

# VERMONT DRAMA FESTIVAL HANDBOOK

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**VERMONT STATE DRAMA FESTIVAL PHILOSOPHY:** The goal of the Vermont Drama Festival is to stimulate and support high school drama programs in Vermont. This is done through presenting, watching and discussing one-act plays, participating in workshops, attending dinners, and being willing to “CELEBRATE THEATRE” by promoting the spirit of festival.

## I. OVERVIEW FOR PARTICIPATION IN VERMONT DRAMA FESTIVAL

- A. Schools participating in festival ensure that all students and adults understand that the Vermont Drama festival at all levels is primarily a *Celebration of Theatre*, and only incidentally a selection process for choosing plays to participate at the next level.
- B. A school wishing to participate in festival must have an ADULT representative, preferably the director/producer, who will read the guidelines, serve as the official liaison with the VDC and the school, and who will attend the MANDATORY January VDC meeting. Failure for an adult representative to attend this mandatory meeting will result in the school being automatically registered as an Associate Production at the Regional Level. The definition of an Associate Production is defined in Section I, subsection 2, bullet point “i”.
- C. The adult director/producer will make all students involved in the production aware of the dates of the regional festivals, state festival and New England festival at the time the students audition so that potential conflicts are avoided.
- D. A production should be designed so that it can be transported to and fits on the stages of the regional, state and New England festivals, and so that the entire show, including set-up, performance and strike, takes no longer than one hour. (As a guideline, set-up and strike each usually should take no longer than five minutes.). Failure to obey the 1-hour rule may result in a school being classified as an Associate production and unable to move to the next level of performances. A consultant(s) at the festival site MUST contact a member of the VDC executive board to gain approval for such reclassification.
- E. Productions presented at festival should be suitable for presentation to audiences that will consist of a wide variety of people, including younger family members. If a show contains material that is inappropriate for younger audience members, this fact must be contained in the program page of the show, explained at the initial Director’s meeting, and a warning given to the audience by whomever is introducing the play prior to its performance at festival. The standard sentence to use is “This play contains content and themes not suitable for younger audience members”
- F. Schools presenting shows at festival must receive written permission from the copyright holders to produce the show as presented, receive written permission for any cuttings, and pay appropriate royalties, as indicated by a printed receipt. Copies of all these permissions will be brought to the festival site.
- G. For the purposes of this festival, a “one-act play” may consist of the following types of performances:
  1. A single dramatic work or series of dramatic works by a single author (or team of authors who worked together to create the work(s))
  2. A non-dramatic work or works, by a single author, in the public domain adapted into a staged performance.
  3. A non-musical dramatic work. This is defined according to how the copyright owner defines the play. If it is categorized as a “musical” it may not be presented. If it is categorized as a “play with music” or a “play” it is permitted. Music mentioned or suggested in a

work as background, or utilized to create a setting or time is permitted. A “musical” is typically defined as a work in which the song(s) are used as the main engine in the work to advance character, plot, or both.

- H. Students participating in a festival will remain at the festival site, participate in all available workshops and forums, eat all meals and attend all shows allowed by the schedule. Students should have experience in peer critique and feedback prior to the festival so that they can participate in the forum process appropriately. (See the handout on “Critical Response” in this handbook for one suggested format for peer critique.)
- I. Schools will arrange and bring sufficient adult supervision for students, approximately 1 adult for each 8 students. Students and adults attending a festival shall treat the festival site with respect, and comply with the wishes of festival staff.
- J. All students and adults attending a festival should be aware of appropriate audience etiquette. These include the expectations that no one should enter or leave during a production, that no photographs, video or audio recordings be made of productions, and that no one should disturb the viewing enjoyment of other audience members {keep the cell phones off}.
- K. Schools will produce program information in the format indicated in the VDC handbook and will send a copy of this to the regional and state festival hosts by the deadline.
- L. Schools who are participating in a festival as an Associate Production shall inform the consultant(s) of their status at or before the first director’s meeting at the beginning of the festival.
- M. Schools who participate in a festival shall send thank you notes to the festival host.
- N. Schools who are participating productions should be aware of the significant meal, housing and transportation costs that accompany attendance at the state festival, and even more so, the New England Festival (a cast and crew of 30 may have costs upwards of \$3000 for the New England Festival).
- O. The director/producer will make principals, students and adults involved with the production aware of these expectations. The principal’s and director/producer’s signatures on the application form will indicate their awareness of these expectation

## II. INFORMATION FOR PARTICIPANTS

### A. General Information

#### 1. Sponsorship

- a. The Vermont Drama Festival, sanctioned and financially supported by the Vermont Principals' Association (VPA), is an activity for secondary schools in the state of Vermont. The Festival is co-sponsored by the VPA and by the Vermont Drama Council (VDC).
- b. The VDC consists of interested Vermont high school theatre directors at VPA affiliated schools who volunteer their services to help coordinate the Vermont Drama Festival and to promote theatre at the secondary level in Vermont.
- c. The Governing Board of the VDC shall consist of the President, Vice-President, Secretary, Immediate Past President and the Vermont representatives to the New England Drama Council (NEDC).
- d. The VDC shall produce the Vermont Drama Festival for the VPA.

#### 2. Format

- a. The Vermont Drama Festival consists of several regional festivals and a state festival.
- b. During each festival, students from each school perform a one-act play, or a scene or cutting of a longer play, view plays presented by other schools, participate in forums and workshops, and interact with one another.
- c. Schools may enter Festival as PARTICIPATING productions or ASSOCIATE productions.
  - i. An Associate production is defined or chooses not to be considered eligible for participation and advancement in the State and/or New England festival. An Associate production will be evaluated, participate fully in all forums and other festival activities, but will not be included among the continuing schools onto the next level. Student participants in Associate productions will be eligible for all awards.
  - ii. If a school does not plan to participate in the State and/or New England Festival, that school must claim Associate production status on the application form. Schools may register as a Participating production at the regional level and an Associate production at the state level.
- d. Two of the Participating productions from each festival will be selected to present their productions at the next festival level. The selected schools will be chosen by the consultant(s) and the directors, as described below.
- e. Consultant(s) will view and evaluate plays, help select the continuing schools, and participate in the directors' forums at each festival. At the State Festival, Adjudicators will replace the Consultant(s) in evaluating plays, Director's Forums and selection of schools to represent Vermont at New England Drama Festival.

