative, respected non partisan voice to policy-makers, the industry, legislators, and thought leaders to improve the media landscape — supported by a grassroots movement from concerned citizens.

# Rate

## OUR IMPACT: ENABLING INFORMED DECISIONS.

We believe that when parents are provided with well-balanced information, they can make informed decisions about what's right for their kids and families. That's why, since our launch in 2003, we've become one of the nation's most used, trusted, and comprehensive sources for family media reviews:



## We screen it so parents don't have to.

We know that every family and every kid is different — but they all need information to make great media choices. We help by providing a list of specific content categories that highlight content concerns:

- |                      |          |                            |
|----------------------|----------|----------------------------|
| Educational value    | Violence | Consumerism                |
| Positive messages    | Sexy     | Drinking, drugs, & smoking |
| Positive role models | Language | Privacy & safety           |
| Ease of play         |          |                            |

In addition, we provide in-depth information that allows families to be fully engaged in starting a conversation about media choices:

### What parents need to know

We provide a short guide to all of the essential information that parents need to know to make a decision quickly — or manage a decision that's already been made.

### Families can talk about

Kids are really influenced by the media they see, hear, and interact with. We offer families easy ways to communicate so that parents can be sure their kids get the messages that families want to give.



## OUR VISION: AN UNPARALLELED EDUCATIONAL RATINGS & REVIEW SYSTEM

We're researching and building a pioneering Education Ratings and Review program that will evaluate the learning potential in both popular and educational video games, websites, and mobile apps.

The ratings will address core subject areas (such as reading, science, and math), as well as the deeper learning skills (thinking and reasoning skills, social skills like collaboration and emotional skills like initiative and self-direction) that have become essential for kids growing up in a global and digitally connected world.

Generously funded by the Susan Crown Exchange (SCE), Common Sense Media's Education Ratings and Review program will:

- » **Help parents, kids, and educators make informed choices** about interactive media products that present learning opportunities.
- » **Offer guidance on fresh, innovative avenues for kids to learn** while having fun and being deeply engaged.
- » **Have a framework completed in Fall 2011, with the program launching in early 2012.**

Did you know?

**7.5:**

**Average number of hours a day  
kids 8-18 spend with media**

(Kaiser Family Foundation Study, 2010)



# Educate

## OUR IMPACT: A COMPLETE RESOURCE FOR DIGITAL LITERACY

Common Sense Media's education program has grown dramatically over the past year. Now available in every American state and throughout the world, our completely free digital library includes a Parent Media and Technology Education Program and a K-12 Digital Literacy and Citizenship curriculum. The K-12 curriculum is:

- » Fun and interactive, with rich video and media creation opportunities
- » Grounded in the solid research of Professor Howard Gardner's team at Harvard University and the MacArthur Foundation Digital Media and Learning Research Network
- » Flexible and modular so educators can pick content to meet their students' needs

Common Sense has established partnerships with leading state departments of education, school districts, and after-school programs to implement our Digital Literacy and Citizenship curriculum as a core component of their digital learning efforts. Seventy-seven schools reaching more than 10,000 students are participating in our deep implementation and evaluation programs, including partnerships with:

- » Chicago Public Schools
- » Houston KIPP Charter Network
- » Los Angeles Unified Schools
- » Maine Department of Education
- » New York Public Schools
- » Omaha Public Schools
- » Denver Public Schools
- » The Harlem Children's Zone



**More than 18,000 schools  
and 25,000 educators  
in all 50 U.S. states and  
70 countries**

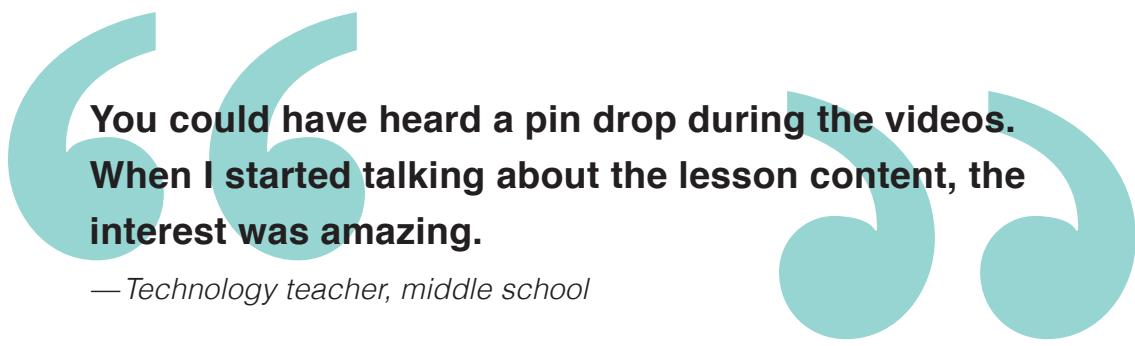
are registered for Common Sense Media's  
free educational resources.

