



2025 City Lights Students



© Eugene Kwon
Jafar Panahi, *IT WAS JUST AN ACCIDENT*



© Pamela Gentile
Paul Mescal and Jessie Buckley, *HAMNET*



© Vivien Killilea
Steve Hartman, Joshua Seftel and Lou Bopp, *ALL THE EMPTY ROOMS*

HIGH SCHOOL PARTICIPANTS WILL RECEIVE FREE FESTIVAL STUDENT PASSES THAT ALLOW THEM TO

- View approximately 10-12 film programs over five days.
- Interact with filmmakers, actors, and other film artists, including screenwriters, musicians, and producers.
- Participate in journal writing sessions.
- Learn how films are critiqued, how they are made, how stories are developed, how to critically view a variety of creative media, and how to open their minds to new experiences and viewpoints.
- Continue the experience after the Festival as both students and teachers share what they have learned through the City Lights Project with peers, school, family, and community back home.
- Have the time of their lives in one of the most majestic and beautiful places on the planet—Telluride, Colorado.
- Live and breathe film with students and teachers from other participating schools.
- Share their experiences with passholders and film lovers from around the world.

STUDENTS AREN'T THE ONLY LEARNERS

We consider the City Lights Project a continuing education opportunity for high school teachers as well. One of the teachers' greatest learning opportunities comes from seeing their students quickly expand their ability to express themselves in a highly participatory environment.

- Please take care to ensure that, if selected for the 2026 group, you will be able to take time away from your school over Labor Day Weekend (You will be required to be in Telluride Thursday afternoon through Tuesday morning.), as well as meet with your selected students for up to five study sessions next summer when you will view and discuss one - two feature films per session (we provide the curriculum; you make your own schedule).
- If selected, you will choose eight to ten student finalists who will be narrowed down to six participants by CL faculty based on their written essays (topic will be assigned upon selection), written recommendations from their teachers, and an optional phone interview that will be conducted with a faculty member from your school who has a relationship with the student(s) (e.g., counselor, teacher, principal). To make all the necessary preparations, student finalist selections will be made no later than May 15.

Please note that films selected for City Lights Project curriculum — both prior to, and during the Festival — will be wonderfully challenging. Students will be expected to stretch their emotional and intellectual limits. They will be exposed to ideas and images that may be unpredictable and that they would not necessarily choose at the multiplex, including adult subject matter. We expect participants to be up for this challenge, and we provide a team of experienced TFF faculty to support them through this life-changing experience.

HOW TO APPLY

High schools outside of Telluride will be selected to attend based on their applications (six students accompanied by two teachers from each school). One school annually comes from the Telluride R-1 School District. Teachers interested in providing this opportunity for their students must simply complete the attached application form and email to the City Lights Coordinator at citylights@telluridefilmfestival.org.

Use as much or as little space as you need on separate pages to answer each question to your satisfaction. **Completed applications must be received in our offices no later than March 31, 2026.** Late applications may not be accepted.

WHY APPLY

By attending one of the most exciting film festivals in the world, students (and teachers) will have the opportunity not only to screen some of the best and newest selections from world cinema, but also to discuss these films and interact with other students, filmmakers, special Festival guests, Festival staff and general passholders. They will develop lifelong friendships with the peers they meet through this program, find a new confidence in their own abilities and thought processes, and expand their way of looking at the world as well as themselves.

WHO SHOULD APPLY

Teachers whose students are interested in the humanities (history, literature, the visual arts, writing, film, music, etc.) and who would like to use an experience such as the City Lights Project as a launching point for further arts education efforts, using the study materials provided by the Festival. **An interest in film production is not a requirement.**

Successful applying schools are identified by the following criteria:

- Serving a student population identified in your community as "underserved and/or at risk."
- Desire to provide special arts-based learning opportunities to their students.
- Solid commitment to supporting their students and accompanying teachers in unique off-campus learning activities.
- Ability and commitment to provide pre-Festival studies to assist their students in preparing for the Festival experience.
- Desire to build on this experience with other students and teachers upon returning to school.
- Ability to identify students eager for this film immersion experience who have the maturity to maximize this opportunity to gain a greater world and cultural awareness.

WHO'S GOING TO PAY FOR ALL THIS?

Thanks to the contributions from considerate individuals, the Telluride Film Festival is able to cover Festival passes, lodging, meals, supplies, and curriculum materials. Travel to and from the Festival (including travel meals + Monday night dinner) is the responsibility of the participating school(s).

CITY LIGHTS PROJECT APPLICATION FORM

School _____

School District _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Applying/Accompanying Teacher(s) _____

Applying Teacher Email _____ Chaperon Email _____

Applying Teacher Cell _____ Chaperon Cell _____

Principal's Signature* _____ Date _____

**Or Superintendent, if applying as a district*

Please use as much or as little space as you need on separate pages to answer each question to your satisfaction.

1. How would you describe an “underserved” and “at risk” student population at your school? Some of the definers you could use might be: Geographic • Social • Cultural • Financial • Extracurricular arts activities provided (or lack thereof)
2. What is unique about your students’ abilities to be successful in the Telluride Film Festival experience? What can we learn from your students and you if your school participates in this program?
3. As mentioned, if selected you are responsible for selecting eight to ten student finalists who will then be narrowed down to six participants by City Lights faculty. We will provide you with an essay question for your students and will also request a teacher recommendation. How will you set up the student application process at your school/how will you go about finding the students who might be interested in applying?
4. Can you detail some ways that you might use the curriculum materials provided through this program after the Festival to share your experiences with other students and teachers?
5. Include short biographical narratives for each of the two applying teachers that highlight an experience (as a student or teacher) that has had an impact on their roles as educators.
6. Please confirm that your school has a screening space for the group during the summer, and that students will be able to attend up to five film study/critique sessions before September 3rd (again, we provide the curriculum; you make your own schedule), and that if selected, you are able to make a commitment to timely communication, tight turnarounds and consistent follow-through with Education Programs staff throughout the spring and summer in order to maintain deadlines leading up the Festival.

CONTACT

All applications, correspondence and questions should be directed to:

Telluride Film Festival

Attention: Zoe Ward

Email: citylights@telluridefilmfestival.org