

# Wester Theatre



## Handbook 2017-2018

**Roxanne Penz**

**Theatre Director**

**Theatre I, II, Theatre Productions, Technical Theatre**

**Junior Thespian Society Sponsor (#88831)**

**Wester Middle School**

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Dear Theatre Families,

I would like to welcome you and your child to the Wester Middle School Theatre Department. I am looking forward to a wonderful school year!

As your child's Theatre Arts teacher, my commitment is to create a safe, enriching and positive learning environment. I have planned many challenging, exciting shows and classroom activities this year. Because I would like all students to experience theatre and the collaboration of this art form, there may be times when I call on you for extra assistance. I would like to work together to help your child achieve success in the theatre experience.

I encourage you to email your child's teacher or call the school, should you have any questions or concerns.

Attached you will find a copy of my theatre discipline plan, as well as policies and procedures designed to help the classroom run smoothly. Your child has already seen the plan, as we discussed this plan as a class and he/she has signed a Classroom Contract promising to honor the classroom expectations.

Once again, if you have any questions about this letter or the theatre department, please do not hesitate to ask. I know this marks the beginning of a wonderful middle school theatre experience for you and your child.

Thank you,

**Roxanne Penz**  
**Theatre Director**  
**Theatre I, II, Theatre Productions, Technical Theatre**  
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### Supply Requirement

- **1 Black Binder to keep all Theatre items**
- **Pencil to write with EVERYDAY**
- **1 5 Tab Dividers Set**
- **Various items throughout the year to fulfill assorted projects**

**My policy is for students to use what they already have-DO NOT GO OUT AND BUY!**

**Grading:**

**Major Grades: (50%) Projects, Tests, Performances**

**Minor Grades: (30%) Participation, In-Class Assignments, Quizzes**

**Daily Grades: (20%) Extra Credit, Journal**

**6<sup>th</sup>/7<sup>th</sup> Grade Theatre I**

The Warm-up/Focus Techniques

Theatre Games for Building Ensemble

Developing your Personal Resources

Movement

Pantomime

Vocal Training

Intro to Improv

Performance Spaces

Origins of Theatre

Basic Acting Skills

Monologue/Duet/Group Acting

Play Structure

Performance Evaluation

Intro to Technical Theatre Aspects

**7<sup>th</sup>/8<sup>th</sup> Grade Theatre II**

Creating Ensemble

(Building on the Theatre skills)

Theatre Games

Stage Combat

Advanced Acting (Solo/Duet/Group)

Character Development

Play Analysis

Theatre History

**7<sup>th</sup>/8<sup>th</sup> Grade Theatre Productions**

(Building on Previous skills)

Creating Ensemble

Advanced Acting Skills

UIL One Act Play

Careers in Theatre

Long Term Projects

**Technical Theatre**

Safety

Technical Theatre Basics

Crew Hierarchy

In-Depth study, application, and demonstration of tech aspects

- Publicity
- Costume
- Make-up
- Lights
- Sound
- Scenic
- Props

Play Analysis

## Class Expectations

**My classroom policies are The 5 “B”s:**

1. **Be Respectful**
2. **Be Responsible**
3. **Be on time**
4. **Be Prepared**
5. **Be Safe**

Remember! This is a creative and artistic atmosphere. No one has a right or wrong idea or interpretation of ideas. Please be open-minded to others’ points of view and performances.

**Discipline Consequences:**

- I follow the policies of the Wester Student Success Plan. Students will follow the Wester Middle School policies for tardies, classroom behavior, hallway behavior, and before/after school behavior.

**NO CHEWING GUM!**

- This is a Wester rule! There is no reason you should even have it with you in the classroom. Leave it in your locker or at home.

**During lectures, discussions, performances, and presentations:**

- Students should show the speaker respect by listening
- Students should raise their hands to ask questions
- Students should not be visually or verbally distracting
- Students should be able to see the person(s) speaking (or miming)

**Theatre/Make-up Room/Prop Storage:**

- Set and prop items, stage, make-up room may not be used without permission.