#### 3. Eligibility

- a. Senior high schools and private academies are eligible for participation in the Vermont Drama Festival if they are members of the Vermont Principal's Association.

- b. Junior high schools, when they operate under a separate identity, are ineligible to represent the state at the New England Drama Festival.

#### 4. Application

- a. The application form is included in this handbook.
- b. The form must be filled out and received at the offices of the VPA. By the second Friday in December. Form may be mailed or faxed to the VPA office. Each application form must be accompanied by a check or Purchase Order, payable to the VPA, for a non-refundable application fee of \$150. This application fee will be used to help support the Vermont Drama Council as it runs the festivals and assists with the New England Drama Council.
- c. The application form and fee should be delivered to:
  - The Vermont Principals' Association
  - 2 Prospect Street, Suite 3 Montpelier, VT 05602
  - Phone : 802-229-0547 Fax:(802) 229-4801
- d. There must be two(2) sites chosen on the application.
- e. If the number of applications exceeds the number of regional festival production slots available, schools will be assigned to festivals according to consideration of requested site, time and date conflicts, and travel distance.
- f. Regional festivals should have no more than 8 schools and no less than 4 schools participating when feasible.

#### 5. IMPORTANT DATES:

Application Deadline the second Friday in December .

VDC Meeting(s) – Fall, January(MANDATORY), & Spring, Regional, State, and New England Drama Festival dates will be announced when they become available.

Festival Dates will be outlined on the Festival Application form.

#### 6. Regulations

- a. All rules and regulations are included in this handbook. Most festival regulations and guidelines are in accordance with the regulations of the New England Drama Council. In order to participate in the annual New England Drama Festival these rules must be followed.
- b. The principal of the school and the adult dramatics director(s) or producer(s) of the participating school shall enforce the regulations and guidelines in this bulletin.
  - i. The principal's signature on the application form indicates:
    - (1) approval of the production script and subsequent production;
    - (2) familiarity with this bulletin;
    - (3) an awareness of the copyright requirements that must be met to produce a play (see #3 below).
  - ii. The following statement was adopted by the Vermont Principal's Association Drama Committee: "It is important that plays presented be of wholesome standards of morality and good taste, suitable for high school actors and audiences likely to attend. Themes of drinking, prostitution, or narcotics should be avoided if they express approval. Excessive profanity or the use of vulgarity in speech and/or gesture in the interest of realism are to be discouraged." In determining

the suitability of a play or its theme, consideration should be given to the fact that the play will be presented to audiences that will consist of a wide variety of people, including family members, in communities with possibly different concepts of acceptability. The principal's signature on the Vermont application form signifies the principal's approval of .

7. All adults hosts and officers entering a play in the Vermont Drama Festival must attend the mandatory meeting in January. DATE AND LOCATION TBA. Participants will declare the play the school will present at Festival; the presumption is that the principal has read the script prior to the school applying in December.
8. Each school's principal will designate an adult chaperone to be with the cast and crew throughout the Festival. Casts without adult supervision will not be allowed at the Festivals.
9. The New England Drama Council states that any school entering the New England Drama Festival may be asked to submit a prepared production script with the following statement: "I hereby affirm to the New England Drama Council that this script will represent our school in the 2015 New England Drama Festival." This statement must be signed by the principal or headmaster and by the adult director/producer.
10. The adult director/producer's signature indicates his/her commitment to abide by the regulations and guidelines in this bulletin. The director/producer will ensure that students and adults involved with the production are aware of these expectations.
11. The adult director/producer of each school at festival is responsible for ensuring that all obligations to copyright holders are met. Failure to provide adequate documentation may result in a school being asked to withdraw from festival. Copyright requirements include the following:
  - a. Royalties for theatrical productions must be paid in advance of the festival and the copyright owner must be properly acknowledged in program information. A copy of the royalty payment receipt should be brought to the festival and presented to the Consultant(s) on request.
  - b. Each theatrical production must receive, in advance, written permission from the copyright holder for cuttings and/or alterations of plays. A copy of this written permission should be brought to the festival and presented to the Consultant(s) on request.
  - c. Each theatrical production must receive, in advance, written permission from the copyright holder for the use of music and other copyrighted material in a theatrical production. A copy of this written permission should be brought to the festival and presented to the Consultant(s) on request.
12. Productions that sign up as "Participating" must be available to perform at both the State and New England Drama Festivals.—The adult director/producer of Participating productions should inform all auditioning students of the dates of the State and New England Drama Festivals so that they may determine whether to audition and plan their schedules accordingly. (See also I. D. 2.)
13. No open flame, including smoking, will be permitted in plays presented as part of the Vermont Drama Festival. Violation of the smoking or open flame rule will result in disqualification.
14. If any member of a cast and/or crew is found to be under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs, the production will be disqualified.

15. A list of alternate productions for participation in the New England Drama Festival will be kept by the president of the VDC. In the event that a school selected for the New England Drama Festival is unable to attend, an alternate must attend in accordance with the 100% rule of the New England Drama Council. According to that rule, each New England state must send two productions to the festival.
16. All schools must send program information and technical requests to the regional festival host by TBA, and by TBA for the state festival. Not meeting this deadline may result in exclusion from the printed festival program and/or technical requests not being met.

