



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

SXSW EDU® Announces 2025 Film and Performance Lineup

January 22, 2025 // Austin, Texas – The South by Southwest EDU® Conference & Festival has unveiled the screen and stage projects to make up its 2025 festival program. This year’s lineup of [films](#) and [performances](#) ranges from discussions on reframing priorities in America’s education and childcare systems to immigrant educators working to give young adults the strength to carve out their paths. SXSW EDU’s festival program brings to light topics that can be hard to address in the classroom but can be accessed through film and performance. Attendees can learn more about the intersection of culture, education, and community while getting swept up in an incredible story or being wowed by a magic act or ballet performance.

As an opportunity to explore the programming topics further, each film screening will be followed by a Q&A session where attendees can interact with the people behind and starring in the films. The student-led and feature films have exciting supporters including *UNTAPPED: Closing America’s Opportunity Gap*, recently released on Netflix; directors Jon Osaki and Josh Chuck in *Making Waves: The Rise of Asian America*; and award-winning filmmaker Francine Strickwerda in *Ultimate Citizens*. Directors Jen Bradwell and Todd Boekelheide’s *Make a Circle* will debut on PBS in the fall. Notable performers this year include Jill Sobule, writer of the song “Supermodel,” featured in 1995’s film *Clueless*; and Jay Flores, 2x “American Ninja Warrior” semifinalist and contestant on “Are You Smarter Than a Celebrity?” giving a live performance of “It’s Not Magic, It’s Science!”

“In 2024 we unfortunately saw significant budget cuts in education, particularly affecting arts programs around the country. The issues we are facing are those that have systematic, long-term effects. This year’s lineup of films tells a broader story on how resilient these communities can be in the face of uncertainty,” said **Greg Rosenbaum**, vice president of SXSW EDU. “We are so proud of this year’s programming and celebrate the stories and individuals who bring their work to our stages. We believe that only at SXSW EDU could you experience this specially curated lineup of diverse perspectives and uplifting stories.”

FILMS:

The nine [films](#) selected for the 2025 program highlight struggles and triumphs in our education system and communities. Portraying topics such as skill development, neurodivergence, social justice, and more, the film screening format enables accessibility to tough topics through unique storytelling. The program includes:

[Counted Out](#)

Director: Vicki Abeles

In the 21st century, our world is dominated by technology, data, and algorithms, yet we maintain the persistent myth that not everyone is a “math person.” Can changing our minds about math revolutionize who has power—and who is counted out?

Q&A with Vicki Abeles and Ismar Volic

[Watch the trailer](#)

[Home Court](#)

Director: Erica Tanamachi

Home Court traces the ascent of Ashley Chea, a Cambodian American basketball prodigy whose life intensifies amid recruitment, injury, and triumph throughout her high school career.

Q&A with Erica Tanamachi and Jenn Lee Smith

[I Am disABLEd](#)

Director: Estlin Feigley

This heartwarming documentary follows the journey of nine disabled youth as they prepare for the musical “Seussical.” The spotlight shines on these young artists' abilities as the film focuses on the similarities they have to their typically developing peers rather than highlighting their disabilities.

Q&A with Estlin Feigley, Kelli Feigley, and Amy Calderone-Blommer

[Watch the trailer](#)

[MAKE A CIRCLE](#)

Directors: Jen Bradwell and Todd Boekelheide

MAKE A CIRCLE is a love letter to early childhood educators turned unlikely activists, and a rallying cry for the childcare system to find ways to support better pay for careers that are critical to our children’s foundational skills and future. This film is a moving portrait of life as an early educator and a promising blueprint for fixing a profession in crisis.

Q&A with Jen Bradwell, Todd Boekelheide, Rebekah Fergusson, and Patricia Moran

[Watch the trailer](#)

[Making Waves: The Rise of Asian America](#)

Directors: Jon Osaki and Josh Chuck

Making Waves: The Rise of Asian America explores the struggle for self-determination through stories of Asian American Activism, resilience, and belonging.

