



SXSW EDU ANNOUNCES MORE THAN 160 PANELPICKER SESSIONS FOR THE 2027 CONFERENCE & FESTIVAL

Speakers include Vanessa Kroll Bennett, Bestselling Author & Co-Founder of Less Awkward; Lori Shapiro, First Lady of Pennsylvania; Christina Greer, Associate Professor of Political Science at Fordham University; Andy Brown, Travis County, Texas Judge; Frederic Bertley, President and CEO of the Center of Science and Industry; Pedro Noguera, Dean of the USC Rossier School of Education; and more.

October 21, 2026 | Austin, Texas — South by Southwest EDU® (SXSW EDU) today announced 161 sessions for the 2027 program, as the largest programming announcement of the season. Selected through the community-driven PanelPicker® process, these sessions represent the broad range of discussions attendees can expect at the 2027 SXSW EDU Conference & Festival (March 13-16).

SXSW EDU received an increase in total submissions this year, more than 1,500 total session submissions for the 2027 program. The most popular tracks among the submissions were Teaching & Learning (22% of submissions), followed by Leadership for Tomorrow (16%) and Work Reimagined (13%). The themes rising to the forefront of the education community were distinctly human-centered, with nearly one-third of submissions referencing community (30%), while workforce development (18%) and belonging (11%) also emerged as prominent areas of focus.

“PanelPicker allows us to hear directly from our global community of educators, administrators, founders, nonprofits, and policymakers about what matters most right now. This year’s submissions reflect a learning landscape navigating immense shifts in funding, infrastructure and technology. Yet, the resounding theme for 2027 is a deeply human one,” said Julia Shatilo, Senior Director of SXSW EDU. “Across themes as wide-ranging as talent pipelines into creative industries, the value proposition of higher education, and the impacts of AI on the classroom and workforce, submissions showed an overwhelming desire to prioritize human connection, protect human agency, and promote the wellbeing of students and educators.”

SXSW EDU is a lifelong learning event that unites the entire education ecosystem, from early childhood and K-12 to higher education, continuing education and workforce development. Bringing together educators, founders, policymakers, nonprofit leaders, and more, the event serves as a launchpad for real solutions to pressing challenges across 12 programming tracks: Accessibility Solutions, Arts & Culture, Community Initiatives, Equity & Belonging, Future of Tech, Health & Wellbeing, International Exchange, Leadership for Tomorrow, Policy & Advocacy, Startups & Investment, Teaching & Learning, and Work Reimagined.

Highlights of the sessions selected through PanelPicker include:

Community Initiatives: Solving the Nature Gap: Learning Outdoors for Everyone—Every child deserves a real, hands-on connection to nature. Is the answer to bring nature into neighborhoods, or to break down the distance, cost and time that keep city kids from public lands. **Lori Shapiro**, First Lady of Pennsylvania, and **Jo-Elle Mogerman**, President and CEO of the Philadelphia Zoo discuss the different approaches.

Health & Wellbeing: How Birds Fix Our Attention Crisis—Explore how neurodivergent ways of engaging with the world through movement, curiosity and nature can transform learning for people of all ages and people. **Steph That Quirky Bird Girl**, will share how her bird educational events help learners step outside their bubbles, build confidence, and embrace new skills through embodied, experiential learning.

Policy & Advocacy: How to Fund Childcare When Nobody's Coming to Help—This panel goes to the places without political tailwinds, where providers, educators, county officials and philanthropists built coalitions from scratch to get childcare funding on the ballot. Hear first hand accounts of these efforts from **Andy Brown**, Travis County, Texas Judge; **Cecka Rose Green**, Executive Director of the Children's Services Council of Leon County; **Olivia Allen**, Co-Founder and Vice President, Strategy and Advocacy of Children's Funding Project; and **Rochelle Wilcox**, Executive Director of Wilcox Academy of Early Learning.

Teaching & Learning: Silicon vs. Soul: Resisting the Algorithmic Classroom—Teachers face real pressure to personalize learning, close gaps and engage families with limited time. Is AI a tool that expands what teachers and students can do, or a shortcut that weakens agency, independent thought and authentic connection? **Pedro Noguera**, Emery Stoops and Joyce King Stoops Dean of the USC Rossier School of Education; **Stephen Aguilar**, Associate Professor of Education and Director, USC Center for Generative AI and Society; **Tracy Fray-Oliver**, Vice President, Bank Street College of Education; and **Veronica Benavides**, Founder & CEO, Bilingual Generation will share ways to protect learning and guide technology decisions.

Work Reimagined: The Brain Economy Goes to Business School—Cognitive, emotional and social skills are now the most valuable assets in the workforce, yet many business schools still train for an economy that no longer exists. **Lisa Leander**, CEO of WIBE Network; **Harris Eyre**, Executive Director of the Global Brain Economy Initiative; **Elizabeth Johnson**, Executive Director and Senior Fellow of the Wharton Neuroscience Initiative; and **Kathy Farrell**, Dean of the College of Business at the University of Nebraska, Lincoln explain what is broken, what is working, and how learning, hiring, and leadership change when we take the brain seriously.

To see all of the sessions announced today, visit the [SXSW EDU schedule](#).

About SXSW EDU

The SXSW EDU® Conference & Festival reflects the world's most critical social issues through the lens of education. The event brings together learners, educators, entrepreneurs, and visionaries to share ideas, find solutions to complex challenges, and build reimagined paths forward. SXSW EDU is a place for attendees to renew their purpose, deepen their practice, and connect with a passionate community committed to the future of teaching and learning. Join the SXSW EDU community March 13-16, 2027, in Austin, Texas.

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Editor's Note: Media accreditation is now open for SXSW EDU 2027 through February 12, 2027. Please visit our [Press Center](#) to submit your application.

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