



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

SXSW EDU® ANNOUNCES FINALISTS ACROSS ITS COMPETITIONS - LAUNCH, LEARN BY DESIGN, STUDENT STARTUP, AND AMAZON ALEXA CHALLENGE

January 8, 2020, Austin, Texas — SXSW EDU® unveiled the five **Launch** startup competition finalists, the five **Learn by Design** competition finalists, the five **Student Startup** competition finalists and the six **Amazon Alexa Challenge** finalists in the countdown to the 2020 Conference & Festival which begins March 9, 2020. As a complement to the conference program, the festival portion of SXSW EDU celebrates what's next and new in education through experiences designed to support a variety of learning styles. SXSW EDU competitions showcase fresh ideas and solutions, and ultimately connect the broader community to those ideas for impact. Each competition features a lineup of finalists, selected through an arduous application process, as well as emcees, judges, and coaches selected for their experience and expertise. For more information about the competitions, please click [here](#).

Now in its ninth year, [Launch](#) is a competition for early-stage startups to pitch leaders across the business, investment and learning sectors, and gain feedback and knowledge about how to take their company to the next stage of growth. This year's program saw an increase in social emotional learning, workforce skills development, and tracking, signaling key issues in the innovation technology marketplace. Since its inception, many of the startup finalists have gone on to receive millions in funding and impact learning across the country, including Elsa, Clever, Bloomboard, The Whether by Better Weekdays, and last year's winner, Edmit. This year's top five finalists are:

Cognitive ToyBox // Brooklyn, NY

School Day Wellbeing // Helsinki, Finland

Learnabi // New York, NY

Kiri // Provo, UT

Presentr // New York, NY

Kimberly Bryant, Founder and CEO of Black Girls CODE will serve as emcee. The judges for Launch include **Nancy Lue**, Co-Founder and Chief Operating Officer for the Advanced Education Research & Development Program, **Jack McCauley**, Co-Founder of Oculus, **Cherry Thompson**, Regional Director at Teaching Channel, and **Jeff Young**, Senior Editor at EdSurge. The Launch competition is presented by Cognia and the Walton Family Foundation. The winner will be announced at the Competitions Awards Party on Tuesday, March 10.

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“The incredible cutting-edge ideas, innovations, and design work happening in the education sector are featured throughout the competitions as seen in early-stage startups, student-created technologies, innovative learning environments, and the latest in voice activated in-classroom learning” said **Greg Rosenbaum**, Head of SXSW EDU. “The Competitions program is meant to be a platform for innovation to rise to the surface; a place for the community to learn from each other and see what’s next and new in solution-oriented technology built for impact.”

Now in its fourth year, the Learn by Design competition celebrates the collaboration of designers and educators in the pursuit of creating groundbreaking physical learning environments. The top five finalists are:

The Living Lab // San Diego, CA

Museum Lab // Pittsburgh, PA

Canyon View High School // Waddell, AZ

Dreamscapes Immersive Art Experience // Salt Lake City, UT

The Cheryl and Philip Milstein Center for Teaching and Learning // New York, NY

The emcees are **Laura McBain**, K12 Lab Co-Director at Stanford University’s d.School, and **Kwaku Aning**, the Director at the Center for Innovation and Entrepreneurial Thinking at the San Diego Jewish Academy. The judges are **AJ Paron-Wildes**, Director of Architecture and Design at Allsteel, **Kareem Edouard**, Assistant Professor at Drexel University, **Morgan Vien**, Deeper Learning Coach at Envision Learning Partners, and **Bryan C. Lee Jr**, Founder and Design Director at Colloqate Design. The winner will be announced at the Competition Awards Party on Tuesday, March 10.

Student voice and innovation are foundational elements to SXSW EDU. Celebrating its sixth year, the Student Startup competition supports youth entrepreneurs, serving as a platform for high school students to showcase their business ideas. The competition provides students with a remarkable opportunity to share their talents, validate their business ideas, and gain experience. This year’s finalists are:

AmityConnections, Academies of Loudoun // Aldie, VA

Seeing for the Blind, Lexington High School // Lexington, MA

Barronso!, David Crockett High School // Austin, TX

Solis UVC Purification, Lake Forest High School // Lake Forest, IL

MODAP, The Nueva School // San Mateo, CA

The emcee for the event is **Liz Dozier**, the Founder and CEO of Chicago Beyond. The judges include **Cecilia Alicata**, Founder of BrighterGood, **Sanil Chawla**, Executive Director of Hack+, **Sean Duffy**, Vice President of Partnerships at Capital Factory, **Sarah Hernholm**, Founder & President of WIT (Whatever It Takes). The Student Startup competition winner will be announced at the conclusion of the competition on Wednesday, March 11.

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New to this year's Conference & Festival is the Amazon Alexa EdTech Skills Challenge. Open to all U.S. based education technology companies, the competition is designed to find the best application of voice-technology in education. The six previously announced finalists are **Blast Learning**, **Healthy Teen Network**, **NuMoola**, **SayKid**, **StrongMind**, and **VOGO Voice**. The emcee is **Andrew Ko**, Managing Director for Global Education and Workforce, Amazon Web Services. The judges include **Laura McBain**, K12 Lab Co-Director of the Stanford d.school, **Michael B. Horn**, Head of Strategy at The Entangled Group, **Preethi Rajgopal**, a student at the Kelley School of Business/ Co-founder of STEM Innovators, and **Sara Schapiro**, Vice President of Education at PBS. The finalists will showcase their new Amazon Alexa Skill before the panel of judges and a live audience, and the winner will be announced on Thursday, March 12.

For more information on the SXSW EDU Conference & Festival, please visit the [SXSW EDU website](#).

About SXSW EDU

Now in its 10th year, the SXSW EDU® Conference & Festival cultivates and empowers a community of engaged stakeholders to advance teaching and learning. The annual four-day event affords registrants open access to engaging sessions, immersive workshops, interactive learning experiences, film screenings, early-stage startups, business opportunities, and networking. SXSW EDU is a component of the South by Southwest® family of conferences and festivals that has grown from 800 to over 8,000 registrants in the last decade. Join the passionate and innovative community at SXSW EDU, March 9-12, 2020 in Austin, Texas. For more information, please visit [sxswedu.com](#).

Press Credentials

The deadline for press accreditation is Friday, February 7, 2020. To register, please go to [sxswedu.com/press](#).

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