### III. GUIDELINES

- A. The festival at all levels is primarily a *Celebration of Theatre*, and only incidentally a selection process for choosing plays to participate at the next level.
- B. Schools will produce program information in the format indicated in this handbook and will send a clean, print-ready copy of this to the festival host well before the deadline.
- C. The host school should be informed of any special lighting requests by the technical information request deadline. Special lighting requests will be honored for all schools according to the host school's capabilities.
  3. If a school wishes to bring special lighting or audio equipment of their own, they must make this equipment available to the other schools who wish to use it, and inform other schools of this no later than the pre-festival meeting.
- D. Each production will be scheduled for at least 45 minutes of technical rehearsal time to become familiar with stage and facilities. It is not wise to use this time for a run-through.
- E. Appropriate awards to cast and crew members will be made at all Festival levels. All student cast and crew members, in both participating and associate productions, are eligible for individual awards.
- F. Following each production, each director of a school in the audience should hold a quick discussion with his or her cast and crew to talk over features of the production they would like to commend, and to make nominations for individual awards, using the forms provided as a guide. These commendations and nominations will be given to the VDC consultant(s) after each pair of shows.
- G. Following each pair of productions, forums will be held for both the students and directors.
  3. All students will gather and discuss the productions. These discussions will be moderated by a student familiar with effective peer critique techniques. The critique should celebrate the successes of the performances as well as providing constructive suggestions for improvement, in an environment of mutual respect and support.
  4. The directors will gather and discuss the productions in a forum moderated by the VDC consultant(s). Although student directors are an important part of this process and encouraged to participate fully, the directors' forum is intended to be an opportunity for adult and student directors to have honest and direct opportunities for peer critique. Attendance at these forums will be limited to the VDC consultant(s), the adjudicators, the adult and student directors, and adult assistant or technical directors.
- H. Each director, consultant, and/or adjudicator, will maintain a "running order of preference" form during the festival on which the director, consultant, or adjudicator records his or her ranking of the shows seen up to the moment. At the end of the festival, the last column must be completely filled-in and the form given to the VDC consultant(s). If the last column of the running order of preference form is not completely filled in it cannot be used in the selection process. Please note that adjudicators and directors should not rate the script.
- I. All students and directors are expected to be in attendance for the entire festival. As part of the festival, all festival participants are expected to participate fully in the festival's workshops, performances, meals, and forums.
- J. Cast control is the responsibility of the adult director/producer. In order to emphasize the spirit of festival, the two schools continuing to the next level of performance are not announced as part of the closing activities of the festival. Instead, after the VDC consultant(s) tabulates the results, the form announcing the two continuing schools is placed in the end-of-festival packet provided to each director. The directors should not open these packets and share the results with the students until the bus carrying the school



has pulled out of the parking lot of the host school. It is also requested that students respect the practices of other schools and not contact students for 24 hours after receiving information about who is moving on to the next Festival level.

- K. Any formal protests should be lodged with the VPA Drama Committee as per the normal procedure.

#### IV. FINANCES

- A. Through the collaborative efforts of the VDC Governing Board and the VPA Drama Committee, a budget will be developed in March to support the Vermont Drama Festival activities and Vermont involvement with the New England Drama Council.
  3. Budgetary items may include awards for the State Festival, the expense of printing programs at the State Festival, expenses for the attendance at VPA Drama Committee meetings, and expenses which VDC Governing Board members incur for operating and giving assistance at the Festivals.
  2. Schools continuing on to the New England Drama Festival are reminded that this will involve a large expense to the local school. The cost of the trip to and participation in the New England Festival will be borne entirely by the local school, except for a modest grant provided to the school by the VPA, as described below. The VPA provides this grant in lieu of providing awards at the state festival.
  3. The VPA Drama Committee will:
    - a. grant each State Festival, each Regional Festival, and each school representing Vermont at the New England Drama Festival up to \$200.00 in operating expenses to cover a deficit.
    - b. present a plaque to the school that hosts the State Festival.
    - c. provide honoraria for adjudicators.
- B. Festival Financing
  1. The VPA will provide the host with a grant of up to \$200.00 to cover deficits, if any, at each festival.
  2. The host school may charge a registration fee for each adult and student participating in the festival. The registration fee should be limited to covering meal costs. The application fee of \$150 paid by each school to the VPA will be used by the VDC to cover all costs associated with operating regional and festivals and participating in the New England Drama Council.
  3. The host school keeps all ticket money, donations and registration fees after expenses are paid.
  4. Host schools must submit the Vermont Drama Festival Financial Report directly to VDC PRESIDENT. The VPA grant will not be paid until this financial report is received.
  5. It shall be the responsibility of the host school to provide the stage facilities, custodial services, management services, security, workshops, meals, decorations and any needed host-family housing accommodations. The host school's expenses shall be paid from ticket proceeds, donations, registration fees, and from the \$200.00 festival grant – if needed - provided by the VPA. It shall be the responsibility of the host school at each festival to budget and finance its own festival. The VDC will serve in a financial advisory capacity, if needed, to each host school.
  6. Each Participating and Associate school shall be responsible for payment of all royalty and production expenses for its play, transportation, registration fees, additional meals, commercial lodging expenses, and for any other expenses or fees incidental to its participation. Schools who sign up as "Participating" productions should anticipate expenses for the State and New England festivals.

## V. INFORMATION FOR HOST SCHOOLS

### A. The Process of Hosting

1. Host schools must attend all Vermont Drama Council Meetings during the academic year they host.
2. Hosts should keep in mind that their primary job is to support and facilitate a Celebration of Theatre.
3. The Host needs to read and be familiar with all of the information in this handbook.

### B. The Host should arrange for theater and school use for the festival on the school's activity calendar well in advance. The Host should arrange for the following facilities:

1. A performance space with theatrical lighting and sound playback equipment and seats for anticipated festival participants and audience members. This does NOT have to be a formal theater space. Many excellent festivals have used cafeterias and gymnasias as performance spaces.
2. Space for the student forum (large enough for all students to gather).
3. A place for festival meals to be served and eaten.
4. A load-in area for schools to store and prepare sets prior to technical rehearsals and performances.
5. Home rooms for each school in the festival, including the host school. These rooms should be available for the entire duration of the festival, from the anticipated time of arrival of a school until its departure at the end of the festival.
6. A room for the directors' meeting and forums, and for the Consultant(s) and Adjudicators to work. The meeting room often serves as a directors' lounge and is often separate from the Consultant(s)/Adjudicator work room.
7. Rooms for any workshops.
8. If possible, separate dressing/make up rooms for the two schools performing during each production slot
9. If possible, separate green rooms for the two schools performing during each production slot.
10. Parking space for school buses and set transportation vehicles.
11. The schedule should consist of the following components:
  - a. technical rehearsals (equal periods of at least 45minute on-stage time for each school)
  - b. performances, organized in pairs (one hour allotted for each school to set up, perform and strike)
  - c. forums, for both students and directors (15 minutes for each show equaling a half hour of forum time)
  - d. workshops
  - e. meals
  - f. initial directors' meeting
  - g. opening and closing ceremonies.
12. The Host shall provide a program for the festival. Sufficient quantities should be made for all participants and the anticipated audience. The program should list the play performance schedule, the program information supplied by each school, and biographical information about the adjudicators and consultant(s). Each school's entry should acknowledge the copyright permission for the play performed. The program should also prominently describe the role of the VPA in the sponsorship of the festivals.
13. The Host shall appoint student hosts to greet each school upon arrival and to be available throughout the festival to help that school.

