

# THESPIAN TROUPE HANDBOOK

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Act well your part; there all the honor lies.



Honoring excellence in school theatre

**THE INTERNATIONAL  
THESPIAN SOCIETY**

A division of the Educational Theatre Association

Thespian Troupe Handbook  
Table of Contents  
Last updated September 2008

Note: All forms and documents referenced in this handbook are available on the Thespian troupe documents page in the membership section ([www.edta.org/membership/documents.aspx](http://www.edta.org/membership/documents.aspx)) of our website. A list of these documents is provided in “Appendix 3: Thespian troupe documents.”

<b>Introduction and general information</b> .....	3
<i>What is the International Thespian Society?</i> .....	3
<i>What is the Educational Theatre Association?</i> .....	3
<i>What is EdTA’s mission and how is it fulfilled?</i> .....	3
<i>Hierarchy of troupe governance documents</i> .....	3
<i>EdTA chapters</i> .....	4
<i>EdTA regions</i> .....	4
<b>The ITS/school relationship</b> .....	4
<i>The difference between the school’s Thespian troupe and the theatre program</i> .....	4
<i>Chartering a troupe</i> .....	4
<i>The term of troupe membership</i> .....	4
<i>Troupe membership status</i> .....	5
<b>The role of the troupe director</b> .....	5
<i>Annual troupe director tasks</i> .....	6
<i>Ongoing troupe director activities</i> .....	6
<i>Changing troupe directors</i> .....	7
<i>Website log-in IDs and passwords</i> .....	8
<b>Troupe organization</b> .....	8
<i>Troupe funds</i> .....	8
<i>Troupe constitution and bylaws</i> .....	9
<i>Troupe officers</i> .....	9
<i>Troupe meetings</i> .....	10
<b>Troupe membership</b> .....	10
<i>Who is a member of the Thespian troupe?</i> .....	10
<i>Determining Thespian induction eligibility</i> .....	11
<i>Inducting new Thespian members</i> .....	12
<i>Benefits of Thespian induction</i> .....	13
<i>Thespian credentials</i> .....	14
<i>Recognizing exceptional Thespian achievement</i> .....	14
<i>Inducting Honorary Thespians</i> .....	17
<i>Transferring Thespians to a new school and troupe</i> .....	17
<i>Troupe record requests</i> .....	18
<i>Addressing Thespian or parent concerns about the troupe</i> .....	18
<i>Additional student opportunities</i> .....	18
<b>Services and benefits for Thespian troupes and directors</b> .....	19
<i>Professional member benefits of the troupe director</i> .....	19
<i>Additional troupe benefits and services</i> .....	21
<i>EdTA and ITS logos</i> .....	23
<b>Appendix 1: Ideas and advice for troupe directors</b> .....	24
<i>Making the most of available help</i> .....	24
<i>Educational activities</i> .....	24
<i>Touring and outreach programs</i> .....	25
<i>Promoting your program</i> .....	25
<i>Performance and fundraising ideas</i> .....	25
<i>Community service</i> .....	26
<i>Social activities</i> .....	27
<b>Appendix 2: Paying by purchase order and collection procedures</b> .....	27
<b>Appendix 3: Thespian troupe documents</b> .....	28

## **Introduction and general information**

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

The International Thespian Society (ITS), an honorary group for middle and high school theatre students, is a division of the Educational Theatre Association (EdTA). The mission of ITS is to honor student excellence in the theatre arts. Thespian troupes are just a component of a school's theatre program. ITS membership offers many valuable benefits, services, and opportunities to troupe directors and Thespians alike.

Thespian induction is a great motivator for students to become more active in their school's theatre program. Whether or not these students pursue careers in the performing arts, the skills that they learn through theatre and Thespian activities are invaluable and ensure that future generations will appreciate and support the arts in our communities. We thank our troupe directors for caring enough to provide their students with this meaningful opportunity.

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

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

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

The mission of EdTA is to create an artistic, educational, and professional network for theatre arts educators, students, professionals, and enthusiasts to share ideas and support the effort to have theatre arts (including film, television, and other related electronic media) recognized in all phases of education and lifelong learning.

