



THEATRE DEPARTMENT HANDBOOK

Dear Students and Families of the Harrison Theatre Department:

Here we go on a new adventure together! In these uncertain times, it is more important than ever to make sure we are all on the same page by setting clear expectations and committing to effective communication. I promise to do my very best to keep everyone in the loop this year, both our Campus and our eSchool families. Help me succeed by making it a priority to communicate regularly and take an active interest in our department.

Many of you know that I joined the outstanding faculty at Harrison in December 2019. I hit the ground running and it has been a most unusual year for so many reasons! I am thrilled to be a member of the team at Harrison and excited to begin the new school year.

My background includes 25 years of service to theatre education. I have taught every grade level from PreK through college in the areas of creative drama and theatre arts. In the course of my career, I have worked with every level of theatre artist from “newbie” to professional. Before arriving at Harrison, I taught at three public schools (K12), one private school (K12), three colleges/universities, and several theatre companies. As a professor I spent my time teaching all levels of acting and theatre education (training future theatre teachers to teach theatre—say that five times fast!)

My favorite things about theatre are that it requires a team to come together in collaboration and that the team must solve challenges to achieve success. What better way to prepare young people for the many possible career paths and journeys they will undertake?

This handbook is meant to provide important information to help each of our students succeed. Please take the time to review it and feel free to contact me with questions you may have. **Due to our unusual circumstances this year, there are some aspects of the Theatre Department Handbook that will NOT apply at the beginning of the year (such as auditions for live performances).** This handbook should provide information that will be applicable in more usual times. **The administration and faculty will cover specific guidelines and procedures that apply to 2020 reopening of schools.**

I use email as a primary means of communicating, so please be sure that I have the best emails for your family throughout the year. I will also send out important announcements (sometimes to remind you to check your emails!) through the REMIND app. To join this text @hsathea to 81010.

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Mission Statement/Theatre Department Goals

The mission of the Theatre Department of Harrison School for the Arts is to provide a rigorous, high-quality education in theatre arts with a particular emphasis on performance. The goal of the department is to provide experiences for young actors that will engage, equip, and empower them to excel in the areas of collaboration, problem solving, leadership, self-discipline, confidence, and performance skills.

Courses include Acting 1, 2, 3, 4, Playwriting, and Directing. Students study contemporary acting methods, classical acting, improvisation, physical/vocal choices, character development, scene work, dramatic structure, playwriting, directing, dramaturgy, and writing skills. Students also take courses in Stagecraft, Voice, Dance, and Theatre History with instructors in the Technical Theatre and Musical Theatre Departments.

School-Wide Procedures and Policies

- Follow the Student Code of Conduct as published by the Polk County Public Schools.
- Wear student ID at all times unless directed to take it off for safety during class or rehearsals.
- Only eat and drink in designated areas. **No gum at all.** No food or drinks in classrooms, hallways, theatre, shops, practice rooms, dressing rooms, or theatres. **Only water is allowed.**
- Clean up after yourself and store materials and personal belongings appropriately.
- Visitors are allowed on campus only after they have received permission from faculty or staff and have checked in at the front office.
- Students staying after school may only be in the areas approved by the faculty or staff member to whom they are assigned. Students who do not have after school activities are expected to leave campus by 2:30. Students who finish their after-school activities may wait for their rides in front of the theatre or in the courtyard if riding the shuttle buses.
- Students will follow the classroom policies and procedures for all of their classes. **Different teachers may have slightly different policies and procedures and it is the students' responsibility to learn them and follow them.**
- Attending Harrison School for the Arts is a privilege and must be treated as such. Choose respect and positivity towards the work, yourself, and others. Artists must practice self-discipline to bring their very best work to each opportunity, even on days when it is challenging.

Attendance

It is critical that each student in the theatre department is present for every class, rehearsal, and performance as scheduled. In theatre we rely on each other to accomplish our goals. The absence of one student impacts others negatively. Students who are late or absent excessively may jeopardize their ability to continue as a member of the theatre department.

Materials Required

Please have the following required materials by the end of the first week of school.

Students in Acting 1, Acting 2, Acting 3, Acting 4, Playwriting, Directing/Stage Management: bring these items to class each day.

- pencils and erasers
- black or blue pens
- loose leaf paper
- composition book: dedicated for use only in theatre classes listed above
- folder or binder**

**Each student is responsible for filing and keeping track of all handouts and assignments. Students may choose to use a binder with multiple sections to track all of the courses they take in theatre. The folder/binder will not be collected by the teacher but is each student's responsibility to maintain and organize.

