**ABC’s for growing recognition and support**

**for your theatre program**

**ALL READY TO GO—The resources are on-hand, so these options can be included in plans now.**

**BUILDING THIS YEAR FOR NEXT—These options most likely can be developed within a year.**

**CONSTRUCT A FOUNDATION—Initiate and cultivate mutually beneficial collaborative relationships to strengthen long-term support for your theatre program.**

**ALWAYS AND ANYTIME—Include these in conjunction with all other options.**

Work from a plan, with the present and the future in mind. Students graduate but the theatre program will live on. A plan helps ensure that your program’s momentum and recognition will continue to thrive.

All ready

Treat promotion as a process; a stream of interesting and important information about your program.

* Publicity and promotion are part of arts administration and essential to the success of any theatre program.
* Train your students in publicity and promotion with as much importance as any other theatre discipline.
* Train successors so your program will continue long-term.

**ALL READY TO GO—The resources are on-hand,**

**so these options can be included in plans now.**

**Promote within your school.**

1. Invest in theatre program/troupe items (shirts, banners, signs, posters, web ads, etc.)
   1. In addition to promoting shows, promote your theatre program and honor society.
   2. Purchase a Thespian troupe banner to use for induction ceremonies, in parades, and to display for show attendees to see.
   3. Get professional design and production help when possible for the most impactful end result.
   4. Include the ITS icon or logo.
   5. Include “Home of Thespian Troupe xxxx (or Junior Thespian Troupe xxxx).
   6. Coordinate when and where items are displayed, such as in high traffic areas, and/or worn for the biggest impact.
2. Give a pair of show tickets for every production to your administration, helpful faculty, custodians, and school board or district members.
   1. Have your troupe officers send hand-written invitations with tickets inside.
   2. Always invite them to the same show (opening night, second night, etc.) so they will come to expect it and you can look for them to say thank you.
   3. Always give them the same seats for every show.
   4. Include in your show budget.
   5. If you see them before the show, acknowledge them and thank them in opening announcements. They’ll really appreciate the public thank you.
3. Hold and promote “Alumni night.”
   1. Acknowledge alums by having them stand before the show.
   2. Make it the same night of every production (i.e. opening night or the first Saturday show).
4. If school policies allow, get graduation honors items for your outstanding Thespians to wear as they walk up to get their diplomas.
   1. This includes graduation tassels, honor or scholar cords, medallions, honor stoles, and scholar stoles.
   2. If students are not permitted to wear honor items “to walk,” instead have students wear their honor items for pictures before and after the ceremony and post online.
5. Recognize the non-theatre achievements of your students. This reflects well on the caliber of students involved in your theatre program.
6. Educate and nurture your Thespian troupe officers as the student leadership component of your theatre program. That’s their job within your theatre program. Let them assume some of your responsibilities. It’s great for their future and for your present.
7. Occasionally cast school faculty or administration in a production if appropriate.
8. Use your show program to:

* Thank parents and other supporters.
* Share the results of your community service efforts.
* Promote theatre education advocacy using EdTA resources such as “Did You Know?” ads or Theatre in Our Schools Month “31 Facts.”
* See “Promote the honor society” section below.

1. For those who go above and beyond in their support of your program, consider inducting them as Honorary Thespians, inviting them to the induction ceremony.

**Promote to those outside your school.**

1. Send promotional materials to local community theatre groups so they can see your shows and discover new local talent.
2. Advertise and hold a “cast photo night.”
   1. Invite the principal, media, and other VIPs to attend, including them in the photos.
   2. Allow patrons to take pictures with the cast after the show. You may even ask for donations or canned goods for a food drive such as TOTS-EAT. Children love having their picture taken with cast members.
3. Coordinate wearing of show/season shirts in the community by everyone in the theatre program. Consider giving shirts to parents and others who helped make the show happen.
4. Have your troupe officers introduce themselves as they introduce the shows.

