



TEXAS
THESPIANSSM

AN EDUCATIONAL THEATRE ASSOCIATION AFFILIATE



Recommendations for Reopening Theatre Classrooms & Theatre Facilities

The Texas Thespians Board of Directors submits the following recommendations for reopening our theatre classrooms and facilities.

Foreword

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, we understand that difficult decisions had to be made in the move to online learning. As we approach decision making for the 2020-2021 school year, we must ensure that Arts-in-Education courses, such as Theatre, are understood to be an integral part of learning for all students.

Arts courses are vital to a well-rounded education. Data proves that involvement in fine arts courses develops 21st century work skills, boosts college readiness and test scores, and fosters critical and creative thinking. In addition to these skills, arts courses provide learners with emotional benefits and a sense of community.

There is a natural relationship between the arts and expression. Students learn the strong social and emotional benefits of theatre through strengthening emotional control, increasing self-concept, and building strong social interactions. Schools play a critical role in preparing our students to be productive members of society and the arts provide those personal, human connections.

Theatre provides important developmental, social, and emotional experiences which allow our students to take safe, creative risks, participate in social interactions and allow them to express themselves without judgement.

We understand that there may very well be a need for hybrid classroom models and continued online learning in the fall. It is not a matter of **IF** theatre should be provided, it is the question of **HOW**.

- HOW do we follow content and curriculum while physically apart?
- HOW do we adjust a theatrical lesson for a virtual classroom?
- HOW do we provide the social and emotional support that theatre provides in the live classroom to the classroom online?

We must encourage our school administrators and teachers to think creatively. As theatre is primarily collaborative, we must use digital communication and collaboration to develop theatrical skills in this new world. We must ensure that all students have viable connectivity and have a safe community in which to express themselves.

As stated in the [Arts Education Is Essential](#) document, "It is imperative that all students have access to an equitable delivery of arts education that includes dance, media arts, music, theatre and visual arts that supports their educational, social, and emotional well-being, taught by certified professional arts educators in partnership with community arts providers."

We call on our educational policy makers to ensure the support of our Texas theatre classrooms and ask that recommendations are swiftly implemented to ensure that all of our students have access to a quality theatrical education in the upcoming school year.

We respectfully submit the following questions for consideration and recommendations for the reopening of our theatre classrooms and facilities.

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The categories for consideration are:

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General Considerations

- Consider having an individual wholly or partially dedicated to ensuring health protocols are being successfully implemented and followed for each activity, class, and/or campus.
- Schools must follow all requirements of state and local authorities.
- Consider staggering start and end times, assigning students to entries and exits to ensure even distribution of students entering/exiting at each entry point.
- Schools should plan for entry and exit procedures that reduce the number of students and parents congregating outside and/or mixing around parking areas.

Scheduling

- Scheduling will be determined by the city, state, county, and/or local government leadership. **Theater educators should be included in the decision-making process regarding scheduling.**
- Possible Ideas include:
 - **Block schedule** for Middle & High School students
 - Monday - virtual classes for all
 - Tuesday/Thursday - odd-numbered classes
 - Wednesday/Friday - even-numbered classes
 - Classes are divided into equal groups. Group 1 attendees are face-to-face and Group 2 attendees are virtual. On the following scheduled day, Group 2 attendees are face-to-face and Group 1 attendees are virtual.
 - **A/B weeks**, students attend different portions of the day and split in-school learning/distance learning methods.
 - For the A/B week, students attend MWF during Week A, then TTh during Week B.
 - Classes are divided into equal groups. Group 1 attendees are face-to-face and Group 2 attendees are virtual. On the following scheduled day, Group 2 attendees are face-to-face and Group 1 attendees are virtual.
- Either option will allow for the same number of instructional minutes as a traditional, daily class meeting.
- For elementary students only, teachers rotate from classroom to classroom. Allow time in schedule between each class to properly sanitize equipment and refresh the room.
- Theatre dedicated spaces, i.e. auditoriums, blackboxes, dressing rooms, etc. should remain dedicated to Theatre instruction and classes.
- Theatre classrooms should remain dedicated to teaching and learning theatre and not re-purposed.
- Hold classes on stage/auditorium/cafetorium when available to allow for more physical distancing.

