Our annual report for 2022

Transforming education
for a better world
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Opening statements from our Founder and Chairs

“This year marked the halfway point to the original threshold for the UN’s Sustainable Development Goal 4: quality education and lifelong learning for all. We have much more to do if we hope to see significant progress by 2030—and we need to think beyond that, too.”

Dr Charles CHEN Yidan
Dr Charles CHEN Yidan
Our Founder and Chairman of the Board of Directors

From the beginning, we’ve made it our mission to create a better world through education. We champion changemakers, and build a global community of education experts and advocates. Our community is growing in both size and influence, as we welcome new laureates and develop and deepen global partnerships. And this year, together with other philanthropic organizations, we signed a statement at the UN’s Transforming Education Summit re-affirming the commitment to driving change.

We believe it is our responsibility as a prize to leverage our strengths—the ability to bring people together, to identify and recognize outstanding achievements—to power collaborations that are shaping the future of education.

True transformation means lasting change

This year marked the halfway point to the original threshold for the UN’s Sustainable Development Goal 4: quality education and lifelong learning for all. Following the pandemic, this ambition has never been more urgent. We have much more to do if we hope to see significant progress by 2030—and we need to think beyond that, too.

When the judges deliberate over who the next laureates will be, they ask an important question: how sustainable is their work? In 2022, two organizations connected to our laureates celebrated significant anniversaries: 20 years for PhET Interactive Simulations and 50 years for BRAC. Their longevity shows that when great ideas are scaled and shared, they can remodel systems and have tangible impact far into the future. Today, PhET is evolving classroom practice, and spurring critical conversations around the
science of teaching. BRAC’s half-century of expertise in early childhood development has laid the building blocks of learning for millions of children, and influences policy around the world.

That long-term, transformative outlook is at the center of all the laureates’ work. Our 2022 laureates, Dr Linda Darling-Hammond and Professor Yongxin Zhu, are reshaping the way we think about teachers’ professional development. The impact of their work will be seen for decades to come. We’ll see it in the talented teachers who stay in the profession—better supported and more fulfilled—and in the students whose lives are changed by those learning experiences.

We must hear more from the people at the heart of progress

Indeed, the evolving role of teachers has been a huge part of the global education agenda this year. But we need to make sure we’re talking with educators, not simply about them. We dedicated the December Summit to ‘Teaching Matters’, sharing case studies in teachers’ own words. At this and other events, we’ve hosted demonstrations with educators using PhET simulations in the classroom. And we will do more to amplify the voices of the teachers and learners most impacted by changes in education.

In this, we can take inspiration from the laureates. Take CAMFED, where a partnership approach is paramount. They’ve built close relationships with families, to understand the barriers keeping girls out of school. With local communities and elders to reinforce the benefits of educating young women. With regional and national governments to secure resources and transform policy. And of course with the hundreds of thousands of scholars who make up the CAMFED Association—and make sure that progress is always driven by the people most affected by it.

And collaborations of all kinds strengthen our mission

Much of the power of these conversations lies in the diversity of expertise and opinion. We believe the same open and collaborative approach can strengthen the organization. To that end, we’re growing our partnerships team, deepening relationships with core hubs of conversation in the education world. And after adding new judges last year, in 2022 we warmly welcomed three new advisors to the prize family.

Our work is only possible through the passion of our prize community

We are thrilled to be part of such a vibrant team, all working towards a common mission. Together with our laureates and luminaries, the Board, Advisory Committee, Judging Committee, and Secretariat are paving the way to make progress towards our goals. I offer everyone my deepest thanks and put faith in our unwavering commitment to creating a better world through education.
Last December in Hong Kong, it was my great pleasure to attend the Yidan Prize Awards Presentation Ceremony and Summit in person for the first time since the pandemic began. Despite all the ways this global crisis has highlighted and exacerbated barriers to learning, we also see great innovation and progress. The Yidan Prize is now more than ever recognized as one of the most significant accolades in education, and a staunch advocate of fair access to quality education.

As the organization has grown, so has our Advisory Committee

We were honored to welcome Baela Raza Jamil, Ruth Kagia, and Professor Pauline Rose to the committee this year. Though they’ve only been with us for a few months, they’ve long been important voices in the education community and we’re delighted by how quickly they’ve become an integral part of our team. They bring with them tremendous intellectual capacity and experience, as well as welcome diversity of gender and geography. I thank them and all my fellow advisors for another year of full and frank conversations that help us guide the Yidan Prize Foundation in its mission.

Because whether it’s among advisors, board members, laureates and luminaries, or partners, we’ve always known there is great strength in canvassing a broad range of opinions and expertise. And what makes it clear we’re on the right track is that no matter how different our perspectives, we’re always able to find consensus where it matters most. Undoubtedly because we’re all deeply committed to Dr Charles CHEN Yidan’s vision of building a better world through education.
There’s still plenty of work to be done, and the Yidan Prize has a clear part to play

With seven years to go, we’re not nearly as close as we could be to realizing the ambitions of SDG 4 in 2030. And the world doesn’t have the luxury of missing those milestones. If we’re going to forge ahead, we need better than ‘business as usual’. We need innovation and collaboration. As a philanthropic organization, the foundation has the agility to keep promoting creativity and strengthening its platform for international cooperation.

All indications are that we’re heading in the right direction

As the Advisory Committee, it’s our mandate to monitor progress and give strategic direction to the organization. That means paying special attention to how we can improve the impact of our work, particularly in developing countries. It’s heartening to see greater diversity in nominations, and the encouraging results of our laureates’ projects. Our focus for 2023 and beyond is to keep building on these solid foundations, and doing all we can to accelerate progress on the most critical issues in education.
I’d like to extend my warmest thanks to our dedicated judges, who came together virtually to carefully review bright ideas and ambitious plans. They committed much time and energy making these distance discussions vibrant and in-depth. Still, I hope that next year we can return to meeting face to face. As fortunate as we are to have global connectivity at our fingertips, nothing quite replaces the collaborative spirit of being together in person.

We also welcomed our sixth set of laureates to our prize community

It’s a moment that lends itself to reflection. As we review project reports from all our laureates and see the lasting impact of their work, we’re very proud that the Yidan Prize has been a part of their journey and helped fuel their efforts. And we know that as our community grows, we are making real progress in creating a world with quality education for all.

Global challenges have highlighted the strengths of our prize

Pandemic lockdowns in particular meant that some laureates have had to flex their plans—or even shift course. We have always valued the flexibility of our prize, which means that we don’t have to stick to a narrow funding focus. As long as our laureates can show how their projects meet our criteria for scalable, long-term transformation, we can keep supporting them as priorities shift.
Our nominations are increasingly diverse—and we’ll strive to make them even more so

We’re now getting research nominations from more countries than ever. We’re also seeing a higher proportion of development nominations from Africa and Latin America. It’s very important to us that we see a wide-ranging picture of the impressive work that’s happening in every corner of the world.

Although we ask for nominations in English, we make every effort to make sure everyone who wants to make a nomination, can. We encourage nominees to film their two-minute video in their own language (with English subtitles or a transcript). And we make our nomination guide available in English, French, Spanish, Portuguese, and Simplified Chinese.

We also know that all our laureates depend on many talented and hard-working colleagues and partners to do their powerful work. That’s why our prizes are also open to teams of up to three, and in 2020 we awarded our first team prize. We look forward to hearing from more collaborative partners, and hopefully adding more teams to our laureate family in the future.
About the Yidan Prize Foundation

How we’re building a better world through education and how we’re achieving our mission
Our work and mission

We’re a global foundation committed to creating a better world through education

We believe that when we recognize the most innovative minds in educational research and practice and build a global learning community around them, we accelerate adoption of the best ideas and practices. This will improve the quality of education around the world, and make it easier to access.

Our two prizes work in harmony, spanning theory and practice

Education Research
The theory of learning—science, psychology, statistics—that can help educators gain a more methodical understanding of their approaches.

Education Development
The practice of learning—new methods, ways to make education more widespread—so we can champion techniques that work.

Each year, we award our laureates a gold medal, a cash prize of HK$15 million and a project fund of HK$15 million (shared equally for teams) to help them scale up their work.

Crucially, we also create connections: from our laureates to our Yidan Council of Luminaries to the wider pool of people who attend our events. We’re building a community—one with the power to change the way the world learns.
The artistry of our logo and medals reflects our work

Designed by ink-brush artist Dr Kan Tai-Keung, our logo echoes our name, and centers on two Chinese characters. The first is yi (一), the Mandarin character for 'one', suggesting the unity of our global community. Then dan (丹), finished with the red bloom of a lotus flower to represent a loyal heart. Together, these strokes create a door: a door to a better world, opened by education.