**When you leave my classroom:**

- Make sure your area is clean, supplies are put away, and desks are put back in their proper place.
- You will remain seated until the teacher dismisses you
- You will exit the classroom in an orderly fashion

**Late Work**

- Please turn in work on the assigned day. Daily work and homework must be turned in by the grading “Drop Dead Date” to be counted.
- **Presentations (monologues, duet and group scenes, projects, speeches, etc.) must be presented on deadline (excluding illness/absence.)**

**Additional Notes:**

- The words “Shut up” (or any form with a similarly harsh meaning) are not allowed in my classroom and will result in a consequence.
- No food or drinks in the classroom. Bottled water is allowed as long as students keep up with their bottle and take it away when class is over.
- Extra credit options will be available throughout the semester.

**Working in groups:**

- Due to the nature of our class, you will be working in groups often
- When planning a scene or improvisation, you will be under strict time limits – so do not waste your time “bickering” over who gets to play what part.
- Plan – Prepare – Practice!

## Rules of the Stage

*These rules apply while we are working in class and at an after-school rehearsal.*

- No talking while backstage.
- If you are not onstage or about to make an entrance:
  - You are to sit in the cafeteria and memorize your lines.
  - Help a classmate memorize their lines quietly.
  - Work on projects or other assignments.
  - Observe the action onstage – you will learn from the mistakes and successes of others.
- NO GUM!
- Be ready for your entrance when called.
- You are not allowed to leave the cafeteria once rehearsals have started unless you have permission from the director or stage manager.
- NOT YOURS - DON'T TOUCH!
- Listen to the director.
- Let the director direct.
- If the Stage Manager asks you to do something, please do it. They are acting under the director's wishes.
- Accept criticism cheerfully and with maturity.
- Never direct or criticize other actors.
- NO FOOD or DRINKS are allowed on the stage area. (Closed water bottles are accepted offstage. Please DO NOT place water bottles on the prop tables.)
- Store all belongings on the designated tables (in the classroom and in the cafeteria). Be sure these belongings are not in areas designated for props and set pieces. *Backpacks, binders and books should not be backstage.*
- Costumes and Props are to be treated with respect at all times and placed in their designated areas (neatly hung on hangers, etc.) following all rehearsals and performances.
- No defacing of school or other's property.
- Only theatre students on stage during rehearsal time.
- Follow directions the first time given. We must maintain theatre safety at all times.
- Respect your fellow actors and technicians.
- Be positive! Positive attitudes will take us far!

**Improper conduct during class and/or after school rehearsals may result in disciplinary consequences and/or removal from rehearsal and/or the show.**

# Eligibility

The State of Texas has in place the Eligibility Law “No Pass/No Play.” All students involved in extracurricular and co-curricular activities are required to have a passing grade of 70 for **all** subjects in order to participate in competitions and contests. A single failing grade in any class on report cards and designated progress reports will deny you the privilege of performing with the theatre group. Your grades have a direct influence on every other student in the play. This problem can devastate all of our hard work, both individually and as a production team. The teamwork needed for a successful performance is based on the responsibility of each student to pass his/her classes.

Here are a couple of hints in order to stay eligible:

**Do all of your homework and turn it in on time!** The incredible fact is the majority of ineligibles fail simply because they do not complete their work. A single zero on any assignment can cause your overall grade to drop drastically.

**Do not be afraid to ask for help!** Check with your teachers to find out when tutorials sessions are available. Every teacher at Wester Middle School is willing to help any student willing to put forth the effort.

*NOTE: Eligibility plays an important part in the casting process. All student grades are reviewed during casting. If a student is failing or in jeopardy of failing, even if only on a progress report, the student may not be cast. Please remember to work with your students on keeping their grades eligible.*

# Rehearsals

Rehearsals are a key part of the production process. Practice makes perfect—and rehearsal are how we practice. We cannot produce a quality show without quality rehearsals. With that said, it is easy to understand why rehearsal expectations are extremely high.

## **Rehearsal Attendance Policy**

Rehearsal schedules will be sent home upon casting each performance

1. Conflicts/Appointments must be shared with the director as soon as possible.
2. In case of illness and/or family emergency, the parents should call the director as soon as they are aware that the situation exists. You may call the director's room and leave a message or you may follow up with a written note. This is the only category where absences will be excused the same day or after the event.