Personal Safety Protocols

- Parents shall check the temperatures of all students before attending school
- Campuses shall provide infrared thermometers for all classrooms
- How will thermometers be issued and maintained?
- Teachers shall check the temperatures of all students before each class.
 - Shall an attendance roster be used for recording temps?
 - Who will be responsible for turning in the temperatures taken?
 - Is there a reason to turn in the temperature log?
- Establish a protocol for reporting increased temperatures to school officials, parents of the student, and school nurse.
- **All personal belongings must be labeled.**

- **Masks required**
 - Will teachers/schools provide these to mitigate appropriate types or will this be a student supply?
 - Cloth masks - how can we ensure that washable masks are properly sanitized each day/week?
 - Students with medical/special needs limitations on face coverings?
- **There can be no shared water or food.**
 - Drinks and food should not be allowed in classrooms or rehearsal spaces unless medically necessary.
 - All water bottles shall have a secure cap/top and must be labeled with a permanent marker; all food should be labeled.
 - If permissible, would it be allowed for students to take breaks outside (weather permitting) with social distancing practices for food/beverages?
- Time will be built into the lesson plans for cleaning
 - 10 minutes check-in; 10 minute clean up/sanitize?
- Cleaning/disinfecting supplies shall be provided by each campus.
 - What is the appropriate alcohol disinfectant content for all levels - Elementary, Middle/High School?
 - Can sanitizers be brought in by students as a supply or strictly provided by the school?
 - CDC recommends at least 60% alcohol for sanitizers.
 - How do we handle parents who do not want their students to use provided materials and sanitizers?
- Class sizes shall be determined by CDC recommendations of social distancing and availability of space
- Shared technology procedures should be put in place to avoid lines for technology when in the classroom (portable devices, headphones, and etc.). As well as constant and reliable access to technology such as dedicated laptops for research and individualized instruction. Each item should be disinfected properly at the end of its use.

Mode of Instruction & TEKS Alignment

Online instructional emphasis may be shifted to include more individualized and/or digital projects such as:

- Published and student-written monologues
- Character Analysis
- Script Analysis
- Digital Research Projects
 - Research of Acting Styles
 - Theatre History Projects
 - Dramaturgical studies
- Masks
- Puppetry
- Technical Theatre – prop making, design projects - costumes, lights, makeup, sound, scenic
- Digital Makeup Morgues (Pinterest, Google Slides)
- Musical Theatre – Analyze different genres such as Golden Age, Juke Box, Mega Musicals, Book Musical, Concept Musicals, etc.
- Digital forums, journals, and Zoom class meetings
- Theoretical studies in all content areas

- Use adaptive learning to address the needs of students and to promote equitable student learning.
- Design lessons with all learners in mind. Consider cultural, economic, and connectivity when designing curriculum, instruction, disciplinary policies, family partnerships, and school-wide initiatives. Doing so promotes equity, community engagement, improves school climate, student morale, and academic achievement.
- Assess students based on their ability, growth, and participation.

Rehearsals & Performances

When it is not possible to mount in-person performances with students, the Educational Theatre Association and Texas Thespians strongly recommend that programs create virtual theatre productions. Permission to perform, stream, and/or record should be obtained from the publisher. Additionally, it is recommended that programs produce theatre that will minimize the risk of infection to students, the audience, and educators until a cure, vaccine, or effective treatment is available.