In order to fulfill this mission, we:

- Cultivate support to sustain and grow EdTA
- Honor the work and recognize the achievements of our members and others
- Produce educational events, programming, and publications to expand the knowledge and skills base for our members and the field of theatre education
- Promote the work of our membership to the public and other organizations
- Serve our members by being the leading advocate for theatre arts education
- Support our volunteer leader network
- Promote high professional standards

### ***Hierarchy of troupe governance documents***

This handbook is one part of a hierarchy of documents that govern troupe operation. It's important to make sure everyone involved with your troupe is familiar with and has access to all governance information. These documents will help the troupe operate smoothly and prevent confusion or conflict. It is essential that troupes consult and adhere to all documents in the following order of importance:

**Code of regulations.** The code of regulations is EdTA's primary governing document that creates the framework that defines the Association and shapes the policies of the organization and its membership.

**Membership policy.** The membership policy consists of EdTA’s rules and regulations. It defines the types of Association memberships, membership eligibility, and the process for becoming a member.

**Troupe handbooks.** The *Thespian Troupe Handbook* and *Junior Thespian Troupe Handbook* explain how troupes are expected to operate.

**Troupe constitution.** The troupe constitution is the basic document that details how an individual troupe will operate. See “Troupe constitution and bylaws” below for details.

**Troupe bylaws.** At the end of the troupe constitution is a section for bylaws. These are easier to add, delete, or change than articles of the troupe constitution, which makes them more flexible for day-to-day troupe operations. See “Troupe constitution and bylaws” below for details.

### ***EdTA chapters***

Chapters are officially recognized entities that represent troupes within a geographical area. Typically, chapters are organized by American states or Canadian provinces. Sometimes larger geographical areas are organized into chapters, such as the Western Pacific Islands or Australia. Each active chapter has a director and board who oversee area activities. Most chapters conduct annual festival/conferences and offer scholarships, performance opportunities, and educational workshops. Some chapters also conduct competitive events. EdTA’s online leader directory lists all active chapters and their directors. Convenient e-mail links make it easy to get in touch with current chapter directors.

### ***EdTA regions***

A region is a grouping of chapters. EdTA is organized into four regions. Typically, regions are only used to designate larger geographical areas for regional membership meetings: specific grants, scholarships, or awards, and for determining representation by the International Thespian Officers (ITO, the elected student representatives for ITS). To find out more about which region a chapter is in, see [edta.org/region](http://edta.org/region) and to find out more about how to become an ITO, see [itohespians.com](http://itohespians.com).

## **The ITS/school relationship**

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### ***The difference between the school’s Thespian troupe and the theatre program***

The Thespian troupe and the school theatre department or program are not one and the same. The Thespian troupe is a subset of the theatre arts program. It is the student honor society, and membership is earned. Any student may be a member of the theatre program, but only students who have been officially inducted and registered with the EdTA home office are members of the theatre program *and* the International Thespian Society.

### ***Chartering a troupe***

Chartering a Thespian troupe establishes a school’s membership in the International Thespian Society. The school administration appoints the troupe director as its official liaison with ITS and EdTA, but the school is legally and financially responsible for all troupe activity. By chartering a troupe and renewing the troupe’s membership annually, the troupe director and administration agree to the terms set forth in the EdTA code of regulations and membership policy.

### ***The term of troupe membership***

The troupe membership term is August 1 through the following July 31, which corresponds with the school year in most communities. Troupes chartered or reinstated August 1 through June 30 become active through the end of the current school year (July 31). Fees are not prorated for partial years.

Troupes chartering late in the school year are still required to pay renewal dues for the following school year by October 15. Troupes chartered or reinstated in the month of July receive that month as a “bonus” and will be active through July 31 of the following school year.

### ***Troupe membership status***

The troupe’s membership status reflects the school’s relationship with the International Thespian Society. Troupe status does not affect individual Thespian benefits that come directly from the home office (Thespian credentials and subscriptions), but may affect benefits that require a troupe director’s authorization, including scholarship and grant eligibility, induction, and the purchase of graduation and honor items.