**BUILDING THIS YEAR FOR NEXT—**

**These options most likely can be developed within a year.**

1. Look for cross-curricular opportunities that get more of the school involved in what’s happening in the theatre department.
   1. Involve the music department by using live music for your show when you can.
   2. Invite the music department to focus the theme for their concert with your show, the music composer(s), or its era.
   3. Work with the social studies department when performing a piece such as *Diary of Anne Frank.*
   4. Work with the art department on scene and promotional material design and development.
   5. See if the language arts department will consider studying *Romeo and Juliet* during the semester you’re going to produce *West Side Story*. Students can help each other compare the stories.
2. Work with the school or its sports teams as a show of support and cooperation.
   1. Talk to the coaches and other after school program leaders to help coordinate schedules that do not prohibit students from participating in your program.
   2. One school had theatre students in bright theatre program shirts sell raffle tickets in the football stadium. The theatre program got great publicity, and the football team helped with the theatre program’s fund-raiser in exchange. Revenue increased for both.
   3. Attend sports events and sit as a group – all wearing theatre program shirts.
   4. Make your theatre department/troupe a booster or sponsor of that team. It will build good relations, and mentions in their programs as well. The more often your program is seen supporting other groups, the better.
3. Perform improvisations, monologues, or short plays during school lunch periods.
4. Staff a booth (in theatre program shirts) at the school carnival or school-wide event.
5. Participate in your school’s activity fair or electives fair. Create a presentation to help demonstrate the value of theatre in all aspects of a person’s life, such as the essential 21st century skills (collaboration, communication, creativity, critical thinking).
6. Embrace at-risk students.
   1. Work with counselors and other teachers to provide a place for these students to be accepted and to achieve success.
   2. Use the “Can you use a paint brush?” approach. There’s always something a student can do to help out and become involved.
7. Participate outside the school environment and publicize this activity and any achievements.
   1. International Thespian Festival and/or Chapter Festival/Conference attendance.
   2. Regional events such as UIL, SETC, FATE, etc.
   3. One-act or show performance.
   4. Individual event participation.
8. Have a pre-performance presentation projected while people are arriving for show to educate them about theatre, theatre etiquette, and your troupe (honor society)
   1. Information about Thespian honor ranks and scholar designations.
   2. Theatre education advocacy, such as “Did You Know?” ads.
   3. Information about recording and copyright protection.
   4. Special acknowledgements for administration, parents, colleagues, custodians, etc.
   5. New inductees and recently earned honors of your troupe’s members.
9. Hold special open dress rehearsals for other student or community groups.
10. Offer season ticket packages (with appropriate pricing) that include opening night receptions, talkback sessions, and patron recognition in programs.
11. Tap your community to find experts who can help you as consultants:
    1. Interview Vietnam veterans if you’re going to perform *A Piece of my Heart*.
    2. Consult with medical personnel for shows like *Bang, Bang, You’re Dead*.
    3. Talk with local builders or employees at building supply stores when designing or building complex sets such as *Sweeney Todd*.
    4. Find a local engineering company to work with your techs on set design using their computer aided design (CAD) software in exchange for recognition in your program and a couple of show tickets.

***CONSTRUCT A FOUNDATION—Initiate and cultivate mutually beneficial collaborative relationships to strengthen long-term support for your theatre program.***

**Develop within your school.**

1. Participate in (or help create) a Fine Arts Fair. Bring in local college representatives to hold mock auditions, entrance interviews, and presentations about fine arts careers.
2. If appropriate, submit a nomination for your principal to win an ITS Administrator’s Award.
3. Pursue the International Thespian Society Outstanding School award. The process motivates everyone to improve the theatre program and may bring added recognition.

