



WASHINGTON STATE THESPIANSSM

AN EDUCATIONAL THEATRE ASSOCIATION AFFILIATE

October 2021 Newsletter

Happy Autumn Theatre Educators and Friends,

I had grand intentions of sending this newsletter out the first of October, but along with many of you, I've been swamped with getting back into the swing of in person instruction. I'm finding so many tasks that were second nature, now require more hoops and added steps increasing my workload by tenfold. So much has been added to our plates, and yet we persevere and continue to fight for the opportunity to provide meaningful Theatre Education to our students. If you are reading this right now, that is a testament to your desire to embrace all the opportunities for your kids! Thank you.

We continue to strive to offer our conferences this year in the midst of so much uncertainty. Please take one minute to fill out this [brief survey](#) to let us know what your district will permit; and your willingness to attend a State Festival. We know that most of us are not interested in more "Virtual" opportunities, and we are also limited by Covid restrictions, transportation shortages, and district policies. Your input is critical!

STO (State Thespian Officer) News:

Meet our new STO: <https://www.wathespians.org/state-thespian-officers>

The October 9th STO Leadership workshop was postponed to **Sunday, October 24th**. We will have a separate announcement with all the pertinent details coming soon.

INTAF (Inland Northwest Theatre Arts Festival)

Kudos to our board members, Greg Pschirrer and Suzanne Maguire for planning this year's first IN PERSON Thespian Event. "Break a Leg" this weekend!

THEATRE TEACHER CONNECTION -

The WA State Board is hosting monthly teacher meetings on the 4th Tuesday of most months to discuss important topics and offer insights and information. Each month will have a different topic of discussion.

Our last event focused on the changes to Thespys. You can watch the recording to this informational session via this link. [LINK TO VIDEO](#)

Tuesday, **October 26** at 7 p.m. we will be discussing how to build membership and the new changes to incorporating Junior Thespians into our program. Julie Olson will lead us in a discussion on this topic. Please share this with your colleagues working in the middle / junior high schools!

[ZOOM MEETING LINK](#)

Future dates & topics include: (TBD - To be determined)

December 14: Submitting Thespys and Registration Support

February 1: Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion - led by Sydney Baird

February 22: TBD

April 26: TBD

May 24: TBD

JUNIOR THESPIANS

Hey, Junior Thespians! Big news! Junior Thespians are INVITED TO PARTICIPATE IN THESPYS THIS YEAR! To learn more about Thespys and how to participate, please go to: <https://www.wathespians.org/thespys> You can also contact Julie Olsen, Junior Regional Festival Coordinator at jolsen@asbschool.org. Don't miss this amazing opportunity to share your work!

THESPYS

There have been some changes to Thespys. Please visit this site to read the updated guidelines and requirements. PLEASE ensure that your students are selecting material from the "Approved Materials" list. It is painful to have to disqualify students for material that EdTA will not accept.

A Thespys specific email will be coming out soon!

<https://thespys.secure-platform.com/a>

Our Response to the DOH Guidelines

We've been fielding a lot of questions regarding the updated guidance from the Department of Health. We were quite stunned that there was no movement toward the equity we've been seeking. This is not a problem unique to WA State. Many other states are also facing this same disparity between athletics and the Performing Arts. We are not asking for a "no mask" mandate; but rather mandates that are equitable!

Suzanne Maguire crafted a recent statement she plans to send to her school and district officials and, potentially to local press. If you have not already familiarized yourself with the K-12 guidance, please take the time to do so before you reach out to advocate for any actions from your school or district. If the statement would be helpful in crafting a statement of your own, feel free to use any elements that would help your own communication.

"An equitable school climate is characterized by psychological and physical safety. It's an environment where students feel comfortable expressing themselves, asking questions and taking risks, and educators raise innovative ideas or try new techniques. That means practicing collaborative decision-making to ensure students' and teachers' voices are heard, building connections within the community, analyzing the systemic ways in which injustice manifests, delivering excellent academic instruction and supporting the well-being of students and every member of the school community. This is also a moment when we need to focus on empathy." - Scotland Nash, EdD Director of Education, ADL Pacific Northwest from her article ["We STILL Must Lead with Empathy. Teach with Anti-Bias"](#) published by the [WA OSPI October 4, 2021](#)

After the [Department of Health K-12 COVID 19 REQUIREMENTS](#) for Summer 2021 and the 2021-2022 School Year released August 10, 2021, Suzanne Maguire, Teacher and WA State Thespians Board Secretary, reached out to Dr. Bob Lutz and the DOH to question the glaring inequities in the guidance offered [Extracurricular Athletics vs. Extracurricular Performing Arts](#), specifically focusing on extracurricular (after school) theatre productions. Maguire was invited to join a meeting with the DOH K-12 Guidance Leadership team to discuss the disparities and search for solutions. The focus in that meeting and two that followed focused on requesting the same guidance offered to high impact athletics like cheerleading, basketball, and wrestling. Multiple options were offered for how the guidance could provide equitable guidance for students whose chosen after school activity is theatre.

Unfortunately, as of the October 4, 2021 changes, no such solutions have been offered. For so many theatre students, working after school in a play or musical is where they develop the empathy, risk-taking skills and collaborative decision making that Dr. Nash refers to in her article. Once again, young artists are left with the perception that state leaders view the arts as less valuable and important than athletics. Whether or not that is the OSPI and DOH's aim - that is the strong impression left on the children, their teachers and the community at large. We have been told that additional changes to the guidance are coming but, in the meantime, all athletics from low risk to high risk indoor or outdoor sports are all allowed to practice their activities with clear vaccination and testing requirements and are allowed to compete and practice **without masks no matter their vaccination status** (p. 18). Meanwhile, the guidance for ALL extracurricular performances are the same as they were August 10 (no matter the art form - music, theatre, choir) - **universal masking required for all performances**. (p. 16 - "Universal masking is required during performances for participants, including appropriate face coverings and bell covers on woodwind and brass instruments.")

It is time that our communities are aware of the egregious discrepancies in the DOH guidance. As we wait for the disparities to be rectified, theatre teachers and their students around the state will continue to adjust productions, rehearsals and performances while athletes get to practice and compete with only minor impact to their normal routine. We are not asking for special exceptions to the guidance, we are simply asking for the same guidance offered to extracurricular (after school) athletics.

WANT TO BE A PART OF THIS TEAM?

If you are interested in joining our State Thespians Board, you can apply to be a part of the Working Board, supporting our efforts and events! [APPLY HERE](#)

WEBSITE

Our fantastic board member, Bryan Sullivan has revamped our Washington State Thespians Website for a new and easier experience. Please note that our domain has also changed. You can find an abundance of information by visiting: <https://www.wathespians.org/>

CALENDAR OF EVENTS for 2021-2022

We have created a Google Calendar of all our meetings, events, and deadlines. Feel free to add this to your own Google Calendar.

[WA STATE THESPIANS CALENDAR](#)

Sincerely,

Kristina Cummins
Co-Chapter Director
WA State Thespians
<https://www.wathespians.org/>