## OUR VISION: THE DIGITAL PASSPORT™

The Digital Passport is a self-guided, web-based set of interactive learning activities geared toward 4th- through 6th- grade students to help them learn the essential knowledge and skills of digital citizenship and online safety. In development during Summer 2011 with a proposed launch during 2012, our unique Digital Passport will:

- » **Be administered and played in schools and after-school programs** as the starting point or prerequisite for students who are about to work independently on the Internet or receive a school-issued laptop, email address, web account, tablet, or other wireless device. It may also be linked to each school's Acceptable Use Policy (AUP) and be E-Rate compliant.
- » **Deliver fun, engaging, and critical lessons** in Safety/Security, Privacy & Reputation, Cyberbullying and Creating Positive Communities, Respecting Creative Work, Using Mobile Technologies, and Searching and Evaluating Websites to help children develop critical thinking and problem solving-skills.
- » **Be adapted for use on the iPad, Android, and other mobile platforms.**
- » **Help our nation's youth think critically** about the possibilities and perils — as well as the opportunities and challenges — of this new 24/7 connected culture.
- » **Ease the growing "wireless age" concerns** of parents, educators, regulators, and other stakeholders around issues related to media and mobile technologies used by our nation's youth.

In the year ahead, with the “blended learning” model of a teacher-guided K-12 classroom curriculum and the Digital Passport, Common Sense will continue to expand the reach of our education programs to ensure that every child ultimately has the opportunity to learn the essential skills needed to thrive in an ever-changing digital world.



**You could have heard a pin drop during the videos.  
When I started talking about the lesson content, the  
interest was amazing.**

— *Technology teacher, middle school*

# Advocate

## OUR IMPACT: LEADING THE POLICY DEBATE

Common Sense Media will continue to advocate for kids and families on key issues such as cyberbullying and privacy, with digital literacy and citizenship being our national agenda item. We've forged a strong link with political leaders, digital industry stakeholders, and the Department of Education. We're working with parents, educators, and politicians to understand the key issues and to advocate on their behalf.

We provide support to political campaigns locally, regionally, and nationally. Here are some we have supported over the past year:

### NATIONAL

- » **KIDS' PRIVACY POLICY** – Launched our “Do Not Track Kids” policy embracing the Children’s Online Privacy Protection Act (COPPA) at the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) roundtables with Chairman Jon Leibowitz.
- » **PRIVACY POLICY BRIEF** – Released “Protecting Our Kids’ Privacy in a Digital World,” a policy brief to encourage parents, teachers, policymakers, and industry leaders to improve kids’ privacy protections.
- » **DIGITAL KIDS AGENDA** – Was a catalyst for Federal Communications Commission (FCC) Chairman Julius Genachowski announcing the “Digital Kids” agenda.

### REGIONAL AND LOCAL

- » **EDUCATION** – Hosted a panel discussion with Genachowski and the Department of Education’s Karen Cator at the Consumer Electronic Show Conference.
- » Participated in a briefing between CEO Jim Steyer and Howard Gardner from the Harvard Graduate School of Education in Washington, D.C.
- » **MOBILE NET** – Championed “Growing Up with the Mobile Net” panels at the Congressional Internet Caucus State of the Mobile Net Conference in D.C.

Did you know?

# 1 in 5

**kids ages 10-18 report having experienced cyberbullying at least once in their lives.**

(Hinduja & Patchin, 2010 – Cyberbullying Research Center)

## OUR VISION: THE ABILITY TO MAKE CHANGE HAPPEN

Common Sense Media will continue to lead the debate to advocate for positive change. We'll maintain our leadership in understanding the issues around kids and media as we provide opportunities for our growing member base to take action to make change happen.

We are currently in the initial stages of funding two new initiatives to help us demonstrate the relevance of the issues that our kids are facing today and to provide opportunities for **everyone** to have an impact.