**Develop outside your school.**

1. Arrange to bus students from other schools (especially some without theatre programs) to see your shows.
2. Get students to know local business managers and owners by name. You’re their customers and they may be advertisers, donors, costume-makers, set builders, poster hangers, and audience. Acknowledge everyone who provides extra support in your show programs.
3. Working with school administration, explore ways to let the community use your theatre space for non-theatre events: battle of the bands, student film festival, recitals, martial arts testing, etc. Have the theatre students tech the event. This may generate revenue as well as be a great opportunity to make connections in the community and increase knowledge and appreciation of tech skills.
4. Occasionally perform a show that relates to your community historically, currently, or culturally. Use the opportunity to speak with leaders about involving the community.

**Interact with your feeder middle schools.**

**Invite them to your shows.**

1. Offer to have the middle school theatre class attend a dress rehearsal and conduct a talk-back session.
2. Give the middle school theatre teacher(s) a pair of tickets for each of your shows. Always use the same seats. It shows that you consider them important and they’ll feel like a VIP.
3. Have your feeder schools participate in a production.

**Bring theatre to the students.**

1. Present a one-act performance or workshop or excerpts from your show at the middle school. This shows the students what’s possible when they get to high school. Use it as an educational event and it may be considered community service. Include a talk-back session where students can share how theatre has positively impacted them.
2. Invite your feeder middle schools to a “tech day” where they get to help with portions of the tech work for your upcoming show.
3. Have a recruitment meeting for students in the grade about to enter your school next year. Consider performing excerpts (with proper rights of course) from your productions.
4. Conduct a playwriting contest for your feeder middle schools. Have the winning scripts directed and performed by your high school troupe.
5. Host a pre-opening-night event or a preview that appeals to kids such as “Pizza with Shrek” or *The Cat in the Hat*, etc.
6. Connect with groups like the Cub Scouts and Brownies.
   1. Have a “scout night” or “Brownies night” at one show.
   2. Encourage everyone to wear their uniforms.
   3. Acknowledge the group at your show.
   4. Follow-up with a simple stage combat or makeup presentation at one of their meetings, using cast and crew from the show they just saw.

**Support the middle school program.**

1. If there isn’t a Junior Troupe, work with the theatre teacher to help them start one. Educate and mentor them. They get an enhanced program and you as a mentor. You get the payoff when Junior Thespians start showing up at your school ready to audition for your shows. The community gets enriched education for its children.
2. Encourage Thespians to attend shows at area middle schools, dressed nicely and wearing induction and honors items.
3. Offer to serve as mentors for middle school theatre students or to help work on their show set with them. This may qualify as community service for high school students.
4. Help out at a fund raising event for your local middle school.
5. Talk with the local middle school theatre teachers in August about the coming season and see if a high school student or two may be able to participate as cast or crew sometime during the year.
6. Offer to show support by having your Thespian Troupe attend the induction ceremony at the middle school, wearing induction and honors items.

**Introduce theatre to elementary school students.**

1. Present a show like *The* *Three Little Pigs* for “character day” at a local elementary school.
2. Talk with local elementary teachers about opportunities to use theatre as a teaching tool about something in history.
3. Produce a show that allows casting a few elementary aged students in appropriate roles.
4. Perform an excerpt from a show in local elementary schools to start introducing students to theatre. Do a short talk-back session afterwards about the fun of the process.
5. Host a pre-show event or preview that appeals to elementary age like “Breakfast with Ariel” or “Pizza with Shrek” to introduce characters, makeup and costumes.

***ALWAYS AND ANYTIME—***

***Include in conjunction with all other options.***

**Pursue professional development.**

The best thing you can do for your students is to continue to develop as a theatre teacher. Options include EdTA’s national conference as well as your state conference.

