



CASE STUDIES

# How GreatSchools Grows Its Education Data Hub

Want to talk to a feedback expert?  
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“We get more than four million unique visitors per month—more than most commercial websites. I hope more nonprofits use our methods in using the Internet to collect data and get feedback. Information-gathering is an efficient, effective way for organizations to be more successful with their grant money.”



**Ji Kim,**  
Product and Design Lead at GreatSchools

## A 20-Year-Old Nonprofit Holds American Education Accountable to Students

Since 1998, GreatSchools, a United States national nonprofit, has helped parents make the most out of their kids’ educational opportunities. The organization has created a school quality rating system that is based on school resources, student outcomes, and reviews.

More than 138,000 public, private, and charter school data is integrated into the GreatSchools database, which has received support from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, and the Walton Family Foundation over the years. Popular real estate companies rely on GreatSchools data to help homebuyers learn about school districts.

With a mission focus, GreatSchools does not exist to make a profit. Rather, the organization equips families, community leaders, and policy-makers with resources to guide their children towards promising futures. Along with its ranking system and database, GreatSchools publishes an education equality index, k-12 grade-by-grade newsletters, tips, interactive tools, and articles.

“...Our 35-person teams wants to make a big impact with the resources that we have. Direct customer feedback loops ensure that we are making the most out of our grants..”

— Ji Kim

## ‘Fast Feedback’ Makes GreatSchools as Robust as a Commercial Entity

As an organization, GreatSchools is set to grow. With a core focus on research, the nonprofit serves parents, community organizers, politicians, school districts, and—of course, students. GreatSchools has done the legwork in conducting field research on schools around the United States. Qualaroo helps the product team expand its insight on educational needs, and parent attitudes.

“Nonprofits often feel that they do not have resources to learn about the communities that they are trying to serve,” says Kim. “On-site visits aren’t always feasible. User testing is also expensive, as are technical solutions for personalization.”

The GreatSchools website attracts a diverse audience from all over the country, with ranging income levels, and goals for visiting the website. Kim and his team use these touchpoints as opportunities to better study visitor behavior.

“We supplement a lot of our research with feedback generation tools like Qualaroo,” says Kim. “It gives us a heartbeat of our parents and allows us to study educational patterns with respect to race, gender, ethnic groups, income levels, and other demographic criteria.”

The data that GreatSchools is unique in the sense that its coverage is vast. It is a central source for school districts, community members, government entities, educational nonprofits, and other information-seekers to learn about American schools.

“We’ve been using Qualaroo to calculate Net Promoter Scores (NPS) on every webpage to make sure that we are meeting the needs of communities. We’ve been collecting feedback for less than a year and have collected 20,000 responses. This information helps our organization share valuable insight with the foundations that give us funding.”

— Ji Kim



## Qualitative Research Transforms Data Points into Insights

Qualaroo is part of a portfolio of other tools that GreatSchools uses, including UserTesting and Google Analytics.

“Every website visitor comes to GreatSchools for a different reason,” says Kim. “We put Qualaroo on every webpage and site feature to understand what parents and community members care about.”

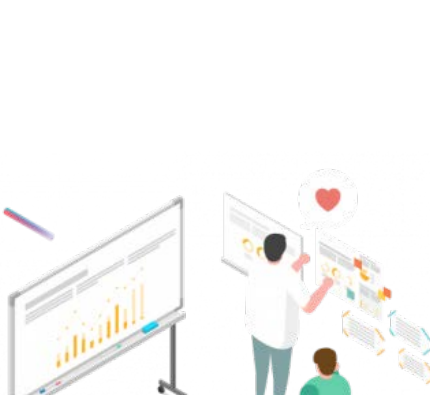
Qualaroo helps us answer questions like the following:

- ✔ What are your goals?
- ✔ Why are you on this particular page?
- ✔ Why are you looking at this particular section?
- ✔ Why is this information important to you?
- ✔ What don't you like about this content?
- ✔ Are you feeling confused, and if so, why?

“We have to know what’s important for parents,” says Kim. “It helps us design a website that suits the needs of everybody. We also look at open-ended responses to gather contextual details such as why someone would or wouldn’t recommend a feature.”

Qualaroo helps identify website bugs, learn about why people visit GreatSchools, expand upon the organization’s field research capabilities, recruit parents who are willing to share in-depth feedback, and make sure that all features are useful.

“We’ll build an experiment—a minimal viable type feature or experience—that’s useful but not quite perfect,” says Kim. “That feature can have many meanings to parents and community members. We get feedback as quickly as possible using Qualaroo. When we start seeing a trend, we can decide whether it’s worth conducting a user test.”



“...Qualaroo reaches about 15,000 Great School visitors each day. We have deployed more than 140 insights studies over the last 5 years, when we began using Qualaroo”

— Ji Kim