Sometimes schools are unable to maintain active status. In such cases we suggest the former troupe director join EdTA individually as a professional member to continue receiving *Dramatics, Teaching Theatre*, member prices for registrations and resource materials, and other benefits.

**Active status.** Active troupes have met all membership requirements and enjoy full benefits as members-in-good-standing.

**Inactive status.** Inactive troupes have not met one or more membership requirements and their membership benefits are suspended temporarily until these requirements are met. These troupes are informed of this status and the term of the grace period, the date by which the requirements must be met. Inactive troupes that meet the requirements before the end of the grace period will be returned to active status without an additional reinstatement fee. Troupes returned to active status after suspension for collection problems will be placed on credit hold for an additional 6 months.

**Withdrawn status.** Inactive troupes that do not meet membership requirements by the end of the grace period will be withdrawn from active status. Withdrawn troupes have their benefits removed indefinitely and must pay an additional reinstatement fee to be returned to active status. Troupes that remain withdrawn past the end of the current school year must also submit a reinstatement form complete with troupe director and administrator’s signatures.

## **The role of the troupe director**

The troupe director is the official representative of the school’s Thespian troupe to our organization. The troupe director is responsible for overseeing all troupe activities and operations, subject to the authority of the school’s administration and EdTA’s code of regulations and policies.

This troupe director is a professional member of EdTA as long as the troupe maintains active membership status. Member benefits and opportunities available to troupe directors are in the “Services and benefits for Thespian troupes and directors” section below. Although the troupe may have more than one person who helps fulfill the troupe director’s duties (sometimes called a “troupe co-director” or “troupe assistant-director”), only one person may be designated as troupe director. Only the troupe director has official ITS troupe leadership authority. This gives him or her the ability to do such things as sign forms and applications, award ITS points, induct students into ITS, order and award Thespian honor items, access troupe account information, etc. We encourage other adults assisting in troupe operations to join the Educational Theatre Association as affiliate professional members, so that they will receive professional benefits for themselves.

The success of a Thespian troupe rests largely on the leadership and enthusiasm of the troupe director. Troupe directors know the value of the skills that are developed through theatre education and are committed to creating excellence within their own program. While directing a Thespian troupe does require some extra time, there are approximately two million students who can attest to the value of the opportunities afforded them as Thespians.

### ***Annual troupe director tasks***

**Keep the troupe's membership active and in good standing.** Troupes must pay their annual dues by October 15 of each school year to remain active. Active troupes may induct new members at any time. Troupes must also pay outstanding balances promptly and adhere to EdTA/ITS guidelines to remain active and in good standing. If a troupe's membership lapses, reinstatement is as simple as submitting a reinstatement form and the appropriate fees.

**Verify/update troupe contact information with the EdTA/ITS home office.** Annual troupe information update requests are sent to all active troupes at the beginning of each school year. These requests verify the troupe director's contact information and note any changes. They also provide us with statistical information to help us better know and serve our members. It is particularly important to notify the home office when a new troupe director is appointed or any time their contact information changes.

**Review the troupe's constitution.** Every troupe should adopt a constitution that includes specific troupe operations and activities that are not discussed in other documents. The constitution clarifies basic operation guidelines such as troupe officer requirements or job descriptions, local requirements for induction or participation in troupe activities, and any changes to the recommended ITS point system. The constitution must be available to students, parents, administration, or any other interested party. A copy of any adopted changes may be sent to the EdTA home office for the troupe's permanent file.

**Verify school/troupe affiliation for new and renewing affiliate professional members.** To be eligible for EdTA affiliate professional membership at reduced rates, adults must be affiliated with an ITS member school. Troupe directors must verify affiliation for all applicants. In addition, the renewal notices for affiliate professional members are sent to the troupe director's attention at the school address. Troupe directors should forward such notices to their affiliate members to ensure prompt renewal. If individuals are no longer affiliated, we encourage troupe directors to notify the home office.

### ***Ongoing troupe director activities***

**Thespian inductions.** Troupe directors recognize student achievement by assessing student work and inducting eligible students into the International Thespian Society. New inductees become members of the school's Thespian troupe for life.

The recommended Thespian point system is the standard for awarding and tracking student eligibility points. The troupe director may modify the point system as appropriate for their program. It is expected that all students involved in theatre will be provided with a copy of the point system.

