



HACIENDA LA PUENTE

UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

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Hacienda La Puente Unified Students Showcase Short Films During Los Angeles Latino Film Festival

CITY OF INDUSTRY – Hacienda La Puente Unified’s first cohort of Youth Cinema Project (YCP) students from California Elementary School and Sparks Middle School walked the red carpet, mingled with industry professionals and watched screenings of their short films during the Los Angeles Latino International Film Festival on June 3 and 4.

Program instructors and YCP mentors selected a fifth-grade class from California Elementary School and a seventh-grade class from Sparks Middle School to attend the annual two-day festival, where students shared three of their student-produced films, engaged in workshops and live reads and reflected on their learnings and creative process during student-led panel discussions.

The YCP curriculum, which launched at the two schools during the 2022-23 school year after a successful summer pilot program, was developed by the Latino Film Institute and founded by award-winning actor, producer and director Edward James Olmos. The program is designed to help students grow their interpersonal skills, promote equity and close the achievement gap while teaching graduate-level filmmaking concepts.

“I learned a ton of new things this year and was able to make stories come to life with my friends and with the help from YCP mentors and awesome teacher, Mrs. Cook” fifth-grader Alinah Jordan said. “I was able to walk the red carpet at an international film festival which was really fun. I liked being a part of the Q&A because when I answered the first question it made me feel proud to be up there. Thank you to everyone that had a part in making this possible for me and my classmates.”

During the screenings, Superintendent Dr. Alfonso Jiménez, HLPUSD Board of Education members, teachers and families gathered in the theater with popcorn and snacks to watch the series of student-produced short films. Each movie featured emotionally stirring themes dealing with real-world social and community issues and concluded with a round of applause from audience members and a special-shout out to the films’ cast and crew.

English Language Arts instructors Kathleen Cook from California Elementary School and Maria Manahan from Sparks Middle School served as the teachers for the year-round program, with YCP mentors assisting with the coursework and filmmaking process twice a week. To further support the District’s young filmmakers, Hacienda La Puente Unified will expand its Video Production career technical education pathway to La Puente High School in the 2023-24 school year.

MORE

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“It was a great feeling to see our movie on the big screen and I was glad that my Ms. Manahan and our parents were also able to join us at the festival,” seventh-grader Roselyn Lopez said. “I learned a lot this year, like how to pitch an idea for a movie and that helped with my self-confidence. The Youth Cinema Project is an excellent program and I am excited for many other students to enjoy it.”

The YCP summer program will also return to Hacienda La Puente Unified at Orange Grove Middle School from June 13 to July 17, where additional elementary and middle school students from across the District will learn the basics of scriptwriting, cinematography, sound mixing and post-production editing.

“Thank you to the Board of Education for supporting the Youth Cinema Project and initiating this incredible opportunity for Hacienda La Puente Unified,” Jiménez said. “Our students have stories to share with the world and this project provides them with the platform, training and industry mentors to succeed. It was inspiring to see their final projects on the big screen and I look forward to seeing what our students come up with this summer. Si se puede.”

PHOTO CAPTIONS:

HLPUSD_YOUTH CINEMA PROJECT 1: Youth Cinema Project students from California Elementary School walk the red carpet and pose for paparazzi during the Los Angeles Latino International Film Festival on June 4.

HLPUSD_YOUTH CINEMA PROJECT 2: Sparks Middle School’s Youth Cinema Project instructor Maria Manahan and seventh-grader Armani Duarte celebrate the success of their three short-film screenings during the Los Angeles Latino International Film Festival on June 4.

HLPUSD_YOUTH CINEMA PROJECT 3: Actors from the new American sitcom “Primo” read Youth Cinema Project student scripts and answer questions from the audience during the Los Angeles Latino International Film Festival.

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