



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

SXSW EDU® Announces the Lineup of Finalists, Judges, and Emcees for the 2025 Competition Program

The conference and festival's Launch Startup Competition and Student Impact Challenge will highlight the work of international and domestic organizations

January 8, 2025 // Austin, Texas – SXSW EDU® is excited to unveil the list of finalists for its 2025 [Launch Startup Competition](#) and [Student Impact Challenge](#). This year's selected cohorts represent teams from the United States, Brazil, Canada, and Nigeria, and feature solutions from promoting access to economic opportunity and education equity, to creating career pathways and personalizing learning with AI.

SXSW EDU's competition program has become an important platform for the next generation of solutions and the creative minds behind them. The applications chosen for the 2025 edition stood out for their innovative take on integrating technology, such as artificial intelligence, and their unique approaches to building spaces that connect communities, build capacity, and ultimately make the education experience more impactful.

"As our competition program has evolved over the last 15 years, we've remained committed to providing a platform to amplify people and ideas that have the potential to advance critical tentpoles of education," said **Greg Rosenbaum**, vice president of SXSW EDU. "We've been able to offer a springboard for several entrepreneurs and students that has led them to further success in their missions, and we look forward to carrying that tradition on."

Launch Startup Competition

The Launch Startup Competition, presented by the Walton Family Foundation, has championed early-stage education startups for 14 years. The competition provides finalists with the opportunity to pitch their startups to an arena of industry judges and a live audience. New to the 2025 program, finalists will also have the chance to present their projects during the SXSW Pitch Demo Day on Monday, March 10. Additionally, the Launch Award winner will get to share their work as part of the SXSW Pitch Award Ceremony on Sunday, March 9.

The emcee for the live Launch Startup Competition event at SXSW EDU will be **Alix Guerrier**, CEO of DonorsChoose. The judging panel includes **Katie Fang**, CEO of SchoolLinks; **John Gamba**, Entrepreneur in Residence at the University of Pennsylvania's Graduate School of Education; **Amelia Kelly**, CTO at SoapBox Labs; and **Missy Testerman**, the 2024 National Teacher of the Year.

Finalists

- [Ambessa](#) // New York, New York
- [Bili](#) // Houston, Texas
- [College Contact](#) // Austin, Texas
- [Genius Academy](#) // Los Angeles, California
- [Making Space](#) // Los Angeles, California
- [Mathos AI](#) // San Francisco, California
- [Polymath University](#) // Chicago, Illinois

Awards will be given to the three category winners at the [Launch Spotlight](#) presented by the Walton Family Foundation:

- **Launch Award:** This award is given to the Launch Startup Competition's grand prize winner. The recipient of this award impressed the judges as the top startup with its overall creativity, innovation, ease of use, potential to scale, strength and unique perspective of the team, and potential to improve learning outcomes.
- **Impact Award:** The recipient of this award has the most potential to impact student learning based on the science of learning, according to the competition judges. This startup has shown a commitment to using research-based interventions to substantially improve student learning and outcomes.
- **Community Choice Award:** The recipient of this award has received the most votes from the audience during SXSW EDU. This startup has not only captured the attention of the diverse SXSW EDU community, which is composed of perspectives beyond the startup industry across the education space, but also centers on equity, accessibility, and supporting historically marginalized learners.

Student Impact Challenge

SXSW EDU is also proud to share the lineup for its Student Impact Challenge, presented by The Allstate Foundation. The Student Impact Challenge celebrates student achievement and agency in solving the most pressing social, economic, and environmental challenges. The selected organizations for 2025 are addressing a range of needs, including sustainable energy and farming solutions, supporting neurodivergent learners, and more.

Finalists

- [Household Appliances Innovation Powered by Solar](#) // Odeda, Nigeria
- [InSpec](#) // Chula Vista, California & Oakville, Canada
- [Organic Fertilizers for Everyone \(Adubo Orgânico para Todos\)](#) // São Paulo, Brazil
- [Spark](#) // Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania
- [Swype AI](#) // Herndon, Virginia

- [Unfold4All](#) // Dublin, California & Kirkland, Washington

The Student Impact Challenge and announcement of the Student Impact Award winner at the Ice Cream Social will be hosted by emcee **Anatola Araba**, Founder of Reimagine Story Lab. The live competition will be judged by **Juanita Soranno**, Head of Impact at Cengage Group; **Greg Weatherford II**, Managing Director, The Allstate Foundation & Social Impact; **Rohit Srinivasan**, Founder of Trashbots and former challenge winner; and **Tiana Day**, Founder and Executive Director of Youth Advocates for Change.

New this year, all participating teams will have access to coaching provided by [CASE at Duke](#) (Student Impact Challenge) and [StartEd](#) (Launch), which consists of group workshops and one-on-one coaching.

For more information on SXSW EDU's competition program, visit sxswedu.com/competitions/.

Press Credentials:

To register, please go to sxswedu.com/press/accreditation.

About SXSW EDU:

Now in its 15th year, the SXSW EDU® Conference & Festival reflects the world's most critical social issues as seen through the lens of education. This year's event will bring together the learner, the practitioner, the entrepreneur, and the visionary to share their groundbreaking stories, tackle complex issues, and build reimagined paths forward. As a community of diverse people who are united around a like-minded vision for the future, SXSW EDU serves as a place for attendees to renew their purpose in practice from both a personal and professional perspective. It is a place to reinforce the core principles of teaching and learning as well as an opportunity to express your creativity and passion for education. Join the passionate and innovative community at SXSW EDU, March 3-6, 2025.

For more information, please visit sxswedu.com.

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