

# Creating Community in HS Theatre: 24 Hour Play Festival

Lakes Community High School, Lake Villa, IL

Presented at AATE 2016, Boston

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## ABOUT

Students create, rehearse, and perform original 10-minute plays in less than 24 cumulative hours, uniting them in a collaborative celebration of theatre.

## STUDENT REVIEWS

*My favorite project was the 24 Hour Play Festival, because it put most of us in a situation where we didn't know everybody we were working with, and it was a little scary to adapt to them. It also gave a simulation of the audition, casting, rehearsal, tech, and performance processes that performers would go through if they weren't previously in a Lakes Theatre production, and may give them a little inspiration to audition for one in the future.*

*I liked a lot of the projects but my favorite one was the 24 Hour Play Festival. As much as I hate to say it now, I really didn't want to do it. All I could think was "What if the people there don't like me?" or "What if I mess up and everyone thinks I'm bad?". I didn't like the idea of staying after school all afternoon and working with people I didn't know. But then at the first practice, my directors and co-actors were super nice and encouraging. The scene was going to be really fun, everyone else was having a good time, so naturally I did. My directors' kept saying make big choices and be spontaneous. They gave me a role I wasn't super comfortable with, but I just dove in. It was one of the best experiences to go on stage and not care what others thought and have fun with a bunch of people who just liked to have fun.*

## CLASS INVOLVMENT

**Beginning Theatre:** Actors. Audition with a 1 min cutting from final scene in class.

**Studio Theatre:** Actors. Audition with 1 min. monologue, prepared independently.

**Studio Theatre Advanced:** Writers and directors.

**Stagecraft:** Run crew (this was an optional assignment for manageable numbers).

**Stagecraft Advanced:** Designers, stage managers, production managers.

## PERFORMANCES

Free, open to parents and community members. Collect donations for our theatre festival scholarship fund and a theatrical organization chosen by student leaders.

## TIPS FOR SUCCESS

- This project is part of final exams – authentic experiences and assessment.
- Be sure you have enough rehearsal spaces for all the groups.
- Keep tech simple! Lights on and off, 2 internal sound cues, predetermined transition music, 30 second transitions between plays.
- Encourage improv, flexibility, and spontaneity.
- Each play has a taped off space backstage to store sets, props, and costumes.
- Format allows space for accommodations and adaptations.
- Google Docs allows for collaborative playwriting, easy edits, and teacher check-ins.
- Have fun, be flexible, and let the students shine!

## **TIMELINE**

**2 Weeks Out:** Email prompts to school faculty and staff to solicit inspiration for the plays. Collaborate with Student Leaders to choose prompts from those submitted. This year's prompts in italics.

### **PROMPTS:**

A line of dialogue: *"You need to get out of my way."*

A word: *Rhubarb*

A prop: *Coffee Mug*

A costume item: *Bathrobe*

A character trait/quirk: *eats food, such as M&Ms or Skittles, by color*

An uncommon profession: *Radio Announcer*

A theme: *Southern Hospitality*

Anything else you think would be fun: *A moment of synchronized dance*

**Friday Prior:** Assign writing groups and prompts to students in Studio Theatre Advanced. Begin to write plays in class. Plays should have flexible casts of 9-11 with chorus and expansion options. Optional weekend homework to work on script.

**Monday (week of show):** Writing continues.

**Tuesday:** Directors and designers collaborate on design needs (revising script on own).

**Wednesday In Class:** Directors discuss casting (revising script on own); Actors engage in audition dress rehearsal; Designers pull props and costumes.

**Wednesday After School:** Auditions. Directors cast in a draft-style round robin, emailing all cast members to congratulate them.

**Thursday In Class:** Directors create rehearsal plans and collaborate with designers.

**Thursday After School:** 1 hour of rehearsal.

**Friday In Class:** Directors and designers consult on tech process.

**Friday After School:** Rehearsals. Each group has 20 minutes of tech onstage. Dinner provided. Students stay after school until after the performances. Perform and celebrate!