In both medals, you’ll again see '一': a reminder for our laureates that our community is with them in spirit. And both depict a pine tree growing from a mountain rock; even from the toughest foundations, the evergreen branches of education can spread.

Watch Dr Kan explain the inspiration behind the designs
Our strategy
Our strategy rests on five pillars that advance our mission

The quality of our nominations is paramount.

We need a crystal clear and effective selection process.

We play an important role in amplifying projects.

We form partnerships around clear objectives and collaboration goals.

We are a hub and channel for knowledge sharing.
To find the most powerful ideas in education, we need to develop a network of the most informed and engaged people in education, who can steer us to those projects.

We’re building on this through our partnerships and events, regular communications, and by refining our nominations process.

Our independent Judging Committee represents a broad range of perspectives and expertise to ensure our process is rigorous and inclusive.

We publish our judging criteria and are as flexible as possible with our funding. In recent years, we've also asked nominees to make a short video so we can hear directly from changemakers in their own words.

We share and promote the work of our laureates and luminaries at every opportunity.

They are key speakers at our events and we share their work in many of our articles, blog posts, short films, and podcasts. We also introduce them to partners and fellow philanthropic organizations to encourage collaboration—for example, starting a conversation between Professor Carl Wieman’s PhET Interactive Simulations and the Mastercard Foundation team, who have gone on to fund some of PhET's work.

Partnerships are an essential part of promoting our mission and our community's work, and give us an opportunity to explore different ways of working and bring attention to important and topical conversations.

Ideas can only change the world if others can grasp them, adapt them, and build on them.

We take an active part in the global education conversation to make sure everyone has access to information that can improve education for all.
Spotlight: education changemakers

We’re proud to work with people changing systems—and lives. Here we take a closer look at how some of our laureates made strides in 2022, and celebrate the impact and legacy of their work. We also shine a spotlight on voices at the heart of education around the world.
Professor Usha Goswami: revealing the rhythms of human communication

How do we first learn language? It’s a question that’s fascinated experts in linguistics for decades, and now neuroscience is revealing an answer. Through her research, Professor Usha Goswami, our 2019 Education Research laureate, is uncovering the roots of language acquisition—and making it possible to spot developmental language disorders earlier so we can develop effective therapies.

A sing-song nursery rhyme. Clapping along while we sing. Bouncing a baby on our knee. Our interactions with very young children naturally come back to rhythm. It’s even in the way we baby talk: ma-ma, da-da, ba-by. Usha’s work is showing that this rhythm is at the heart of learning language. And that can unlock support for children who can’t hear the rhythms as well—and may experience educational setbacks and exclusion as a result.

Usha and her team are turning traditional theories about language acquisition on their heads

For years, the prevailing idea was that we pick up language through phoneme patterns: that is, the smallest units of sound in words. But people who were never taught to read don’t hear in phonemes—and reading is much, much newer to humans than speaking is. Usha’s research is finding that we start with rhythm, then syllable patterns, then rhyming patterns. And then, only if we’re taught to read, do we start matching phonemes to those syllables.

It’s important to know because human speech is the single most complex sound our brains have to analyze—but language is absolutely fundamental to how we communicate, learn, and thrive. Over years of studying brain patterns of children with dyslexia, Usha’s research indicates that they don’t hear rhythm as well as typically developing children. And she’s now focusing on children with developmental language disorders (DLD), to understand how their language learning might differ from both dyslexic and typically developing children.

The earlier we know about gaps in language learning, the sooner we can act to close them

All infants and young children benefit from hearing lots of rhythm and rhyme: like being told stories with repetitive rhythms, singing, and clapping. For people with dyslexia or DLD, these can also form the basis of therapeutic intervention that helps the brain to make those all-important connections between rhythm and syllables.
In one potential therapy, Usha’s team monitor adult brain patterns while they listen to a story and watch a spaceship on a screen. When their brain start optimizing the rhythm, the spaceship takes off—a way to practice, reinforce, and speed up an instinctive response.

**The pandemic slowed down progress—but opened other avenues, too**

One of the advantages of our flexible approach to funding is that our laureates have scope to extend or adapt their plans. With school lockdowns, it became much more difficult to recruit families for studies—and some tasks which needed a facilitator in the room became impossible. We extended the project beyond the original three years, but Usha’s team also adapted some of the research tasks so they could be carried out over video calls. That’s given them the basis for a bank of resources for therapists and teachers that they’re developing to publish online in the near future.

**Collaboration accelerates progress**

For Usha, one of the big advantages of working with philanthropic funds is being able to attach projects together—and widen the scope of research. She has a number of PhD students working alongside her such as a Gates scholar with their own funding, exploring therapies in primary schools.

That means she’s conscious of keeping team spirit alive—especially as there are researchers doing brain imaging that are always based in the lab. Regular team meetings help everyone bond, and stay aware of how their piece of the puzzle fits into the bigger picture.

“**Children with DLD need to know it’s not them—they’re trying incredibly hard**”

Many children with dyslexia or DLD fly under the radar at school during the early years when intervention would be especially valuable. When a child also has a high IQ, teachers might not notice that they’re struggling with language tasks—or think it’s a lack of focus or something they can control. Early diagnosis and awareness can help teachers and schools support children and change a child’s view of themselves.

And it’s not always easy to observe what’s happening. As Usha points out, some children don’t speak a word until they’re two years old. Half of them won’t have any language processing issues at all—so we need a robust, scientific way to identify and support the other half.
50 years of BRAC: half a century of hope over fate

The legacy of Sir Fazle Hasan Abed KCMG, BRAC’s founder and our 2019 Education Development laureate, is one of transformation. The organization he built is now the world’s largest NGO. Over the years, it’s reached 100 million people in 11 countries, and helped set Bangladesh on the path to becoming an upper-middle income country by 2031.

“The inequalities that create divisions among rich and poor, powerful and powerless, are made by humans. So, change is also possible through human acts of compassion, courage, and conviction. I have spent my life watching optimism triumph over despair when the light of self-belief is sparked in people.”

Sir Fazle Hasan Abed

In the last three years, we’ve supported BRAC to deliver quality early education across three countries

BRAC’s project plans ended up being an exemplar of the flexibility of philanthropic funding—given that they were agreed just as the events of 2020 unfolded. As people around the world retreated to their homes, BRAC sprang into action to develop the Pashe Achhi model. And since we don’t tie funds strictly to specific projects, they were able to direct resources where they were most needed.

Harnessing the power of a phone call to lay the foundations of lifelong learning

Pashe Achhi—Bengali for ‘beside you’—centered on the one piece of technology almost everyone in Bangladesh has at their disposal: the cellphone. At the heart of this program are regular, 20-minute calls to mothers of children aged 0-5 in Chakoria Upazila, an area of Cox’s Bazar in the region of Chittagong. These one-to-one connections are a lifeline for maternal wellbeing and early years development—offering parents learning experience and socio-emotional support. With prize funds, five paracounsellors and 25 facilitators were added to the team, and the project expanded to include a wellbeing intervention for fathers.
Empowering women as agents of change

BRAC has used the majority of its prize funds to develop its Play Lab models in Bangladesh, Uganda, and Tanzania.

In Bangladesh, the project helps local people—generally women—launch daycare businesses, and gives training in early childhood development and delivering a play-based curriculum. They’re building livelihoods, and a sustainable income. And as pandemic restrictions lift, young mothers are flooding back into garment factories—so reliable local daycare offers a lifeline to women working hard to support their families.

BRAC’s also using the power of partnerships to drive progress across communities. In Uganda, local teams are working with 25 government primary schools and 10 humanitarian Play Labs in refugee settlements—helping them with practical support and inclusive approaches to play-based learning.

In Tanzania, the team is working with the government supporting efforts to offer quality early learning. Play Labs are set up in government schools, helping children aged 3–6 get ready for school. Based on principles of joyful exploration, children build up a foundational knowledge of math and literacy, as well as all-important social and emotional skills.
Highlights from BRAC’s 50 years of impact

The organization’s track record of transforming lives of course extends far beyond their work with us. This list of achievements includes:

- graduating over 14 million children in Bangladesh from school through a low-cost, scalable education model prioritizing ‘drop-outs’ as well as girls, disabled children, and those living in rural regions

- founding BRAC University in 2001—today one of the top private universities in Bangladesh

- establishing the BRAC Institute of Educational Development.

Education is of course closely connected to wellbeing, and the team has also spearheaded progress in areas like financial services, social enterprise, and healthcare. For instance, BRAC equipped 15 million clients with access to financial services through BRAC Microfinance, BRAC Bank. And the proportion of children in Bangladesh vaccinated against deadly tuberculosis has gone from 4% to 91% with the support of BRAC’s community mobilization initiatives.
More than anything, Sir Fazle understood that poverty is a circumstance, not an identity. Now his philosophies of prioritizing women and developing human-centered, community-led solutions are captured in a new biography by Scott MacMillan. We distributed copies of the book at our Awards Presentation Ceremony in December, and hope that it continues to spread the story—and ideas—of an extraordinary man to every part of the world.
As it celebrates a major milestone, we’re shining a spotlight on the work of University of Colorado Boulder’s PhET Interactive Simulations—the brainchild of our 2020 Education Research laureate, Professor Carl Wieman.