### OUR MULTI-YEAR RESEARCH AGENDA WILL:

- » Inform policymakers, journalists, advocates, media companies, and parents about key media and technology issues and trends with our nation's youth.
- » Draw more public attention to these issues.
- » Engage more parents and teachers to use Common Sense Media ratings, reviews, and educational program resources.
- » Include a series of surveys with parents, kids, teachers, and other professionals; a publicity campaign; and events in Washington, D.C.

### OUR DIGITAL ADVOCACY PLATFORM WILL:

- » Help parents, teachers, and kids raise their voices to be part of our key issues.
- » Organize our members through social media, email, and community by providing simple ways to take action and engage.
- » Use next-generation features to empower users to take action.
- » Increase our users' ability to share their issues and actions socially.
- » Enable everyone to start campaigns nationally or in their local community.

**Private Entities like Common Sense Media are pursuing a sanity-not-censorship approach, which can serve as a model for how to use technology to empower parents without offending the First Amendment.**

—President Barack Obama

# 7th Annual Common Sense Media Awards

Celebrated in New York City on April 28, 2011, Common Sense Media's theme for this year's event was **"RAISING KIDS IN A DIGITAL WORLD"**. We were proud to host a high-powered gallery of honorees, celebrities, authors, politicians, educators, government dignitaries, bankers, benefactors, philanthropists, mentors, and friends.

We honored leaders who have truly improved kids' and families' media and technology lives. These honorees brought us to a new level of national media attention because each is at the epicenter of this issue.



*From left to right:*

Honoree Miranda Cosgrove, actress, singer, and star of Nickelodeon's *iCarly*, accepted the award for Best Role Model in a Digital Age.

Honoree PS22 Chorus, elementary school chorus from Staten Island, accepted the award for Best Use of Digital Media.

**They have all the talent and the best sense of entrepreneurial spirit... but their values are to kids and are values the nation needs... Continue to rate, educate, and advocate for our kids.**

*—Honoree Joel I. Klein*



Honoree Joel I. Klein, CEO Educational Division, News Corp. and former Chancellor of the New York City Department of Education, was bestowed the Educator of the Year Award.

*Opposite Page – Top:*

Honoree Bill Clinton, 42nd president of the United States and founder of the William J. Clinton Foundation, received a Lifetime Achievement Award., with Jim Steyer, Common Sense Media CEO and founder, and Chelsea Clinton, member, Board of Directors.

*Bottom (left to right):*

Presenter, the Honorable Julius Genachowski, Chairman of the Federal Communications Commission. Presenter, Geoffrey Canada, president and CEO of the Harlem Children's Zone.

*Photo credit to Stephen Lovekin/Getty Images for Common Sense Media, 2011.*

**For more photos of the event, go to  
[www.facebook.com/commonsensemedia](http://www.facebook.com/commonsensemedia).**





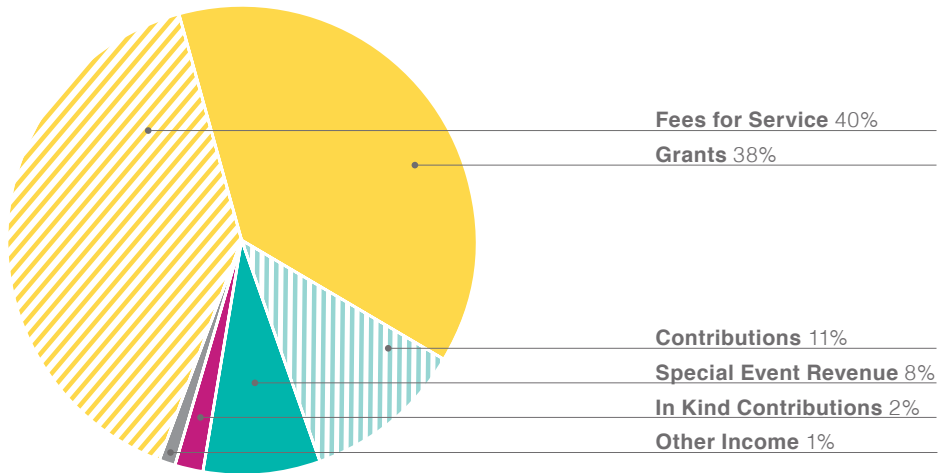
I love this idea of having a driver's license for kids to navigate the Internet... Our children can be trusted to make the right decisions, if they know. That, too, is part of common sense.

