

KQED Education Annual Report

2024-2025 SCHOOL YEAR



Photo: Cheyenne Bearfoot

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Kevin
Kunishi



4,000 Reasons to Listen

This past year, KQED took bold steps to elevate youth voice—amplifying student stories, supporting educators, and leading the way on ethical GenAI use in classrooms. And we focused on civic engagement and media literacy with a special Election 2024 project in the Youth Media Challenge where students called upon audiences to come together to create a better world for all. From record-breaking media submissions to national partnerships and teacher-tested resources, we've helped create space for young people to share how they see their world—and why it matters.

2024-2025 BY THE NUMBERS

- Published **4,055 student media pieces** from 27 states on the Youth Media Challenge showcase, which received more than **130,000 views, doubling the previous year's record**
- Brought **63 pieces** from Bay Area youth to KQED's digital shows and airwaves through the Youth Takeover, reaching an **audience of over 1.8 million people**
- Convened **20 Bay Area high school students** as KQED's Youth Advisory Board
- Partnered with **12 public media stations and schools** who shared **142 Youth Media Challenge submissions** created by students in their local communities
- Delivered media literacy training workshops and courses to **6,619 educators**, impacting around **400,000 students**
- Awarded **747 media literacy micro-credentials** and certified **33 new Media Literacy Educators**
- Partnered with **36 California schools and school districts, 6 county offices of education**, and the California Department of Education to deliver professional development and resources for media literacy teaching
- Convened **18 Media Literacy Innovators** from across the country as our teacher advisory board and brought together **14 superintendents and district leaders** from around the Bay Area as our Administrator Advisory Board



Photo:
Cheyenne
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ABOUT KQED EDUCATION

KQED is a not-for-profit public media station and NPR and PBS member station in the San Francisco Bay Area. KQED makes award-winning digital, radio, and TV programming and has a track record in education spanning more than 70 years.

The KQED Education Department's north star is to elevate diverse youth voices. We are uniquely positioned to combine award-winning media literacy and media making resources with the power of public media. Our staff includes teachers, media makers, and journalists who create free, ready-to-use, media literacy curriculum that deeply engages students and hands-on professional development for teachers. Through our suite of programs, we train teachers to meaningfully incorporate media literacy into K-12 classrooms and develop students' critical thinking skills about real-world issues, which are core to a healthy democracy, and promote civic engagement across generations.

Dear Friends,

What a year! When it seems our country and even local communities couldn't be more divided, questions about whose voices matter continue to be raised. Misinformation and disinformation plague nearly all information channels. This reality underscores the critical role KQED tries to fill.

Even during a very difficult period, KQED's education department had our most successful year on record. More than 4,000 students created and submitted audio, video and graphic media projects to our publicly available Youth Media Challenge Showcase. This is more than double our original goal. I review many of these submissions and am moved, more informed and delighted whenever I do—sometimes all within the same piece!

Topics in the news and on social channels may be widely debated, but KQED's curricula and resources help students form their own educated opinions. These resources build critical thinking, media analysis and evaluation skills, and make space for students to practice their civic engagement in meaningful ways that affect their lives and communities even now.

One high school teacher told us: "In today's polarized social and political climate, it is more crucial than ever to equip young people with the skills to engage in informed, respectful civic discourse." As they share their own perspectives with a real audience outside their own classrooms, the KQED Youth Media Challenge helps students encounter and consider other students' perspectives whose experiences may differ from their own. Another teacher told us they believe that "the curriculum should match real life" and that "none of this matters, none of this is civics if it never leaves the classroom." Hear, hear!

In fact, a few years ago, researchers from Rutgers University and Stanford University studied the impact of student civic voice and dialogue on politically diverse young people in rural, suburban and urban settings using one of KQED's election-related civic media projects. They found evidence of improved student civic engagement, a deeper understanding of their role as American citizens and a hopeful orientation toward the future. Students benefit from understanding issues that affect their lives, sharing their own views and encountering the perspectives of others from different backgrounds and regions.

