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AI Innovator Student Challenge Guide

— 2027 —

Why We're Doing This

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is shaping how we live, learn, and work. For today's students, understanding how to use AI responsibly isn't optional — it's essential. The AI Innovator Studio empowers educators and students to explore AI as a tool for solving real problems, while building the skills needed for ethical, safe, and inclusive innovation.

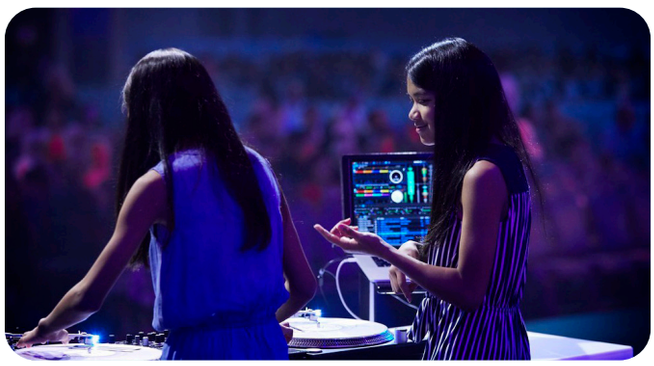
This program advances the UN Sustainable Development Goals of Quality Education (SDG 4) and Reduced Inequalities (SDG 10) by helping schools foster digital inclusion and responsible digital citizenship. It also builds on the ISTE Student Standards and ISTE Digital Citizenship Competencies, as well as the Profile of an AI-Ready Graduate, ensuring students become empowered learners, innovative designers, creative communicators, and global collaborators.

WHAT IS THE AI INNOVATOR STUDENT CHALLENGE?

An opportunity for student teams to design AI-powered solutions that address a problem or concern in their community, align to a UN Sustainable Development Goal, and demonstrate the ethical, safe, and responsible use of AI. Top teams will be showcased online, with finalists presenting in-person at ISTELive. Students are able to participate in the Challenge with the support of a teacher sponsor.



Supports for educators include lessons focused on strengthening AI literacy, educator webinars, and collaboration opportunities. Teachers can integrate lessons and the accompanying resources into classroom instruction across content areas, clubs, camps, or broader innovation programs. Educators may choose to use the lessons to build innovation and AI literacy and/or to guide students into the Challenge. Use of the lessons is not a requirement to enter the AI Innovator Student Challenge.



The AI Innovator Student Challenge provides flexible entry points into AI innovation, while spotlighting the creativity and impact of student teams worldwide.

AI Innovator Support

ISTE+ASCD equips educators with resources and support to bring innovation into classrooms, clubs, and communities.

SUPPORTS FOR EDUCATORS

- **Lessons** – A set of 15 lessons incorporating Intel's Skills for Innovation that can be used as quick innovation starters or combined into a full progression. Lessons follow a studio cycle:

  Spark → Explore → Experiment → Create → Share → Reflect

- **Webinars and Coaching** – Live and recorded sessions for district leaders and teachers, offering strategies, classroom ideas, and support throughout the year.

- **Professional Community** – A space to share approaches, connect with peers, and access exemplars to support AI and innovation in learning experiences within and beyond classrooms.



WHY SUPPORT MATTERS

This is more than preparation for a competition — it's a way to make AI literacy and innovation accessible to all students. By giving

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helps schools:

- Reach a wider range of learners, not just those who enter the Challenge.
- Integrate innovation and design thinking into everyday learning.
- Build student skills for problem-solving, collaboration, and ethical technology use.
- Create inclusive pathways where all students can see themselves as innovators.

HOW EDUCATORS CAN USE THE AI INNOVATOR SUPPORTS

support

can use the resources in many different ways, depending on time, goals, and student needs. Here are some of the most common approaches:

- **In the Classroom** – Integrate AI innovation directly into teaching and learning. *Such as: short embedded units in different content areas, a full PBL progression, or cross-curricular collaborations.*

- **Beyond the Classroom**
  opportunities outside the school day, giving

  Such as: after-school clubs, independent or capstone projects, advisory activities, or break-week innovation camps.