14. In keeping with the spirit of festival, the host school should carefully plan closing ceremonies. The VDC and VPA will cooperate in the presentation of awards. Further information regarding awards ceremonies will be available at VDC meetings.
  15. The Host should arrange for the availability of meals during the festival. Entrees should include both vegetarian and non-vegetarian offerings, as well as sensitivities to possible food allergies. Meal costs will be paid for by means of the per-participant registration fee that each school coming to the festival will pay. Special consideration should be given to schools who have technical rehearsals and performances near meal times.
  16. The Host should arrange for theatre-related workshops to provide educational and social experiences.
  17. The Host should have a calligrapher or computer operator to fill out certificates during the festival. This person will work in confidence with the consultant(s) at the festival.
  18. It is the host school's responsibility to see that there is adequate supervision, either police or staff and often both, to ensure good crowd control.
  19. The VDC will work with the Host to provide a Consultant(s) to the festival.
- C. Technical Hosting
1. Each festival must have an adult Technical Director and a responsible House Manager.
  2. All properties and set pieces are the responsibility of the participants unless prior arrangements have been made with the host. Hosts are encouraged to help schools in any way possible.
  3. An area for the properties and set of each school should be provided.
  4. The Technical Director will organize a technical crew sufficient to oversee the backstage operations of the festival, providing technical assistance as needed to schools participating in the festival.
  5. Theatrical lighting and sound playback equipment will be provided.
  6. The Technical Director should arrange a load-in and load-out schedule that allows the smooth operation of technical rehearsals and performances.
  7. A clear communication procedure must be established between the backstage Technical Director, the House Manager, and the VDC Consultant(s) to ensure that shows start in a timely manner, on schedule, with all relevant members in the audience.
  8. The adult Technical Director should fill out an evaluation form that assesses the technical aspects of each production and give these forms to the Consultant(s). These forms may provide the basis for individual awards to members of the technical crews of each school.
  9. Each hosting school should have designated "Go Lines" that are a reasonable distance from the performing space. Set pieces, props, costumes, etc, can be pre-loaded to behind these line, and timing for tech rehearsals or performances does not begin until a member of the rehearsing / performing school officially crosses a go line, and the timing shall end when all pieces of a school's production and members of the production are clear of the go lines.
- D. Scheduling and Communications
1. Each host should arrange a meeting for the directors the mandatory January meeting, or a later time at the host school for that Festival.
  2. The Host should prepare an information packet to be distributed to directors at the pre-festival meeting, for each school entered in the festival. The packet must contain the following information:

- a. The exact date, time, and place the festival will be held.
  - b. A festival schedule, including the following:
    - i. Schedule for technical rehearsals on stage;
    - ii. Order and times of performances;
    - iii. Workshop slots, meals and preparation times for schools getting ready to perform;
    - iv. Major activities, including opening and closing ceremonies, and the director's meeting prior to performances.
  - c. A plan diagram of the stage showing the dimensions and acting areas.
  - d. A description of the lighting and sound equipment available, acting areas, entrances and exits, and any other special characteristics of the theatrical space.
  - e. Meal menus, registration fee (which should be limited to meal costs) and any special information regarding meals.
  - f. Information regarding advance sale of tickets to encourage as many adults and students as possible to attend from the participating schools.
3. Each Host should prepare a form, thanking the director for participation in the festival, with spaces available for clearly announcing the names of the two schools and plays that will participate in the next festival level. These forms should be given to the VDC Consultant(s), who will fill them out and distribute them to the directors at the end of the festival. Usually they are given to the director as part of the packet of post-festival information immediately following the closing ceremonies at the festival and read on the homeward bound bus or thereafter.

### **FESTIVAL HOST CHECKLIST:**

#### **I. PRIOR TO THE FESTIVAL:**

1. Ensure that all technical systems in the performing space are in working condition and that an adult will be serving as Technical Director for the festival.
2. Ensure the performing space is clean and ready to be used by multiple schools, and arrange for a "Go Line" with the Technical Director.
2. Ensure that meals will be provided for all members of visiting schools.
3. Arrange homerooms for each visiting school.
4. Assign two students (or more) to serve as hosts and guides for each visiting school.
5. Assign a student to greet the VDC Consultants and/or Adjudicators upon their arrival. The guide should familiarize them with the meeting and stage facilities, including the lighting, prior to curtain time, the schedule, and serve as a contact person throughout the festival.
6. Assign students to assist the adult Technical Director.
7. Assign students to serve as Masters of Ceremonies – introduce each block of plays, do announcements, etc. These students are also often the ones who run the student forums after performances, and should be thoroughly trained in Liz Lerman method.
8. Assign a student to serve as calligrapher for all awards, and set up a computer and printer for this student to create awards.
9. Contact each visiting school to get their program page, then create the program, which should contain all program pages from each school, the schedule for the day. There should be enough programs for all people from visiting schools as well as members of the general public.
10. Send to each visiting school your standard lighting schedule, a draft of the stage layout, an outline of the sound system, and any and all other relevant technical information.
10. Create a schedule which allows for 45 minutes of tech rehearsal, 15 minutes of