The first few pages of this report share all about the impact of the KQED Youth Media Challenge and the partners we've worked with on it, as well as highlight some student media pieces for you to sample.

KQED also had great success with our professional development for educators! The National Association for Media Literacy Education (NAMLE) recently evaluated KQED Teach, our free, online collection of media literacy courses. They found that educators who participate in those courses reported extremely high ratings of overall course effectiveness and high levels of student engagement and achievement in related assignments. One really cool finding was that these positive results held true across all types of educators—regardless of grade level, years of teaching experience or political orientation. Great, right? You can learn more on page 10.

This year we took on the challenge of guiding educators through the fear they're feeling about artificial intelligence. We explored its intersection with our media literacy work and built a set of GenAI guidelines, hosted workshops and wrote new KQED Teach courses. The response was huge. You can read more about it on page 8.

Finally, as I write this letter in July, long before you will read it, public media continues to serve its communities under threats of every kind. Even KQED has had to reduce staffing and expenses in these uncertain times—and yes, those cuts affected our education department, too. But what I will confidently tell you is that we are still here. And we will continue to be here for years to come to serve you—our heart and soul. KQED is here to serve students, educators and everyone around the Bay and nationwide who trust and look to us for media literacy guidance and inspiring youth stories and ideas. Thank you for your continued support and partnership in this work.

Warmly,



Michelle Parker
Executive Director, Education



Photo: Estefany Gonzalez

Holy Youth Engagement, Batman!

THE KQED YOUTH MEDIA CHALLENGE – INCREASING IMPACT

The [KQED Youth Media Challenge](#) (YMC) invites middle and high school students to share how they see their world, themselves, and their future by making and publishing their own media. Teachers choose from three free standards-aligned project types—informational, personal narrative, or commentary—that come complete with ready-to-use, modifiable curricular supports in English and Spanish.

This school year, students from across the country published more than 4,000 media pieces on the [Youth Media Challenge Showcase](#)—**nearly twice as many as last year**—and received more than 130,000 audience views. From powerful First Person narrative podcasts to entertainingly educational Show What You Know mini-documentaries, these pieces remind audiences that our communities are made richer and stronger when we connect across generations. And the surge in submissions indicates these projects are filling a need in classrooms and a desire to hear what youth have to say. A couple of stand out pieces from this year include:

- [Financial Literacy in Schools](#) by Kate R., Krystal Z., Oliver E., and Kavya B.
- [Proud to be Mexican](#) by Julia S.



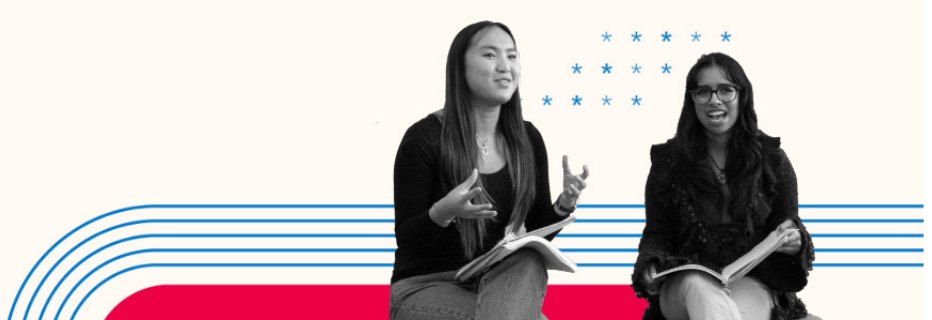
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ELECTION 2024 CALL FOR CHANGE

Since 2012, KQED has helped teachers across the country meaningfully connect their students to current events with election projects that center youth voice and media making. This year, we partnered with PBS LearningMedia and the National Writing Project on a special election edition of our Call for Change commentary project. We invited students to choose a local, national or international issue they care about—ranging from topics like school start times, gun control, and climate change—research it, then share their ideas for making the world a better place. Many pieces focused on civil dialogue rather than election politics, calling on audiences to rejoin the civic conversation as neighbors who are passionate about creating a better world for all. Explore some of our favorite audio, video, and cartoon commentary pieces on the [Election 2024 playlist](#).