In Tanga, Tanzania, there’s a STEM park sitting in the middle of a cluster of schools in one of the city’s poorer neighborhoods. Children throng the interactive displays, shepherded by young volunteers. On the screens are PhET simulations, interactive virtual spaces that help students explore math and science through a game-like environment. And standing by the captivated young people are teachers soaking up the excitement and ideas they’ll take back to their own classrooms.

There’s a beautiful circularity to it: PhET simulations work because they’re built on the science of teaching, and they support classroom practitioners to teach science. And now those same teachers are helping to expand the platform’s reach and impact. With support from our prize, Carl and his team are nurturing a generation of local changemakers through the PhET Fellowship Program.

PhET Fellows are driving lasting change through local communities

Recruited from across Africa and Latin America, PhET’s 32 Fellows are secondary and tertiary teacher leaders. Together, they’re building robust teacher communities, with the goal of reaching at least 1,600 teachers across two continents—who in turn will make quality STEM education available to thousands of young people.

More than that, they’re reshaping systems—and building a better world. When research-based teaching and learning approaches are embedded in schools, that gives rise to future generations of STEM professionals who’ll go on to change our shared future.

Meet Martha and Tuwaya

Martha Mwiinga, from Zambia, and Tuwaya Manyozo, from South Africa, joined us at the 2022 Triennale of the Association for the Development of Education in Africa (ADEA). It’s essential we hear directly from teachers in
discussions that impact them; they were a vital voice in the dialogue and offered hands-on demonstrations to show PhET’s effectiveness in the classroom.

At home, Martha and Tuwaya lead face-to-face and virtual professional development workshops for educators, supporting hundreds of teachers in transforming classroom practice—and STEM education.

“**It’s making the invisible science phenomena visible**”

So said a guest at our Summit in Hong Kong, who saw PhET in action thanks to demonstrations from the PhET team. Dr Kathy Perkins, Dr Rebecca Veyra, Zachariah Mbasu, and Hong Kong STEM teachers joined us to show how the simulations enrich local physics and maths curricula.

It’s an important point to remember: that virtual learning can also be, in a sense, tangible. PhET’s 160 engaging, game-like interactive simulations are designed to reinforce that connection. They help students learn through play and exploration—the best way to learn—emphasizing the connections between real-life experiences and the underlying science.

**The languages of learning**

PhET Interactive Simulations are available in 115 languages. As part of its prize-funded expansion, the platform first launched the Africa Translator Network and then the Global Translator Network. They’re part of a deliberate drive to make the platform both accessible and inclusive: bringing on board more languages, and making sure students can see themselves in the simulations: in dress, in skin colour—even in the objects used to draw connections with the real world.
CAMFED: African women in charge of their own destinies

Our first team, Lucy Lake and Angeline Murimirwa, are our 2020 Education Development laureates. They've worked together since 1994, when Lucy first joined CAMFED and Angeline was a CAMFED scholar. Since then, they have worked tirelessly to build CAMFED to where it stands today. From 2023, Lucy is passing the baton as CAMFED CEO to Angeline, demonstrating the organization’s commitment to African women’s leadership in the decisions that affect their lives. Lucy will continue as Chair of the Executive at CAMFED.

At CAMFED, every girl the team works with is a client. They can’t be beneficiaries, because, in Angeline’s words, “education is a right, not a privilege”. Every step the organization has taken since it started as a scholarship program in Zimbabwe in 1992 has been to put women in charge of their own destinies.

CAMFED graduates join the CAMFED Association of women leaders, accessing peer support, training and resources. Many become Guides who help the next generation. Through CAMFED’s flagship Learner Guide program, young women volunteer in their local secondary schools as mentors and role models for girls at risk of dropping out. For vulnerable girls, it’s a lifeline of academic, social, and emotional support. While for the volunteers, it’s a pathway to leadership. They gain access to interest free loans and business training, and can earn a BTEC qualification to use as a stepping stone to teacher training or employment.

Lucy and Angeline’s plans for their prize funding center on developing a Learner Guide Hub. It’s a digital platform CAMFED can use to train more guides systematically through resources and information sharing, as well as keep Learner Guides closely connected to the CAMFED team for support and follow-up.

To make sure the hub meets end-user’s needs, Learner Guides have been actively involved in the design process from day one. The team has also appointed a Chief Digital Officer, Dan Martin, who’s overseeing the development of the hub prototype. The hub launches in early 2023, with several hundred pilot users across countries in Africa. By the end of 2023, 20,000 young women will use it for training, peer-to-peer learning, and review, effectively equipping them as Learner Guides to support one million adolescent girls in their communities.

The Learner Guide program is an exemplary model of sustainable community building—by women, for women

Photo credit: CAMFED/Kumi Media
Despite lockdowns and school closures, 15,764 new CAMFED Guides have come on board between 2020 and 2022. Together they’ve reached over 800,000 girls with the wellbeing curriculum, My Better World.

Building on these expansion plans, CAMFED’s ambition is to integrate the Learner Guide role into national education systems across five countries in sub-Saharan Africa, working closely with government ministries. It’s a collaborative effort that echoes the motto of the organization: pamoja tunaweza—Swahili for ‘together we can’.

**Steering from experience**

The Learner Guide digital hub is essential for expanding and developing the role—so its design has to be in the hands of its end-users. Among the hub’s steering committee are 15 core trainers, who train and support Learner Guides, and a number of members of the organization’s leadership network, the CAMFED Association, including IT specialists. The team represents views from Ghana, Malawi, Tanzania, Zambia, and Zimbabwe, and their in-depth discussions are critical to the project’s development.
Understanding the advantages—and limitations—of technology

It’s tempting to assume that ‘everything’ went online during the pandemic—but that’s not strictly true. For those with robust infrastructure, technology opened doors around the world. Indeed, the digital hub steering committee found that virtual discussions were more inclusive.

But for many of the schools and families CAMFED works with, it’s not that simple. In areas where resources are in short supply, connectivity can be unstable. So part of the design involves thinking about the most low tech ways to develop the platform—for example, downloading resources in smaller chunks so it’s easy to pick back up and continue if a connection cuts out.
A quarter of a million future female leaders

Back in 1998, Angeline Murimirwa and Fiona Mavhinga were among 400 recent school graduates from rural Zimbabwe who came together to form what would become the CAMFED Association. Some were still wearing their school uniforms—their most presentable clothes. Realizing their strength in numbers and sisterhood, the group formed a movement to support each other’s endeavors and demand greater opportunities for women and girls.

By the end of 2022, the leadership network has 254,470 members across sub-Saharan Africa—and it’s growing all the time. Fiona is its Executive Advisor.
A positive pathway to closing learning gaps across Asia-Pacific

“We’re trying to teach our 21st century students in a 19th century classroom with 20th century teachers.”

With these words, Jeffrey Xu of Asian Development Bank (ADB) summarized the challenges for education in the Asia-Pacific region. Speaking at our Yidan Prize Summit, he described how in the most resource-constrained countries, 70% of children aren’t leaving primary school with essential foundational skills. Many of them will be among the 84 million children that UNESCO estimates will still be missing from education systems by 2030.

So there’s a pressing need to reinvent education systems and embed innovative approaches to teaching and learning.

For ADB, that means going back to basics at the same time as driving transformation

It’s a two-pronged approach—which depends on collecting high-quality data to show how education systems are progressing. For early years pupils, ADB wants to support programs that build crucial foundational skills, prepare them for a lifetime of learning, and close gaps for disadvantaged and marginalized groups.

And for older students, they’re seeking out interventions that bring together principles of psychology, neuroscience, technology, and education research to improve teaching and learning—with a particular emphasis on STEM and digital skills.

Positive education is one such innovative approach, showing success in Hong Kong

A panel of teachers and philanthropic partners also joined us for the Summit, discussing how working together is already creating lasting change in Hong Kong classrooms.

Lillian Kiang, CEO of the Bei Shan Tang Foundation, drew on the example of Geelong Grammar School in Australia: one of the first in the world to carry out a ‘whole school’ positive education program. It’s an evidence-based approach that values social and emotional learning as the pathway to richer lives, better citizenship, and academic performance. The foundation is helping to establish it across schools in Hong Kong through training, and resources. In 2014, positive education strategies were used in around 10 schools in the region. Now they’re embedded in more than 50 primary schools.
and middle schools. For teacher Stephanie To Yue Man, a Bei Shan Tang Fellow, the difference in confidence in her students was “like magic”. She recalled being told by one student that she was too enthusiastic, and should give up on such a poor class. That student is now a teacher using the same positive education methods with her own classes.