11. forum time and one hour of performance for each school, workshop times, meal times, times for opening and closing ceremonies, time for an initial director's forum, and time between the final forum and closing ceremonies for visiting schools to clean their homerooms as well as the consultants to finish their work. It is recommended that show performances be scheduled in blocks of two. The first performance should not start before the appointed time, but the second show may start as soon as the first show is finished, and forums should be held immediately afterwards, lasting a half hour. Also, it is acceptable, if time is incredibly tight, to schedule multiple things at once – to have a school doing a tech rehearsal during a workshop slot, for example.
12. Find a room in the school for director's forums to be held and serve as home base for consultants, directors, and adjudicators (at the State level).
13. If possible, if schools are geographically close to you, see if you can arrange for them to come in and do their tech rehearsal before the date of the festival – this makes the schedule for the schedule much lighter.
14. Create a packet for each director of the visiting school. This should include:
  - Feedback forms for each of the other schools.
  - Award nomination forms
  - Running Order of Preference Sheet
  - Name tags for all participants from each visiting school.
  - Programs for all participants from the school.
15. Create two packets for the consultant which contains:
  - Feedback forms for each performing school
  - Award nomination forms
  - Running Order of Preference Sheet
  - Information necessary for the two schools who will be going on to the next level (this packet will be sent to you by the VDC Executive Council)
  - Programs and the schedule for the day.
  - An envelope for the consultants to mail the results of the festival to the VDC Executive Council.
  - A sheet to put in each director's packet which states which two schools will be advancing to the next level.
17. (STATES ONLY): Create packets for the adjudicators that contain the following materials:
  - clipboard, flashlight, pencil/pen
  - Feedback forms for each performing school
  - Award nomination forms
  - Running order of preference sheets
  - Program and schedule for the day

## II. THE DAY OF THE FESTIVAL

1. Assure all students working the festival arrive at a reasonable time prior to the beginning of the day.
2. Set up a registration table to greet schools as they arrive, and have assigned hosts serve as the main point of contact between the visiting school and your site.
3. While not required, refreshments in the director / consultant's room are always appreciated.
4. Work with the Consultants and Tech Director to ensure that each block of shows begins on time.

5. Ensure that, at the end of the day, homerooms have been properly cleaned and taken care of. If there are any issues with the treatment of a homeroom or any of the site's facilities, please contact the VDC Executive Council and the offending school ASAP after the festival.

## VI. INFORMATION FOR CONSULTANTS

A. The Consultant(s) to the Festival is designated by the VDC to facilitate forums, assist the festival host by fielding questions regarding VDC procedures, facilitate the discussion of the directors, and one to vote and one to serve as a tie-breaker at Regional Festivals for schools to move onto the VT State Festival. The Consultant(s) also works with the festival host, the Technical Director, and the House Manager to ensure a smoothly run festival. Ideally, each festival should have two Consultant(s) – one to run discussions during the directors meetings and one to keep up with all paperwork being turned in, nominations of awards, etc. It should be decided before the festival begins which consultant shall serve as the tie-breaking vote should one be necessary.

### B. General Information

1. The Consultant(s) is invited by the VDC, in conjunction with the festival host, to assist at that festival;
2. The Consultant(s) facilitates the adjudicators' and directors' understanding of festival procedures;
3. The Consultant(s) will introduce the adjudicators to the directors in the directors' forums and to the students in the student forums at State Festivals.
4. A Consultant may not be affiliated with any of the schools performing at the festival site.

### C. Duties Before the festival:

1. The Consultant(s) should meet with the host to become familiar with the site;
2. The Consultant(s) will facilitate the directors' meeting at the start of the festival, at which host, directors consultants, and adjudicators (at State Festival) are introduced, program information is updated, the start and finish of each show is clarified, and adult workers are clearly identified.
3. The Consultant(s) will work with the host to ensure that the necessary forms in sufficient quantity for each adjudicator and director have been photocopied and are ready for use.
4. The Consultant(s) should read a copy or summary of Liz Lerman's article, "Toward a Process of Critical Response," as a guideline for forums at the first director's meeting. Please see section 5, subsection "c" for the paragraph that should be read.

### D. During the festival:

1. The Consultant(s) is the on-site representative of the VDC and will serve as the local arbiter of any questions concerning rules and regulations of the festival.
2. The Consultant(s) will carefully monitor the time to ensure that the schedule remains as close to the schedule as possible.
3. The Consultant(s) will ensure that the first show in a two-show block does not start sooner than its scheduled time, so as to ensure that audience members who have traveled to the festival are allowed to see the shows. (Unless otherwise agreed at the directors meeting related to an issue that might necessitate a time move. Notification to home school areas to alert audience members will be done if possible).
4. The Consultant(s) will ensure that before a show has started that the cast and crew are in places, that the technical director is ready, and that all of the directors and adjudicators are in the hall.



5. The Consultant(s) will work with the house manager to ensure audience etiquette, and that once a show has started that no one enters or leaves the auditorium.
6. If weather conditions warrant it, the Consultant(s) will consult with the Host to determine the appropriateness of continuing, shortening, postponing or canceling the festival.

E. After each block of performances at the festival:

1. The Consultant(s) facilitates the directors' forum, which consists of a discussion that allows the use of one of the two following formats:
  - i. the director poses any questions to the group, followed by a round-table discussion in which each participant (the other directors and adjudicators) are allotted an equal amount of time to comment on the show (approximately two minutes), and use of the discussion format sheet and its "I liked...", "I would suggest...", "I want to thank you for..." prompts; or allowing directors to ask a question as the starting points; or
  - ii. the format described by Liz Lerman in the article "Toward a Process of Critical Response" that allows for periods of (1) affirmation; (2) opportunities for the presenter to ask questions of the audience; (3) opportunities for the audience to ask neutral questions of the presenter; and (4) opportunities for the audience to provide opinions on the production they have seen, with the permission of the presenter.
2. Facilitate a time period that uses time constraints to encourage everyone to be succinct, non-repetitive and focused, recognizing the emotional state of directors, the need for fairness, and the importance of commenting on the performance and directorial choices, not the script; fostering an environment that encourages free-flowing discussion. Attendance at these forums should be limited to adult and student directors, adult assistant and technical directors, and the adjudicators. Experience has shown that large numbers of spectators, either adult or student, inhibit free-flowing discussion.
3. Before each forum session, the Consultant(s) shall read the following: "The Vermont Drama Council sees this session as a dialogue between the production director and the other directors at the festival. It is an opportunity to discuss directorial choices and decisions, as well as a chance to exchange ideas about each individual's interpretation and responses to a given performance. The VDC assumes these discussions will deal with professional questions at the directorial level, focusing on the actual production, not the process. It is the director's choice as to which information will be filtered to the students. Confidentiality in relation to discussion of critiques of other shows is assumed."
4. The Consultant(s) will ensure that Comment Sheets have been completed for each play performed with each block of performances, and keep current their Order of Preference Forms. The Consultant(s) should fill out his or her own order of preference form.
5. The Consultant(s) will receive the individual award nominations from the directors and tally them to make award decisions. No definitive criteria exist for making these decisions. Rather the Consultant(s) will use patterns of

nomination from the casts, and directors as a guide for individuals to be recognized. Care should be taken to ensure that individuals from all schools receive recognition, though there is no expectation that the numbers of awards should be equal. In addition, the Consultant(s) may make awards to technical crew members based on the technical evaluation forms filled out by the adult Technical Director.