KQED Election 2024

Call for Change



HIGHLIGHTS FROM THIS YEAR

More students than ever from across the U.S. shared their learning, experiences and stories this year on the YMC Showcase across a wide range of subject areas from [STEM history](#) to [nuclear disarmament](#) to [freshman basketball](#). KQED created playlists to highlight issues that were top of mind for students, like [immigration](#) and [mental health](#). We also collected pieces that [spark joy](#) or [stood out to staff](#). As part of these media projects, students demonstrated [effective teamwork](#), [impressive graphic design](#), and [sophisticated video/audio editing skills](#). They advocated for civic engagement around topics that spanned from local [climate concerns](#) to [international relations](#). Students expressed diverse and nuanced viewpoints. In their producer statements, students shared passionate messages about why making media matters to them. For example, Anaya J. from the Bronx, who created a project around the [environmental impacts of transportation](#), stated:

“I want people to know that every action matters, and even the smallest of changes can make a big difference.”



Photo: Kevin Kunishi

BAY AREA STUDENT MEDIA PROJECTS SHINE

Students around the Bay Area continue to impress and inspire us here at KQED.

At **Madison Park Academy**, an arts, media and entertainment-focused school in Oakland Unified, youth voice isn't just encouraged—it's celebrated. This year's Community Showcase featured student-produced YMC pieces from four classrooms that sparked dialogue, pride, and applause. From poetry to podcasting, students stepped into their power as storytellers and change agents. You can hear their voices firsthand in this [YMC Playlist from Madison Park](#) filled with reflections, hopes, and sharp cultural critiques that prove just how tuned-in and fearless young people are when given the mic.

In Hayward, **Tennyson High School** has deeply integrated media literacy into instruction and has incorporated the YMC and Youth Takeover program over the last four years. Students there don't just make media—they use it to move people. From op-eds on immigration to powerful reflections on mental health, Tennyson's students consistently show up with media that's bold, thoughtful, and intersectional. Check out these standout pieces from their YMC submissions:

- [The Color Magnets](#) by Trisha G.
- [Grateful](#) by Richard A.



Photo: Kevin Kunishi

NEW PARTNERS TO REACH MORE YOUTH

KQED is excited about our new partnerships and the opportunities they bring to students across the country to creatively and powerfully demonstrate learning and share their personal experiences on a range of topics.

KQED partnered with public media stations to integrate the Youth Media Challenge into station-developed curricula as well as create custom project pages on the YMC site that welcome students across the country to share what they learned. **GBH** (Boston) launched YMC projects about nuclear disarmament and student civic action, **Montana PBS** encouraged students to share their individual stories, and **WSKG** (Ohio) invited student documentaries that explored their great state.

Students also have opportunities to explore U.S. History and how it connects to their own lives through KQED's partnership with the **National Writing Project's American Creed** initiative, as well as in collaboration with **PBS LearningMedia** and the upcoming PBS documentary ***The American Revolution***, premiering in fall 2025. **WHYY** is one of several stations that have been awarded grants to provide educator engagement opportunities that will include [The American Revolution Youth Media Challenge](#). Lisa Wilk, director of school partnerships at WHYY, shared her excitement to participate as the station brings it to teachers in Philadelphia and Camden, NJ: "The Challenge is a great opportunity for our station to combine our work around the America 250 commemoration and youth media into one impactful project."

Building on our local partnership with **826 Valencia**, we are now collaborating with **826 National** on teacher professional development opportunities for the back-to-school season. These initiatives, along with another new teacher professional development partnership with **Adobe**, will round out an exciting fall professional development schedule. These expanded partnerships will provide more opportunities for educators to find the magic in bringing Youth Media Challenge projects to their students and the lasting impacts they can have.