**One theme rang through everyone’s words: it’s essential to work together at every level**

Vice-principal Brian Wong Hok Shing inspired the room by talking about how important compassion and empathy are in bringing out the best in students and teachers alike—especially when they work as a team. He described how one class built a project around the teacher’s passion for snorkelling, while another group learned through wedding photography. These creative approaches mirror what Brian would like even more of from philanthropic organizations—a professional network, as well as funding.

It was a point echoed by Stephanie, who described the power of knowledge-sharing between colleagues. And Peter Poon of The D. H. Chen Foundation talked about teachers as the “most crucial change agents”, and the ripple effect it can have when they’re properly supported to develop their roles. In his view, it’s also the responsibility of foundations to direct limited resources to the most meaningful projects, not necessarily the most prominent ones, which means working closely with schools to understand what’s working.

Collaboration is also at the center of ADB’s holistic approach, where they see parents, teachers, students, infrastructure, and systems all playing an equally important role in reshaping the education landscape. Or, as Jeffrey summed it up: “the journey to reinvention starts with strong partnerships”.

Stephanie To Yue Man with Brian Wong Hok Shing
Voices for change: teacher stories from around the world

There’s a reason you remember your best teachers all your life. According to the United Nations, they’re the “single most influential variable” in a child’s education and their learning outcomes.

So if we want to improve education quality and build systems fit for the future, teachers must be part of the conversation. We asked teachers from around the world about what matters most to them. Here are some of their inspiring ideas.

Embrace each child’s uniqueness

“Every child has different circumstances and therefore needs different solutions,” says Elizabeth Mpumba, a secondary school teacher in Zambia. Her teaching practice emphasizes using “ears to listen, patience, and the wisdom” to help her students unlock their full potential.

Create an environment that inspires

Principal Weixing Yuan changed how students learn by changing where they learn. He designed a school in China with books lining every corridor, and a garden on the roof. “As far as the eye can see, there are books. The library has become a living, breathing part of the school—a school where students love to read.”
Make learning a community activity

Dageshwar Ravte—or ‘Ravte sir’—is one of the best-known faces in Nawagaon, India. Through drop-in classes and home visits, he’s got parents and neighbors as enthusiastically involved in learning science, math, and reading as the children around them. “Initially it was difficult; people believed only teachers were responsible for their children's education. But I feel involvement of parents and the whole community is very important for the education of the children.”

Tailor learning around student interests

At LST Yu Kan Hing Secondary School in Hong Kong, Vice-principal Brian Wong Hok Shing’s students are motivated by learning programs built around their passions—from esports to animal protection. It builds empathy, positive values, and real-life skills. “Each student has their own unique strengths. Our mission is to help them fulfill their dreams by accompanying them throughout their learning journey. We hope to make an impact on their lives through our own.”
Seeing education from every angle: new voices joined our Advisory Committee

This year, we welcomed three new advisors: Baela Raza Jamil, Ruth Kagia, and Professor Pauline Rose. They bring with them a wealth of international expertise, and a shared commitment to quality education for all. We believe that diversity of perspective, teamed with a common goal, strengthens our Advisory Committee and brings us closer to our mission.

Diverse views put focus where it’s needed: on the communities where impact matters most

Ruth observed that she was interested in our prize in part because “it’s one of the few that is not based in the West”. In less than 30 years, the majority of all the world’s young people will be in Asia and Africa—many of them in places where education has lagged behind for want of resources and reliable infrastructure. This includes parts of the world already hardest hit by the effects of climate change. If we’re going to make real progress in education, solutions that work for regions in most need must take center stage.

“Look at what young people are doing in Kenya, for example,” Ruth says. “There’s a new brand of young, tech-savvy entrepreneurs that develop small but truly creative innovations in response to challenges they confront on a daily basis. They inspire me to explore how we can build on their out-of-the-box thinking in the teaching and learning process—so that this approach becomes the norm, rather than an exception.”

Highlighting different areas of focus can bring us closer and help us stay on track

The way we champion education research attracted Pauline’s attention. “Too often research is seen as a side issue—nice to have if there’s enough funding,” she says. “And yet rigorous evidence should be central to policies and planning that aim to include access to good quality of education. The recognition that the Yidan Prize places on research helps to elevate its importance to the global community.”

For Baela, the prize represents ideas and solutions for human well-being which span far beyond borders. “In today’s complex and troubled world, the future thinking of the prize brings optimism for our emerging young leaders, communities of practice and policy makers alike. In essence, the prize epitomizes respect for freedom and the courage to pursue big ideas with scale and impact.”

And when we share big ideas and strong views—when everyone is heard, and we understand each other’s challenges—we make progress faster and more effectively.

Our Advisory Committee helps us think critically about our goals and keeps us on course

That’s why it’s so important that our advisors represent a really global perspective, and can have frank discussions that take in diverse viewpoints. The points where experts from different disciplines, geographies, and genders find agreement are where the most robust and game-changing ideas emerge.
Building a High Touch High Tech platform across Asia

Education Commission Asia (ECA) aims to improve learning outcomes by supporting the use of innovations from across the education world—engaging institutions, experts, and edtech firms, as well as social and global development organizations. Here, YiDan Prize judge Dr Elizabeth M. King outlines ECA’s plans to create a global platform promoting a High Touch High Tech (HTHT) approach.

HTHT reimagines classrooms for the future—with positive results for students and teachers

The idea behind HTHT is to combine hands-on learning and expert guidance by teachers (high touch) with classroom technology (high tech). Classrooms are rarely composed of students who come to the classroom with the same level of knowledge and family background, and who can learn in exactly the same way.

Teachers can benefit from any help to meet the diverse learning needs of these students. When students are given the chance to understand a topic and concepts at their own pace, research shows that they are better able to reach learning goals and teachers become more effective in guiding that learning in the classroom.

This is why ECA wants to promote HTHT across the region. These methods keep the all-important student-teacher relationship central: they support teachers with tools that can help them use a truly personalized approach in a busy and diverse classroom. With the aid of technology, teachers can individually support learners who might otherwise fall behind, as well as challenge those students who are ahead of the curve.

ECA’s projects span Vietnam, Uruguay, Indonesia, Philippines, and Cambodia

The aim is to create a global platform to spread the word about effective HTHT methods, and keep designing and implementing them. These demonstration cases will be powerful: they can show with clear and sound empirical evidence that HTHT in its many forms can help teachers to teach effectively, and students to learn faster and better.

Asia is an innovator in improving education

More than half the world’s population lives in Asia. It’s a massive region, representing great diversity; ethnically, linguistically, culturally, geographically, and economically. It includes the world’s largest growing economies, representing substantial scope for using existing and new alliances to transform education systems.

ECA makes the most of this potential for experimentation, innovation, and learning about effective policies and interventions. It unites partners and donors with a focus on education as a crucial part of sustainable development. It works with, among others, Asian Development Bank, Korea International Cooperation Agency (KOICA), Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), China, AusAid, NZAid, and private organizations including the Yidan Prize.
Foundation. So ECA can tap into significant resources that both create new approaches in education and showcase models that countries across the Asia region and beyond can adapt and scale.

**More than ever before, HTHT offers us a way to recover learning losses**

The pandemic showed us just how important teachers are to learning, and how they can be supported with the right technology. Even if the next pandemic is decades away, it’s not the only disruption to learning that schools and students face. Many, if not most, Asian countries experience natural disasters, conflict, and violence frequently. Earthquakes, tsunamis, extreme weather, and super floods have become an annual disruption—and climate change may make them a regular occurrence in more countries. Although schools may close, we cannot allow learning to stop. Today’s students are our future workers, leaders, and parents.

All of which makes this the right moment to capitalize on the positive lessons from these challenges, too. Like how families and schools used the resources at hand—books, radios, TVs, smartphones to keep classrooms ‘open’ and children learning. We can use that momentum to test the resolve of education systems to do something truly transformative.

**Learning from experience—and evidence—supports a global community of changemakers**

Evidence of impact is powerful, and sustains change. Evaluative research across a large number of countries gives us a robust framework for designing both projects and impact evaluations.

The more ECA gathers and shares what works, the more it can exert a positive influence on education systems at scale—supporting lasting transformation.
Meet our laureates

Transforming education calls for bold, scalable, sustainable ideas. Get to know the individuals and teams whose work is raising standards, reshaping systems, and making education more inclusive.
Dr Linda Darling-Hammond
Our 2022 Education Research laureate

"O"ur mission to expand educational opportunity has become more complex in our rapidly changing world—one in which our children will need to work with knowledge that hasn't been discovered yet, using technologies that haven't been invented yet, solving major problems that we have not been able to solve.

