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FETC 2018 Expands Learning Opportunities and Solution Providers

38th annual event attracted an audience of more than 10,000 educators and ed tech enthusiasts, who enjoyed high-profile keynotes and brand new learning opportunities

PALM BEACH GARDENS, Fla. — The 38th National [Future of Education Technology Conference \(FETC\)](#) was a successful, high-energy event bringing together an ed tech community of more than 10,000 to the Orange County Convention Center in Orlando, Fla. This year’s conference attendance, which increased significantly from the 2017 event, was comprised of educators, industry leaders, analysts, and other ed tech enthusiasts who participated in more than 600 learning opportunities, including three well-received keynote sessions, and explored an Expo Hall filled with more than 400 exhibiting companies.

“The 38th National Future of Education Technology Conference was one of our best yet, with a palpable energy filling the entire convention center and a sense of excitement from attendees, presenters, and exhibitors that was impossible to miss,” said Jennifer Womble, FETC Program Chair. “After an event like that, it’s hard to accept that we’ll have to wait a year until FETC 2019, but we are so remarkably encouraged by this year’s success and we’re already hard at work planning an even bigger, better conference for January 2019.”

Keynote Presentations

World-renowned keynoter Sir Ken Robinson opened things up on Wednesday afternoon by making a compelling case that schools must get much more creative to revolutionize education and meet the needs of students. Speaking to a packed general session hall, Robinson — presenter of the record-breaking TED Talk, [“Do Schools Kill Creativity?”](#) — argued that the current system of standardized testing stifles innovation and wastes more talent than it saves. He explained that there are extraordinary challenges to living and working in the 21st century and students can’t be prepared to succeed in this environment by going through the old “industrial” model of schooling. Schools must take a more organic approach that allows creativity to flourish.

On Thursday, the popular TechShare LIVE! session returned to FETC, presented by leading ed tech trainers Adam Bellow, Hall Davidson, Leslie Fisher, and Kathy Schrock. This presentation brought some of the most cutting-edge software and devices in education technology to the Keynote Stage, giving conference attendees the first look at these new tools through the eyes of education technology leaders. By seeing the technologies in action, attendees gained an understanding of how they can support learners in creating, coding, designing, programming, problem solving, and much more.

The closing keynote was presented by Dr. Ayanna Howard, co-founder and CTO of Zyrobotics. In her presentation, “The Value of Inclusive STEM Education: Robots and Their Role in Our Future,” Howard looked at how schools can make robots accessible for the next generation of diverse students. She discussed the elements of intelligence, trust, and emotional empathy robots are emulating, drawing on lessons learned from building robots to assist children with special needs, and provided attendees with advice on preparing all students to embrace the inevitable future.

2018 FETC PitchFest

11 of the best-of-the-best startups nominated by industry accelerators competed in the 2018 FETC PitchFest, an event where a panel of expert judges evaluated the hottest tools and resources coming to the ed tech market. After two days of competition, [Weird Enough Productions](#), a Georgia-based company combining education on media literacy with original content to provide a full-service solution to media misrepresentation, was named the winner. Weird Enough Productions was represented in the PitchFest by CEO Tony Weaver, Jr., a 2018 *Forbes 30 Under 30* awardee. As a reward, the company was extended a private meeting to present their product to the highest district-level academic and technology leaders plus a complimentary booth space for FETC 2019.

STEM Excellence Awards

The three recipients of the 2018 FETC STEM Excellence Awards were announced on the Keynote Stage on Friday, January 26, ahead of the STEM keynote presented by Dr. Ayanna Howard. From a group of nine total finalists — three apiece across the elementary, middle and high school levels — one winner was selected as the best-of-the-best at each level. A panel of seven high-ranking education professionals served as judges for the awards and selected the winners based on criteria including interdisciplinary curriculum, collaboration, design, problem solving and the STEM experiences offered to their students. The winners are:

- **Elementary School Division:** Liberty Elementary School, Loudoun County Public Schools, South Riding, Va.
- **Middle School Division:** Washington Middle School, El Dorado Public Schools, El Dorado, Ark.
- **High School Division:** All Saints Academy, Independent Preparatory School, Winter Haven, Fla.