Traditionally, troupes present ITS induction pins to each new Thespian during their induction ceremony. These and all other Thespian honor items may only be purchased by troupe directors of active troupes for presentation to inducted Thespians.

Note: Each August a letter is sent to school administrators, congratulating them on the prior year's inductions and thanking them for supporting the theatre arts. A list of the inductees is included. This

recognition serves as a reminder that the school has an active theatre honor society. Troupe directors receive a copy of this letter.

**Minimum number of active Thespians.** Effective August 1, 2008, each troupe must maintain an active member base of at least six officially inducted Thespians at all times. This provides a core group of students to conduct the activities of the troupe and fill officer positions (EdTA Membership Policy, Section 1.2.2 (a) (iv)). Active members are those inductees still attending the school for their primary education in core subjects such as math, language arts, social studies, and science.

Troupes not having the minimum number of active inductees as of August will receive a reminder from the home office. The troupe will have until the following August to reestablish a minimum core of six active Thespians. If the troupe does not do so, the school's troupe membership will become inactive. Troupe benefits will be suspended until the appropriate number of new Thespians is inducted. If there are fewer than six active Thespians in the troupe the following August, the troupe's membership will be withdrawn.

**Thespians rank advancement.** Following induction (10 Thespians points earned), troupe directors encourage and reward dedication and achievement by continuing to award Thespians points and advancing students through Thespians honor ranks: Honor Thespians (60 points), National Honor Thespians (120 points), and International Honor Thespians (180 points.) See "Recognizing exceptional Thespians achievement" below for details.

**Troupe officer elections.** Each year troupes conduct officer elections. This establishes a team of student leaders who will support the troupe director and troupe activities throughout the year. More details are available in the "Troupe organization" section below.

**Information sharing.** The troupe director is the primary conduit of information between the school, the home office, and the students. Correspondence from EdTA will be sent to the troupe director's attention. It is the troupe director's responsibility to forward all invoices and statements for processing as required by the school's payment policies and procedures. The troupe director authorizes transactions, orders, rosters, and membership queries on behalf of the troupe. EdTA cannot release sensitive troupe information to students. Whenever possible, troupe directors, not students, should contact the home office.

### ***Changing troupe directors***

**New troupe directors.** Transitions between troupe directors are particularly important times for Thespians troupes. It is crucial that EdTA/ITS be informed of troupe director changes as quickly as possible to ensure that professional membership is transferred to the new troupe director and that accurate contact information is available. To make the change official, submit a Change of Troupe Director/Troupe Information Update form to the EdTA home office.

Sometimes the importance of ITS affiliation is not communicated to new theatre teachers, and the troupe falls by the wayside, leaving Thespians without an active troupe and honor society. This transition is so important that EdTA has created a specific webpage for new troupe directors, [edta.org/newsponsor](http://edta.org/newsponsor). In addition to general information and forms, new teachers may want to download our Tips for New Thespians Troupe Directors.

**Outgoing troupe directors.** If staff changes, such as retirement, are known in advance, the outgoing troupe director can help to facilitate a smooth transition by:

1. Communicating to the new troupe director the value of Thespian affiliation, including:
  - a. the honorary nature of induction
  - b. professional member and Thespian benefits and services
  - c. chapter and international event and program opportunities, etc.
2. Providing the new troupe director a packet of up-to-date EdTA/ITS information, including:
  - a. a change of troupe director form
  - b. a troupe handbook and FAQs
  - c. copies of all ITS forms
3. Passing on to the new troupe director all troupe-specific materials, including:
  - a. the current troupe constitution, complete with any membership eligibility amendments
  - b. Thespian membership rolls and induction history
  - c. student point record and rank information
  - d. troupe leadership information
  - e. copies of all correspondence to and from the home office

### ***Website log-in IDs and passwords***

Each troupe director and affiliate professional member receives a log-in ID and password from the home office along with an EdTA professional membership card. These personal codes provide access to online EdTA member benefits such as the member directory and special member pricing for educational resources. In addition, troupe directors may log in to purchase troupe-only items such as Thespian honor items, graduation materials, and troupe supplies. Access codes may change with certain record information modifications, so members should contact the home office at [members@edta.org](mailto:members@edta.org) if their codes don't work. Access codes cannot be altered (for example, if a password is stolen, a new one cannot be issued), so we strongly advise troupe directors not to share codes with others. The troupe is responsible for any online activity involving its log-in ID and password. At present, there are no access codes for Thespian members. Any person wishing to post to the online discussion board may create their own username and password for use in that area alone.