**Please remember that no matter the role in a production, every student is a valuable part of the process and will be missed if he/she is absent. Please let the director(s) know of absences as soon as possible.**

# Performances

Performances are the tangible outcome of the hard work and effort of the students and director. The only outcome sought is that of excellence. When performing, students should always remember that they represent our school and community and should behave accordingly.

## **Performance Guidelines:**

1. Be on time—early is on time, on time is late, and late is unacceptable.
2. Be courteous and polite—Be respectful of all cast and crew members.
3. Thank those who offer support and assistance—They make your hard work meaningful.
4. Maintain a performance atmosphere at all times
5. No costumes/make-up in the “lobby” or audience—Students are to remain back stage during productions and intermission.
6. Ride buses in a mature manner. No shouting, standing or switching seats, especially when the bus is in motion.

## **Performance attendance is mandatory if you are cast or crew!**

If for some reason you cannot attend a performance date you **MUST** let the director know **before casting!** If there comes a time during the production process when a scheduling conflict is discovered, please let the director(s) know immediately so a solution may be worked out. An alternative assignment may be given ahead of time, but without prior knowledge of the absence a student will **not** be able to make up the grade(s).

## **Performance Departure**

After the show ends, students are to return to the dressing rooms to change out of costume and remove make-up. The dressing rooms must also be cleaned of all trash, food, etc. and set up for the next school day before anyone leaves. Please see the “Rehearsal and Event Dress” section for costume guidelines. After the dressing room has been cleared, students will check out with a director. **After an after-school rehearsal or performance, students may not leave until they have been dismissed by a director.**

**Performance dates are listed in the rehearsal calendars, the Wester student agenda, and on the Wester Theatre webpage.** If you have any questions or concerns about dates, please contact the director.

**Again, please remember that no matter the role in a production, every student is a valuable part of the process and will be missed if he/she is absent. Please let the director(s) know of absences as soon as possible.**

# Rehearsal and Event Dress

The Wester Theatre Department takes great pride in projecting professional, uniformed appearance at all rehearsals and theater events.

## **Rehearsal Attire:**

You may wear school appropriate attire that follows the school dress code. Be sure you bring additional clothing if the rehearsal requires movement (remember to remain within dress code standards). You want to be comfortable at rehearsal. Please see that **closed-toe shoes** are worn to every rehearsal for safety reasons.

## **Field Trips:**

We represent Wester Middle School and the Theatre Department when attending theatre field trips. Please make sure you dress appropriately and professionally for and theatre event or field trip.

## **Special Events/UII One-Act Play:**

Students are to wear comfortable, presentable clothing during the day of the UII One-Act Play Competition. Students will be asked to wear their Wester Theatre shirts.

## **Costumes:**

Costumes are a very important part of a production. Many costumes belong to the school, but some are also rented or personally owned. At the end of a rehearsal, costumes should be taken off and neatly hung on the costume rack in an organized fashion. Any accessories (including shoes, hats, jewelry, etc.) should also be removed and stored **with** other costume pieces. You may choose to bring a bag of some sort. Before students leave after a performance, they must return to the dressing room and change out of their costumes. Costumes should be neatly hung on the costume rack in an organized fashion including all accessories.

**Costumes should NOT be taken home for any reason.**

**Following an after-school rehearsal or performance, students may not leave until they have been dismissed by a director.**

## **Show Day:**

It is requested that all Theatre students wear their Wester Theatre shirt to help promote the current show.

## **Wester Theatre Shirts:**

The students will have the option of purchasing a Wester Theatre shirt to wear throughout their theatre years here at Wester. The shirts are worn for field trips, shows, and other days as requested. As a means of economics, there are not show shirts to purchase for each show. The students wear the same general theatre shirt for all functions. (see following page for example.)

# Auditions/Class

## Theatre Productions

The Theatre Productions class is selected from Theatre I & II students auditions, grade, and essays. Students will be informed of the application process early in the spring semester packet. In addition to the application and essays, selections will be made based on attendance, academic performance, dedication, teacher recommendation, and student interview essays.