**Use all forms of media.**

1. Request students use personal Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Pinterest, etc. to share with friends and family about their Thespian accomplishments and those of your troupe and theatre program.
   1. Guide them with what and how to do it right.
   2. Make sure your students understand they represent your troupe, theatre program, and school with everything they post.
2. Develop a relationship with local media outlets. Build a rapport with the person who covers entertainment or schools. Give a pair of tickets to each show to your media contacts. Keep a list and give them the same tickets every time. They’ll feel special to have “my seat.”
3. Stay in regular contact, informing them throughout the year. Repurpose content from show programs and school websites for news releases, with photo, to announce:
   1. Show dates and/or tickets on sale
   2. Thespian inductions and honor rank achievement
   3. Community service projects like Trick or Treat so Kids Can Eat
   4. Scholarship winners
   5. College acceptance
   6. Theatre in Our Schools Month

**Promote the honor society.**

1. Maximize troupe exposure.
   1. On show signs, and on your program covers, use text something like “(School name) theatre, home of Thespian Troupe (Troupe number) presents . . .”
   2. Put an explanation of the International Thespian Society AND the induction point scale in every program so the audience understands your troupe members are part of an elite organization and that induction is EARNED.
   3. Identify Thespians with their designations in your programs, promotional materials, and website. The format is rank plus the word scholar at the end if appropriate: Thespian Scholar, Honor Thespian Scholar, etc.
2. Induct students as early in their middle school or high school career as you can. This encourages them to work toward honor ranks and scholar distinctions.
3. Have an induction ceremony; it does not have to be elaborate. Have inductees dress up for this occasion on which they’re being honored.
   1. Have students sign your induction roster in their own writing (with the date) as part of the induction ceremony. You never know whose autograph you may end up with. Keep your rosters posted for everyone in school to see if possible.
   2. Publicize your induction ceremony and invite everyone at school to attend, especially your administration.
   3. Invite the principal to say a few words. If your administration attends, be sure to acknowledge and thank them during the ceremony.
   4. Following the induction ceremony, have a thank you card signed by all new inductees sent to the administration. Let them know how much it meant to the students to have them there.
   5. Advance Thespian honor ranks and recognize new scholars at your induction ceremony.
   6. Post Thespian honor ranks and scholars on bulletin boards or in the trophy case.
4. Continue tracking Thespian points following induction. Advance your Thespian through the ranks of Honor Thespian, National Honor Thespian, and International Honor Thespian.
5. Award students with point stars, honor ranks, and scholar distinctions as soon after they are earned as possible.
6. Remind Thespians to note their induction and ranks on all job applications, resumes, and portfolios and professional online profiles.
7. Make certain that inductee records with ITS reflect honor ranks and scholar distinctions accurately at the end of the school year; the information is reported to school administration every August.
8. Take every opportunity to highlight your inductees and their ongoing ITS accomplishments
   1. While theatre program participation is open to all, induction into the honor society is earned.
   2. Post new Thespian troupe inductee list on (digital) bulletin boards or the school trophy case. Announce new inductees during school announcements, at the school website, in your programs, and in the school newspaper.
   3. Send a news release of new inductees to local media; post in social media.
   4. Identify troupe members in your programs, on posters, and whenever identified by name with photos.
9. Recognize new inductees, honor ranks, and new Thespian scholars before your shows so the whole audience hears the names of the students who have earned these honors. You know there will be proud parents there who are anxious to hear their child’s name announced. Others will ask their child when they will have their name announced.
10. Have your Thespian troupe officers introduce your shows. Make certain they introduce themselves with their name, officer title, and your Thespian troupe number.
11. In high school, be sure you give 50 percent of your inductee points to incoming Jr. Thespians per the ITS point system. You may also give up to 5 points to students who weren’t inducted into a Junior Thespian troupe based on your knowledge or verification of their work.
12. Have Thespians wear their induction and honors items to shows and ceremonies, and when working on community service projects.
13. Identify troupe members by providing them with different color show shirts or with their troupe number. Remember only official inductees are part of the troupe.
14. Participate in AND promote/acknowledge theatre activities outside the school:
    1. Chapter conference/festival attendance
    2. Chapter student board membership
    3. Chapter student leadership workshops
    4. Thespian Festival (ITS) attendance
    5. Scholarship auditions
    6. College auditions
    7. Community theatre
    8. College/University acceptance into theatre arts programs
15. If you have a theatre web site or page, be sure you include “home of International Thespian Society Troupe xxxx” prominently on the home page.