## **Troupe organization**

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A Thespian troupe is an honor society that recognizes and rewards excellence among the participants in the theatre arts program. Induction into the International Thespian Society is an honorable achievement, which the troupe director should promote to their students. The troupe is not a club, fraternity/sorority, or secret society within the school. Meetings, induction ceremonies, and other activities should be open to interested students, parents, and administrators as a way of reinforcing the honorary nature of the troupe.

Activities of the Thespian troupe and the school's theatre program are most beneficial when they are coordinated to complement and reinforce each other. Additionally, many schools find that cooperation with other departments results in a more rewarding program. Many schools use the art department for set painting, business classes for assistance in publicity and marketing, and home economics classes for help with costume design and construction. This cooperation helps promote the theatre arts within the school community as well as introduce new students to the pride in putting on a full-scale production.

### ***Troupe funds***

Control of the troupe's funds is vested exclusively with the troupe director and the school officials. The EdTA/ITS home office recognizes only the troupe director as the representative of the school's troupe with regard to filing official records or payment of fees with the home office.



We recommend that new troupe directors familiarize themselves with their school's payment procedures by meeting with a business manager or accountant at the beginning of the school year. School purchasing procedures vary greatly. Knowing the school's purchasing procedures and payment schedule in advance and coordinating them with EdTA's procedures, deadlines, and turnaround times will make it easier to pay annual troupe dues and other bills on time and to induct students and receive merchandise in time for ceremonies and awards banquets.

All payments to EdTA must be made in U.S. funds. We highly recommend that troupes outside the United States pay using Visa, MasterCard, Diners Club, or American Express credit cards. These cards automatically convert payment to U.S. funds and lock in the conversion rate.

### ***Troupe constitution and bylaws***

Each Thespian troupe is expected to adopt a constitution. A troupe's constitution should include basic information about how your troupe operates. Items such as requirements for troupe officers, any additional local requirements for student induction or participation, and any changes to the recommended ITS point system that should be spelled out in the constitution. A troupe constitution template is available on the EdTA website and includes the process for approving changes. If the troupe has not adopted a modified version, the ITS troupe constitution template is the governing document.

At the end of the troupe constitution template is a section for troupe bylaws. These cover the day-to-day details of troupe operation, which vary greatly from troupe to troupe and may need to be updated more frequently than articles of the troupe constitution. Bylaws often include such things as rules of order for troupe meetings, elections, and induction ceremonies. Good, up-to-date bylaws help the troupe document and communicate these important details to everyone involved and provide continuity from year to year as officers and troupe directors change.

The troupe constitution and bylaws must be made available to all theatre students, their parents, and the school administration. Troupes are encouraged to send a copy of their final troupe constitution to the EdTA home office for their permanent records.

### ***Troupe officers***

All Thespian troupe officers must be officially inducted members of the International Thespian Society and their troupe. Serving as a troupe officer gives inductees additional opportunities for leadership skill development and personal growth. Troupe officers can assist the busy troupe director in numerous ways with troupe and theatre program activities.

We recommend that student officers be appointed or elected immediately after a troupe has been chartered. Regular elections near the close of the school year (for the following year) will ensure that officers are ready to serve when students return in the fall.

Officer positions include president, vice president, secretary, treasurer, and clerk/scribe. Other offices such as historian, publicity chair, Trick or Treat so Kids Can Eat (TOTS-EAT) food-drive chair, and webmaster may be added to the troupe's constitution at the troupe's discretion. They're a great way to increase student involvement and recognition.

Non-member students may serve as officers on a temporary basis as long as the student is inducted into ITS by the end of that school year. Most often this is done to accommodate officers in a new theatre program or school that has not yet determined induction eligibility for its students.