All Theatre Production students will participate in a role of the UIL (as cast or crew) to ensure a rewarding theatrical experience for the entire Theatre Productions class.

## Theatre II

This group works in class to rehearse and prepare performances and projects for in-class grades.

All Theatre II students have the option to audition for shows. **Shows may be rehearsed in class or afterschool.** Auditions for the above mentioned events will be after school on a designated date. An audition application with parent's permission must be turned in at the time of the audition. The involvement in these additional shows is completely voluntary. Students who participate as cast or crew members will be held to the same expectations of the Theatre department and may receive extra credit for their work.

## Theatre I

Students in Theatre I will learn basic theatre concepts and vocabulary as well as rehearse and prepare performances and projects for in-class grades

The audition information for Theatre I students interested in auditioning will be the same as the other theatre levels. . **Shows may be rehearsed in class or afterschool.** Auditions for the above mentioned events will be after school on a designated date. An audition application with parent's permission must be turned in at the time of the audition. The involvement in these additional shows is completely voluntary. Students who participate as cast or crew members will be held to the same expectations of the theatre department and may receive extra credit for their work.

## **Audition Process**

All performances are cast by audition. Students will be asked to perform a “cold reading” from the script to be performed. Auditions will be closed to the public with only the director present. The students will be asked to add character, mood, and an efficient use of space in their audition. **Students will be cast as director sees fit**, allowing all students opportunity to audition for many roles for growth in performance. The student’s creative and theatrical growth is the primary concern of the director.

The primary objective for each student at school should be to obtain the highest quality overall education possible. Academic performance and success fall hand in hand with theatrical success. Wester takes pride in knowing theatre students are among the highest achieving students in the school and are also among the most active in other organizations. Education research shows that students involved in extracurricular activities perform at a consistently higher academic level!

**Students must be academically eligible for performance in these top-performing groups. A student ineligible cannot participate in the performance and their role will be assigned to another student.**

## **Communication is the Key!**

The Wester Theatre Department wants to keep students and parents informed! In addition to this handbook, we provide calendars and notes home. You can also access materials online as well as communicate with the director. Please keep any rehearsal calendar and post it for future reference.

Be involved in your student’s theatre education. There are many volunteer opportunities for parents!!

Pertinent information sheets will be sent home with each student prior to any major event. If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to call or email the director.

Thank you for your support!

## ***Ways to help your Theatre student:***

- ✦ **Encourage and allow them to run their lines/perform their scene for you/with you.** They love to "perform" for you and appreciate your help.
- ✦ **Help them gather props** (things used on stage) **and costumes** (things worn on stage) **from items at home.** I do *not* encourage spending money. Always, double check what things you might have at home just lying around.
- ✦ **Check Eschool on a regular basis and go over your student's grades with them.** Hold them accountable for assignments. Ask them to explain assignments/units. This is a good way to see if they know what they are doing/should be doing.
- ✦ **If they are in a main stage play, try to come watch.** This is very important to them and they want you to see their hard work.
- ✦ **Reinforce their fragile egos.** Not everyone is a "Oscar" winner but remember everyone can use compliments and good constructive advice. Know that they are doing their best and applaud them for that. It is very hard to get up in front of your peers (and teachers) and perform.
- ✦ **Meet Deadlines.** Having their lines memorized and performances ready on time is extremely important. There are no "make-up" dates in live theatre. "The Show Must Go On!" This is a great skill for not only Theatre but Life in general.
- ✦ **Ask them daily what their favorite part of class was today.** You can extend this on to all their subjects. It is a great way to start a conversation and allows them to talk about something that they know. It also avoids the "Yes", "No", "Fine", or "Nothing" answers.
- ✦ **Remind them that every job in Theatre is important.** It takes a large group of people working very hard to put on a fabulous show. Have them watch the credits of a movie sometime if they have doubts.
- ✦ **Keep in mind that Theatre might not be "their thing" but the skills taught and learned will be useful in all career aspects.** Public speaking is the number one fear of most adults. Your student will be conquering that on a regular basis.

