

# Virtual School Meanderings

**March 12, 2025**

**March 2025 EdTech Catalyst: Pitch contest timeline, AI in literacy, and more**

Filed under: [virtual school](#) — Michael K. Barbour @ 1:37 pm

Tags: [cyber school](#), [education](#), [high school](#), [Michigan](#), [Michigan Virtual School](#), [MVS](#), [newsletter](#), [virtual school](#)

An item from a US-based K-12 online learning program.

[View in browser](#)



## ***Michigan Virtual's* fourth annual EdTech Pitch Contest & Innovation Bootcamp**

Do you have an innovative idea that could transform education through technology? We are excited to announce the fourth annual EdTech Pitch Contest & Innovation Bootcamp, designed to help educators, entrepreneurs, and school leaders bring their edtech ideas to life. This year's event offers expert mentorship, startup funding, and the opportunity to connect with industry leaders shaping the future of learning.

The Innovation Bootcamp, held virtually June 17-19, provides hands-on training and coaching to help participants refine their ideas and develop strong business models. Whether you're an educator with a problem-solving mindset or an entrepreneur exploring new ways to enhance learning, this immersive experience will equip you with the tools and insights needed to turn your idea into action.

All bootcamp participants will also be considered for the EdTech Pitch Contest, where five finalists will compete for over \$22,000 in startup grants and professional support. The final live pitch event

takes place online on June 26. Winners will receive financial support, legal consultation, and marketing strategy assistance to help launch their ideas into real-world impact.

Applications open in April and close May 26, with finalists announced in early June. Don't miss your chance to be part of this exciting event! For details on eligibility, application guidelines, and key dates, [visit our website](#).

## **Thank you to our sponsors and partners!**

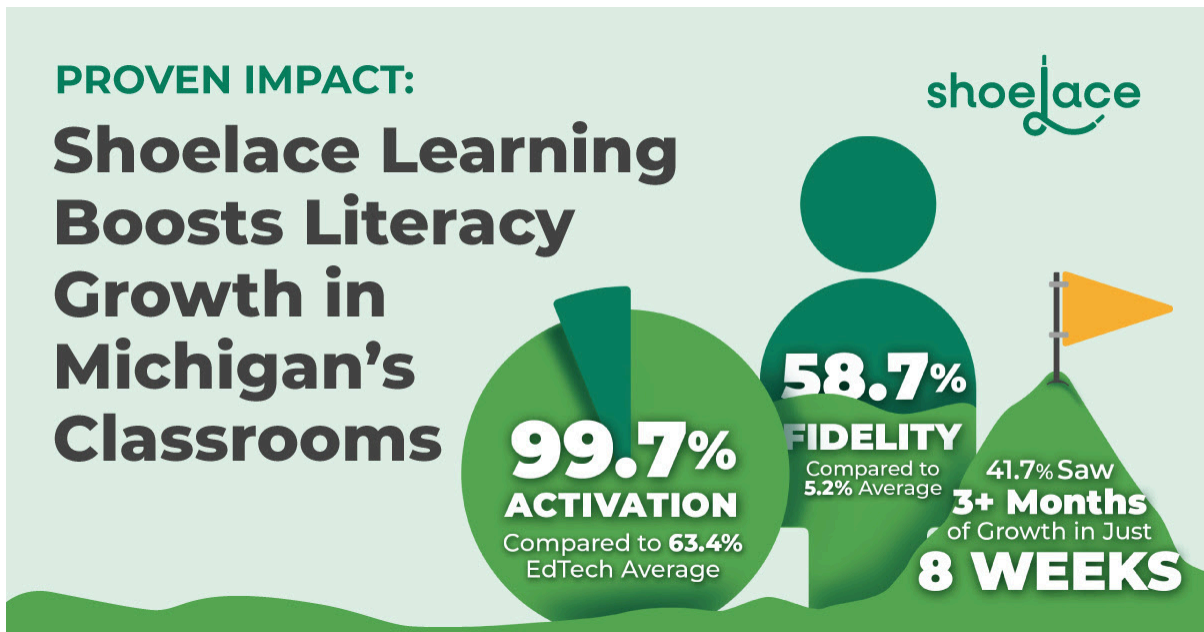
The success of our EdTech Pitch Contest and Innovation Bootcamp is made possible by the generous support of our sponsors and partners. The [Michigan SBDC](#) and [Spartan Innovations](#) from the MSU Research Foundation play integral roles in our bootcamp programming, while [Michigan Creative](#) and [Foster Swift](#) provide essential startup services for our pitch contest winners.

