



A Moonshot for Kids — Who's Who?

Judges



Kumar Garg

Senior Director for Technology & Society at Schmidt Futures

At Schmidt Futures, Kumar's portfolio includes four core areas of work: promoting the positive digital transformation of society by investing in data collaboratives that address concrete societal problems; expanding the number of people that are involved in discovery and innovation; investing in early stage risk-capital in nascent university research, high-potential people, and young organizations; and advancing public policy that sustains and leverages science and technology. Past positions include nearly eight years in government, where he helped shape science and technology policy for the Obama Administration and lead the Educate to Innovate campaign. Prior to government, Garg worked as an education lawyer and advocate. He received his bachelor's degree from Dartmouth College and the law degree from Yale Law School.



Lizzette Gonzalez Reynolds

Vice President of Policy for the Foundation for Excellence in Education (ExcellinEd)

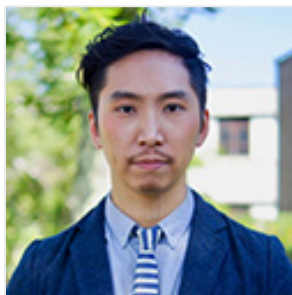
Lizzette Gonzalez Reynolds is vice president of policy for the Foundation for Excellence in Education (ExcellinEd) where she guides a team of policy experts in the areas of Quality, Opportunity and Innovation to effectively provide customized support for state policymakers, reformers, educators, parents and communities to cultivate policy conditions that advance student-centered education systems. Prior to joining ExcellinEd, Ms. Reynolds served as chief deputy commissioner for the Texas Education Agency (TEA) Under President George W. Bush's Administration, Ms. Reynolds served as special assistant in the Office of Legislative and Congressional Affairs under Secretary Rod Paige and as the Region VI representative for Secretary Margaret Spellings. Lizzette currently sits on the national boards of KnowledgeWorks, Generation Citizen and UTeach, the Austin and Florida advisory boards of IDEA Public Schools, and the school board of the Central Texas Goodwill Excel Center. Ms. Reynolds is also a Pahara-Aspen Fellow. She earned her bachelor's degree in political science from Southwestern University where she sits on its Board of Visitors.



Sara Allan

Strategy Leadership for K–12 Education at the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation

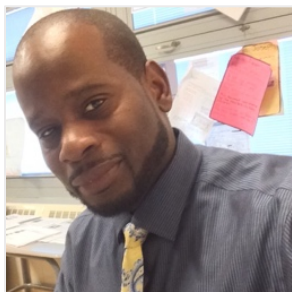
Sara Allan is Deputy Director of K–12 Education at the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation where she leads the development and implementation of program strategies targeted at improving the college and career readiness of U.S. students. Her team focuses on catalyzing innovative models in education that have the potential to dramatically accelerate student learning and expanding access to high impact educational experiences for traditionally underserved students. Previously, Sara was a district level leader at Portland Public Schools where she led a wide range of system change initiatives focused on supporting schools to improve. Prior to working in education, Sara was a strategy consultant with the Boston Consulting Group, working with private and public sector clients on issues of strategy, organizational development and growth in North and South America. She lives in Seattle with her husband and three children.



Takeru Nagayoshi

AP English teacher at New Bedford High School, MA

A sixth year educator, Takeru teaches AP English at New Bedford High School, an urban low-income public school in southern MA, and received the 2020 Massachusetts Teacher of the Year. With over 92% of his students passing their AP exams, he helped his district lead the state in the number of AP Certificates awarded (2018). A son of Japanese immigrants and LGBT teacher of color, Takeru believes in leveraging his unique perspectives to fight for education equity. He has written op-eds on education issues, coaches developing teachers, and lends his voice to several panels, committees, and fellowships throughout the year to advocate on policies impacting students and teachers. This year, he helped launch an educator leadership program, SNEALI, which develops local capacity and organizing skills for teachers in the Southern New England area (2019). Takeru has lived in Japan for 5 years and currently lives in Providence, RI. He earned his BA in International Relations from Brown University and an M.Ed in Curriculum and Teaching from Boston University.



Michael Simmon

8th Grade U.S. History Teacher at In-Tech Academy, Bronx, NYC

Michael Simmon is an NYC 8th Grade U.S. History Teacher at MS/HS 368 IN-Tech Academy, Bronx, New York, and is entering his sixth year of teaching. He also coaches the middle school boys basketball team, and high school girls varsity basketball team. Simmons is married with two sons, where one attends The Ohio State University, and the other is a Junior in high school. In his freetime, Simmons also deejays his school's functions such, as the annual back to school block party, to raise money for events through the school year, which includes such events as the 8th grade prom. Simmons teaches U.S. History Regents prep for the Academy's 8th grade students and High School students as well. Simmon earned his BA in history, with a minor in middle school education, and an M.Ed in special education from Lehman College, CUNY.

