



**The Tech
Challenge**

GRAVITATE

to NAVIGATE

2025

2025 Executive Summary

Inspiring a New Generation of Innovators



Inspiring a New Generation of Innovators

About the program

A signature program of The Tech, The Tech Challenge is an annual engineering design challenge for students in Grades 4-12, with a particular focus on girls and other groups that are underrepresented in STEM. Generally, about 45% of participants are girls and roughly 40% of students come from Title I schools. Now entering its 39th year, this program continues to embody The Tech's mission by inspiring the next generation of innovators. Over 44,000 students have participated since the program's inception.

Developing problem-solvers and learning from failure

Beginning in October, participants spend months working with their team to solve a real-world problem. They become deeply engaged in the engineering design process by working to solve each year's unique challenge. Teams document every step of their journey including testing, brainstorming, and most importantly, what they learn through experimentation and failure. The program culminates in an inspiring showcase in the Spring where teams put their solutions to the test.

Thank you volunteers!

In 2025, corporate and individual supporters joined us as volunteers and helped make the Showcase a big success. This year, we had volunteers from **Accenture, Adobe, Agilent, Alphabet, AMAT, Amazon, AMD, Apple, Arista Networks, Arm, Bio-Techne, Blue River Technology, Cinderella Pageant, Cisco Systems, City of Mountain View, Delart Technology Services LLC, eBay, EY, Facebook, Google, Guardant Health, Hathaway Dinwiddie Construction Co., Hitachi Vantara, IBM, Intel, Juniper Networks, Keysight Technologies, Lockheed Martin, Lyten, Marvell Semiconductor, Mission College, Netflix, Nokia, nOps, Northrop Grumman, Nvidia, Oakland Museum of California, Oracle Papros Inc, QuantumScape, Samsung, San Jose State University, SanDisk, SAP, Seagate, Silicon Valley Education Foundation, Snowflake, Sonatus, STMicroelectronics, Stanford University, Tesla, The Tech Interactive, Thermo Fisher Scientific, University of Arizona, Yu-Ai Kai Japanese American Community Senior Service, Zoom and Zygo Corp.** We are grateful to our generous corporate, foundation and individual supporters of The Tech Challenge for helping us inspire the next generation of innovators and problem-solvers. We could not do it without you.

Local, national and global

Our 38 years of Tech Challenge expertise is the foundation of our Design Challenge Learning methodology at The Tech. Design Challenge Lesson plans shared via our website and partners impacted an estimated 568,000 youth this past year. In Kenya, we trained over 19,000 educators in 1,290 schools and are anticipating at least 4,000 students attending the Drop and Dash Showcases. Our goal is that, by 2026, two million people each year will be using Tech-produced materials to develop their problem-solving skills.