This will demand even more investment in expert teaching—because teaching is the profession on which all others depend."

How do children learn—and how do we best teach them? How can we make sure all children have access to empowering learning opportunities?

And how can we shape policy so those students are taught by well-prepared educators? These are the questions Dr Linda Darling-Hammond has devoted her career to answering.

Linda's worked with education and policy leaders in many US states and over 15 countries, helping to inform teacher development programs and policies around evidence-based teaching methods and supports for reaching every learner, including the most marginalized.

Over the course of her career, her impact has crossed boundaries—from teaching, academia, to policymaking. She has shaped standards for teacher and school leader preparation, professional evaluation, teaching methods, assessment and accountability systems, and school design—all of which strengthen educators' ability to reach and support diverse learners.

"We must ensure educators have the resources to best teach students"

Linda's career began in the classroom, as a public-school teacher in the US—where she saw firsthand how inequitably distributed school funding affected resources for students, teaching capacity, and student outcomes. So her early research focused on school finance reform and leveling the playing field for low-income students. She now firmly believes that,
in addition to adequate and equitable funding, the key to transforming education is properly preparing teachers. Her opinions are echoed in the World Bank’s World Development Report, which says ‘education systems perform best when teachers are respected, prepared, selected based on merit, and supported in their work’.

**Linda’s passion for fair access to quality education has defined her work**

To that end, she founded a preschool and a public high school in an underserved community, and has founded three research organizations, including the Learning Policy Institute (LPI) in 2015.

In 2019, she launched the LPI’s Educator Preparation Laboratory (EdPrepLab) with Bank Street Graduate School of Education. The network connects leading-edge preparation programs, school districts, researchers, and policymakers to put evidence-based, student-centered, equitable teaching at the heart of policy so that every student has access to empowering education.

**EdPrepLab can influence policy and practice as educators recover from pandemic disruption**

Given what we know from the science of learning development, it is important for educators to know how to integrate social, emotional, and academic learning and to teach in culturally responsive ways. With the Yidan Prize project fund, Linda plans to develop EdPrepLab’s scope to tackle these and other issues.

Her ideas include expanding the membership and affiliates, bringing on board more science-based, equity-focused educator preparation programs from around the world. She also wants to fund more research on the most powerful practices—and problems of practice, too. And just like our foundation, she believes in the power of community, so she’d like to increase the project’s webinars and site visits, hosting more meetings in the US and globally where members can share research, learn, and grow.

**Our judges were struck by Linda’s approach to uniting policy and practice—as well as her passion**

The head of our judging panel for Education Research, Andreas Schleicher, notes the harmonious interplay of Linda’s ideas. Linda believes that for policy and practice to be effective, it must be underpinned by innovative research that policymakers can understand and use. And also that it’s the responsibility of researchers to engage with policymakers to create a better world through education.

Andreas also talks about her ‘incredible generosity of spirit, and deep sense of public service’, describing how—even with a relentlessly busy schedule—she’s always ready to listen and offer advice. ‘And she does all of that always with a human heart,’ he adds. It’s exactly the kind of compassionate commitment that draws us to the inspiring leaders that make up our laureate community, and we’re excited to support Linda’s essential work.
"We live in a world full of challenges and uncertainties. A world affected by the pandemic, by conflict, and by natural disaster. A strong education is the foundation of the wisdom and the courage we need to navigate these challenging times."

Professor Yongxin Zhu’s New Education Initiative (NEI) puts reading, writing, and communication at the center of a collaborative approach to education that empowers teachers and transforms how students and families live and learn.

Since 2000, New Education Initiative has grown from a single school to an active network involving over 8,300 schools and 500,000 teachers and reaching more than 8 million children—many based in rural, hard-to-reach areas in China.

NEI’s ‘Teacher Growth Model’ keeps educators connected to the latest academic research

Teachers have access to reading lists, resources, and online platforms. And they’re encouraged to read, reflect, write, and share their experiences with each other—building a supportive community and helping rural teachers feel connected and valued. The model fosters leadership skills and helps teachers find fulfilment within their careers.

Professor Zhu predicts that the future of schooling is learning centers—where education isn’t restricted to a formal schooling environment, and teachers are highly valued experts. For many, he believes, "being a teacher will not be a way to make a living, but to enjoy life. They will be able to pass on their ideas and thoughts the way masters have imparted knowledge to students in the old days."
It also draws on the influence of family—a dynamic that’s been highlighted by pandemic homeschooling

As part of NEI’s program, students, teachers, and parents read and write together. Its program also includes an extended school library, where the student’s wider community can come and learn together. NEI helps parents support learners and promotes a growth mindset, transforming homes into positive learning environments.

Professor Zhu’s view is that the hybrid and home-working model forced by covid is here to stay. And he believes that the pressures families experienced were down to trying to recreate a traditional, exam-driven model at home. When, instead, it becomes a harmonious partnership, we start to see education as something that happens everywhere—not just in schools.

And NEI’s method certainly shows impressive results, boosting students’ motivation with a tangible impact on learning outcomes. Research shows that NEI school students showed measurable uplift in reading interest, abilities, habits, and an increased sense of belonging at school.

Making an impact in China and beyond

Over the past two decades, he’s made a huge impact on China’s education landscape and beyond, with his books now translated into 28 languages. His 20 plus monographs—such as Future Schools and To teachers—have been published in over 40 countries and territories. He’s also been named the national ‘Spokesperson of Reading for All’ and won the IBBY-iRead Outstanding Reading Promoter Award in 2020.

He’s aiming to expand that impact by taking teacher training online and reaching more remote areas

Professor Zhu’s initial project plans include developing the New Education Network Normal College into a cloud-based university. It’ll make teacher education more accessible, and reach more rural teachers. He also plans to scale up NEI’s reach and impact to improve education quality and equity in resource-restrained and remote areas of China. And he’s keen to share the organization’s learnings with other developing countries so that they can adapt and benefit from what’s working well.

Our judges were inspired by Professor Zhu’s holistic, inclusive approach

The head of our judging panel for Education Development, Dorothy Gordon, talked about how Professor Zhu’s work “demonstrates that our greatest tools for transforming education are our minds and mindsets”. In that context, she noted, he also “reminds us of the importance of joy and wellbeing for each and every learner”. It’s a philosophy we’re delighted to welcome to our prize family, and we look forward to working with Professor Zhu as he takes NEI from strength to strength in the coming years.
Professor Eric A. Hanushek, our 2021 Education Research laureate, has redefined how we think about the connection between education and economic growth. Now he wants to help build capacity for policy analysts in Africa to shape local policy.

For sound education decision-making, policymakers need access to robust, locally-relevant research that they can easily access and put into practice. Eric is developing a two-year fellowship program to support a corps of education policy analysts in Africa who—with additional training and support—can help guide their countries to better educational outcomes by producing and emphasizing systematic evidence on educational outcomes. The program will support local policy analysts to develop essential skills, access resources, and take advantage of international and regional networking opportunities.

The program is organized around in-country activities and training opportunities internationally. In the first year, each fellow will get the opportunity to travel to Munich, Paris, and the US to attend workshops and meet with people from across the international education community, including researchers at leading universities, and policy advisers. In the second year, they will carry out their own research project, supported by mentorship from professors at Stanford University and local and international institutions. Over two years, the fellows will take part in a series of short courses on evaluation methods, communications, incentive structures, and more—all designed to enhance the quality of research and policy outreach.
Pratham’s Dr Rukmini Banerji, our 2021 Education Development laureate, firmly believes that ‘one-size-fits-all’ never works. She’s committed her prize funds to scale up and strengthen Pratham’s early childhood programs in India.

As CEO of Pratham Education Foundation, Rukmini drives and champions its ‘Leap Forward’ strategy—which focuses on building a strong early years foundation for learning. It gives every child a fair start, and means they’re less likely to need catch up interventions down the road.

Storytelling is a vital part of all children’s learning and for Rukmini and her team it’s important that children should be able to engage with stories in their own native language. So the organization is investing part of the prize funds in expanding its National Story Project. It’s a collection of original, relatable stories written in 11 regional languages, with the goal of creating 100 stories every year.

To that end, Pratham’s hosted numerous story writing workshops, and commissioned authors to write new stories. The team made sure the whole collection can be found online via the Pratham Open School website—an open, central repository. Aside from print versions of the stories, audio versions have also been created, with video versions also being planned for the future. The team made use of low-tech resources, such as Whatsapp messages, to ensure these stories are accessible to all parents in their homes to read or listen to with their children.
Yidan Prize laureates

**Professor Carol S. Dweck**
Lewis and Virginia Eaton Professor of Psychology, Stanford University
2017 Education Research laureate

Carol's work shows that, in the right environment, students can improve their intellectual abilities, raise their level of attainment, and open doors for the future. Creating these growth mindsets calls for a united effort between school settings and family life—with teachers perhaps playing the biggest role.

