



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

SXSW EDU® Announces First Keynote and Featured Sessions for 2026 Conference & Festival

MagicSchool AI Founder and CEO Adeel Khan, Authors Casey McQuiston and Erin Geiger Smith, U.S. Representative Jim McGovern, and others will discuss AI, literary freedom, and other pressing issues of the moment.

October 1, 2025 // Austin, Texas – South by Southwest EDU® (SXSW EDU) today unveiled the first round of Keynote and Featured Sessions joining its 2026 Conference & Festival. The Conference & Festival runs from March 9-12, 2026 and will take place across a new, more integrated footprint in downtown Austin, including a reimagined SXSW EDU Hub with more details in the map below. Registration is now open.

The initial lineup, including a range of leaders across fields such as tech, policy and advocacy, academia, and literature, will tackle critical issues facing education in the United States and around the world.

Announced Keynote Session:

- ***Keeping Teachers at the Center of AI in Schools:*** Join **Adeel Khan** (CEO & Founder, MagicSchool AI) for a Keynote discussing how millions of teachers are experimenting with AI tools. As a former educator who has created one of the most used AI platforms in schools, Khan will share unfiltered insights on what's working and what's not, and how to prepare students for an AI future responsibly.

Announced Featured Sessions:

- ***Word Magic: How Etymology Ignites Curiosity, Precision, & Joy:*** **Jess Zafarris** (Author of *Once Upon a Word & Words from Hell*) invites educators into the secret life of language and how the study of etymology unlocks interdisciplinary insight, stimulates linguistic curiosity, and builds bridges between learners and cultures.
- ***How State Constitutions Empower & Protect Youth:*** **Erin Geiger Smith** (Writer & Editor, Brennan Center for Justice; Author of *Thank You for Voting*), **Celina Stewart** (CEO, League of Women Voters), **Harper Seldin** (Senior Staff Attorney, ACLU's LGBTQ & HIV Project), and **Julia Olson** (Co-Executive Director & Chief Legal Officer, Our Children's Trust) come together to break down the role state constitutions play in young people's access to the ballot, the safety and autonomy of the LGBTQIA community, states' ability to respond to climate change, and the quality of state education systems.

- ***New Ground Rules: Rethinking U.S. International Education:*** **Deneyse Kirkpatrick** (President & CEO, Texas International Education Consortium), **Vivian Walker** (Co-President, Public Diplomacy Council of America; Practitioner in Residence & Professor, Walsh School of Foreign Service at Georgetown University), **Jason Czyz** (President, Institute of International Education), and **Lawrence Schovanec** (President, Texas Tech University) examine how higher education is adapting, what data reveals about these changes, what's at stake for the nation's workforce and innovation pipeline, and how international education shapes America's role in the world.
- ***Feeding Kids Like We Give a Damn: Transforming School Food:*** **Mara Fleishman** (CEO, Chef Ann Foundation), **Norbert Wilson** (Director, Duke World Food Policy Center), **Rep. Jim McGovern** (U.S. Congressman, Second District of Massachusetts), and **Maya Miller** (Student, Environmental Studies, University of Pennsylvania) explore how scratch-cooked meals, investments in infrastructure, and smart policy can transform school food into a force for equity, sustainability, and systemic change.
- ***Beyond Bans: Defending LGBTQ+ Stories & Literary Freedom:*** **Casey McQuiston** (#1 NYT Bestselling Author of *Red, White & Royal Blue*), **Brian Bond** (CEO, PFLAG National), **Sam Helmick** (President, Community & Access Services Coordinator, American Library Association, Iowa City Public Library), and **Nadra Kareem Nittle** (Education Reporter, The 19th News) discuss actionable solutions to preserve access to LGBTQ+ literature and stories amid discriminatory book bans.
- ***Exclusion to Empowerment: Women, Tech, & the Future of Learning:*** As Afghanistan's first female tech CEO and one of TIME's 100 Most Influential People, **Roya Mahboob** (CEO, Digital Citizen Fund) has used her success to educate and empower Afghan women and girls through technology. She shares insights from her journey and career creating new pathways in tech for girls worldwide, offering a vision for education that is inclusive, practical, and full of possibility.

Alongside the Keynote and Featured Sessions, SXSW EDU has added more than 15 conference sessions that cover the Conference & Festival's breadth of programming, including its five focal areas across levels of education and 12 tracks spanning future of tech, global initiatives, accessibility solutions, and more.

"With this initial slate of sessions, we are setting a strong tone for what audiences can expect from SXSW EDU 2026," said **Julia Shatilo**, Senior Director of SXSW EDU. "This year, we will be taking on the most important and challenging issues facing education, our nation, and ourselves. It's time to think big and think differently about how technology is changing education, what we want and need from each other, and how we maintain our sense of humanity throughout."

SXSW EDU 2026 will also feature a newly expanded version of Crossover Day. Taking place on Thursday, March 12, Crossover Day will mark the final day of SXSW EDU and the start of the SXSW Innovation Conference, Film & TV Festival, and Music Festival with a full day of co-programmed sessions and a Keynote as well as multiple celebrations, including the SXSW EDU exclusive Beats & BBQ Social and the Crossover Day Mixer, and access to a multitude of SXSW events.

For more information on the 2026 programming, registration, opportunities, and more, visit sxswedu.com.

Media accreditation is now open for SXSW EDU 2026 through February 13, 2026. Please visit our [press center](#) to submit your application.

About SXSW EDU:

The SXSW EDU® Conference & Festival is a reflection of 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 9-12, 2026.

For more information, please visit sxswedu.com.

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