- **Special Events** – Spark creativity and energy

  Such as: schoolwide innovation weeks or hackathons, community innovation nights, or pop-up labs in makerspaces and libraries.

- **Broader Programs** – Build sustained pathways for innovation across courses, schools, or regions. *Such as: dedicated electives, community partnership projects, regional-led cohorts, or makerspace innovation incubators.*

AI Innovator Challenge

The AI Innovator Challenge is designed to give students the opportunity to become problem-solvers, designers, and innovators who use AI for good. Teams will explore how AI can be applied ethically, safely, and responsibly to make a difference in their communities — and connect their work to global goals.

CHALLENGE GOALS

Through the Challenge, students will:

- Act as empowered learners, digital citizens, knowledge constructors, innovative designers, creative communicators, and global collaborators in alignment with the ISTE Student Standards.
- Build an awareness of how AI works and how to use AI tools ethically and responsibly.
- Develop digital citizenship competencies, emphasizing safety, inclusion, equity, and respect.
- Apply design thinking and innovation practices aligned with and inspired by the Intel Skills for Innovation framework.
- Create a usable product or prototype that addresses a problem or concern in their community and connects to a United Nations Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) of their choice.



WHY THE CHALLENGE MATTERS

By participating, students are able to showcase their creativity while learning to design with purpose.

They solve authentic problems, evaluate AI responsibly, and develop solutions that can be shared beyond the competition to benefit their schools, communities, and the wider world.

WHAT TEAMS WILL SUBMIT

- **Digital Product or Prototype**
  A working resource, app, media product, or tool that demonstrates their solution.
- **Pitch Video** *(up to 3 minutes)*
  A video that explains the problem they are trying to solve or the need they are trying to address (~1 min), a description or walkthrough showing how their product works (~90 seconds), its intended impact, and how it aligns with their chosen SDG (~30 seconds). Each team member should be represented in the video.
- **Team Story** *(written, no more than 1 page)*
  An introduction to the team and the inspiration for how they chose the problem they are trying to solve.

HOW PROJECTS ARE SCORED

Projects are evaluated in three rounds:

ROUND 1 — Ready for Evaluation

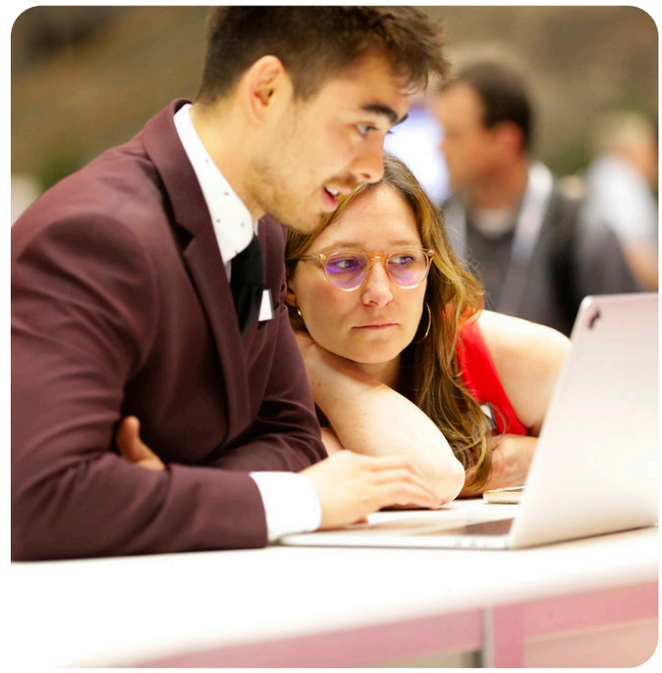
Does the project meet the requirements and demonstrate a clear, thoughtful approach?

ROUND 2 — Finalist Evaluation

Projects are evaluated based on the rubric. Top scorers' pitch videos will be featured on the ISTE +ASCD website and will enter the Winner's Round.

ROUND 3 — Winner's Round

Three projects will be chosen as winners and will be invited to present at ISTELive*.