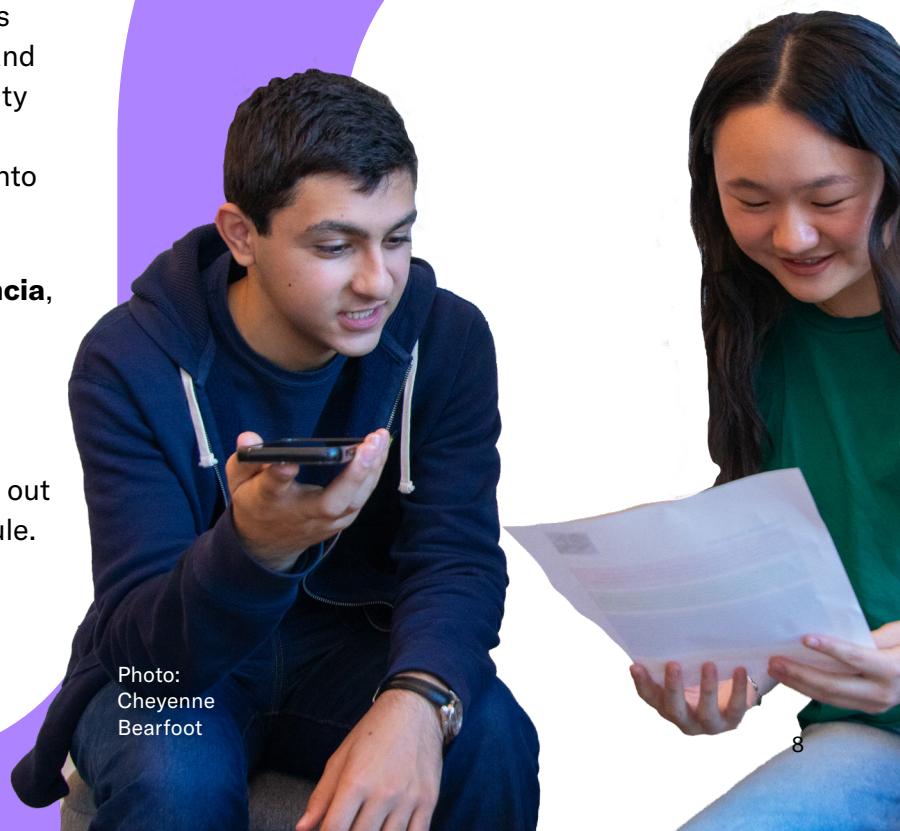


Photo:
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AI is Here. So Are We.

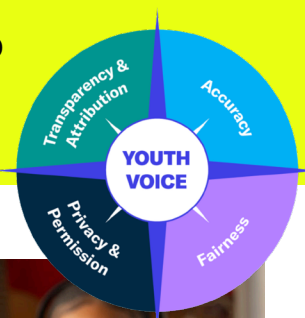
Standing apart from the corporate race to AI, KQED is committed to serving as a reliable source for high-quality, free professional development (PD) and classroom resources. We set out to help educators confidently navigate this new technology and help students use it in a way that enhances—rather than undermines—their learning. We spent a year test-driving generative AI tools, talking to teachers, and listening to students. This work culminated in the release of our wildly popular **Generative AI Guidelines** and our new GenAI course for educators.

As a public media station committed to elevating diverse youth voices, KQED has a unique perspective to offer teachers in this moment. Our education team's backgrounds include not only experience in classroom teaching, but also in journalism and media making. We look at GenAI as a real-world challenge that students need to learn to navigate. The best way to assist them is to help their teachers feel more confident in providing meaningful guidelines and asking the right questions.

[Generative AI Guidelines](#) for student media creators provide emerging best practices for responsible use of AI for generating text, images, videos, or audio in the classroom. The guidelines are full of practical tips for prompting students to think critically and act ethically in their use of AI and can be used in any classroom (as well as the KQED Youth Media Challenge). We first shared the guidelines in a series of highly attended workshops.

“I love being able to learn ways to coach students in constructive ways to use a tool that will undoubtedly be important in their future.”