Students in all acting classes

Students in Acting classes must come to class dressed to MOVE. Consider comfort and modesty during physical activities which include bending, stretching, lying on the floor, exercises (yoga and such), and more. Great choices include clothing (including shoes) that allows the student to move freely without having to adjust it during physical activity. Class time is not used to change clothing; it is best to come to school wearing clothing appropriate to theatre classes and rehearsals.

Students in the Theatre Department

Theatre Department students need a 2" heavy-duty binder with pockets, dividers, and folder inserts for storing all materials for juries. This binder will be used throughout the entire high school experience and students will add materials both for juries each semester and also for their audition portfolios.

Other Courses

Teachers in Technical Theatre and Musical Theatre will require additional materials for their courses. Please follow the guidelines they provide.

Performances

Students may occasionally need to provide basic wardrobe pieces for performance opportunities. Actors should have at least one pair of black pants/slacks and at least one black shirt/blouse in good condition. Actors sometimes need to provide shoes for some performance opportunities and more information will be given on a case by case basis. Actors sometimes have the opportunity to work on crew for various performances and will need to dress in all black including closed-toe shoes.

Facilities

The theatre classroom, practice rooms, and black box are to be used only with permission and supervision from faculty or staff. At times during class and rehearsal, various groups will be assigned to different work areas. Students must remain in the work area assigned by the faculty/staff.

Blackbox: The theatre spaces are shared spaces. Be respectful of the space and your colleagues by picking up after yourself. Props and costumes that are not yours should not be touched or moved.

Restrooms: Restrooms between the theatre classroom and main rotunda are to be used if excused from theatre classroom. Restrooms across from the black box are to be used if excused from the Black Box or Practice Rooms. These restrooms also serve as the dressing rooms for black box performances.

Greenroom: The greenroom and greenroom restrooms are to be accessed only with the permission of an instructor.

Theatre Department Bulletin Board: Students are encouraged to regularly check the board located in the hallway near the Blackbox. This is where we post department announcements, rehearsal schedules, audition notices, cast lists, and scholarship information. Students may only post announcements with the permission of the teacher or administration. **Forgetting to check the board is not an excuse for missing a rehearsal or other important information.**

Practice Rooms

- Students wishing to use a practice room after school must prearrange this with a teacher who is on-campus for the rehearsal.
- Practice rooms are to be **used for rehearsal**.
- Students may lose the privilege of using the practice rooms if found out of assigned area during practice room rehearsal, in the practice room without permission during class time, off task, or having phones, food or drink in the room.

Practice Room Guidelines

Allowed

water bottle
script
journal/notebook
pencil/eraser

Not allowed

food, drinks, gum
cell phones
backpacks

Auditions

- All students in the Theatre Department are required to audition for all Theatre Department plays and all sophomores, juniors, and seniors are required to audition for the All School Musical.
- Audition notices and workshops will be posted in advance.
- If a student is cast, he or she must arrange scheduling to attend afterschool rehearsals, publicity events, and performances.
- A professional demeanor is imperative during auditions and when cast lists are posted. Public displays of disappointment or gloating are considered unprofessional choices.
- Auditions are similar to job interviews and prepare students for handling both successes and disappointments with professionalism and self-control.
- Not getting cast does not mean a student did not audition well as many factors are taken into consideration during casting.
- **It may be helpful to think of each class day as part of an audition as it relates to punctuality, attendance, focus, completing assignments on time, professionalism, dedication, positivity, and working with peers and instructor.**

Rehearsals

- Bring a pencil, your script, and a water bottle to every rehearsal. Standard actor etiquette.
- After school rehearsals are from 2:15-4:45, ending in time to catch the late shuttle buses.
- There are times, including tech week, when rehearsals run later. Advance notice is given, and it is the student's responsibility to arrange for transportation in advance.
- Students are to be picked up in front of the school at the designated end of rehearsal.
- Visitors are not permitted in rehearsal; this includes students not cast in the production.
- **Students not attending school for at least four classes in a day, may be denied the opportunity to attend after-school rehearsal that day.**
- Three absences or five tardies from rehearsal may result in being released from the show and **placed on artistic probation.**
- Actors must sign-in on time and attend warm-ups at the beginning of each rehearsal.
- During rehearsal, students are expected to maintain focus. Actors that are not on stage may read, do homework, or work on lines. Excessive talking or distraction may result in a warning.
- For safety reasons students are not permitted to leave school grounds from the end of the school day until they are dismissed from rehearsal. That means bring water, a snack, and anything else you may need to school on rehearsal days.
- Appropriate actor etiquette includes no use of electronic devices during rehearsal except at breaks.
- Students are expected to maintain a professional demeanor during rehearsal. This includes being on time, dressed appropriately, warming up with the group, knowing lines, following blocking and choreography, maintaining a prompt script and following guidelines set by the directing team. You may be asked to try things on stage you did not expect, and you may be asked to assist in some way

(running lines) when you are not on stage. These are opportunities to practice flexibility and ensemble and are expected of all cast members.

