

Back to School in the Age of AI: Young Actor Ivan Uses Summer Break to Spotlight Education's Future

Stacie McClam's MR. ADVOCATE brings students, educators and school systems into a timely conversation about artificial intelligence and equity.

BAY AREA, CA, UNITED STATES, August 11, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- For some young people, summer break is more than a pause between school years. It can be a season to create, contribute and use their talents to address issues that will shape their generation.

At 13, actor, singer and dancer [Ivan](#) is spending part of his summer helping audiences confront one of education's most urgent questions: Are school systems preparing children to understand and shape artificial intelligence, or simply react to it?

Ivan appears in [MR. ADVOCATE](#), a 51-minute drama written, directed and produced by former educator and filmmaker [Stacie McClam](#). The film will make its Bay Area theatrical premiere Aug. 15 at Cinemark Century Hilltop 16 in Richmond, California.



MR. ADVOCATE MOVIE AUGUST 15TH PREMIERE

Set inside an urban elementary school focused heavily on standardized-test preparation, MR. ADVOCATE follows Nathan Edwards, a new teacher who creates a six-station AI Show to introduce his third-grade students to artificial intelligence. When the principal moves to cancel it, students, parents and educators are drawn into a larger conflict over innovation, institutional resistance and what schools should prepare children to do.

Ivan's participation gives the story an important student-centered perspective. His film biography notes that he recorded his first track at age 4 and, by age 9, became the youngest artist signed to Concord Records and the youngest member of Kidz Bop. His work has connected him with performers in the United States, United Kingdom and Mexico.

In MR. ADVOCATE, he also represents a generation for whom AI is not a distant possibility. It is already becoming part of how young people learn, communicate, create and solve problems.

That reality is moving faster than many school systems. A 2025 RAND study found that 54% of surveyed students and 53% of English language arts, math and science teachers were using AI for school. Yet only 35% of district leaders reported that their districts provided student AI training, while more than 80% of students said teachers had not explicitly taught them how to use AI for schoolwork.

McClam said the film does not portray AI as either a hero or a villain. Instead, it uses technology to illuminate broader concerns about access, educational purpose, educator wellness and whether all students will have an equitable opportunity to participate in an AI-driven future. "I merge advocacy and film to challenge systems that undervalue our children and staff," McClam said.



IVAN, Actor

Before entering filmmaking, McClam taught in public schools across the United States and abroad. Her classroom experiences, together with her legal training, shaped her approach to telling stories about institutional accountability and the people most affected by educational policy.

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The multigenerational cast includes Rodney Damon Collins, Conrad Cheeks, BZ Cullins, Andre K. Jefferson, Jere’Miah McGhee, Rapheal Gavin, Arturo Spell and Tehan Davis. Beyond AI and education, the film examines grief, depression, burnout and the emotional lives of Black male

educators.

MR. ADVOCATE is the first film in McClam’s planned THE SYSTEM Trilogy, which will explore the promise and challenges of AI across elementary, middle and high school environments. California college and historically Black college and university screening tours are planned for fall 2026.

As families prepare for another school year, McClam hopes the film will inspire parents, educators, administrators and students to ask a deeper question: What kind of future are today’s classrooms preparing children to enter?

For premiere information, screening inquiries and film updates, visit www.MRAdvocateFilm.com.

About Stacie McClam

Stacie McClam is a former educator, law school graduate, filmmaker and founder of School Dismissed, a production company using film to examine the systems shaping students and educators. Her work explores educational equity, artificial intelligence, mental health and institutional change. MR. ADVOCATE is the first installment of her planned THE SYSTEM Trilogy.

Stacie McClam

MR. ADVOCATE

+1 (510) 473-5608

info@schooldismissed.com



Stacie McClam, Former Educator
and Filmmaker

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