Carol split her funding to explore two areas. For one, the research team is building a robust data bank to track the long-term impact of growth mindsets across the US. For the other, the team is developing an openly accessible platform to transform classrooms and teacher mindsets through a curriculum known as Culturally Inclusive Growth Mindset (CIGM). She's also worked with the OECD to embed growth mindset questions in the PISA survey and run workshops.

**Vicky Colbert**
Founder and Director, Fundación Escuela Nueva (FEN)
2017 Education Development laureate

Vicky's work has demonstrated—first in Colombia, now around the globe—that with an innovative approach, under-resourced remote rural schools can develop active, cooperative, and personalized learning environments and increase equity. Environments where children learn to learn, and where a new role of the teacher as facilitator and guide can be promoted.

FEN developed an online teacher training campus, expanding its reach to thousands more teachers in remote areas, as well as matching funding to encourage investment in quality education projects.
**Professor Anant Agarwal**  
*Founder, edX; Professor, MIT; Chief Platform Officer, 2U  
2018 Education Development laureate*

edX is the global online learning platform that exists to help learners everywhere unlock their potential. edX was founded by Harvard and MIT in 2012 to make the world’s best education available to everyone. Today, as a 2U, Inc. company (Nasdaq: TWOU), edX connects 48 million ambitious learners with the skills, knowledge, and support to achieve their goals.

edx used the prize funds to develop MicroBachelors® programs, which deliver immediately transferable skills while providing a pathway towards pursuing a full Bachelor’s degree.

**Professor Larry Hedges**  
*Chairman, Department of Statistics, Northwestern University  
2018 Education Research laureate*

Larry’s goal is to help transform the loose-knit study of education into a more rigorous science—shedding new light on subjects like class size and school funding. Larry sees three ways to strengthen educational research: creating rigorous methods for research; training researchers; and improving how research findings are shared.

With the ground shifting dramatically during the pandemic, Larry changed his project plans to reflect the new landscape. He’s now writing two books that support researchers in the post-pandemic era. The first describes research designs for quick, easy, yet robust early evaluations of education interventions—because covid showed us we can’t always wait for definitive studies in emergency situations. The second focuses on how to design larger-scale educational research studies, bringing together years of disparate study under a central theory and addressing post-covid issues.
Sir Fazle Hasan Abed KCMG
Founder, BRAC
2019 Education Development laureate

The late Sir Fazle championed education (particularly play-based learning) as a force for change. He founded BRAC in 1972, and today it's supported over 15 million children across 8 countries in Asia and Africa.

BRAC is using some of its prize funds to support its Pashe Achhi project, reaching parents of young children in Bangladesh through phone calls to support early learning and development. And it's using another portion to develop its home-based ‘Play Labs’ daycare project in Bangladesh, mainstream and humanitarian Play Labs in Uganda, and Play Labs co-located in government schools in Tanzania.

Professor Usha Goswami
Professor of Cognitive Developmental Neuroscience, University of Cambridge
2019 Education Research laureate

Usha's neuroscience research suggests that rhythm is the hidden factor in how children learn and process speech. Her work has the potential to reveal the origins of developmental language disorders (DLD), and is already laying the groundwork for more effective ways to tackle screening and intervention.

Usha and her teams are using prize funds to expand studies that use brain imaging and language tasks to understand how children with DLD differ in language learning, and how to best support them.
As well as studying the effectiveness of teaching interventions, Carl launched a STEM learning platform, PhET Interactive Simulations, at the University of Colorado Boulder. So far, the PhET project has delivered more than 1.1 billion simulations in 115 languages to learners of physics, chemistry, mathematics, earth sciences, and biology.

Carl and the PhET team are using prize funding to expand the platform and make it more accessible—including building up African and local translator networks and localizing content. They’ve also launched a Fellows program to support local teachers in transforming STEM education. Carl’s group is also carrying out research on how PhET simulations can support the learning of science.

Lucy Lake
Chair of the Executive, CAMFED
2020 Education Development laureate

Lucy and Angeline Murimirwa were our first team laureates. They have dedicated their careers to showing that education is the foundation of social justice. The CAMFED Association network they started is now more than a quarter of a million members strong, and they work with clients in Zimbabwe, Malawi, Ghana, Tanzania, and Zambia.
### Angeline Murimirwa

**CEO, CAMFED**  
**2020 Education Development laureate**

Angeline was among the first Zimbabwean girls to get a CAMFED scholarship. Since then, she has steadfastly worked towards a world where women are champions from within the system, advocating for critical investments and driving reform, and making sure school systems are sensitive to the realities of those left behind.

CAMFED has committed prize funds to developing a digital hub for its ground-breaking Learner Guides program—which helps keep girls in school through peer mentoring and practical and emotional support.

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### Professor Eric A. Hanushek

**Paul and Jean Hanna Senior Fellow and Professor,**  
**Hoover Institution of Stanford University**  
**2021 Education Research laureate**

Eric’s research has inspired the growth and development of a new disciplinary subfield: the economics of education. With his colleagues, he’s shown that cross-country differences in economic growth are almost completely determined by the skills of the population.

Eric is developing a fellowship program for researchers in Africa to increase capacity and support local experts in influencing robust educational policy decision-making.

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### Dr Rukmini Banerji

**CEO, Pratham Education Foundation**  
**2021 Education Development laureate**

Under Rukmini’s leadership, Pratham has focused on understanding and solving the problem of why children are in school, but not learning. Her team’s ‘Teaching at the Right Level’ (TaRL) program has been used by many of India’s state governments to deal with the learning crisis.

Pratham is devoting its prize funds to strengthen its early years work—ensuring children in India receive quality early childhood education to build strong learning foundations, reducing the need for catch-up interventions down the road.
Dr Linda Darling-Hammond
Charles E. Ducommun Professor of Education Emeritus, Stanford University; President and CEO, Learning Policy Institute (LPI)
2022 Education Research laureate

Linda has devoted her career to understanding how to create empowering learning opportunities for all children, especially those furthest from opportunity. Her work answers questions around how children learn and how best to teach them, as well as how policy and practice can ensure all students have access to well-prepared educators.

Linda’s prize funds will go towards expanding the LPI’s Educator Preparation Laboratory (EdPrepLab), a network connecting leading-edge preparation programs, school districts, researchers, and policymakers to put evidence-based, student-centered, equitable teaching at the heart of teacher preparation and policy.

Professor Yongxin Zhu
Founder, New Education Initiative (NEI); Professor, School of Education, Soochow University
2022 Education Development laureate

Professor Zhu founded the New Education Initiative in 2000 and has led its development ever since. Its systemic concepts and methods have helped to create school systems that empower teachers and help students achieve wellbeing through a growth mindset for learning at very low cost.

Professor Zhu plans to invest his prize funds in developing NEI’s online teacher training capacity, and expanding the organization’s reach in remote, rural areas in China.
We make greater, faster progress together. Here are some of the ways we’re bringing people and organizations closer together, and amplifying the most urgent global issues in education.
If we want the most effective ideas to spread far and wide, we need everyone thinking and creating together. This year, we focused on strengthening those relationships across the global education community. And we expanded our partnerships team, welcoming a program coordinator based in the UK—one of the hubs of progressive education conversation.

With travel an option again, events formed the backbone of our year

We were delighted to launch a collaboration with the Brookings Institution to co-host a series of events delving into the big questions gripping the global community. The devastating events in Ukraine spurred a powerful discussion about refugee education around the world. We explored how to flip the equation so that educators are in early on the development of technology, rather than the other way around—as too often happens at the moment. And we debated the extent to which education priorities need to be locally driven, especially with heightened inequality in the aftermath of the pandemic.

Our Director of Partnerships, Dr Christopher Thomas, also joined members of our Council of Luminaries to speak or facilitate at events around the world, from Israel to Mauritius. The value of these conferences is not just in the powerful discussions on the stage that shine a spotlight on crucial issues, but in the many informal conversations and introductions that take place around them.
We also hosted a conference in the US and a Council of Luminaries meetup

For 'Energizing the potential of all learners', co-hosted with Stanford Graduate School of Education, we aimed to unlock a vast range of insight from diverse guest speakers. That included paediatric healthcare specialists, disability rights advocates, experts in learning differences, neuroscientists, psychologists, and educators with a huge span of experience. We built on issues of marginalization, learning differences, and early childhood development, to shape theory of change: delving into the strategic approaches we could take to see progress at speed and scale.