6. Note that ensemble awards should be reserved for those situations when a group of actors works together as a unit; all members of the ensemble should receive a certificate for this reward. Separate acting awards should usually not be awarded to the members of an ensemble unless they distinguish themselves outside the context of the ensemble.
7. The Consultant(s) should give award decisions to the calligrapher to begin preparing the certificates for the adjudicators' eventual signature.
8. After all plays have been performed at the festival:
  - a. The Consultant(s) makes sure the adjudicators and directors have filled out all Comment Sheets gathers them, so that they can be handed to the directors at the closing ceremonies;
  - b. The Consultant(s) collects the Order of Preference forms and tallies the votes to determine the continuing schools.
    - i. Plays are ranked in the order of "best" performance to lowest performance, running throughout the festival and filled out after each performance. If the final column of a director's Order of Preference form is not filled out completely, it cannot and should not be included in the point totals.
    - ii. At regional festivals, the directors' and consultant's votes are all summed together to give the final score for each school. Consultant's and directors' votes are weighted equally. **THE TWO LOWEST TOTAL SCORES ARE THE CONTINUING SCHOOLS.**
    - iii. At the State Festival, the score given by an adjudicator to each school is multiplied by TWO. Thus, each adjudicator's score is weighted TWO times each director's score. **THE TWO LOWEST TOTAL SCORES ARE THE CONTINUING SCHOOLS.**
    - iv. At Regional Festivals, one Consultant votes along with the directors, and the 2<sup>nd</sup> Consultant only votes in the case of a tie regarding which schools continue on to the next level. If the tie-breaking vote is needed, that role is indicated on the forms that are sent to the VPA;
    - v. The Consultant(s) checks the awards to be presented. The Consultant(s) will consult with the Adjudicators to make any additional awards they feel appropriate, and, if a school has been inadvertently omitted from the awards, to decide on appropriate awards for that school;
9. The Consultant(s) coordinates, with the closing ceremony host, the manner in which the awards will be announced to the students.
10. The Consultant(s) prepares a packet for each school that contains:

- a. The form announcing the two schools continuing to the next festival level;
  - b. Information provided by the host of the next level for the two continuing schools;
  - c. The written comments provided by adjudicators and other directors evaluating the school's production.
  - d. The technical evaluation sheet filled out by the technical director.
11. After the closing ceremonies, the Consultant(s) ensures that each director receives the school's packet and instructs each director that the packet is not to be opened until the bus has left the school grounds.
  12. The Consultant(s) places the Order of Preference forms in an envelope that is to be sealed and mailed to the VPA or VDC representative named on the form. The actual ranking of the schools is confidential and should not be discussed with the festival participants. The Consultant(s) also fills out the Adjudicator mailing address form and sends it the VPA representative named on the form. This will ensure that adjudicators receive their honorarium.
  13. The Consultant(s) of a regional festival, at the soonest opportunity, should mail a clean copy of the festival program to the state festival Host and to the President of the VDC, along with the identity of the two continuing schools. In addition, the Consultant(s) should contact the state festival Host and VDC President by phone or e-mail to communicate the identity of the two continuing schools. The Consultant(s) at the state festival need only contact the VDC president.

### **CONSULTANT FESTIVAL CHECKLIST:**

#### **I. PRIOR TO THE FESTIVAL**

1. Be in contact with the host site to ensure that all materials from visiting schools have been received, and if there are any procedural problems that can be helped with or clarified.
2. Create a tally sheet to be used for adding up scores at the end of the festival.
3. Henceforth, make sure that directors and adjudicators are using the same feedback forms – what was formerly known as the “adjudicator feedback sheet” – at both the regional and state level.

#### **II. THE DAY OF THE FESTIVAL**

1. Arrive prior to the initial director's meeting and check in with the Festival Host to ensure all is running smoothly.
2. At the initial director's forums, discuss the following items:
  - Liz Lerman method (paragraph to be read contained in this guidebook)
  - Ensure that all directors have the necessary materials in their packets
  - Ensure you have all the necessary materials in your packet
  - Go over each show and make notes in the program of running times and any possible material in the show that may be unsuitable for younger audience members.
  - Go over the schedule and guidelines. Remind people that time limits are a matter of courtesy and that violation of time limits for tech rehearsals or performances may result in their show being reclassified as an Associate Production.
  - Ask that if any shows are registered as an Associate Production the director(s) let you know in private.

- Explain that the packets that will be given to each director at the end of the festival should not be opened until the school is off the host site.
  - Ensure all shows performing copyrighted materials have brought written proof of permission of the copyright holder to perform the work
3. Work with the Festival Host and Technical Director to ensure shows start ONLY when they are ready to go. The first show in a block should not start before the scheduled time, but the second show may start as soon as the first show is done. Shows may not start until ALL schools and directors and adjudicators are in the audience.
  4. Facilitate discussion in the director's forums after each block of shows using the Liz Lerman method described above.
  5. At the end of each forum, ensure that awards nomination sheets are handed in along with feedback sheets for each of the shows performed. Talk for a few minutes to decide which awards should be given, and give this information to the student calligrapher so that awards can be printed throughout the day. Also, remind directors that they must be filling out their Running Order of Preference Sheet.
  6. At the end of the day, ensure that all awards have been printed. The consultants will present these awards on stage at closing ceremonies.
  7. Prepare a packet for each director that contains the following items:
    - All feedback forms from other directors and adjudicators.
    - The sheet which announces the two schools advancing
    - For the two school advancing, their packets should contain all necessary information about the next level of festival. It is recommended that all envelopes be "stuffed" to be of the same thickness as those of the two schools advancing so that there is no idea of who is advancing until the sheet is pulled from the packet.
  8. Prepare a packet to be mailed on the first possible day to the VDC President which contains the following:
    - All Running Order of Preference Sheets from the directors and consultants and adjudicators.
    - The tally sheet which shows all math done to determine the winner.
  9. A SPECIAL NOTE: If a school that has registered as an Associate Production is nominated as one of the schools to advance to the next level, the next play (i.e. 3<sup>rd</sup> place) will be nominated to advance to the next level.