— GenAI workshop participant



Next, we released the accompanying [Partner with GenAI to Elevate Authentic Student Voice](#) course on KQED Teach. This free, self-paced course helps teachers build on their existing expertise to integrate best practices and practical tips for how to coach students to use GenAI responsibly, as a tool to support critical thinking and creativity. Course participants learn by doing, through customizing and testing a ChatGPT prompt so that it gives the right level of support and feedback to students.

Following up on the enormous popularity of the guidelines, workshops, and course, we developed two more courses (released in August 2025) that further integrate best practices in media literacy with guidelines for using AI:

[Break Through AI Bias to Analyze and Create Media](#)

[Outsmart AI to Spot Misinformation and Evaluate Sources](#)

[Explore all KQED's AI resources](#)

You Want Impact? We'll Give You Impact!

Beyond the headlines you've already learned about in this report, KQED has even more examples to share about how our work has impacted young people and educators this year.

YOUTH VOICE MATTERS

The future is youth media makers. We believe that the diverse ideas, opinions and perspectives of young people should and must be represented in public broadcasting because oftentimes their voices go unheard. This year marked a critical junction for our **Youth Takeover program**, which completed its eighth season. It was our largest classroom cohort yet, serving over 300 students from 12 high schools across seven Bay Area counties. During our annual Youth Takeover Week in April, we published 63 total pieces across broadcast and digital platforms. We produced 42 television interstitials with the **Youth Advisory Board (YAB)** and several high schools that were broadcast on KQED Channel 9 and KQED Plus. These short-form segments allowed youth voices to reach new heights — achieving 1 million views for the season.

“As a teacher, witnessing these students transform from hesitant speakers to confident storytellers was profoundly impactful. They learned to articulate their thoughts with intention, reminding us all of the importance of listening to young voices. Their powerful audio pieces truly captured what life is like for young people today, and I am grateful for the opportunity to support their journeys.”

– Leon Sykes, Fremont High School



Photo: Kevin Kunishi

YMC: PODCASTING DEMOCRACY

Seeded by a grant from the U.S. Department of Education, KQED created project-based units for middle and high school students this past year called **Podcasting Democracy: Understanding the Constitution to Inspire Civic Change**. Linking student audio creation with civic engagement, the curriculum will engage students in learning about our nation's founding documents, then support them in using the Constitution to advocate for change in a commentary podcast. The curriculum was developed in partnership with classroom educators and will be piloted in classrooms across the U.S. this fall, furthering KQED's mission to meaningfully elevate diverse student voices. As one pilot teacher put it, sharing projects to the Youth Media Showcase means her students will learn that “their voices, their learning, and their experiences have value, and that they too can have a seat at the table.”



Photo: Cheyenne Bearfoot

LEVELING UP EDUCATORS' MEDIA LITERACY SKILLS & CONFIDENCE

Providing teachers around the country with high-quality media literacy professional development is core to our efforts. During the past year, more than 5,300 teachers attended one of our live PD workshops, and more than 1,000 educators earned over 3,400 [KQED Teach](#) course completion certificates. Teachers love the hands-on approach we take to professional learning. We don't simply supply a scripted lesson—we engage teachers as producers and creators of their own media, building confidence to integrate media literacy into curriculum in authentic, student-centered ways.

Professional learning with KQED is fun and effective — and the research backs us up! This was made clear in an in-depth evaluation conducted by the **National Association for Media Literacy Education (NAMLE)** in the spring of 2025. The report found that teachers who completed KQED Teach courses gained confidence, practical strategies, and a stronger sense of purpose in bringing media literacy into their classrooms. Educators consistently reported **increased student engagement, higher-quality media projects, and stronger critical thinking among students**. The project-based design stood out as especially effective. Results were positive across grade levels, teaching experience and political backgrounds, highlighting the broad, adaptable impact of the platform.



