

SFFilm's Education Programs
by Chelsea Eiben, The Western Edition

The San Francisco International Film Festival is the longest running and first major international film festival in the Americas, born into existence in 1957 San Francisco, at the Metro Theater. Nearly 12 thousand people attended the 2 week festival, which was started by Irving "Bud" Levin. SFFilm's 4 values are: film, filmmakers, audience and the San Francisco Bay area.

The Education Program was started by Bob Donn, a previous San Francisco High School teacher, in 1991, as a branch of SFFilm. The program brings education to youth and people of all ages together to learn and gain insight through the power of film, especially foreign film. Over 11,000 students and teachers are reached annually by the SFFilm Education Program. Cultural diversity is just one of the enriching factors of SFFilm's influence in broadening the student's knowledge in all fields, such as science, language and humanities.

When I spoke with Keith Zwolfer, the Associate Director of Education for SFFilm, I learned about the history of how the program began and about Keith himself. Keith has always been interested in the arts, especially as a tool for helping educate. Keith started directing the program in 2003, and the program became a year-round program in 2005. "We teach kids about the art of film-making," said Keith. The program reaches ages Kindergarten to 12th grade, involving on-campus presentations, hands-on training and visits to studios like the LucasFilm studio in the Presidio. Keith explained how the Education Program gets it funding from grants (from foundations like the Hearst Foundation), donors, proceeds from ticketed events like awards showings, sponsors, (Wells Fargo, Google). SFFilm is the largest grant-giving body for narrative features in the country.

Keith actively spends his time emailing teachers, off an ever-growing list of active teachers. "We have been seeing the interest grow with the use of film," Keith reported. The attendance has grown by 2,000 people in the from 2016 to 2016. 2017's festival saw 7,000 people involved in the Education Program. The Youth-Made films program (children under 18 years old) has a "call for entries" and submissions come in from world-wide, as a "Youth Works" category in the film festival. This is the only free category of the festival. Three theaters screen for the Education Program films: Castro, SF MOMA, Children's Creativity Museum. "There are so many connection points for many curriculums," Keith mentioned in our interview. "For example, math-specific teachers, like Physics and Chemistry, come to the LucasFilm program." Volunteers help everywhere, as ushers, ticket booth operators for the Education Program, greeters, students workshop, or helping to facilitate Q&A. Keith's favorite part of his job is seeing the engaged faces of kids experiencing film in the theater.

I also spoke with an administrator at Creative Arts Charter School in San Francisco, Maria Jenerik. Maria was formerly a middle school teacher for 20 years. She has been working with SFFilm for many years, incorporating their resources into her curriculum. Maria loves working with Keith Zwolfer and finds the Education Program to be an immense influence and aide for her students to learn, with hands-on experience, working alongside some of the greatest professionals in the business! She strongly believes that utilizing film for education has vast proportions of effect, for youth of all ages. Maria said it was "amazing to augment the work they do at SFFilm!" Maria makes an art-integration project where students go into the studio and mix music, lighting, etc. Keith "read her mind" by having artists work with her students. Maria helps gets teachers tot eh festival and they "all love working with Keith," she said. Maria has been on the panel with SFFilm to select films for a few years. Maria has submitted many grants and has purchased studio equipment, for students to get hands-on learning. They also go do on-location shots and utilize a green screen. 7th and 8th graders get to choose their

elective courses they take 3 days a week, (i.e. dance). Film is the core curriculum medium used for their humanities studies, including social studies and language arts. Maria is passionate about this because documentaries and animation films that her students make is “making their learning visual; they learn teamwork, social skills, responsibilities, and knowledge of history and culture.”

There are 3 branches of the Education Program: Schools at the Festival, Resources for Educators and Year-Round programs. The Schools at the Festival program introduces students between the age of 6 and 18 to international film and the art of film-making. The year-round programs are numerous Education Programs, such as Screenings for Schools, Filmmakers in the Classroom, The Art and Science of LucasFilm, and Young Filmmakers Camp. Through the LucasFilm program, artists at the studio in the Presidio are able to see ways to incorporate art, math, science into film. Experts also speak at high schools. At schools, there are 15-20 screenings of foreign language films, which fulfill the social studies/humanities field. Last year the schools received a sponsorship to make the schools and festival free. Filmmakers visit classrooms to screen the film and have a Q&A session. The final branch of the educational programs are the resources for educators. There is an interactive Open Educational Resource for teaching media making and viewing in the classroom. FilmEd is an online community and toolkit for both educators and artists.

As someone who also enjoys going to see foreign films with my parents growing up, I am humbled to learn I live in a city as San Francisco, committing all they have to the Arts, especially film. Learning new cultures, languages, ideas of people through stories from afar, truly is a gift and a modern-era luxury of engaged learning to behold. It is one thing to read something from a book, or hear it explained by a teacher, but to actually experience cross-culturism through film is an experience that cannot be matched and cannot cease from inciting wonder through the minds of all ages.