FINALISTS



Anna Utgoff

Bibliomatic, Founder

Anna Utgoff is a product leader who has been working at the intersection of education and technology for over a decade. She has led product teams at five-person startups and FTSE 100 companies. Anna is the founder of Bibliomatic, a company making literacy games that use speech recognition to give children the feedback they need to become fluent readers.

Anna's Moonshot Idea – Reduce by half the number of 4th graders reading below the Basic level: Computerized games with speech-recognition technology to identify mistakes students make while reading out loud and provide personalized feedback to improve reading skills.



Ginger Young

Book Harvest, Founder & Executive Director

Ginger Young believes that innovation is vital to solving our society's most intractable challenges. In 2011, frustrated by the disconnect between what we know (books in the home are an essential part of a healthy childhood; parents are the key to kids' success) and what we are doing with that knowledge (not enough), she founded Book Harvest (www.bookharvestnc.org). In eight years, children and families in central North Carolina have harvested more than one million donated books to take home and keep for their very own, building home libraries. Her dream: that every child grow up in a home that is brimming with books and go to sleep each night enjoying a bedtime story with a parent. In her role as Executive Director of Book Harvest, Ginger is involved with the Campaign for Grade-Level Reading and its Supporting Parent Success Initiative. She serves on the National Advisory Board of the international social enterprise First Book. She is a member of the Board of Directors of The Hill Learning Center, an organization committed to transforming students with learning differences into confident, independent learners. Ginger graduated from Harvard College in 1984 and received her MPA from Harvard's Kennedy School of Government in 1990. She is the mom of three avid readers.

Ginger's Moonshot Idea – Reduce by half the number of 4th graders reading below the Basic level: Home visits three times a year for five full years to families of Medicaid-eligible children, starting at birth and providing books, language-rich curriculum, and parent-focused literacy coaching to lay the foundation for kindergarten readiness.



Jayda Batchelder

Founding Executive Director of Education Opens Doors

Jayda Batchelder serves as the Founding Executive Director of Education Opens Doors, a Texas-based non-profit organization that equips students, starting in middle school, with the college and career knowledge they need to determine and pursue an informed future. To date, their innovative program has equipped over 45,000 students with measurable impact and is continuing to scale across Texas and the US. Prior to this, Jayda was an award-winning science teacher at a high-needs middle school in Dallas, where she was inspired to create Education Opens Doors. Jayda is currently a part of the 2019-2020 Stagen Integral Leadership Program and recently graduated from the Leadership Dallas Class of 2019. In 2018, she was honored to be a Marshall Memorial Fellow through the German Marshall Fund. She was also selected as a Parkland Community First Award Winner, a 2018 Teach for All Global Social Innovation Fellow, and joined the Board of Directors for the Dallas Zoological Society. In 2016, Jayda was selected as a Draper Richards Kaplan Foundation Entrepreneur and in 2015 Jayda was named a "40 Under 40" honoree by the Dallas Business Journal. She holds a bachelor's degree in Public Health and Psychology from Tulane University.

Jayda's Moonshot Idea – Universal college or career counseling for all students before ninth grade: A college and career knowledge curriculum embedded directly into classrooms that could increase average time on college guidance from thirty-eight minutes over four years to 900 minutes in just one year.



Kareem Farah

The Modern Classrooms Project, Founder & Executive Director

Kareem Farah earned a B.A. in Finance from Washington University in St. Louis and M.A. in Secondary Education from Johns Hopkins University. Since joining Teach for America in 2013, he has spent the past 6 years teaching in schools that support highly diverse student populations in low-income communities in Hawaii and DC. Kareem was awarded the 2018 DC Public Schools Award for Classroom Innovation for his blended, self-paced, mastery-based approach to teaching and learning. Shortly after, he founded The Modern Classrooms Project, a nonprofit that leads a yearly fellowship that trains teachers on his innovative instructional model. He currently serves as the full-time executive director of The Modern Classrooms Project.

Kareem's Moonshot Idea – Double the amount of high-quality feedback middle school students receive: A teacher fellowship that empowers and supports educators as they reinvent their classroom around teacher-designed, blended, self-paced, mastery-based principles, allowing them to provide more feedback to every student every day.



Anna Steinbrecher & Lavanya Mohan

Harvard Graduate School of Education

Anna Vallee is the creator of "Campus Connector." Throughout her career, she's focused on how evidence and technology can improve student experiences. As a Manager of Research and Data Analytics at an ed. tech startup, she analyzed user behavior data in order to improve test preparation software. While at Harvard Business School Online, she led content development for the first Harvard online course for K–12 principals. In her current position, she supports the research agendas of three renowned MIT professors who use econometrics and market design theory to study the most pressing challenges in K–12 education. She received her bachelor's degree from DePaul University and her master's degree from the Harvard University Graduate School of Education.