- Students are expected to speak to the director with any concerns or issues. This is considered professionalism. Gossip and behavior considered to be destructive to the ensemble may result in dismissal from the play.
- Actors do not direct other actors. An idea or suggestion may be given to the stage manager or director during a break.
- Tech week absences are not permitted.
- Students cast in a show must practice extra self-discipline to maintain schoolwork as it takes a serious time commitment to produce a show and students will be pressed for time as tech week approaches.

Performances

- Students may be part of a performance that takes place during the school day. In this case, the teacher/director will obtain an excused absence for the student. However, it is the student's responsibility to meet with teachers to get missed assignments and make-up work.
- A performance is an exciting time for everyone at school. Cast members, classmates, family and friends are asked to exercise theatre etiquette at all times. This includes no flash photography or videotaping performances, no food or drink in the theatre, and no use of electronic devices during a show.
- Following a performance, cast members may be greeted in the rotunda outside of the Black Box. This is the appropriate time to give flowers/gifts to cast members. No flowers/gifts should be presented to actors onstage.
- Appreciation may be shown with applause during a show and discussing a performance after a show.
- Performing is a privilege at Harrison that is earned through hard work, dedication, and reasonable artistic consideration. It is not an expectation that every student will perform in a main-stage production. All students are given the opportunity to perform in showcases throughout the year.
- There are performances tied to some classes and students in those classes are required to perform at those events. Notice is given to parents in advance to assist in family scheduling.

Special Performance Groups, Festivals, and Competitions

- Throughout the year students may audition for or be invited to participate in special performances festivals, or competitions.
- If a student commits to these opportunities the student is required to perform at these events. Parents will be notified in writing of the schedule for these opportunities.
- These performances **may be tied to a class grade**. If the performance is *not* tied to a grade and the student does *not* perform, he or she may be placed on Artistic Probation.
- **A student may not perform in a specialty group, festival, or competition if he or she is placed on any type of probation with the school.**

Community Activities and Work

- Harrison rehearsals and performances are co-curricular, not extracurricular.
- Outside commitments take a second priority to rehearsals and performances at Harrison.
- **It is the student's responsibility to schedule work and outside activities around Harrison responsibilities. Rehearsals are usually 2:15 – 4:45 pm weekdays.**
- Tech week and other special/unusual rehearsal times are given far enough in advance for students to schedule all other commitments around them.
- Normal, weekly rehearsal schedules are given about one week in advance. Students have the opportunity to list potential conflicts at the time of auditions. If a student does not have a pre-approved conflict, s/he must attend all rehearsals as scheduled. Students with consistent issues managing their schedules will be removed from a show and will have a conference to discuss their status at Harrison.
- The theatre department supports the numerous performance opportunities in the area. However, a student must seek permission from the theatre department instructor to audition for a show that is not part of the theatre department, in order to maintain a healthy and balanced time management schedule for the student.
- If a student finds that community activities, schoolwork, or a job are creating conflict with Harrison activities, the student is encouraged to schedule a meeting with the theatre instructor to discuss his or her status at Harrison.

Academic and Disciplinary Probation

- At Harrison, we take the academic development of each student very seriously. Although we view academic and artistic development as separate issues, we do understand that a proper balance needs to be achieved for the development of a well-rounded student.
- **Please refer to the school's student handbook for specific information on academic and disciplinary probation.**
- Any student placed on Academic Probation may be denied performance opportunities for the following semester. The student may also be required to submit grade updates every three weeks during the probationary period.
- Students placed on Disciplinary Probation may face consequences from the department in regard to performance opportunities.
- Any student on Academic or Disciplinary Probation may be denied opportunities for missing school due to performances, field trips, or special events.

Artistic Warning and Artistic Probation

In order to grow as theatre artists, students must choose hard work, dedication, and a positive demeanor. If students choose not to take artistic growth seriously, then they may receive the status of **Artistic Warning or Artistic Probation**.