Tech Challenge Executive Committee

John Heinlein, Ph.D.,
Committee Chair
Sonatus
The Tech Board

Theodore Lamour,
Vice Chair
Formerly Hitachi Vantara

Courtney Blum
PwC
The Tech Board

Greg Brown
Program Founder
The Tech Board

Prasad Chaparala
Amazon Lab126

Dan Christman
Formerly Marvell
Semiconductor

Sabrina Farmer
GitLab
The Tech Board

Aymerica Gisselbrecht
Tsavorite Scalable
Intelligence
The Tech Board

Tammy Gollotti
Hitachi Vantara

Bill Heil
The Tech Board

Brendan Ittelson
Zoom

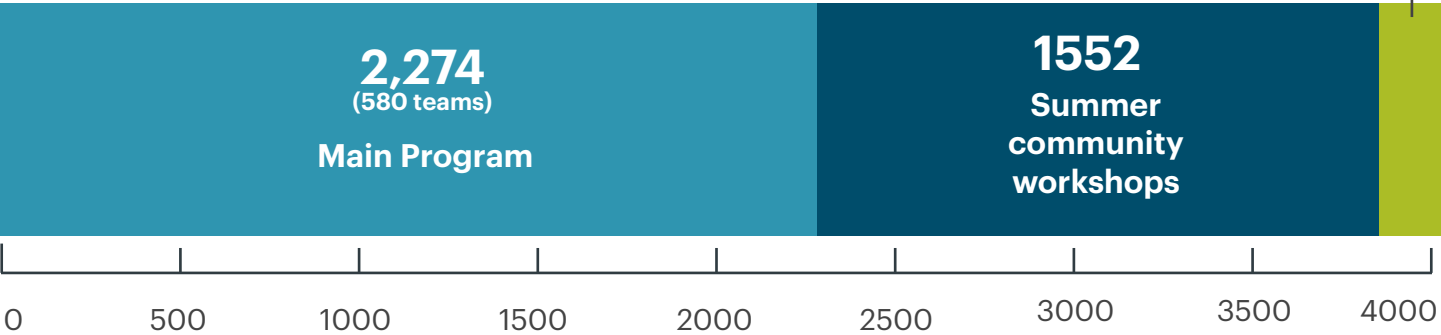
Lindo St. Angel
Amazon
The Tech Board

Ken Washington, Ph.D.
Medtronic
The Tech Board

Total participants served: 3,998

172
(44 teams)

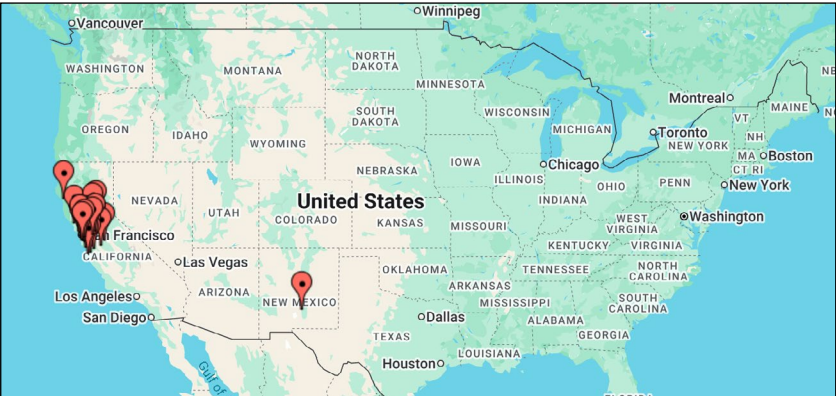
Expansion Program



 **Dual Enrollment!** 166 students earned college credit through Foothill College by participating in The Tech Challenge.

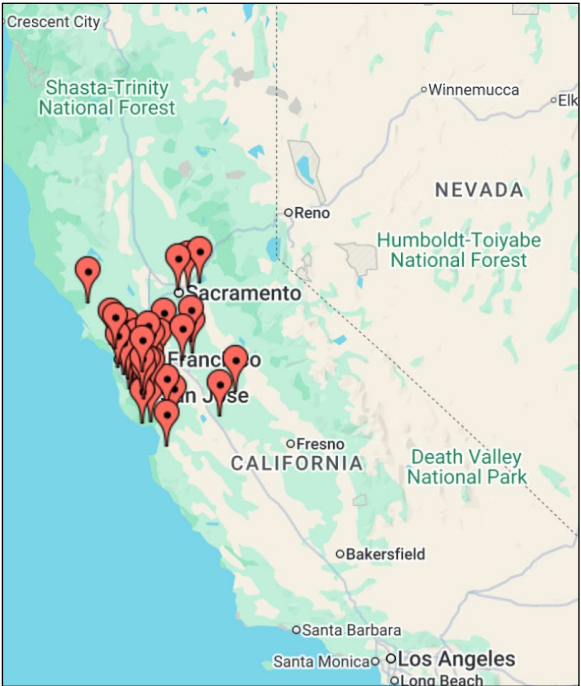
2025 participants came from

United States



- | | | |
|----------------|-----------------|----------------|
| Aptos | Hayward | Oakland |
| Atwater | Hillsborough | Palo Alto |
| Brentwood | Hollister | Pleasanton |
| Campbell | Lathrop | Portola Valley |
| Carmichael | Livermore | Sacramento |
| Corte Madera | Los Altos | Salinas |
| Cumming | Los Altos Hills | San Carlos |
| Cupertino | Los Banos | San Jose |
| Danville | Los Gatos | San Lorenzo |
| Dublin | Menlo Park | San Mateo |
| East Palo Alto | Mescalero, NM | San Ramon |
| Folsom | Milpitas | Santa Clara |
| Fremont | Morgan Hill | Santa Cruz |
| Gilroy | Mountain View | Saratoga |
| Graton | Newark | Seaside |