## VII. INFORMATION FOR ADJUDICATORS

- A. The Vermont Drama Festival is an annual event for secondary schools in Vermont, produced by the Vermont Drama Council (VDC) and sponsored by the Vermont Principal's Association (VPA).
- B. The Festival has several purposes:
  1. To encourage the development and growth of theatre education in Vermont;
  2. To provide a culturally enriching event for students in Vermont schools;
  3. To educate directors and their casts in the effective use of theatre by sharing production techniques;
  4. To expose students to the creative merits of theatrical productions by their peers from other schools;
  5. To provide directors and casts an opportunity to share in discussions of all productions with qualified adjudicators in forum settings, for the purpose of encouraging schools to learn more about drama, and to continue their interest in and development of a theatre program.
- C. Notification of Adjudicators
  1. Based on the responses to the survey sent to potential adjudicators, adjudication assignments will be made by February at least a month prior to the State Festival. When the adjudication committee of the VDC has made the selections and placements for adjudicators, the names and addresses of the adjudicators will be immediately sent directly to TREASURER. This will ensure that honoraria can be paid in a timely manner by the VPA.
  2. Two adjudicators will be assigned to the state festival. The adjudication assignments will be made by letter and confirmed with a phone call.
  3. The name, address, phone number and e-mail address of the contact person for each festival will be provided when the adjudication assignments are confirmed.
  4. From this point on, it is the duty of the festival Host to apprise the adjudicators of the festival schedule, necessary times of arrival, and directions, as well as other important festival information.
  5. An alternate adjudicator will be assigned, if possible. This person will be available up to the morning of the festival. If the alternate has not been notified by this time, the alternate's attendance at the festival will be optional.
  6. Appropriate housing will be provided for each adjudicator at the state festival.
  7. State festival adjudicators will receive an honorarium of up to \$200.00.
- D. Duties of Adjudicators
  1. Before the festival each adjudicator should:
 

read the guidelines and regulations contained in the current VPA Drama Handbook. The handbook is updated regularly and the current handbook should be used. Each adjudicator will receive a handbook when they have been assigned.

    - i. Provide the festival host with a short biography for inclusion in the festival program. Hosts should receive this no later than mid-February for regional festivals and the middle of March for the state festival.
    - ii. Plan to arrive at the festival site in plenty of time to meet the host and the VDC Consultant(s), who will facilitate communication during the festival, and to have a tour of the facility.
  2. At the festival each adjudicator should:

- i. Meet with the other adjudicator(s), the festival host, the VDC Consultant(s), and the directors to update program information and to clarify procedures. This will usually happen at the initial directors' meeting prior to the first performance on the day of the festival.
- ii. View each play.
- iii. Participate in the directors' forums or student forums as your host directs. As adjudicators plan their comments they should keep in mind that the members of the VDC have worked very hard to develop drama festivals that exhibit a true "festival" atmosphere and give everyone a chance to "Celebrate Theatre." Within this context, however, the VDC also needs a process for selecting shows to represent Vermont at the New England Festival. The VDC has tried to emphasize the sharing aspects of the festival and also the critiquing process in the following ways:
  - Workshops are provided at all levels of the Festival as part of the sharing process;
  - The award format has been expanded to include many aspects of production; therefore technical elements as well as acting elements should be discussed as part of the forums;
  - All festival participants, directors, and students are expected to attend all forums, so everyone has a chance to learn. Therefore, we suggest that the terms "contest," "winners," "best," and "competition" be avoided, that good things be said about every production, as well as constructive comments and suggestions for improvement.
  - Productions should be evaluated, not scripts.
  - Each production should be evaluated on its own merits, and not in terms of productions of the same show the adjudicator has seen or participated in.
  - Remarks should be confined to whether or not a director's interpretation is consistent and effective, as opposed to whether the director's artistic vision matches the adjudicator's own.
  - Since schools of many different sizes, budgets, and experience levels may be participating at the same festival, it is the VDC's intention that the Festival will provide a learning experience. The VDC hopes to encourage a school's theatre group to produce better theatre, rather than discourage their attempt by abject comparisons with other productions. In the past, several schools have dropped out because they felt they couldn't "compete" with the larger schools. The members of the VDC feel that the attitude of the adjudicators in assessing productions, not schools, is critical in addressing this problem.
  - Directors and students respond favorably to an informal, relaxed forum that allows for mutual give and take among the participants. The adjudicators should

communicate their positive as well as negative impressions in a constructive, encouraging manner for all participants.

-For many schools, the forums are the most valuable part of the Festival experience. We would like the adjudicators to appreciate the responsibility that they have in helping to foster a sense of achievement for the participants, especially for those schools that are new to Festival.

-Liz Lerman's article, "Toward a Process of Critical Response," provides a vision of the critique process that is consistent with the VDC's philosophy. Some Consultant(s) will use these ideas as a guideline for forums. A summary of the article is included in this handbook.

