

Focusrite Group EDU Summit 2/2026



Focusrite Group recently hosted its second annual Focusrite EDU Summit, August 13–14 at Create-it Studios in Franklin, Tennessee. The event brought together approximately 20 educators and industry professionals representing a broad cross-section of educational institutions from across the Southeast, along with additional participants from the Nashville area and abroad.

Organized by Bryan Castle, Focusrite EDU Director, and John Merchant (pictured above), Director of Partner Development, Focusrite Group Professional, the two-day summit provided a forum for thought leadership, collaboration and the exchange of ideas around the technologies, teaching methods and facility strategies shaping the next generation of music and audio professionals.

This year's summit centered on two primary themes: teaching and creating immersive 3D audio experiences, and the ways network-centric system design can help educational institutions maximize the flexibility and adaptability of their studios and recording facilities. "The EDU Summit gives us a unique opportunity to move beyond the typical product conversation and spend meaningful time listening to educators and learning about the challenges they're facing," says Castle, who served as MC for Thursday evening's welcome dinner and Friday's Summit program.

“Whether the conversation is about immersive audio, networked facilities, remote production or AI, our goal is to better understand what schools and their students need today and where music and audio education is heading. That exchange is incredibly valuable, and it’s why we plan to continue expanding these events.”

This year’s expanded program included workshops and discussions on studio design, immersive audio tools, remote recording, networked audio and 3D audio production concepts and applications. Sessions explored both the creative and practical considerations surrounding immersive audio, including the growing accessibility and affordability of the technology for academic institutions, available creative tools, and approaches to integrating immersive production into existing curricula. The network-centric portion of the Summit examined how technologies such as Dante can allow schools to make more effective use of classrooms, studios and production spaces while creating systems that can evolve as institutional and student needs change.

Guest speakers included Michael Orlowski, who discussed the mission and vision behind Create-it Studios; Vince Lepore, presenting on maximizing classrooms and facilities through Dante; Nuno Fonseca, who led a Sound Particles session that included binaural listening demonstrations; Lasse Nipkow, who explored immersive music production pedagogy; and Brad Berridge, who addressed immersive audio applications spanning studio and live production. Beyond the formal sessions, the Summit included dedicated time for informal networking and discussion, giving members of the Focusrite Group an opportunity to hear directly from educators about the opportunities and challenges they are encountering in their programs.

Among the most prominent topics was the growing role of artificial intelligence in education. Participants discussed how academic programs are approaching both assistive and generative AI, including questions surrounding how much of the technology should be incorporated into curricula and how educators can prepare students for its expanding presence in professional workflows.

Immersive audio was another significant area of discussion. While 3D audio has long been established in film and television post-production, its growing presence in music production and distribution is prompting more schools to consider adding immersive production to their programs. Discussions addressed not only the cost and technology required to build immersive facilities, but also the pedagogical challenges of incorporating immersive production into programs that may currently have limited or no surround-sound curriculum.

Tennessee State University, University of North Alabama, Vanderbilt University, Northwest Mississippi Community College, Dark Horse Academy, SAE Institute Atlanta, SAE Institute Nashville, Music Education Group and Cobb County Schools, along with additional music and audio professionals from the Nashville area and abroad. The mix represented public and private universities, community colleges, career-focused schools and K-12 music technology education, broadening the range

of perspectives represented at this year's event.

The Focusrite Group EDU Summit is part of an ongoing initiative to foster dialogue and collaboration among academic institutions, industry leaders and creators, helping ensure that educators and students have access to the tools, resources and knowledge needed to prepare for a rapidly changing professional audio landscape.

Focusrite Group also acknowledged the Create-it team for its support in hosting the Summit, including Andrew Duncan, Senior Director of Outreach for Full Sail University; Michael Orlowski, co-creator of Create-it; Diego Arvelo, Studio Manager at Create-it Franklin; and Elijah Fregia, engineer at Create-it Springdale. "Events like this are as much about what we learn from educators as what we're able to share with them," Castle adds. "Having people from different types of institutions in the same room creates conversations that simply don't happen anywhere else. That feedback helps us better serve our education partners, and we're committed to continuing the EDU Summit as an ongoing part of our education outreach."

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