## ***Troupe meetings***

The troupe director and new officers should schedule at least one meeting at the beginning of the school year. This should focus on the contributions that the troupe plans to make to the theatre arts program and the school. Plans should include troupe-only activities and those in which all theatre students may participate. Suggestions for the year's calendar of activities, including community service projects such as TOTS-EAT, may be considered at this first meeting as well. We recommend that Thespian troupes meet monthly throughout the school year. Inductions may be incorporated into troupe meetings.

## **Troupe membership**

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### ***Who is a member of the Thespian troupe?***

**Troupe directors.** The troupe director, while not an official member of the troupe, is the administrator of the troupe on behalf of the school. He or she is a professional member of the Educational Theatre Association, and that membership is tied directly to the active member status of the troupe. If a troupe does not remain in good standing for any reason, the troupe director's professional membership benefits will be suspended or withdrawn.

**Affiliate professional members.** Affiliate professional members are not active members of the troupe, although some may be Thespian alumni if they were inducted into the troupe as students. While not active members of the troupe, they must be affiliated with the troupe to maintain their affiliate member status.

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

A student member must maintain satisfactory standards of membership as set forth by the EdTA governing board and the troupe constitution. The troupe director may deny a student participation in troupe activities for just cause. However, neither the term of the student's subscription to *Dramatics* magazine nor the student's paid induction into ITS will be affected. Once a student has been submitted to the home office for induction, their name cannot be removed from the Thespian Society membership rolls.

**Thespian alumni.** Thespian inductees receive a lifetime membership, the active benefits of which last through high school graduation. Thespians who have graduated from high school become Thespian alumni. They are members of the troupe and ITS, but don't receive many of the benefits of active members still enrolled in the theatre program, such as the ability to vote or run for troupe office.

**Honorary Thespians.** Honorary Thespian membership is granted to adults who perform outstanding service for the Thespian troupe. They are typically parents or other volunteers from the community, school employees, or generous patrons. Honorary Thespians are affiliated with the troupe and ITS, though they are not active voting members.

**Thespian apprentices.** The prospect of induction should be used as an incentive for involvement in theatre as soon as a student enters secondary school. Students who are still earning their induction points are sometimes referred to as "Thespian apprentices." Apprentices may be invited to attend Thespian

troupe meetings and social events at the troupe's discretion. Whether or not apprentices may vote is decided by the troupe in accordance with its troupe constitution. Although they are not official troupe members (Thespians), Thespian apprentices are affiliated with the troupe. Troupe affiliation may permit non-member students to participate in ITS events, festivals, and other troupe activities as troupe, chapter, and ITS rules permit.

### ***Determining Thespian induction eligibility***

Mandatory school and student eligibility requirements are defined in the EdTA membership policy. Schools and students must meet all of these and any additional requirements defined in the handbook and troupe constitution for inductions to be granted.

The International Thespian Society is the honor society for theatre arts students. Specifically, students earn the right to be inducted by accumulating points for their work and meeting other required criteria.

ITS provides a Thespian point system to help determine induction eligibility as well as Thespian point record sheets that make it easy to track each student's earned points. Only the troupe director may award points. The troupe secretary or clerk/scribe is usually responsible for maintaining point records and making them available for each student's personal review. Point records are kept at the troupe level. They are not sent to the home office.

Troupe directors are to notify students that records of their activities will be maintained and that honor society induction will be available when all criteria have been met. All induction requirements must be in writing and provided to all students involved in the school's theatre program.

### **Induction criteria.**

**Grade at time of induction.** Only students in grades 9 through 12 (or the international equivalent) may be inducted into the high school Thespian troupe. Students in grades 6 through 8 must be inducted into a Junior Thespian troupe. We recommend that programs that serve students in both grade ranges charter a high school troupe *and* a Junior Thespian troupe.

**School enrollment.** If a student receives primary academic coursework from a school with an active troupe, he or she may only be inducted into and receive benefits through that troupe. Troupes may induct students who attend other schools only when those schools do not have their own active troupes. When a school charters or reinstates a troupe to active status, Thespians who attend that school but were inducted elsewhere must transfer to that troupe. See "Transferring Thespians to a new school and troupe" below.

