

# 3M Young Scientist Challenge Names 10 Finalists for 2026 National Competition

*Students aged 11 to 14 recognized for innovative robotics, safety and climate solutions; earn chance at title of "America's Top Young Scientist"*

ST. PAUL, Minn. & CHARLOTTE, N.C., July 6, 2026 /PRNewswire/ -- 3M and Discovery Education today announced the 10 finalists in the 2026 3M Young Scientist Challenge, the nation's premier middle school science competition. Now in its 19<sup>th</sup> year, the annual challenge invites students in fifth through eighth grade to think creatively and apply the power of STEM to develop real-world solutions.

Each of the 10 finalists receive an exclusive mentorship with a 3M scientist and at the final event in October, they have the chance to win a \$25,000 grand prize and the title of "America's Top Young Scientist." They will work alongside their 3M scientist mentors throughout the summer to gain hands-on experience that will advance the development of their solution.

The top 10 2026 3M Young Scientist Challenge finalists are as follows (in alphabetical order by last name):

**Ahmed Abdelsalam**, Cambridge, Mass., Darby Vassall Upper School, Cambridge Public Schools  
**Aaisha Asif**, Sarasota, Fla., Pine View, Sarasota County Schools  
**Raji Doshi**, Farmington, Conn., Talcott Mountain Academy, Private School  
**Aiden Jo**, Houston, Texas, The Village School, Houston Independent School District  
**Roy Kim**, Beaverton, Ore., Whitford Middle School, Beaverton School District  
**Arika Kundu**, Shorewood, Minn., Minnetonka Middle School East, Minnetonka Public Schools  
**Sharvi Mahajan**, San Diego, Calif., Bernardo Heights Middle School, Poway Unified School District  
**Millie Pradawong**, Fairfax, Va., Thoreau Middle School, Fairfax County  
**Naboshree Santra**, Oviedo, Fla., Jackson Heights Middle School, Seminole County Public Schools  
**Abigail Stein**, Nashville, Tenn., Harding Academy, Nashville Independent Schools

"The 3M Young Scientist Challenge brings together student curiosity, scientific thinking and 3M mentorship to turn promising ideas into real solutions," said William Brown, 3M Chairman and CEO. "3M is focused on helping these young innovators strengthen their ideas and apply science in ways that can make a meaningful impact."

This year's 10 finalists, aged 11 to 14, each spotted an everyday problem, developed an innovative solution, and pitched their project through a one- to two-minute entry video. Their proposals align to two of 3M's 49 technology platforms, including Climate Tech and Safety. An esteemed group of judges, including 3M scientists and leaders in education from across the country, evaluated the entries based on creativity, scientific knowledge and communication effectiveness.

"The finalists of this year's 3M Young Scientist Challenge prove you can be a scientist at any age," said Brian Shaw, chief executive officer at Discovery Education. "Each remarkable student pursued their curiosity with persistence, turning an idea into an innovation. We cannot wait to see where their ideas take them."

## Next steps in the competition

Each of the 10 finalists will participate in an exclusive summer mentorship program with a 3M scientist. These mentors will provide guidance and advice to help advance each finalist's solution. Then, on October 12-13, all 10 finalists will gather at the 3M Innovation Center in St. Paul, Minn., to go head-to-head in the final interactive competition.

At this final event, each finalist will participate in a series of live challenges before presenting their final project and answering questions from a panel of judges. At the close of the competition, one finalist will be named the grand prize winner, receiving \$25,000 and the title of America's Top Young Scientist.

## Previous competition winners and alumni achievements

Previous challenge finalists and 3M scientists have created solutions for a wide variety of real-world problems, including cybersecurity, coral reef health, water conservation, food safety, energy consumption, air pollution and transportation efficiency. Former America's Top Young Scientists have given TED Talks, filed patents and founded nonprofits. In addition, a 3M Young Scientist Challenge Alumni Network was formed in fall 2022 and includes more than 100 former challenge winners, finalists and mentors, who take part in networking opportunities and more. Past honors include:

Gitanjali Rao became TIME's first-ever Kid of the Year in 2020  
Liam McCarty was named to the Forbes 30 Under 30 list in 2022  
Heman Bekele was TIME's 2024 Kid of the Year

### **Learning resources for all educators and students**

The 3M Young Scientist Challenge is complemented by Young Scientist Lab, a free digital resource program from 3M and Discovery Education that gives every student, regardless of background, access to standards-aligned, hands-on science experiences designed to spark curiosity and build STEM skills. Students, teachers and families of all skill levels can explore, transform and innovate the world around them. Young Scientist Lab resources are also available through Discovery Education Experience, the essential companion for engaged PreK-12 classrooms.

To learn more about the 3M Young Scientist Challenge and meet the 2026 finalists, visit [YoungScientistLab.com](https://www.YoungScientistLab.com).

### **About 3M**


3M (NYSE: MMM) is focused on transforming industries around the world by applying science and creating innovative, customer-focused solutions. Our multi-disciplinary team is working to solve tough customer problems by leveraging diverse technology platforms, differentiated capabilities, global footprint, and operational excellence. Discover how 3M is shaping the future at [3M.com/news](https://www.3M.com/news).

### **About Discovery Education**

Discovery Education is a global education technology leader whose innovative solutions empower educators and progress student learning. Discovery Education's solutions have served more than 100 million students globally, supporting effective teaching and learning in 45% of U.S. K-12 schools and in 100+ countries and territories. The company's portfolio includes award-winning core and supplemental curriculum, high-quality standards-aligned content, and AI-enabled teaching and learning tools. Solutions span math, science, literacy, social studies, and career-connected learning, including instructionally-aligned content developed through one-of-a-kind partnerships with industry leaders to bring real-world relevance into every lesson. Learn more at [www.DiscoveryEducation.com](https://www.DiscoveryEducation.com).

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