Lavanya Mohan is a community educator focused on family engagement and media integration. Ms. Mohan works closely with national partners and community-based organizations to reach and support marginalized families and communities. Ms. Mohan has held policy, research and training roles with the Aspen Institute, Center for Law and Social Policy and the Henry Street Settlement Workforce Development Center. She holds an Ed.M. in education policy and management from the Harvard Graduate School of Education and a BBA from the University of Michigan. (Lavanya will be presenting at the event.)

Anna and Lavanya's Moonshot Idea – Universal college or career counseling for all students before ninth grade: A college admissions dating app that matches high school students with colleges based on compatibility (e.g., geography, GPA, SAT scores, college size, college type, etc.) and calculates their chances of admission.



Lindsey Tروف

Immersed Games, Founder & CEO

Lindsey Tروف, M.Ed., is the Founder & CEO of Immersed Games. Previously, she was a doctoral candidate at the University of Florida in School Psychology, with a specialization in Program Evaluation and a Minor in Research & Evaluation Methodology, and expertise in data based decision making. She was working on a dissertation on game-based learning when she saw gaps in the available products and decided to found Immersed Games. Since then, she's led the company from founding to development of two titles, growth of their game-based learning curriculum, through the Intel Education Accelerator, and obtained grants for their work from the National Science Foundation and Department of Education.

Lindsey's Moonshot Idea – Double the number of young women majoring in STEM fields: Video games that engage students in solving real-world problems such as testing a broken ecosystem and proposing engineering solutions to fix it or using genetics to solve a simulated hunger crisis.



Michelle Brown

CommonLit, Founder & CEO

Michelle is the founder and CEO of CommonLit, an award-winning nonprofit education technology organization dedicated to improving adolescent literacy education for low-income students. Under Michelle’s leadership, CommonLit has become a robust free online reading program that has been accessed by over 12 million registered teachers and students in over 65% of American public schools. Michelle holds a B.A. in English Literature and Spanish from Butler University, and a master’s degree in Education Policy and Management from the Harvard Graduate School of Education. She is an experienced classroom teacher who has taught in urban and rural environments, and at the university level as an adjunct professor of Spanish. Michelle speaks frequently about innovation in education, and has spoken at TEDx, Accelerate Good Global, MCON, ISTE, and the Microsoft Innovation Center. She was a finalist for the Forbes 30 Under 30 Change the World Competition and the 2019 winner of the Ernst & Young Entrepreneur of the Year Award for the mid-Atlantic region. In 2016, CommonLit was featured in TechCrunch for winning a \$3.9 million grant from the Department of Education for Innovative Approaches to Literacy. In her spare time, Michelle coaches early stage entrepreneurs and blogs for Women@Forbes.

Michelle’s Moonshot Idea – Double the number of eighth-graders who can write a persuasive essay: A free and open access online reading curriculum that helps teachers foster adolescent literacy not only in English classes but also social studies, humanities, and STEM classes.



Ogden Morse

FineTune, Founder & Chief Academic Officer

Ogden Morse is the Founder and Chief Academic Officer of FineTune. A graduate of Dartmouth College (B.A., English) and former English teacher at Falmouth (Maine) High School, he founded the company to develop products that combine sound pedagogy, rich content, and digital technology to support instruction and learning in close reading and writing in grades 6-12. In 2014, this work attracted the attention of The College Board, with whom FineTune subsequently partnered to adapt its digital platform for professional learning and student assessment to Advanced Placement® courses. Today, this platform serves more than three million students and 175,000 teachers across 36 AP courses.

Ogden’s Moonshot Idea – Double the number of effective eighth-grade writers: An artificial intelligence application that guides students through the essay writing process with as much accuracy and personalization as a one on one interaction with their teacher.



Ryan Torbey

Founder, National Robot Library

Ryan Torbey is a computer science education advocate and former K–8 technology teacher. He is currently pursuing his PhD in STEM Education at the University of Texas. His work is focused on increasing computer science access opportunities for all K–12 students. He is a co-founder of CS4TX, serves as a Computer Science Teachers Association chapter president, and is the Texas state lead for the Expanding Computing Education Pathways (ECEP) Alliance.

Ryan’s Moonshot Idea – Double the number of young women majoring in STEM fields: A National Robot Library that would loan physical computing devices to teachers at no cost and provide teachers with curricula and training focused on engaging female students.



Tom Neumark

Frederick Classical Charter School, Founder

Tom Neumark has been involved with education reform for nearly twenty years. His articles have been published by Education Week, the Maryland Public Policy Institute, and the Frederick News Post where he has a regular column that focuses on education. Mr. Neumark is the founding President of the Frederick Classical Charter School. He coached a First Lego League robotics team for four years, which qualified for state competition. He has a bachelor's degree in computer science from West Virginia Wesleyan and master's degree in computer science from Johns Hopkins University, and works as a software engineer in the technology industry.

Tom’s Moonshot Idea – Reduce by half the number of 4th graders reading below the Basic level: The design and evaluation of reading curriculum and aligned professional development that packages scientifically based methods in an actionable format for teachers.