With involvement from several of our luminaries, the site of the conference also proved to be our first informal, in-person council meeting. The energy in the room from bringing everyone together was a joy to behold—and we hope 2023 will offer many more such opportunities for sharing ideas and learning from each other.
Yidan Council of Luminaries

The Yidan Council of Luminaries gathers the world’s brightest minds—researchers, educators, neuroscientists, psychologists, economists, statisticians, and innovators. The luminaries are determined to take concrete actions to close the inequality gap in education around the world. They aspire to build new bridges between the worlds of research and practice to make education more responsive to the challenges of the 21st century, and more inclusive for the millions of children who are marginalized by today’s systems.

Read about our luminaries and their expertise

Sir Fazle Hasan Abed KCMG
Founder, BRAC

Professor Anant Agarwal
Founder, edX; Professor, MIT; Chief Platform Officer, 2U

Kamal Ahmad
Founder, Asian University for Women

Dr Rukmini Banerji
CEO, Pratham Education Foundation

Vicky Colbert
Founder and Director, Fundación Escuela Nueva

Dr Linda Darling-Hammond
President and CEO, Learning Policy Institute

Professor Carol S. Dweck
Lewis and Virginia Eaton Professor of Psychology, Stanford University

Professor Usha Goswami
Professor of Cognitive Developmental Neuroscience, University of Cambridge

'Represented by Shameran Abed, Executive Director, BRAC International, and Dr Erum Mariam, Executive Director, BRAC Institute of Educational Development
06

Our year in events

In 2022, we were pleased to see more of our community in person—while keeping the flexibility and inclusivity of virtual and hybrid gatherings. Hosting and speaking at events is an important part of community-building, networking, and shaping the global education agenda.
This year, we were delighted to be able to once again to host in-person events—enjoying the buzz of conversation and productive debate that happens on- and off-stage. This is an overview of the events we hosted or spoke at, and more detailed summaries and videos are available at yidanprize.org.

**In January, we held a nomination webinar**
These popular, virtual sessions gave potential nominators a chance to hear directly from our Secretariat about what to expect during the process and what judges are looking for in a strong nomination.

**Then in June, we held two events in collaboration with the Brookings Institution**
The first, ‘Ukraine and beyond: Lessons in refugee education’, tackled big questions rising from the crisis—like how ready host countries are to deliver education to millions of refugee children. The panel also discussed experiences from other countries and how they can inform more sustainable, systemic solutions.

For the second, we turned to the challenges and opportunities presented by fast-moving technological shifts, in a webinar called ‘Education meets the metaverse: The promise and the worry’. The panel discussed wide-ranging issues of accessibility, diversity, and safety. And they also explored how creators of educational products for the metaverse work with educators and scientists to ensure that children experience real human social interaction as they navigate virtual spaces.
We held a conference in September at Stanford University

Co-hosted with the Stanford Graduate School of Education and their Accelerator for Learning, 'Energizing the Potential of All Learners' posed the question of how we make sure we're developing the best education interventions—as quickly as possible.

Empassioned panel discussions brought together thought leaders across sectors and disciplines, sharing strategies for taking innovative ideas and scaling them for maximum impact. Distinguished guest speakers included members of our Council of Luminaries and experts in diverse fields from anthropology to biomedical data science.

And PhET representatives joined us at the ADEA Triennale on Education in October

PhET Ambassador, Zach Mbasu, and two PhET Fellows, Martha Mwiinga, from Zambia, and Tuwaya Manyozo, from South Africa, joined us to engage in high-level discussions at the 2022 Triennale of the Association for the Development of Education in Africa (ADEA). It’s important that conversations that directly impact teachers involve teachers—and having Martha, Tuwaya, and Zach in the room underpinned how important it is to connect classroom practice with policy.
In November, we rejoined Brookings to consider the post-pandemic future of education.

There’s no doubt Covid has illuminated and widened access gaps in education. And questions remain: critically, how can we support local learning priorities in the post-covid era? Our expert panel took a deep dive into how local leaders, governments, and organizations are working to help young people develop the skills they need to participate actively as agents of change. And how the global education community can best support them.

We ended the year, as ever, with our Awards Presentation Ceremony and Summit.

‘Teaching Matters: supporting educators through a world of change’ shone a spotlight on the single most significant factor in a child’s quality of education—their teachers. Teachers are facing more—and more complex—challenges than ever before. They’re preparing students for a world where new technologies and industries constantly challenge the status quo, and a pandemic has fundamentally shifted the ways we live, learn, and work. So how can schools, education systems, policymakers, and philanthropists support them to transform classrooms and nurture skills to navigate through a world of change?

These are questions Dr Linda Darling-Hammond and Professor Yongxin Zhu are deeply familiar with. Both are renowned for working tirelessly with educators to empower and prepare them for life in the classroom today and tomorrow. It was our privilege to formally welcome them as our 2022 Yidan Prize laureates, and hear from them about their work and plans. We look forward to sharing more about their projects over the next few years.
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We’re supported by our Board of Directors, Advisory Committee, and Judging Committee—here’s who they are.
Our Board of Directors

Our Board oversees everything we do as a Foundation. In particular, they appoint people to sit on our Advisory and Judging Committees, and approve the judges’ decisions on each year’s laureates.

Dr Charles CHEN Yidan
Founder, Yidan Prize

Best known for his work with Tencent and his philanthropy, Dr Chen has had a lifelong love of learning. These days, he spends most of his time on education initiatives, from our Foundation to the non-profit university he set up in Wuhan.

HRH Princess Laurentien of the Netherlands
Co-founder and Director, Number 5 Foundation

Princess Laurentien believes in ‘unexpected experts’: letting children and students play a part in shaping their own learning experience. It’s a philosophy she’s used in her work as a UNESCO special envoy, and in the various educational foundations she’s established.

Professor Sir Leszek Borysiewicz
Chairman, Cancer Research UK; Vice Chancellor Emeritus, University of Cambridge

With a career that spans both the research and educational worlds, Sir Leszek understands the joint aims of our Education Development and Research prizes better than anyone. In fact, his 2001 knighthood was in part based on his contribution to medical education.
Professor Rick Levin
Senior Advisor, Coursera; President Emeritus, Yale University

In Professor Levin’s 20 years as President of Yale University, he rebuilt the campus, redeveloped downtown New Haven, strengthened the university’s international programs, and co-founded Yale-NUS College. Now he acts as an advisor to Coursera—an online learning platform offering courses from more than 250 universities.

Professor Tony Chan Fan-Cheong
President, King Abdullah University of Science and Technology; President Emeritus, Hong Kong University of Science and Technology

Professor Chan might be a computer scientist by degree and a mathematician by trade, but as Assistant Director at the US National Science Foundation, he managed everything from astronomy to chemistry, and from mathematical sciences, to physics to material science. Today he splits his time between university positions and involvement with various global institutions and events, like the Future Investment Initiative in Saudi Arabia and university boards and advisory committees globally.
Our Advisory Committee

Our Advisory Committee is an independent team that closely examines our work as a Foundation, and designs strategies to help us increase our impact on education around the world.

Dr Qian Tang
Chairman, Advisory Committee; former Assistant Director-General for Education, UNESCO

In his role at UNESCO until 2015, Dr Tang facilitated education programs in all 195 member states. In particular, he helped to draft and roll out the Education 2030 Agenda—the fourth goal of the wider Sustainable Development Agenda—that so greatly influences our work today.

Professor Cheng Kai-ming
Convenor, Advisory Committee; Emeritus Professor, The University of Hong Kong

Professor Cheng started his career as a school teacher; now, as an Emeritus Chair Professor of Education, he's particularly interested in how societal changes impact education. He has been working with various international organizations in the realm of education policies.

Dr Manzoor Ahmed
Professor Emeritus, BRAC University

As Professor Emeritus of BRAC University in Dhaka, one of premier government-chartered private universities established by BRAC, and Founding Director of BRAC Institute of Educational Development, Dr Ahmed is another one of our links to a brilliant organization. In particular, his research focuses on policy and planning for national learning systems.
Baela Raza Jamil
CEO, Idara-e-Taleem-o-Aagahi (ITA)

Baela Raza Jamil is a public policy specialist and advocate for girls education. As a civil society champion she has driven nationwide movements for right to education, early years and girls’ education, and second chance programs on education, life skills and livelihoods. Since 2008, she’s led the citizens’ Annual Status of Education Report (ASER) Pakistan on learning, equity, and inclusion.

Ruth Kagia
Former Senior Advisor and Deputy Chief of Staff, Executive Office of the former President of Kenya

Ruth Kagia has devoted her career to advising on teaching, education management, and research. In between senior roles in the Kenyan government, she was the World Bank’s Global Director for Education, and Country Director for countries including South Africa, Botswana, Namibia, Swaziland, and Lesotho.