- iii. Complete the Adjudicator Comment Sheet. Since these written comments will be read and re-read by directors and their casts, we ask that that adjudicators be constructive and specific in the commendations and recommendations.
- iv. After the second show, ensure that the Order of Preference Worksheet is up to date and updated throughout the festival.
- v. Keep a list of potential award candidates.
  - Prepare a list of students that should be named to the Festival Honorary Company. This recognizes excellence in acting and technical work - such as lighting, set design and/or construction, make-up, costuming, properties, sound, or special effects - by individuals from any or all productions.
  - It is the philosophy of the VDC that while there is no restriction on the number of these awards, each school's cast or crew should receive at least one award recognizing some aspect of their production. These awards are to be used to recognize student, not adult, achievement. Both Participating and Associate productions are eligible for individual awards.
  - At the close of festival, the Consultant(s) will provide a list of awardees nominated by the casts and directors. If the adjudicators feel that additional awards are merited, they should inform the consultant(s) who will ensure that the awards are made.
- vi. Using the information on the Order of Preference forms, vote for two schools to represent Vermont at the New England Drama Festival and give your forms to the VDC Consultant(s) who will tabulate the results. It is important that the Order of Preference form - in particular, the final column - be completely filled out.
- vii. Sign all certificates of participation and award certificates. Adjudicators may be able to do some of this during the day. It also might be possible to sign blank certificates at the start of the festival.
- viii. Adjudicators are encouraged to continue one-on-one discussions with directors outside the context of the directors' forums.

VIII. PROGRAM FORMATTING

Using your word processor:

*Set the margins at 1 inch on all sides.*

*Set a right justified tab at 6.5" with a dot leader.*

*Use either center- justified text or left- justified text for the body.*

*Experiment with font sizes and line spacing's to determine what fits and looks good.*

Name of School Name of Town, State Presents

NAME OF PLAY

By Author

Scene: Someplace Time: Sometime

(in order of appearance, or alphabetical or whatever applies) First

Character..... First Actor Second Character

.....Second Actor Third Character

.....Third Actor Fourth Character

.....Fourth Actor Fifth Character

.....Fifth Actor First

Chorus.....Sixth Actor, Seventh Actor, Eighth Actor, Ninth Actor

Tenth Actor, Eleventh Actor, Twelfth

Actor Sixth Character.....Thirteenth Actor

*This line is right justified text.*

PRODUCTION STAFF

*Asterisks indicate adult.*

Director .....Director Name\* Technical

Director .....Tech Director Name\* Set Designer

.....Designer Name, Designer Name Lighting Designer

.....Designer Name Costume

Designer.....Designer Name Stage Manager

.....Manager Name Lights

..... Light Tech Name Sound

.....Sound Tech Name

CREW

Crew Name, Crew Name, Crew Name, Crew Name, Crew Name, Crew Name, Crew Name, Crew Name,

Produced by special arrangement with Publishing Company Name

*It's important to list the name of the town and state so that the program is usable for the NEDF.*

*This is intended as a guide. We are aware that some shows may require some modification of this format.*

*It's crucial to list copyright permissions!!*



## IX. EFFECTIVE CRITIQUE

(summarized and adapted from Liz Lerman, *Toward a Process of Critical Response*. Lerman is a professional dancer and a 2002 winner of one of the MacArthur Foundation's "genius" awards!) The most accurate feedback does no good if it is not heard and accepted. The format below was devised by dancer Liz Lerman to ensure that the artist has the greatest opportunity to receive feedback that will be heard and used during the revision process. Effective feedback requires that the performer be ready to receive the information that is offered; however, performers are usually in a fragile place with respect to their own work, particularly if it is fresh. The crucial point is that the feedback is *creator-centered*, and not *observer-centered*. The facilitator must keep things moving and keep people on track to ensure critique sessions are geared to the needs of the creator.

As you work with your students, you will find that they struggle with developing questions (in both steps 2 and 3) that lead to useful responses. Performers must have a reflective approach to their own work; observers should look at the questioning as a process of inquiry.

### STEP ONE: AFFIRMATION

Right after a performance, performers need to hear positive, affirmative information about their work. People want to hear that what they have just completed has meaning to another human being. Phrases such as, "when you did such-and-such it was [surprising, challenging, evocative, compelling, delightful, unique, touching, poignant, interesting, etc] because...." provide this affirmation.

### STEP TWO: ARTIST AS QUESTIONER

*The creator asks the questions first*, which need to be quite specific. The more artists clarify what they are working on and what their own questions are about their own work, the more intense and deep the dialogue becomes. It doesn't work to say, "tell me what you think," especially since performers usually don't really mean it, and if observers do tell them, they get defensive. If the question is specific and pointed, then the respondents are given the opportunity to say exactly what they think in a way the creator is prepared to hear. Questions with "Yes/No" answers tend to stop discussion, and should be avoided. The job of the facilitator is to help the artist find the specific questions that get at the heart of the matter. But, the artist needs to raise the question first; the facilitator can probe with more questions to expand on the performer's intent, if needed.

### STEP THREE: RESPONDERS ASK THE QUESTIONS

The responders form their opinions in a neutral question. Forming opinions into neutral questions is precisely the process necessary to get to the questions that matter for the artist. It's important to remember that this process is NOT about telling or hinting to an artist how to improve their work. However, one can say whatever is important through this mechanism, and what can't be said probably couldn't be heard, or isn't relevant.

### STEP FOUR: OPINION TIME

After the neutral questions have been asked, if issues remain, the responder can ask permission to state an opinion: "I have an opinion about the costumes. Do you want to hear it?" I have never been at a session when the artist hasn't been willing to hear from everyone. But the asking of permission puts the opinion in a different place than it usually is; the artist is ultimately in control, and can say, no - or yes - or not now, but later. In many situations, there is not much left to add.

*If time permits, then the following steps can be added, usually in a one-on-one setting.*

### STEP FIVE: SUBJECT MATTER DISCUSSION

Extended discussion about the content and/or context of a piece that usually happens one-on-one.

STEP SIX: WORKING ON THE WORK Follow up lab work on a piece, based on the discussions that have preceded it.

X. VERMONT DRAMA COUNCIL INFORMATION

The Vermont Principals Association Drama Committee:

Bob Johnson (Associate Executive Director Vermont Principals' Association)

2 Prospect Street, Suite #3 Montpelier, VT 05602

W: 229-0547 H: 479-2417

[bjohnson@vpaonline.org](mailto:bjohnson@vpaonline.org)

***The Vermont Drama Council Governing Board***

David Nicol (President)

Twin Valley Middle High School

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Dave Nicol (Vermont Rep to NEDC)

Twin Valley Middle High School

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