## **Junior Thespian Society Introduction and general information**

### ***❖ What is the International Thespian Society?***

- The International Thespian Society (ITS), an honorary group for middle and high school theatre students, is a division of the Educational Theatre Association (EdTA). The mission of ITS is to honor student excellence in the theatre arts. Thespian and Junior Thespian troupes are the honors components of a school's theatre program. ITS membership offers many valuable benefits, services, and opportunities to troupe directors, Thespians, and Junior Thespians alike.
- Thespian and Junior Thespian induction is a great motivator for students to become more active in their school's theatre program. Whether or not these students pursue careers in the performing arts, the skills that they learn through theatre and Thespian/Junior Thespian activities are invaluable and ensure that future generations will appreciate and support the arts in our communities. We thank our troupe directors for caring enough to provide their students with this meaningful opportunity.

### ***❖ What is the Educational Theatre Association?***

- The Educational Theatre Association (EdTA) is a professional organization supporting the field of theatre education. Members include theatre arts educators, students, professionals, and enthusiasts.
- EdTA is also the parent organization of ITS—we endeavor to create an educational and stimulating theatre experience for students by providing the resources, training, and advocacy support for well-trained theatre education professionals. In short, we are not only serving theatre students, but we are also serving and developing theatre educators.

### ***❖ What is EdTA's mission and how is it fulfilled?***

- The mission of EdTA is to create an artistic, educational, and professional network for theatre arts educators, students, professionals, and enthusiasts to share ideas and support the effort to have theatre arts (including film, television, and other related electronic media) recognized in all phases of education and lifelong learning.
- In order to fulfill this mission, we:
  - Cultivate support to sustain and grow EdTA
  - Honor the work and recognize the achievements of our members and others
  - Produce educational events, programming, and publications to expand the knowledge and skills base for our members and the field of theatre education
  - Promote the work of our membership to the public and other organizations
  - Serve our members by being the leading advocate for theatre arts education
  - Support our volunteer leader network

**Junior Thespians.** Only students who 1. have completed all eligibility requirements and 2. have had their names and one-time induction fees submitted to the EdTA/ITS home office by the troupe director are members of the Junior Thespian troupe and the International Thespian Society. It is not possible to induct or maintain Junior Thespian membership locally without registering through the home office. Participation in an induction ceremony alone does not constitute induction. The induction ceremony is the local celebration of the induction into ITS.

A student member must maintain satisfactory standards of membership as set forth by the EdTA governing board and the troupe constitution. The troupe director may deny a student participation in troupe activities for just cause. However, the term of the student's paid ITS membership will not be affected. Once a student has been submitted to the home office for induction, their name cannot be removed from the Thespian Society membership rolls.

**Junior Thespian alumni.** Junior Thespian inductees receive a lifetime membership, the active benefits of which last through grade 8. Junior Thespians who have graduated from middle/junior high school become Junior Thespian alumni. They are members of the troupe and ITS, but they don't receive many of the benefits of active members still enrolled in the theatre program, such as the ability to vote or run for troupe office. Many Junior Thespian alumni are inducted into their high school Thespian troupes as well.



<http://schooltheatre.org/society/junior-thespians>

- **Monthly Meetings are held starting in September.**
- **Please have your student attend a meeting for further instructions on pledging JTS.**
- **Junior Thespian Society also collects Box Tops for Education to earn money for the organization to use towards convention attendance, induction, and other expenses.**
- **Please send baggies of **Box Tops** to school with your student!!**
- **Thank you!**

**The next page is left intentionally blank.**

**If a blank page bothers you, feel free to draw your favorite animal, vacation spot, or food.**

**You could even list your goals for this class.**

**Or even a draw a self-portrait.**

**Possibly write the greatest knock-knock joke that you have even heard or told.**

**Show Ms. Penz to receive an extra credit grade or prize.**

**(Your Blank Space)**

# 2017-2018 Wester MS Theatre Handbook Acknowledgement

*Please sign and return this page to your child's Theatre Arts teacher for EXTRA CREDIT.*

- **I have been provided a copy of the Wester Theatre Arts Handbook.**
- **My student and I have discussed the handbook and understand the policies and guidelines stated therein.**

\_\_\_\_\_  
Parent Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Student Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Student Name Printed

\_\_\_\_\_  
Class Period

NOTES FOR THEATRE DIRECTOR:

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