Financial sponsorship is provided by the [MEA's Center for Leadership and Learning](#), [D2L](#), and [Dewpoint](#). The MEA has stepped up as a Valedictorian-level sponsor for 2025, not only providing financial support but also helping spread awareness about the program to educators across Michigan.

Chad Williams, MEA Senior UniServ Consultant for Professional Issues, shared: “The Michigan Education Association (MEA) is honored to sponsor *Michigan Virtual's* EdTech Pitch Contest 2025, reinforcing our shared mission to uplift Michigan's educational community. This dynamic showcase provides a platform for our state's talented educators to spotlight their innovative ideas, addressing real-world classroom challenges and enhancing student learning experiences. By supporting this initiative, both MEA and *Michigan Virtual* demonstrate a steadfast commitment to empowering educators, fostering creativity, and driving educational excellence across Michigan.”

## **Interested in partnering or sponsoring?**

If you or your organization would like to partner with or sponsor the EdTech Innovation Bootcamp and Pitch Contest, please contact Scott Watkins at [swatkins@michiganvirtual.org](mailto:swatkins@michiganvirtual.org).



## ***Michigan Virtual* pilots game-based literacy program with Shoelace Learning**

At a time when educators are focused on reading proficiency more than ever, *Michigan Virtual* is exploring innovative approaches that make literacy both effective and engaging. In fall 2024, we partnered with [Shoelace Learning](#) to investigate whether game-based learning could transform how elementary students develop and practice essential reading skills.

Shoelace Learning offers two interactive reading comprehension games—Dreamscape and Dreamseeker Drift—designed to motivate students while reinforcing key literacy skills. Over an eight-week period, 13 Michigan elementary school classrooms integrated these games into their reading instruction. Students engaged with the platform by answering reading comprehension questions to progress through the games, while teachers observed its impact on confidence, fluency, and overall literacy skills.

The results of this pilot were promising. Among the 300 participating students, 58.7% met the fidelity benchmark of using the platform consistently, and engagement remained high throughout the study. Students who played regularly saw measurable growth in their Reading Comprehension Level (RCL), with 42% of students who played with fidelity demonstrating the equivalent of at least three months of reading growth in just eight weeks.

Additionally, teachers overwhelmingly reported positive impacts on students' reading confidence and enjoyment, with 84.6% noting an increase in vocabulary development.

Despite these successes, the study highlighted key considerations for implementing game-based literacy tools effectively. Teachers noted that while the platform was engaging, there was a learning curve in integrating it into their instruction. The findings suggest that ongoing professional development and in-class support are essential for maximizing the impact of such digital interventions. Furthermore, while most students benefited from the program, those who engaged more consistently saw the greatest improvements, reinforcing the importance of structured implementation.

This pilot aligns with our vision to be Michigan's leader for innovation in education. As we continue to explore new edtech solutions, we invite education entrepreneurs and school leaders to collaborate

with us in future pilots. By working together, we can advance innovation and ensure that Michigan students have access to the best learning opportunities available.

A more [in-depth report on the outcomes of the pilot](#) is available on our website.



## Heading to ASU + GSV and the AI Show? Let's connect!

Will you be attending the 2025 ASU+GSV Summit and The AI Show in San Diego this April? If so, we'd love to connect! *Michigan Virtual* is hosting over 50 educators from Michigan's Future of Learning Council and the Virtual Learning Leadership Alliance, and we want to bring together all Michigan educators, edtech entrepreneurs, and industry leaders attending the conference.

Stay in the loop on Michigan-specific meetups, pre-conference "Know Before You Go" sessions, and our daily conference newsletter, which will feature session recommendations, insider tips, and exclusive details on when and where *Michigan Virtual* staff and partners will be presenting.

Reach out to Scott Watkins at [swatkins@michiganvirtual.org](mailto:swatkins@michiganvirtual.org) to get connected. Let's make the most of this incredible gathering—see you in San Diego!

## Stay connected

Don't miss out on the latest updates, insights, and opportunities *Michigan Virtual* has to offer. Follow us and stay connected with the Michigan innovation community using our socials link below.

## Did you miss our last newsletter?

Read our [February 2025 Issue](#)