Professor Pauline Rose
Director, Research for Equitable Access and Learning (REAL) Centre, University of Cambridge

As the Professor of International Education at the University of Cambridge, Professor Rose has collaborated on large research programs with teams in sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia, tackling issues related to education inequality. She provides evidence-based policy advice, supporting quality and inclusive education for all.
Dr Jamil Salmi

Global tertiary education expert

Dr Salmi worked 25 years at the World Bank, where he shaped policy on higher education reforms and development strategies. In the past ten years, he has worked as a consultant with governments, universities and donor agencies.

Marc S. Tucker

Founder, President Emeritus, and Distinguished Senior Fellow, National Center on Education and the Economy (United States)

Marc S. Tucker has directed the education policy research of the United States government and served as a senior officer of Carnegie Corporation of New York. His research on the policies and practices used by the countries with the world’s most successful education systems has had an important impact on US education policy and system design.

Dankert Vedeler

Chair, UNESCO Institute for Statistics Governing Board; former Assistant Director-General, Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research

In his role at the ministry, Dankert Vedeler has reformed secondary education, rolled out wide-scale programs, and chaired the steering committee for Education for All (EFA) and later the Education SDG Steering Committee. In these roles, he worked with Dr Tang to draft the Incheon Declaration and the SDG Framework for Action.
Our Judging Committee

Our judges put the 'prize' into Yidan Prize Foundation: they go through each nomination carefully, analyze the entries, and decide on our laureates. There are two panels—one for each award—both overseen by our Chairman.

Dr Koichiro Matsuura
Chairman, Judging Committee; former Director-General, UNESCO

With over 40 years in international relations, Dr Matsuura brings wisdom and a global outlook to our judging panel. His role as Director-General of UNESCO spanned 10 years, in which time he took brave initiatives for reform in many areas of great impact, from universal basic education to freshwater management.

Education Research

Andreas Schleicher
Head, Judging Panel, Yidan Prize for Education Research; Director for the Directorate of Education and Skills, OECD

In his work at the OECD, Andreas Schleicher analyzes and advises on educational policies for economic growth and social progress. He oversees several international assessments and surveys, most notably the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA).

Professor Bruce M. Alberts
Chancellor's Leadership Chair in Biochemistry and Biophysics for Science and Education, Emeritus, University of California, San Francisco

As a prominent biochemist dedicated to improving science and math education, Professor Alberts is on the board of more than ten non-profits, chairing four of them—and in 2014, was awarded the US National Medal of Science by president Barack Obama.
Dr Elizabeth M. King  
Non-resident Senior Fellow, Brookings Institution

Dr King, an economist, spent much of her professional career at the World Bank, ending her time there as the global director for education policy and acting vice president for human development issues. She’s currently managing editor of the Journal for Development Effectiveness and teaches at Georgetown University and the University of the Philippines. She’s published widely on education, poverty, the care economy, and gender inequality.

Professor Ju-Ho Lee  
Former Chairperson and CEO, Education Commission Asia

After almost a decade in the South Korean government, including a stint as Minister of Education, Science and Technology, Professor Lee returned to academia in 2013. His research covers a wider range of human development and education reform areas, including 21st century skills and innovation ecosystems.

Dr Felice J. Levine  
Executive Director, American Educational Research Association (AERA)

Dr Levine is known for her work across a vast span of research and science topics—from big data to policy, and higher education to ethics. She serves on several steering groups and boards of national associations focusing on sciences, statistics, and data.

Professor Zhang Min-xuan  
Director, Teacher Education Centre under the auspices of UNESCO

Professor Zhang is passionate about education research in areas of systems and policy, teacher education, and school-based curricula. He plays a pivotal role in leading education research and advises on policy in China and globally. In 2014, the Asia Society awarded him the Asia Outstanding Education Leader and Game Changer Award.
Education Development

**Dorothy K. Gordon**
Head, Judging Panel, Yidan Prize for Education Development; Board Member, UNESCO Institute for Information Technologies in Education

As a technology activist and a firm believer in internet for all, Dorothy K. Gordon’s judging perspectives are more valuable than ever in light of 2020’s online education boom. In particular, she draws on her government, corporate, and UN policy and management experience to find laureates who can make an impact.

**Dr Steven Cohen**
Professor, School of International and Public Affairs, Columbia University

In his work at Columbia, Dr Cohen is an expert in public administration with a focus on environmental protection, and leads several of the university’s programs in that area. He’s been Executive Director of their Earth Institute, a policy analyst and consultant to the US Environmental Protection Agency, and and he’s also written a series of books in this field.

**Vicky Colbert**
Founder and Director, Fundación Escuela Nueva

Among her many accolades, Vicky Colbert was also our inaugural education development laureate. A sociologist and former Colombian Vice-Minister of Education, she pioneered the Escuela Nueva way of learning. It’s now a world-renowned model, transforming learning in remote, resource-strapped regions of Latin America and beyond.
Dr Allan E. Goodman
Chief Executive Officer, Institute of International Education

Dr Goodman heads the Institute of International Education, a non-profit that promotes global educational exchanges of students and scholars, conducts research on international academic mobility, rescues scholars and artists, and administers programs for governments, corporations, and foundations. Previously, he was Executive Dean of the School of Foreign Service and Professor at Georgetown University. He has run diplomatic training programs in China and Vietnam, and authored several books on international affairs.

Kiran Bir Sethi
Founder and Director, Riverside School

Kiran Bir Sethi brings a designer’s vision to education, as the driving force behind the award winning Riverside School, aProCh—an initiative to make cities child friendly and the global movement, Design for Change (DFC). DFC is now in more than 60 countries, where children are empowered by the ‘Feel / Imagine / Do / Share (FIDS)’ framework to design solutions for some of their greatest challenges.

Ruben Vardanyan
Social entrepreneur; Impact investor; Venture philanthropist

Ruben Vardanyan is a recognized expert on the global economy, entrepreneurship, and education, and acts as a strategic consultant on those topics to a range of organizations, from banks to business schools. He’s also co-founded several organizations over the years—like the Moscow School of Management SKOLKOVO, to name just one.
Looking forward

Our Secretary-General Edward Ma reflects on the themes that will influence our work and strategy as we seek to create a better world through education.
Building momentum in 2023 and beyond

Edward Ma

What does it mean to transform education?

Transforming education is about creating real, measurable and sustainable change that lasts for the long haul. It means engaging communities, and making sure they have the tools to drive for changes they need in their specific local context. And exploring the issues from different perspectives. As we look ahead, we’ll step up our effort to support our laureates and luminaries as they do exactly this.

We’ll keep spurring collaboration through partnerships and events

We were pleased to hear such positive feedback about the quality of conversation and breadth of discussion at our conference series in September, ‘Energizing the potential of all learners’. We explored how to improve educational access for marginalized communities, the importance of investing in early childhood learning and development and ensuring learning differences don’t limit opportunities.

This year, we were pleased to expand our relationship with Asian Development Bank (ADB), and hear about its strategic goals at our December Summit. Jeffrey Xu talked about the need to reinvent education systems, and to foster innovative approaches to teaching and learning. The ADB sees parents, teachers, students, infrastructure, and systems all playing an equally important role in reshaping the education landscape—a view which resonated with us and our guests at the summit.

Both events are compelling examples of three elements of our strategy that drive change: collaboration, amplification, and knowledge sharing. And we’re open to hearing from any organization that shares our passion and goals—from NGOs and civil society to government bodies and businesses.
We’ll continue to focus on agents of change, like teachers

There’s no greater influence on learners than their teachers, and we need to create the conditions that help teachers do their best work. This year we were privileged to hear stories directly from educators around the world. And both our 2022 laureates have reshaped how we think about teachers’ professional development and the evolving role of educators.

We’ll shine a spotlight on underrepresented perspectives

The world’s population centres are shifting, and we know that quality education for all is absolutely essential. Crucially, local challenges need local solutions—and voices. Our Judging Committee and Advisory Committee have both expanded in recent years to add much-needed new perspectives. We’re keen to include more expertise from underrepresented regions, particularly Latin America and Africa.

We’re still a relatively young foundation, and we’re always growing

We believe in lifelong learning—and that includes our own approach to our work and mission. We’re grateful for the open-minded, enthusiastic reception to our prize, and proud to help advance projects that are changing lives. That’s a level of trust and commitment we don’t take for granted, and we’ll honour it by continuing to develop and adapt our methods while staying true to our mission of creating a better world through education.
Acknowledgements

We offer our heartfelt thanks to the people and organizations whose generous support helps drive our mission.

Honorary Investment Advisor
John Lo
Chief Financial Officer, Tencent Group

Honorary Investment Advisor
Tsang Wai-yip
Group Financial Controller, Tencent Group

Honorary Legal Advisor
Richard Pu
Deputy General Counsel, Tencent Group

Honorary Auditor
PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC)