

Digital Cinema Production Updates

This year, the national tech standards for the Digital Cinema Production contest have changed dramatically. Please read the following updates and help me spread the word to all of the other DCP advisors that you know so that there are no surprises at State this year - I also highly recommend modeling your district Digital Cinema Production contests to fit these new standards this year as well.

The short summary of all of these changes:

1. DCP teams will no longer create their short films on-site at any level of SkillsUSA conference. They will have more time and freedom with how they create their films, with few restrictions for things like equipment, location choice, cast and crew, etc. For State, and likely Nationals, teams will have about a week to create their films for DCP.
2. The style of prompt is changing to be more general - Nationals will give something like a genre or prompt them to emulate a famous filmmaker rather than have specific props/dialogue/etc. Teams will also have to submit more deliverables, such as specific pre production items, and potentially things like a movie poster or thumbnail for their film. Nationals may require them to edit and submit a movie trailer on-site at the national contest.
3. Teams will only have to complete an interview at State, and we will hold a screening of all of the films at State as well. No equipment or computers will be needed in Corpus since teams will have submitted their films in advance of the conference.
4. Speaking for District 7, we will have teams create their films over the weekend before the District 7 Conference in Beaumont. This means that we will have a virtual orientation on Friday, February 10, and films will be due by midnight on Sunday, February 12. There will be no on-site DCP activities in Beaumont this year.

Why the changes?

For several years now, the national level DCP contest has been run by Chet Thomas and Darrin Fletcher, two gentlemen who have worked in Hollywood in various capacities during their career, and now also run an online filmmaking curriculum site called [Sneak on the Lot](#). During the virtual SkillsUSA contests that took place post-covid, DCP teams competed virtually - making their films from home rather than on site at a contest, and were given a great deal of time and freedom with things like equipment, crew size, software, locations, etc. Chet & Fletch liked the higher quality films they received during that contest, and are looking to move towards that style of contest to continue that trend of teams creating higher quality films. They view it as treating the contest like a Film Festival rather than a traditional SkillsUSA contest. They also very much want to take part in educating young filmmakers and trying to have them do things professionally, which includes creating more materials and doing much more planning than DCP team have done in the past.

I definitely feel that they are prioritizing end results rather than the contest aspect of this filmmaking race. But, in order to prepare our students well for the national level contest, we will be trying to emulate the new regulations as much as possible both at State and District this year.

What is changing (at the national level)?

The officially published tech standards are attached to this email for your review. I encourage you to read through them and get a clear picture of what they're changing for the national contest. Here is the summary:

- **The national DCP contest films and materials will be completed from school/home.** When teams travel to Atlanta during the SkillsUSA NLSC, there will be a screening of the films and some seminars/lessons for teams and advisors to attend where the Sneak On The Lot guys plan to teach filmmaking techniques. **They still want teams to bring equipment and computers to nationals to**

- create "additional content"** - they don't mention what that content might be, but it suggests that it will also factor into the contest scores.
- 2-3 weeks prior to the NLSC, teams will be required to join SneakOnTheLot.com and complete lessons and training modules that will prepare them to create some of the new preproduction materials they will have to turn in for their contest. Teams will also be asked to research/watch the films of multiple "filmmaking artisans", as they will be required to emulate one of these filmmakers in their contest film.
 - PreProduction materials that will be required include Beat Sheet, Log-Line, Synopsis, and Screenplay
 - Last year, teams were also required to create a thumbnail image for their film which is displayed on the SneakOnTheLot website
 - **After 1-2 weeks of SneakOnTheLot guided lessons, research, and PreProduction, the official prompt will be released. Teams will be assigned a SPECIFIC GENRE as well as a FILMMAKER TO EMULATE, "which could be a renowned director, cinematographer, writer, production designer, editor, or others". Teams will receive about a week to create their film based on this prompt.**
 - Teams will not be limited in their choice of equipment, locations used, cast size, or crew size. **The team of two DCP competitors must fill the roles of Writer, Director, Cinematographer, Producer, and Editor.** Additional crew may be recruited for other jobs on set such as audio recording, assisting with hair/makeup, lighting grips, etc.
 - There are some **new score categories** now as well, including:
 - Additional PreProduction materials (beat sheet, log line, synopsis)
 - Directing (blocking, shot list and schematics, storyboards, production design, overall creativity and execution)
 - Acting (performance, believability, and casting)
 - Producing (organization, audio quality, pre-production elements such as call sheet, script breakdown, etc.)

I know what you're thinking. This is A LOT. And it is. These are some big changes that will require more time and effort from teams, likely result in higher quality end products, but also removes some of the high-pressure competition elements that we're used to in our traditional on-site DCP contests. If you don't like this new format for whatever reason, please email me your thoughts. I'd personally like to voice my concerns to the SkillsUSA organization about some of this and would like to include anyone who feels similarly.

What does this mean for the Texas State DCP Contest?

In an effort to run the contest as close to the nationals format as possible, **we will not require students to create their contest films on site in Corpus Christi this year.** Instead, they will be given the week leading up to the State Conference to create the films, pre production, and other materials. Most likely this will be from Friday the 24th to Tuesday the 28th, thus giving the students weeknights and a full weekend to work. There will be an online orientation meeting and the prompt will be released on Friday at 4:30pm. All materials will be submitted online by midnight on Tuesday. **Teams may not be UILed out of classes or entire school days during the DCP contest**

In terms of prompt, I intend to give out a genre-based prompt and require the teams to demonstrate a specific production technique that will be given to them. This could be something like "make a 3-5 minute Romantic Comedy and use at least 3 match cuts", for example. I may also require a specific prop or line of dialogue as in years past, but the national level will not have these specific requirements. Films will be required to be from 3:00-5:00 minutes in length. We will use the same scoring categories as the national contest.

Teams will be required to submit a Log-Line, Synopsis, and Screenplay, as well as any shot list/storyboard they may create. They will also be required to create a thumbnail image or movie poster style image to accompany their film.

We will conduct an interview with the teams in person in Corpus Christi, since this has always been a part of the official score card at State and Nationals. We have not always done this portion of the contest due to time, but since the teams won't be making their films in Corpus, we'll at least do the interview portion there. We will also plan a screening for all of the state DCP film submissions one of the days in Corpus.

What does this mean for the District DCP Contest?

For us in District 7 this year, the DCP contest will take place the weekend before all of the other contests are held in-person in Beaumont. We will have an online orientation meeting and release the prompt at 4:30pm on a Friday, and teams must submit their films online by midnight on Sunday. The prompt will be to create a 1:30-3:00 minute short film in a specific genre, and there will be one or two specific things to include such as a required prop, line of dialogue, or production technique.

Teams will be required to submit a Log-Line, Synopsis, and Screenplay.

All films will be submitted online, but there will be no in-person element to the contest in Beaumont or Port Arthur during the District Conference. Students may still attend the conference if desired, even if only to attend the awards ceremony, be a voting delegate, etc.

I encourage you to pass this information along to any other AV teachers you know who will be competing in Digital Cinema Production this year, and especially pass this along to whoever is running the contest in your SkillsUSA district. We want to be as consistent as possible across the state as well as prepare our students to compete at the national level in the process.

If you don't feel good about these new standards from the national contest chairs, please reach out to me to let me know your thoughts. I'd like to present some organized and official thoughts and concerns to the state and national board, and every voice will count to make any changes we think should happen. The contest format is not likely to change this year, but concerns will be addressed after 2023 Nationals.

Please don't hesitate to reach out to me with any questions, comments or concerns. Please also read the official tech standards which are attached to this email!