

2026 State Prompt Overview

Your team will create a 2–3 minute original narrative short film based on the story criteria below. All filming, editing, and final delivery must occur within the official contest window. Your film must demonstrate strong visual storytelling, creative interpretation of the prompt, professional production techniques, and effective use of required elements.

2026 Prompt Theme: “*The Unchosen Detour*”

Your narrative must explore a moment when a character is unexpectedly forced to change direction, literally, figuratively, or both. This detour must initiate or accelerate the story’s conflict. The audience should clearly understand:

- What the character *intended* to do,
- What created the detour, and
- How the character responds to it.

Your team may choose any genre that fits the prompt (drama, comedy, mystery, adventure, etc.).

Required Story Elements

Your film must incorporate all the following:

1. A Physical Object: A map (digital or paper) that is meaningfully used in the story. It must play an identifiable role in the narrative (guiding a plan, revealing an obstacle, creating confusion, etc.).
2. A Line of Dialogue: “This wasn’t part of the plan.” The line must be spoken on camera by a character (not as narration).
3. Specific Action: A character must pause to observe something unusual (an object, a sound, a person, a clue, etc.). This moment must influence the direction of the story.
4. A Location Requirement: One scene must take place at or near a doorway, threshold, or entry point. This may be symbolic or literal but must support the “detour” theme.

Length: Final film must be **2:00–3:00 minutes**, including titles, excluding the required slate.

Content Restrictions

All content must comply with:

- Digital Cinema technical standard safety & content rules
- School-appropriate language and imagery

- No depiction of real-world brand logos or copyrighted material
- Music must be original, public domain, or royalty-free with proper licensing

Deliverables submit the following in accordance with state instructions:

A. Final Film

1. **Filename:** *State2026_Team#_Film.mp4*
2. Export in 1080p, H.264 format.

B. Title Slate (5 seconds, placed before the film)

- a. Must include:
 2. School name
 3. Team number
 4. Film title
 5. Names and roles of team members

C. Statement of Originality (PDF, 1 page)

- a. A brief team-written document stating:
 2. All footage and audio were created during official production time
 3. All music and graphics are original or properly licensed
 4. The film is an original creative work following all rules

D. Script or Shot List

- a. Upload your working script, storyboard, or shot list used during production.

E. Raw Footage Folder

- a. A folder containing **all** original unedited clips from the competition window.

Judging Considerations

Judges will evaluate:

- Story & interpretation of “The Unchosen Detour”
- Cinematography (composition, lighting, camera movement)
- Sound (clarity, design, mixing)
- Editing & pacing
- Production quality
- Creative use of required elements
- Teamwork and professionalism (based on documentation)