General Guidelines

- All members of the production will wear masks.
- Directors should check temperatures before each rehearsal or performance.
- Attendance records shall be kept as a means of tracking symptoms, however, students shall not be required or allowed to make up missed days or practices.
- During a rehearsal period, student crew/managers shall not hold any responsibility for collecting temperatures or documenting student health.
- Extracurricular rehearsal times limited to two (2) hours to prevent extending activities while in protective masks.
- Water breaks shall be built into rehearsal times
- Attendance at extracurricular rehearsals must be optional for students and in compliance with the rules for theatre production/rehearsals.
 - In addition to on-campus options, schools should consider providing students guidance for practicing at home or remotely away from school.
 - This can include virtual practices, emailed or otherwise electronically delivered rehearsal instructions, or any delivery model approved by the local school district.
- Individual student work can occur at home and then be integrated with others at a specific time in the school week for after-school rehearsals.
- All production checklists shall be laminated for easy disinfecting.

Social Distancing & Space Allocation

- Students and staff must maintain at least six (6) feet of distance from all sides when not actively rehearsing.
- When actively rehearsing, students and staff must maintain at least six (6) feet of distance from all sides whether indoors or outdoors.
- Rehearsals can be conducted up to a maximum of 50% capacity. (Based on June 2020 Governor Abbott's recommendation)
- Schools shall limit the total number of participants based on available space to allow for the appropriate distancing between students and staff.
- For the audience of your performances, consider an earlier opening of the house or stagger arrival/entrance times.
- Share information about the precautions you are taking as well as ask them to take precautions.

Risk Mitigation

- Schools should consider having students remain with a single group or cohort to minimize the number of students and staff that must isolate if a case is confirmed.
- Students shall report to practices and rehearsals in proper attire and immediately return home to change clothes or shower at the end of the session.
- Showers and restrooms should have a designated person to disinfect between use.
- During practices and rehearsals, staff must ensure appropriate social distancing, hygiene, and safety measures are implemented.
- Schools must have hand sanitizer or hand-washing stations readily available in the practice and rehearsal area. Students and staff should be encouraged to wash or disinfect their hands frequently.
- All surfaces in practice and rehearsal areas must be thoroughly disinfected throughout and at the end of each day.
- No clothing or costume materials may be laundered on-site or shared during rehearsals.
- There can be **no shared water or food**.
- Students who are not actively practicing shall wear cloth face masks.

Furniture and Stage Dressings

- Hard surface items that can easily be sanitized should be used.
- How do you sanitize a set piece that has been flame protected with flame retardant paint or sealant?
- All surface areas of furniture should be wiped down at the beginning and end of each use or covered in a protective cover that can be sanitized after use.
- Social distancing protocols should be used when staging furniture or other set items.
 - Furniture that is upholstered? Flame retardant restrictions on cleaning?
 - What is the recommendation for cloth beanbags, couches, recliners, and other furniture that is porous or covered in textiles?
 - The CDC and EPA have specific guidelines for types of antimicrobial pesticides that are effective to use on textiles. Is it necessary to prohibit soft surfaces?
- Scenic items that are to be moved on and off stage should only be done with a single source operation.

Costuming

- Costumers and actors will wear masks during fittings.
- Costumers will sanitize their hands before touching costumes
- All machinery and costume room supplies should be sanitized before and after each use.
- Each costumer should have their own sewing kit and personal tools.
- Costumes, wigs, or makeup will not be shared between cast members. Should there be understudies for the lead actor, separate costumes, wigs, and makeup should be provided.
- Costumes should be cleaned and laundered prior to student check out or use.
- Wigs and costumes should be sanitized after each rehearsal.
- Dry cleaning is recommended for all costumes and textiles that are used in productions and will be returned to the costume or prop storage.
- Costuming rooms and costume construction rooms should have limited access if possible.
- All pre-check lists and costume plots provided for actors shall be laminated for easy disinfecting.

Props

- All pre-check lists shall be laminated for easy disinfecting.
- Prop tables will be wiped down before and after each performance.
- Props will be disinfected before and after use.
- Only designated actors and designated props crew will be allowed to touch the props and props crew members shall wear gloves to handle props used by actors.
- Real food for productions should not be considered during the pandemic. Any scripts which call for food should use only prop/fake/plastic food for communal scenes, and should be disinfected after the scene.

