

WASHBURN RURAL THEATRE

POLICY HANDBOOK

Who We Are

Our Mission

WaRu Theatre strives to serve students of all backgrounds, abilities, and identities by providing a range of training and hands-on experiences that encourage growth of skills and formation of personal connections.

We aim to prepare motivated students for further study and employment in theatrical industries, and to provide opportunities where students of multiple interests can flourish in a variety of theatrical experiences.

Our Expectations

The policies outlined in this handbook are in place to ensure that a safe, inclusive, respectful, and forward-thinking environment is established for all students. Any student involved in productions and other WaRu Theatre activities as an actor, crew member, Thespian member, or other means of participation are subject to these policies.

Our Staff

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Policies

Courtesy Behavior

As an art form, team activity, and public cultural experience, theatre requires courteous and respectful behavior from everyone. Students will demonstrate courtesy in their words and behavior to peers and staff alike during all theatre-related activities. Students are representatives of the theatre program and WRHS not just in the school building, but in the community as well. Behaviors that demonstrate a lack of respect, make other students feel unsafe or harrassed, and/or inhibit the rights of other students to have a positive artistic and educational experience may result in dismissal from the production.

“Talent will get you in the door...but character will keep you in the room.”

Ethics/Dedication

All students are equally important to the ongoing success of WaRu Theatre activities. Students are expected to fulfill the requirements of their individual roles and respect the rights of others to do so as well. Teamwork is crucial in all things theatre, and learning to balance individual needs and privileges with those of others for the good of the overall group is a valuable life skill. Lying, failing to complete responsibilities, or other behavior that undermines the group goal of producing a successful play/musical will not be tolerated.

Students must be honest, dedicated, and positive in order to get the most out of every experience and to allow others this privilege as well. Any personal conflict may not impact theatre activities; all activity-related conflicts must be settled on a personal basis, or if necessary, with one of the directors, so that resolution can be sought quickly and peacefully.

Social Media and Personal Communication

While social media is an important part of culture at large, it can also have a disruptive and/or destructive impact on individuals and in our program. Participating in theatre is a privilege. In order to maintain an environment of respect and authenticity, students can expect involvement privileges to be revoked if social media is used in a way that is disruptive or detrimental to students in our department or reflects poorly on the department in the community.

Such use includes but is not limited to:

- a) Sexually explicit, profane, lewd, indecent or defamatory language
- b) Derogatory comments regarding school personnel or other students involved in theatre activities
- c) Indecent or offensive images
- d) Discussion of theatre matters related to our program
- e) Excessive and/or malicious gossip

Theatre Spaces

Washburn Rural has the good fortune of dedicated theatre spaces, and students are expected to maintain these spaces with care and respect. Students involved in cast, crew, or any other capacity will refrain from behaviors that disregard the safety, organization, or appearance of our spaces.

This includes but is not limited to:

- a) Not placing trash or recyclable materials in designated containers
- b) Moving furniture and failing to return it to its original position
- c) Scattering personal belongings in dressing rooms and/or classroom
- d) Not following safety guidelines, especially in backstage and construction areas
- e) Failing to clean messes that occur during the consumption of food or beverages
- f) Being in restricted areas without director authorization

Theatre Materials

Students will handle the use and return (when necessary) of materials used in theatre productions and activities in a timely manner, with respect for the time and resources expended in obtaining and/or creating them.

Props, costumes, and other items are fully restricted to the crew and cast members who use them – they are not toys or fun dress-up items. Scripts are a tool crucial to the rehearsal process, and are to be handled with care. Cast members will be responsible for keeping possession of their scripts, and will turn them in when required or incur a late fee. Failure to return a musical script will incur a replacement fee.

Crew Roles

All students enrolled in the Theatre III: Advanced Stagecraft and Scene Design course are required to crew at least one production during the semester. The responsibilities and privileges associated with each of these roles are specified by the technical director. All crew members are expected to display the traits of reliability and commitment in these roles. All actors and other students involved will respect the rights and responsibilities of each crew member.

Actor Roles

Any student who is cast in a production is subject to policies that protect and maintain accountability for the responsibilities that come with being an actor. Being cast in a show is a great privilege, and acting is an art much bigger than any one person.

Actor expectations will be discussed in detail at the first read-through rehearsal of each production. Many of these policies address the topics listed below.

Procedures and Activities

Thespians / Theatre Club

WRHS is the home of International Thespian Society Troupe #6193. This group meets during designated club periods roughly every other Thursday during the school year. A \$5 fee is required in order to provide the materials necessary to running club activities throughout the year. This group supports the functions of WaRu Theatre programming in various ways, volunteers in the community, and coordinates the attendance of theatre activities outside of WRHS.

Joining Thespians allows a student to be eligible for joining the International Thespian Society (ITS), as well as attending the Kansas State Thespian Festival every January. As a Thespian, students have access to scholarship opportunities and other privileges associated with ITS.

Auditions

All WRHS students are eligible to audition for productions. Audition dates are posted on the website, as well as included in high school announcements during Advisory.

- Audition information is made available via Google Classroom. Students are required to sign up for an open-call audition time, and complete an Audition Form in advance with a parent/guardian signature.
- Signatures on the Audition Form indicate that the parent and student agree to abide by policies outlined in this handbook and commit to the rehearsal schedule.
- All students enter open-call auditions with a “blank slate,” and have equal opportunity for being considered as cast members.
- Callback auditions are held after open-call auditions. The purpose of callbacks is for the director(s) to observe the student reading/singing specific dialogue for specific roles. Getting a callback does not ensure that the student will get to read for preferred roles nor is it a guarantee of being cast.