Students placed on Artistic Warning are told verbally and informed of what they need to do to amend their status; parents will be informed by e-mail. Students placed on Artistic Probation will be notified in writing and parents will be notified by a letter stating the reason or reasons for probation.

Any student receiving Artistic Probation twice may be removed from Harrison School for the Arts. A parent who wishes to appeal the status of Artistic Probation must make an appointment with the administration and the instructor(s) to discuss the probation.

A student may be placed on Artistic Warning for:

- Low achievement on a jury
- Failure to get semester production hours
- An unexcused absence from rehearsal
- Excessive tardiness to rehearsals or performances.
- Failure to attend one Harrison production per semester
- Poor performance on production responsibilities
- Unprofessional attitude/behavior, creating conflicts
- A lack of etiquette towards cast members and/or production staff.

In order to amend Artistic Warning, a student may be required to obtain additional production hours, perform again a portion of his or her jury, demonstrate noted improvement on the next jury, or other appropriate consequence assigned by the instructor and approved by the administration.

A student may be placed on Artistic Probation for:

- Plagiarism
- Failure to pass a jury
- Failure to get production hours over two semesters
- Receiving the status of Artistic Warning two times
- Failure to attend two Harrison productions in a calendar year
- Excessive tardiness or absences from rehearsal or performance
- Non-fulfillment of production responsibilities
- Three documented incidents of unprofessional behavior or lack of etiquette toward towards a student, performer, or staff member.

In order to amend the status of Artistic Probation, a student may be required to perform additional production hours, perform an additional jury within the next 9-week period, write a research paper/essay, or other appropriate consequences assigned by the instructor and approved by the administration.

Student Requirements

Production Responsibilities

Theatre Department students may be cast in theatre productions or the All School Musical. They may also have the opportunity to work on crew (with approval of Mr. Kimble). The Theatre Department is allotted a few slots per year for students to serve as ushers for various performances and concerts at Harrison. Students are expected to fulfill their production responsibilities with excellence. Failure to perform assigned production responsibilities results in an Artistic Warning for the student. Proper attire is required when ushering, working in the shop, or backstage and the attire requirements are posted.

Attending Performances

Students must attend (as audience members) all Theatre Department productions and the All School Musical if they are not assigned as actors or crew for those shows. Students are encouraged to attend events from other departments as well. Each student receives one complimentary ticket to all Harrison productions with the exception of the All School Musical. A program with the signature of a faculty member is enough to prove you attended the show. The playbill or program is part of the jury portfolio and part of the jury grade.

Parent Involvement

Volunteer opportunities include chaperoning or assisting with field trips, fundraisers, special events, parties and performances; serving or providing meals during tech and performance weeks; serving on committees; promotion; financial support; and much more. Volunteering in the department provides a special insight into the student experience at Harrison. Serving on committees provides parents a voice in the forward development of the department and the school. It also provides time with your teen. Parents are invited and encouraged to take an active role at Harrison. We can't exist without you. Please email the instructor or the parent volunteer coordinator to get connected.

The Harrison Parent Association (HPA) is the volunteer arm of the school and each department has a parent liaison. Contact information for the liaison is shared at the beginning of each school year.

Scholarships/Audition Preparation

Scholarship opportunities are announced and posted throughout the year. Check bulletin boards in the back hallway and theatre classroom for updated information.

Student recommendations can be provided with a **two week notice** via e-mail that includes the school or scholarship program name, address, and information regarding the type of scholarship and specific information that should be included in the reference letter.

Students wishing to work on auditions for scholarships with the instructor should make special arrangements with the instructor and consider using works that have been used in class.

Juries

A jury is required at the end of each semester to evaluate a student's artistic progress. Specific criteria are given for each level. Juries are used as a class grade and as a standard for retention in the Theatre Department. The jury consists of three main sections.

1. Review of Jury Portfolio/Audition Notebook to evaluate student's commitment to artistic growth
2. Interview with the instructor to discuss progress of student's artistic growth
3. Audition segment to demonstrate student's artistic growth

If a student does not pass a jury, he or she will be placed on Artistic Probation. The student will have one semester to improve deficiencies. If the student fails the second jury, s/he may be recommended to the administration for dismissal from Harrison. Parents are encouraged to make an appointment with the instructor if a student fails a jury.

A missed jury will only be excused with a doctor's note. An unexcused absence for a missed jury may result in the student failing the jury.