BY THE NUMBERS

- 5,307 teachers attended a live or virtual PD workshop
- 3,449 KQED Teach course certificates earned by educators
- 1,312 unique educators enrolled in courses
- Educators participated in KQED PD from all 50 U.S. states and 36 countries
- Over 90% of surveyed educators rated KQED Teach courses as “very effective”
- Most frequently praised elements: hands-on pedagogy and the resulting impact of media making on instruction and student engagement

“I taught a unit on bias this year, totally based on a KQED Teach course... I wouldn't have known where to begin without it.”

– Teacher, Clark County School District

MEDIA LITERACY CERTIFICATION: SUNSETTING A SUCCESSFUL PROGRAM

KQED sunsetted the **PBS Media Literacy Educator Certification** on June 1, 2025. Launched in 2018 in partnership with PBS, this certification recognizes educators for developing their own media literacy skills and imparting those same critical competencies to the students they teach. KQED certified **181 educators** for demonstrating mastery in media literacy education by completing a set of 8 micro-credentials. In addition to those exceptional educators who achieved full certification, we awarded **3,414 micro-credentials** to people across the United States. We are so proud of this program and celebrate each of these educators, whether they earned one micro-credential or completed certification. We remain fully committed to supporting media literacy education through free KQED Teach courses, workshops and youth media curriculum for classrooms.

“The additional learning I completed in order to earn this certification, and the strategies I constructed to enact lessons toward this certification, have already strengthened my practice. I am also now a recognized leader in my school community for media-based instruction and assessment.”

— High School English Teacher

LEARNING FROM OUR ADMINISTRATOR ADVISORY BOARD

We know that Bay Area School districts are at different stages when it comes to AI tools and many teachers seek clear guidance, especially around media literacy and AI misuse. There's strong demand for low-lift, ready-to-use lessons, not just theory. While tools like KQED's GenAI guidelines exist, they have yet to be widely adopted. The 2024–2025 **KQED Admin Advisory Board** meetings provided a timely solution: district leaders from across the Bay Area met quarterly at KQED to share ideas, spotlight what was working, and explore tools. The meetings provided an opportunity for district leaders to gain hands-on experience with KQED's new AI-focused workshops while they were in development. These in-person sessions were important to build regional consistency and connect KQED's resources to district priorities like project-based learning. As a result, KQED has strengthened our GenAI resources for classrooms and raised visibility on our new offerings in partnership with our Admin Advisory Board.



Thank you!

PROGRAMMATIC PARTNERS

KQED expresses deep gratitude to our programmatic partners who play a pivotal role in broadening the reach of our professional development, classroom curriculum and youth media, ensuring their impact reaches a wide array of communities across the nation. Thank you especially to 826 National, AME Institute, Bay Area Writing Project, Beyond100K, Boys and Girls Club of San Leandro, PORTS (a project of California State Parks), California School Library Association, CUE, Community Resources for Science, Facing History and Ourselves California, GBH, Jefferson Public Radio, National Association for Media Literacy Education (NAMLE), National Writing Project, News Literacy Project, Oakland Goes Outdoors (a project of Oakland Unified School District), Oakland Teachers Advancing Climate Action (OTACA), PBS, PBS NewsHour Student Reporting Labs, Bay Area school districts and Bay Area County Offices of Education, Math for America, Montana PBS, New Hampshire Public Radio, PBS SoCal, PBS Wisconsin, Science Friday, Vegas PBS, WEDU, WHYY, WOUB, as well as our technology partners, Adobe, Soundtrap and WeVideo.

We welcome partnerships with education agencies, organizations with educator networks, and educational technology makers to increase communities' access to our free resources. To learn more, contact Almetria Vaba, Director of Partnerships and Distribution, at avaba@kqed.org.

PHILANTHROPIC PARTNERS

Our generous philanthropic partners fuel KQED's free, high-quality programming that elevates diverse youth voices and equips educators to nurture critically engaged, civically active students. We are deeply grateful to all who make this work possible, including the members of KQED and:



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To support our award-winning media literacy and youth voice programming, please contact Danielle Horcabas, Education Grants Manager, at dhorcabas@kqed.org.



Photo:
Estefany
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