Throughout the conference, each of these schools, along with their fellow finalists, had the opportunity to showcase their teaching strategies in the FETC Expo Hall's STEM Theater so that conference attendees could learn innovative ways to build their own successful STEM programs. The presentations gave finalist schools the opportunity to highlight their effective practices and provided educators the chance to learn about lesson ideas, program successes, and implementation strategies.

"We are proud of each of the 2018 FETC STEM Excellence Awards finalists, and especially want to extend our enthusiastic congratulations to the three award winners," said Womble. "Each of these schools has demonstrated an admirable dedication to first-class STEM instruction and has set an example that schools nationwide — and beyond — can follow."

Blueprint for Technology in Education

The first-ever Blueprint for Technology in Education was convened on Tuesday, January 23, and featured a series of six panel sessions with educators and leaders from across the globe. This initiative is an effort to bring numerous international perspectives together to form the blueprint for implementing technology in schools according to best practices, to find solutions for providing equitable access, and develop a roadmap for leading all students toward a successful future. These sessions were moderated by Dr. Matt Harris, the Deputy Head of School for Learning Technology at the British School in Jakarta, Indonesia. The panelists included educators and experts from China, the United Arab Emirates, Kuwait, Switzerland, The Netherlands, and Canada, along with leaders from the education industry in the United States. The panelists engaged with conference attendees to work through improved approaches to data use, enhancing community engagement, finding IT approaches that control costs, and more, and this

community of global educators will continue to develop the blueprint leading all the way through FETC 2019.

Looking Ahead to FETC 2019

Exhibit space is now available for FETC's 39th annual event, to take place January 27 - 30, 2019, at the Orange County Convention Center in Orlando, Fla. The 2019 Expo Hall will expand in size, enabling even more exhibitors to participate. The 2019 FETC Expo will once again feature the [FETC PitchFest](#) competition and the Startup Pavilion, a designated area to learn about the newest companies emerging in the education technology marketplace. To learn more about exhibiting opportunities and reserve your spot, visit fetc.org/exhibit. Registration for the 2019 Future of Education Technology Conference will open in June 2018. Educators who would like to be notified when registration opens can join the [FETC mailing list](#).

About the Future of Education Technology Conference (FETC)

The Future of Education Technology Conference (FETC) annually attracts thousands of education and technology leaders from around the world. Delivering strategies and best practices for student success and schoolwide advancement, FETC is known as one of the nation's premier education technology events. Recognized for its outstanding program year after year, FETC provides CTOs, CIOs, Innovation Directors, Special Ed/Pupil Services Directors, Early Childhood Directors, Media Specialists, Technologists, Administrators and other Educators, the opportunity to explore the most effective integration of technology across the curriculum — from PK-12 — through premium sessions, intensive workshops, various concurrent sessions, live demonstrations of several hundred hardware and software products, plus much more.

About LRP Conferences

LRP Conferences, LLC, an affiliate of LRP Publications, produces more than a dozen professional conferences and trade shows annually including: Campus Technology Conference, Ergonomics Conference & ErgoExpo, Future of Education Technology Conference (FETC), Recruiting Trends Conference, Talent Acquisition Tech Conference, and Women Leaders in Education Conference.

About LRP Publications

LRP Publications, founded in 1977 by Kenneth Kahn, is a broad-based media company serving business and education professionals. Specializing in the fields of education administration, education law, education technology, federal employment, human resources, workers' compensation and disability, the company publishes hundreds of books, pamphlets, newsletters, videos and online resources on various topics including Title 1 and Special Education. Additionally, LRP publishes two industry-leading magazines: *Human Resources Executive*® and *Risk & Insurance*®, plus delivers top-quality training and professional development with eLearning, conferences and tradeshow including: HR Technology Conference & Exposition®, National Institute on Legal Issues of Educating Individuals with Disabilities®, National Workers' Compensation and Disability Conference® & Expo and dozens more. For a complete list of LRP products, eCourses and conferences, please visit www.lrp.com.

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