Musical Theatre

- No dance activities should be allowed that require direct or indirect contact including partnering, tactile cueing, direct floor work, touching the same equipment, or traveling across the floor.
- Areas should be well-ventilated should dancing occur.
- Singing ensembles should follow the [guidelines of the ACDA](#) American Choral Directors Association.

Shared Materials

- Students should not share scripts or other paper rehearsal materials.
- New scripts are being developed by multiple publishing companies for digital collaboration performances. Take this into consideration when purchasing.
- Scripts and other materials, if sent home to students, may not be able to return back to the classroom. It is suggested to have a plan in place to accommodate (e.g. making copies for school and home use).
- Textbooks, if used, should be provided to students without digital access.
- It is possible, textbooks should not be transported to and from school. Allow for copies to stay at home.
- All rehearsal paperwork and scripts should be kept in a plastic binder that can be wiped down after each use.
- Computers, tablets, or other electronic devices should not be shared.
- Supplies such as hot glue guns, sewing machines, scissors, straight pins, paintbrushes, Exacto knives, rulers, measuring tapes, etc. should be disinfected before and after use, and should be checked out to the student via a single-source procedure.

Scene Shops

Tool use and application for Technical Theatre shall follow all safety protocols for the specific tool operation including but not limited to:

- Clean area of operation
- Proper safety goggles and masks
- Ventilated areas for material debris from lumber or paints
- Access to eye washing station should an accident occur
- Posted signs for tool safety
- Designate one person/staff member to establish a single-source equipment process to limit multiple students handling tools/equipment; all tools/equipment should be sanitized after each use. A record of tool use should be kept.
- Schools should limit the use of equipment/tools to further reduce the risk of spreading the virus.

- All equipment must be thoroughly disinfected before and after each use. If a student uses a piece of equipment, that equipment must be thoroughly disinfected before another student uses it.

PACs & Facilities

Social Distancing & Space Allocation

Per Governor Abbott's guidelines **as of June 2020**:

- Ensure proper spacing between patrons by choosing one of these methods to achieve 6 feet social distancing between groups of patrons and **to not exceed 50%** of the facility's indoor occupancy limits:
- For performance halls that configure seating arrangements which are not in rows, ensure at least 6 feet of separation between other groups. Tables of no more than 10 people.
- For performance halls that configure seating arrangements in rows, maintain at least two empty seats (or six feet separation) between groups in any row, except as follows:
- Two or more members of the same household can sit adjacent to one another, with two seats (or six feet separation) empty on either side.
- Two individuals who are not members of the same household but who are attending together can sit adjacent to one another, with two seats (or six feet separation) empty on either side.
- Alternate rows between patrons (every other row left empty), as appropriate.
- Any other method to provide at least six feet of separation between groups of up to 10 individuals who attend the performance hall together.
- Disinfect seats and frequently touched areas between performances.
- If the performance is outdoors individuals should avoid being in a group larger than 10 individuals. Within these groups, individuals should, to the extent possible, minimize in-person contact with others not in the individual's household. Minimizing in-person contact includes maintaining 6 feet of separation from individuals. When maintaining 6 feet of separation is not feasible, other methods should be utilized to slow the spread of COVID-19, such as wearing a face covering or mask, washing or sanitizing hand frequently, and avoiding sharing utensils or other common objects.
- For fine arts performance halls providing food service to patrons:
- Do not leave condiments, silverware, flatware, glassware, or other traditional tabletop items on an unoccupied table.
- Provide condiments only upon request, and in single-use (non-reusable) portions.
- Clean and disinfect the area used for dining (table, etc.) after each group of patrons departs.
- Use disposable menus (new for each patron).
- If the performance hall allows patrons to write down their food orders inside the hall, provide take-home pencils and notepads that cannot be used by other patrons.
- Have wait staff sanitize or wash hands between interactions with patrons.
- Fine arts performance halls with counter food service for patrons:
- Provide condiments or utensils only in single-use, individually-wrapped items, and provide condiments only upon request.
- Have employees and contractors follow proper food-handling protocols.
- Disinfect any items that come into contact with patrons.
- Set line markers to ensure social distancing while awaiting service.