RUBRIC HIGHLIGHTS

Projects are assessed on:

1. **Storytelling**
   - Help a broad audience understand and care about the problem, your solution, and its impact.
2. **Defining a Problem Worth Solving**
   - Investigate a real problem in your community with evidence and empathy, and connect it to a UN Sustainable Development Goal (SDG).
3. **Designing the AI-Powered Solution**
   - Build an original, usable, accessible solution where AI plays a meaningful role and can make a lasting difference.
4. **Collaborating, Testing & Iterating**
   - Students lead the work and improve your solution with feedback from people affected, experts, and AI.
5. **Responsible & Critical AI Use**
   - Use AI intentionally, safely, and transparently, with attention to bias, privacy, and inclusion.

You can find the full rubric **here**.

**See full terms and conditions for details.*



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WINNING PROJECTS

The AI Innovator Challenge celebrates the creativity, responsibility, and impact of student innovation.

1. **Student Showcase:** Top scorers in the Finalist Round will be highlighted on the ISTE +ASCD website, giving teams visibility beyond their own schools and communities.
2. **Winning Teams:** The three winning teams will receive travel and accommodations to present their projects live on the global stage at ISTELive 27 in Boston, Massachusetts. This is a chance for students to showcase their ideas in front of educators, leaders, and innovators from around the world.
3. **Recognition for Educators:** Teacher sponsors of winning teams will be recognized for their leadership in guiding students through responsible AI design and innovation.

Participating in the Challenge means more than competing — it's about making a real contribution to your schools as well as local and global communities while providing the opportunity to amplify student voices and have your voice heard on a global stage.

Program Timeline

The AI Innovator Student Challenge runs throughout the school year, giving educators and students time to learn, create, and showcase their ideas. Educators are provided ongoing support, while the Challenge offers clear milestones that keep projects moving forward.

KEY DATES AND STAGES

1. DEVELOPMENT PHASE

- **August - November 2026:** Webinars for district leaders and educators; website and resources go live.
- **November 2026:** Refreshed Lesson Plans and Updated Program Guide launch on website. Submission form opens.
- **Ongoing (Aug–Dec):** Support tips and resources (emails, design prompts, reflection tools).



2. CHALLENGE PHASE

- **November 16, 2026:** Challenge launch. Official kickoff with a launch webinar and resources for teams and educators.
- **January–February 2027:** Additional educator webinars. Students begin prototyping and testing.
- **Ongoing (Jan–March):** Challenge tips and support. Emails, design resources, and reflection tools shared.
- **February 7, 2027:** Final submission deadline. Teams submit digital product/prototype, pitch video, and team story.
- **March 2027:** Judging process completed and Finalists announced.

3. SHOWCASE PHASE

- **April 2027: Winners Announced** — Top three teams invited to ISTELive 2027. Showcase of Finalist projects published on the AI Innovator website.
- **June 2027 (ISTELive 27)** – Top 3 winning teams present in-person on the ISTE+ASCD global stage.

How to Get Involved

There are many ways for educators and students to participate in the AI Innovator Challenge. You can start by heading to the site for yearlong support, dive straight into the Challenge, or do both.

EXPLORE SUPPORTS

- **ISTE+ASCD Connect Community** – Become part of the conversation, share ideas, and access updates.
- **Sign-Up Form** – Complete the form to get updates and access to support materials.
- **Launch Webinar** – Watch the kickoff and learn how to bring innovation to your school.
- **Download the Lessons** - Complete the form to access a lesson guide and all 15 lessons for free.
- **Ongoing Webinars** – Sign up for educator sessions throughout the year to explore strategies, lesson sparks, and examples.

JOIN THE CHALLENGE

- **Challenge Tips & Resources**
  Sign up to receive weekly Challenge emails starting in January 2027.
- **Form a Team**
  Teams of up to three students (ages 13–18) with a teacher sponsor are eligible.
- **Start Creating**
  Use AI tools approved by your school and Studio resources to design your solution.
- **Final Submission (February 7, 2027)**
  Teams submit their digital product/ prototype, pitch video, and team story.





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