California



- South San Francisco
- Stockton
- Sunnyvale
- Tiburon
- Tracy
- Union City
- Woodside

The Tech Challenge By the Numbers

Participants



44%

women/girls



55%

men/boys

1%

non-binary or
prefer not to say



37%

of teams came from Title I schools serving low income families.

2025 participants said: **Tech Challenge helped me to:**

90%



Listen to and use other
people's ideas

86%



Have fun with
engineering

85%



Work better
with others

86%



Come up with
more creative
solutions to
problems

79%



Respond better to
setbacks

83%



See that you can
turn your ideas
into a reality

86%



Compare
different
solutions and
choose the
best one

78%



See how you can solve
real world problems
with engineering

75%



Be more
interested in
a job in STEM

Participant feedback: What did they learn?

"I learned how to bring people up when things get rough and to proceed with finding solutions to problems. How to work and communicate with each other and be more open minded to other people's solutions, not just mine."

"I learned how to work with my team and to be creative and curious. It also helped me be more open to talk to others and explain things more clearly. It also helped me have fun."



"We are capable of doing a lot more than we think we are."



"I learned that sometimes the real challenge is learning to include everyone and consider their ideas."

"Failure isn't a setback, but a way to learn."

"How to make life easier with science, math and engineering."

"I learned about gear ratios, velocity, acceleration, traction, friction and so much more."

Volunteer feedback



"I love seeing them realize things, to see their expressions when they learn or experience something amazing to them. I want them to see what they can do with their brains and hands, to learn that failure is ok if taken as an opportunity to learn. Judging at the Showcase is a fun way to see the culmination of the work they try to do. It isn't successful for them most of the time but the post performance interview is where the time with the kids is most important. I hope I leave a positive impression on them and that makes it meaningful and worthwhile to me."

"I love being able to see the devices and in my small way encourage the teams to succeed! I love when they make it, I love when something does not work as expected and they think on their feet and fix it (or not), I love the camaraderie I see on the teams. I love how teams are so diverse in age, gender, backgrounds... I love seeing the different ideas, and the different implementations of the same idea,... and as an engineer I love the spirit of encouraging and developing the engineering mindset early in life."



"I love to see and experience the enthusiasm of the teams and the results of all their hard work. It is always a treat to see some surprising and innovative ideas become reality. Every year I'm always amazed to see those out of the box designs. That's why I look forward to volunteering for Showcase every year!"

Supporter feedback



“Fostering innovation starts with empowering young minds to tackle real-world challenges through hands-on STEM experiences. We’re inspired by these young innovators who demonstrate that creativity and determination know no age limits. We’re proud to support a program that helps transform today’s curious minds into tomorrow’s technology leaders.”

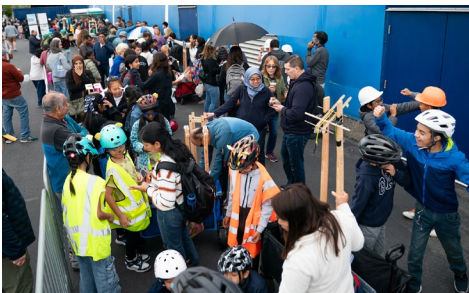
— Michelle Carrega,
Senior Manager, Global University
Recruiting Programs, Snowflake

“Fostering the next generation of innovators requires building skills of collaboration, innovation and understanding that learning from failure is a necessary step to success. The Tech Challenge consistently delivers these three critical elements and keeps participants happily coming back year after year. We are proud to support the Tech Challenge and our employee volunteers are overjoyed at the positive impact they see from this important program.”