Q&A with Jon Osaki, Mohit Mehta Ph.D., and Ann Nguyen

[Watch the trailer](#)

[North Putnam](#)

Director: Joel Fendelman

Showcasing the amount of work a community of educators puts in to help its students achieve success, *North Putnam* follows along on a year in the life of a yes-saying rural Indiana school district and the community it serves.

Q&A with Joel Fendelman, Beth Benedix, and James Chase Sanchez

[Watch the trailer](#)

[Run, Hide, Fight: Growing Up Under the Gun](#)

Director: Marie Cusick

Created by PBS News Student Reporting Labs in collaboration with 14 student journalists from five U.S. cities, *Run, Hide, Fight: Growing Up Under the Gun* is a documentary about how gun violence affects young Americans.

Q&A with Leah Clapman and Ethan Rodriguez

[Watch the trailer](#)

[Ultimate Citizens](#)

Director: Francine Strickwerda

Jamshid, an Iranian American primary school counselor, helps immigrant and refugee children find belonging in Seattle on their way to compete in the world's largest youth ultimate frisbee tournament. Follow along on the journey of an educator who is deeply interested and invested in his students' well-being.

Q&A with Francine Strickwerda

[Watch the trailer](#)

[UNTAPPED: Closing America's Opportunity Gap](#)

Director: Josh Kahn

Advocating for skills-based hiring, *UNTAPPED* follows several young adults from underserved communities as they take part in a rigorous skills-training program and compete for Fortune 500 internships to jump-start their tech careers.

Q&A with Carrie Varoquiers, Byron Auguste, and Chassidy Tabios

[Watch the trailer](#)

PERFORMANCES:

SXSW EDU [performances](#) feature dance, experiments, musical performances, and more. This year's selection is highly interactive, and performers are keen to engage with audiences. Feature productions include:

[Anthropos Arts - Inverting the Music Education Pyramid](#) – This presentation will demonstrate how the current middle and high school-mandated curriculum is upside down, excluding and leaving behind a vast number of young artists and music students. By teaching students how to play the music they

already listen to, introducing improvisation from the beginning, and bringing them to real public music venues to perform, Anthropos has helped thousands of students growing up in poverty to navigate their way through middle/high school, with 90% going on to college on scholarship. These methods foster inclusion and give kids a tremendous boost in confidence.

[Building the Next Generation of Black Ballerinas](#) – For the first time, the ballet will be performed on the SXSW EDU stage. Attendees will see the power of the arts in action as they watch three student ballerinas give an experiential presentation featuring video and sound. A Q&A session will follow.

[Global Cypher: Building Inclusive Classrooms Through Music](#) – Join Aisha Fukushima, a renowned community-based artist and social justice teaching artist, for an interactive performance lecture that reimagines classroom pedagogy through hip-hop cypher-inspired approaches. With global experience spanning four continents and founder of the global RAPTivism (rap activism) project, Fukushima will share practical strategies and activities that foster inclusivity, creativity, and liberation in the classroom.

[It's Not Magic, It's Science!](#) – Join Jay Flores, 2x "American Ninja Warrior" semifinalist and contestant on "Are You Smarter Than a Celebrity?" for a live performance of "It's Not Magic, It's Science!" leveraging the entertainment factor of magic to increase excitement and awareness in STEM. Each "trick" (experiment) is as entertaining as it is educational and is fun for all ages.

[Let's Kikabou! Puppets Are Tomorrow's Playful Educators](#) – Have you ever seen a porcupine and a prairie dog sing a duet about camouflage? Or pollination? Swing by this entertaining and educational musical performance led by world-class puppeteers and musicians to experience first-hand how engaging learning can be in a theatrical environment. After each short performance, we'll offer discussion breaks to explore the design behind the lesson, music, and character development choices. Leave this session with a smile on your face and immediate takeaways for interactive STEAM learning and earth stewardship for all kids!

[Jill Sobule Presents: Songs from F*ck 7th Grade & More](#) – Join singer-songwriter and guitarist Jill Sobule, known for her hits "Supermodel" from the movie *Clueless* and "I Kissed A Girl" (the original), and the critically acclaimed Off-Broadway show "F*ck 7th Grade" as she performs a lineup of her songs, diving into how they came to be. An interactive song-writing opportunity with the crowd will follow. "

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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