—Honoree President Bill Clinton

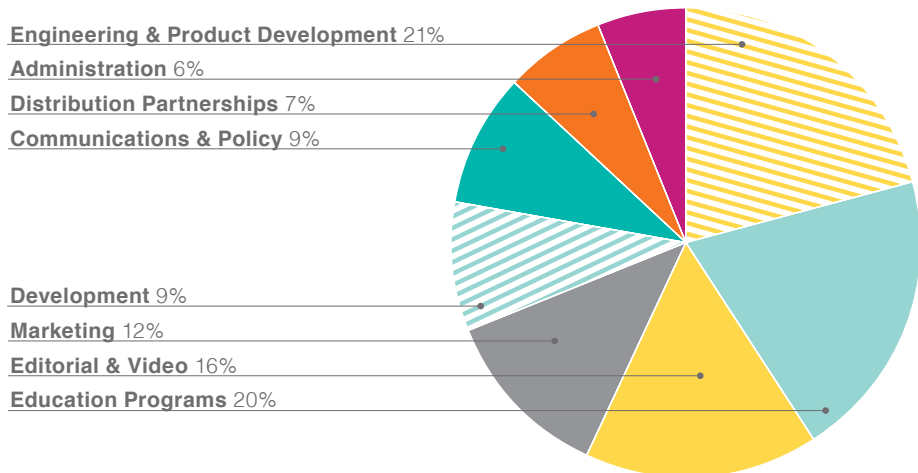


# Financials

## 2010 REVENUE



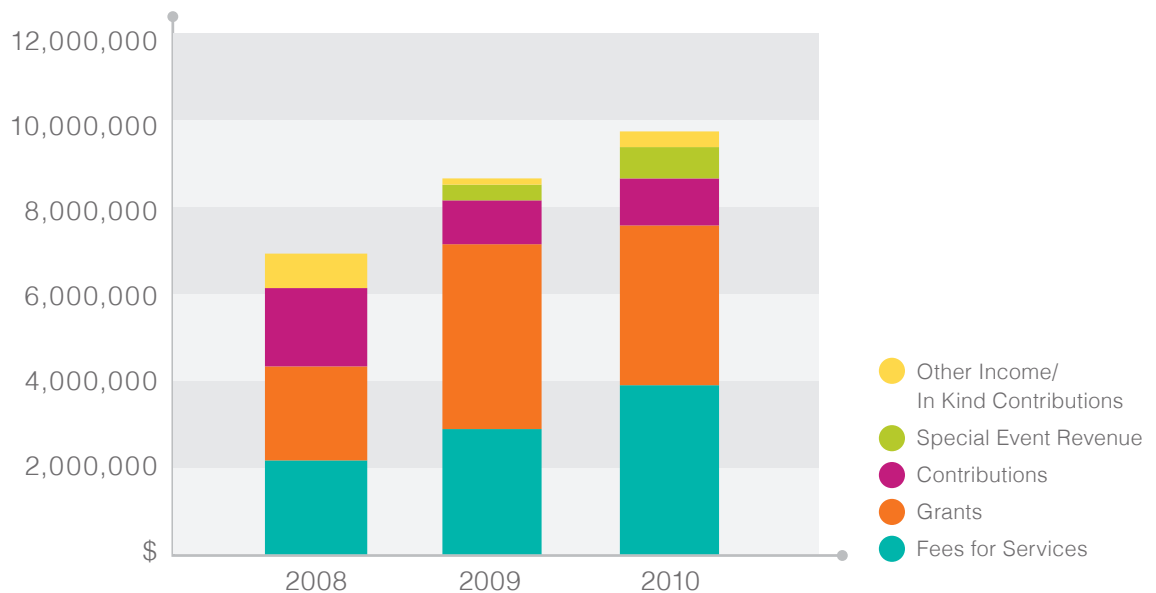
## 2010 EXPENSES



## WHY WE CALL OURSELVES “VENTURE PHILANTHROPISTS”

- » Our focus on creating media ratings and reviews has established a sustainable, self-supporting revenue model.
- » Our growing list of partnerships with leading media organizations has helped us maintain our position as a pioneer for global kids’ media issues.
- » Our infrastructure has undergone rapid expansion to meet the needs of parents in all areas of digital media.
- » Our goal is to stay ahead of the technology curve to be everywhere that kids and parents need us.

## 2008-2010 COMPARATIVE REVENUE



Common Sense Media is a 501(c)(3), not-for-profit, public benefit corporation.

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