- Audition workshops are often held in advance of musical auditions. These workshops are not a requirement, but it is highly recommended that students learn the required music and/or choreography from someone who has attended the workshop.
- Students who have scheduling conflicts with audition dates may seek an audition appointment with the director in advance.

Fees

According to USD437 policy, student actors involved in theatre as an extracurricular activity are subject to a \$50 participation fee. This does not apply to crew members because they receive course credit, nor to house managers and ushers because their brief involvement does not incur any cost from school or district funds.

On rare occasion, students may be asked to purchase costuming or makeup materials. In this event, students may keep the materials purchased. If this is not financially feasible to a student's family, a private request may be made to the director to waive or decrease this purchase cost. Payments for t-shirts are due at time of order. Unpaid fees will be passed along to the bookkeeper to insert into Infinite Campus accounts.

Rehearsals

Rehearsals for play and musical productions are scheduled for every weekday 3:10-5:30. On weekdays when school is not in session, rehearsals are tentatively scheduled as TBA. On rare occasion, a Saturday rehearsal may be scheduled, and students and parents will be notified in advance.

- Attendance: It is crucial that every actor fully commit to the rehearsal process. Any scheduling conflicts should be listed on the audition form in order for an accurate rehearsal schedule to be made. Medical appointments, family trips, etc. should be scheduled in advance – **surprise absences will not be excused once the rehearsal process has begun**. Unplanned absences will be allowed only on an emergency basis. The accruing of more than one (1) unplanned absence will be subject to dismissal from the cast and replaced by an understudy.
- Punctuality: This means not only arriving at the designated start time, but being prepared to work the moment rehearsal begins. Actors should be mentally and physically prepared to work, and **in possession of their script and a pencil** for taking notes. If an actor is going to be late, they must immediately notify the stage manager. Actors are expected to attend the entire rehearsal unless early-dismissal is previously noted on their audition form.
- Dress: Actors should wear clothing and shoes that comply with school dress code, and also allow full mobility on stage. Flip-flops, tight or excessively short skirts, and other such apparel are problematic.
- Decorum: Actors must respect the right of fellow cast members to focus and concentrate when rehearsing. Noise should be kept at a minimum, and **cell phones are not allowed to be distracting from the work at hand**.
- Conflict Resolution: Cast and crew members must use a two-step approach to conflict. The concerned party should begin by addressing the person who is causing concern. This should be an attempt at finding common ground, clarifying why certain behaviors are of concern, and how more positive behaviors can be established and followed going forward. If this does not resolve the issue, the concerned party should bring the situation to the stage manager's or director's attention.

Technical Rehearsals

These rehearsals take place the week before production week, and involve a great deal of activity as crew members and cast members work together for the first time. Since more elements are involved at this stage, technical rehearsals tend to be longer in length. Directors work to run the rehearsals as efficiently as possible; in return, students are expected to behave in a focused and flexible manner. As **ending times cannot be predicted**, students and parents are asked to respect the rehearsal process by making pick-up arrangements as flexible as possible so that all students can be present for the entire rehearsal. Everyone is tired, everyone is working hard, and everyone wants to complete a successful rehearsal and go home. We will not keep students past 7:00 pm.

Work Calls

On occasion, it is necessary to work on lights, scenery, or other technical elements outside of the school day. Work calls occur on designated Saturdays, and are open to cast and crew members on a voluntary basis. We highly encourage attendance as this is a great opportunity for bonding among cast and crew, and is an investment in their production which has tangible pay-off.

Performances

Theatrical performances are the culmination of and reward for a great deal of hard work from a large team of people, and an opportunity for students to share learned skills and art with their community. In order to ensure that performances fully reflect the efforts of those involved, students are expected to abide by procedures and traditions that contribute to smoothly-run productions.

- Punctuality: Cast and crew are called to report 90 minutes before curtain to ensure that all have time to fully prepare for the performance. Upon arrival, students must sign in on the call board and report to their designated area. Any student who is late due to emergency circumstances must immediately notify the stage manager. Tardiness shows disregard for the time and efforts of others, and multiple tardies will be addressed with the student by the director.
- Hygiene: With many students working together in limited space, and costumes that must maintain appearance and cleanliness through multiple performances, it is important that students maintain hygienic habits such as showering, use of deodorant, clean undergarments, etc. during production week.
- Conduct: All cast and crew must remain focused both on stage and off during every performance, and behaviors that are distracting or disruptive are prohibited, including excessive cell phone usage and loud talking.
- Stage managers: The stage manager and assistant stage manager (SM and ASM) in professional settings are given a great deal of responsibility, as are those at WRHS. These crew members have high accountability for running theatre productions during performance, and therefore are granted a level of authority over the rest of the crew and the entire cast. Requests from the SM or ASM are to be followed respectfully; any conflicts that arise will be addressed by the director.
- Costumes: After every performance, actors **MUST** hang up all garments and place all accessories in assigned tubs. If they fail to respect these materials and the dressing room space, they will not be allowed to greet family and friends or leave the building until their area is cleared by a director or the costume supervisor.

Community Activities

Any theatre enrichment or volunteer activities arranged by the Thespian club or theatre directors that takes place outside of school grounds and hours is subject to WRHS policies. Students are representing the school and theatre program during these activities and are expected to display positive conduct.