— John Heinlein, Ph.D., Chief Marketing Officer at Sonatus and
Chairman, Tech Challenge Executive Committee

“Not only is Nokia a tech company with a presence in the Silicon Valley, but we have a manufacturing facility here that makes compound semiconductors used in telecommunications solutions. It’s critical that we are encouraging kids to see themselves as ‘technological innovators’! This program gives participants a chance to have a real-hands on experience as well as learn valuable collaboration skills. All of this is really important as these children will become our engineers, scientists, and change agents of the future. We are thrilled to have had a chance to be a part of this amazing program.”

— Kim Elise Chrissan, Integration Management Office;
Government Affairs, Nokia



“A lot of people in the community might not realize the profound impact this program has on the future lives of students. The kids see themselves differently after they participate in the Tech Challenge. They realize they have more options than they thought they did. We’re helping young people at a very key moment in their lives, when they can make decisions and have insights about themselves that can affect them positively for the rest of their lives.”

— Greg Brown, Program Founder, The Tech Challenge and
Board Member, The Tech Interactive

Educator feedback

“Throughout the Tech Challenge, my students developed stronger logical thinking and complex problem-solving skills. They had to constantly apply math and physics concepts like potential and kinetic energy, friction, and momentum. They practiced iteration by testing and redesigning their device multiple times, and learned how to break large problems into smaller, solvable parts. I also saw growth in teamwork, perseverance, and communication, especially as they encountered failures and had to collaborate on real solutions to meet the challenge goals.”

— Alexis Ahumada Lara, 3rd Street Community Center

“I love encouraging my students to take on the Tech Challenge! It opens their minds and inspires them to think creatively and tackle real-world problems in exciting new ways. They build incredible skills—like teamwork, innovation, and out-of-the-box thinking—and it’s amazing to watch them grow. My favorite moments are when you can see the lightbulb go off—when an idea hits and they can’t wait to write it down or start building.”

— Julie Frost, Joseph Weller Elementary School

“For educators, the Tech Challenge provides a meaningful way to connect classroom learning to practical applications, foster critical thinking, and inspire students to explore STEAM fields in a hands-on, engaging environment.”

— Lina Young,
Lairon College
Preparatory Academy

Media Coverage



Videos
[Highlights Video](#)
[Short Video](#)



Photos from Showcase
[Flickr album](#)



Media Coverage

May 7, 2025
[San Jose Mercury News, “Tech Challenge Continues to Inspires Students – and this grown-up”](#)
Reach: 93,000
Media Value: \$26,720.19

May 16, 2025
[Siliconer, “Defying Limits, Gravity Powered Cars: The Tech Challenge 2025 | Siliconer”](#)

Press Release

Total Potential Audience: 134,302,507
267 Pickups, 1293 Engagement Actions
2,190 Release Views & Hits

May 7, 2025
[PR Newswire, “Students Defy Limits with Gravity-Powered Devices at 38th Annual Tech Challenge”](#)

Thanks for sharing!

The Tech Challenge 2025
Marketing Overview

The Tech Challenge 2025 Marketing Strategy is built on key learnings from the previous years experiments, prioritizing the TTC Instagram/ Facebook channel and The Tech Interactive’s LinkedIn. Though the total amount of social media content was lower, the engagement of the posts were higher and led to The Tech Challenge Instagram passing **1K followers!**

One post in particular went viral on Instagram, leading to over **32.4K views** and over **160 engagements**.

Reel insights

That feeling when all those nights of testing, failing, iter...
May 5 · Duration 0:09

158

0

13

2

Overview ⓘ

Views	32,467
Watch time	2d 0h 48m 58s
Interactions	173
Profile activity	9

Views ⓘ

32,467
Views

Thank you 2025 supporters!

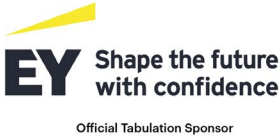


FOUNDING SUPPORTERS

Barbara and
Bill Heil



PRINCIPAL SUPPORTERS



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oneZero Financial Systems

Plug and Play
Qatalyst Partners
Sonatus
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