Microphones and Communication Headsets

- Sound operating consoles should be cleaning prior to each use with alcohol wipes and after contact has been made by an individual.
- Students should not share lavalier or other voice amplification equipment. In the event that a student would have to share a microphone/headset, proper cleaning and sanitization of all parts of the equipment are required.

Microphone cleaning resources

<https://www.shure.eu/musicians/discover/educational/keeping-your-microphone-clean>

<https://dramatics.org/mic-check/>

Lighting Equipment

- Masks, gloves, and eye protection should be worn while handling lighting equipment.
- Students should not share gloves or protective gear for the duration of the lesson.
- School provided safety gear should be sanitized after each use. Student provided safety gear is not encouraged.
- All surface areas of the battens/truss, instruments, safety cables, and C-clamps should be thoroughly wiped down with sanitizing wipes before and after each use.
- Alcohol wipes should be used after changing the lamps in instruments. Hand sanitizer is not recommended on lamps for theatrical lighting.
- Spotlights and other hand-operated instruments should be cleaned before and after each use.
- Lightboard consoles should be cleaning prior to each use with alcohol wipes and after contact has been made by an individual.
- One operator should have exclusive access to lightboards and social distancing should be adhered to while in the booth or command station.
- All cables used should be cleaned and sanitized prior to use and should have limitations on the number of students who will handle/access lighting cables.
- Any ladder, scaffolding, or elevation devices used should be sanitized before and after each use.
- Limit student access to grids, alcoves, and catwalks.

Draperies and Soft Goods -

- Due to flame retardant standards on all curtains, drapes, and other flown softgoods, how do we handle them?
 - We cannot sanitize curtains or drapes without diminishing the protective flame retardant.
- Curtains, drapes, and other flown soft goods should be flown out if possible during rehearsal.
- If curtains or soft goods cannot be flown out, safely secure a plastic barrier (trashbags) around the softgoods.
- Students should not touch any curtain or soft goods without proper masks, long sleeve shirts, gloves, and protective eyewear.

Fly rail and rigging systems

- Limit the number of students in this area for social distancing
- Students should never operate a fly system or rigging without director/teacher present
- All locking rails should be sanitized before and after use
- Gloves and eye protection should be worn at all times while operating rigging equipment.

Field Trips

- Parents can drive students to and from the location, so as to not have to use busses.
- The number of students allowed to go will depend on the venue's capacity and the current recommendations from the Governor and local officials.

Sources Cited

- [“Arts Education Is Essential”](#): May 2020 statement of support by 52 national arts and arts education organizations
- [National Federation of State High School Associations Guide for Opening up High School Athletics and Activities](#)
- [CDC Activities and Initiatives Supporting the COVID-19 Response and the President’s Plan for Opening Up America Again](#)
- [K-12 Schools and Child Care Programs: FAQs for Administrators, Teachers, and Parents](#)
- [CDC Recommendation Regarding the Use of Cloth Face Coverings, Especially in Areas of Significant Community Based Transmission](#)
- [Covid-19 Music Information — Music — University Interscholastic League](#)
- Arts Together: Planning Guidance for Arts Educators in Maryland Public Schools
- [Roadmap for Recovery and Resilience for Theatre](#)
- Danceusa.org
https://dance-usa.s3.amazonaws.com/page_uploads/COVID%20FAQ%20-%20MAY%202020.pdf
- [Arts Education and Social-Emotional Learning Outcomes Among K-12 Students: Developing a Theory of Action](#)
- [Texas Association of School Administrators](#)
- [2016 EdTA Opportunity-To-Learn Standards for Theatre Education](#)
- [Guidelines of the ACDA](#)
- [Texas Theatre TEKS](#)