**Thespian points.** The official ITS point system provides the recommended number of points awarded for a specific assignment. Troupe directors may use their discretion in awarding points according to the student's quality of work and cooperation. Quality may include the caliber of the work done and the educational value of the experience. The Thespian troupe director makes the final decision regarding the awarding of Thespian points.

Troupes may adopt changes to the point system to meet the unique needs of the school's theatre arts program and its students. For instance, the troupe may establish academic requirements for induction or honor rank attainment. The school's administration should review any changes to the point system to ensure compatibility with school policies. Approved changes must be codified in the troupe constitution and shared with all theatre students. Troupes are encouraged to send a copy to EdTA for the troupe's permanent records.

### ITS point system summary.

- Inducted Junior Thespians automatically begin their high school careers with half of the points needed for high school Thespian induction.
- 1 point represents approximately 10 hours of excellent work. Use this formula in awarding points for items not specifically listed.
- To become a Thespian, a student must earn 10 points, 5 of which should be acquired at the school where he or she is to be inducted.
- Induction points should be earned through participation in at least two full-length productions, or one full-length and two one-acts, or four one-acts.
- Induction points should be earned in at least two of the listed categories, for example, acting and production.
- Students may earn up to 5 points toward induction in the high school Thespian troupe through participation in community, children's, or professional theatre; in other theatre-related disciplines; or through participation in middle school theatre and/or a Junior Thespian troupe.
- Thespian membership is offered to all students who qualify. No student can be elected into the troupe, and no student can be denied membership if he or she has fulfilled all membership requirements.

Additional criteria. The school or troupe director may adopt additional requirements for induction into ITS. Attendance, behavioral expectations, and community service projects are examples of criteria that may be considered when determining induction eligibility. Any changes must be documented in the troupe constitution.

Note: Criteria that violate school policy or that may be deemed as degrading or hazing are not permitted.

### ***Inducting new Thespian members***

Troupes with active membership status may induct new members as often as they choose. The steps for inducting new Thespians are:

**Present membership invitation cards.** The troupe director presents each eligible student with a personalized invitation to join ITS and the troupe. Membership invitation cards are provided free from the home office. To request invitation cards, e-mail a request to [members@edta.org](mailto:members@edta.org) or by checking the box on the merchandise order form.

**Gather student induction acceptance cards (RSVPs).** Students receiving invitation cards must confirm their desire to be inducted by returning their RSVPs to the troupe director, ideally four weeks before the induction ceremony. This card will help verify each inductee's current contact information. If students pay their own induction fees (some troupes include the cost of induction pins), payment should be provided to the troupe director according to school guidelines.

**Submit an induction roster form.** At least four weeks prior to any induction ceremony, troupe directors should submit an induction roster form. Download a new High School Thespian Roster Form each time a form is needed to ensure you use the current version of the forms. Only include new inductees; the Thespian induction fee is a one-time fee that pays for a lifetime membership in the honor society. One payment for the full amount should be submitted with each induction roster form. If you are submitting the roster with a purchase order, please see "Appendix 2: Paying by purchase order and collection procedures" below.

Once the inductions are processed (2 to 3 weeks), one blank membership certificate for each new inductee is sent to the troupe director for completion and presentation at the induction ceremony. If you need the membership certificates very quickly (under 2 to 3 weeks), we recommend paying for rush service, which will guarantee delivery of the membership certificates within 5 business days of *receipt* of the properly completed roster and full payment.

The fastest way to submit any transaction is by fax to (513) 421-7055 with payment by Visa, MasterCard, Diners Club, American Express, or a copy of an official school purchase order document. Troupe directors may also submit rosters by mail using the P.O. Box address on the form. Allow additional time for rosters submitted by mail.

**Personalize the membership certificates.** Once an induction form is received and processed, the home office will mail the troupe director one blank membership certificate for each new Thespian. The troupe director should arrange for the certificates to be personalized before presentation at the induction ceremony.

**Hold an induction ceremony.** Most troupes choose to welcome and celebrate the accomplishments of their new Thespian members through an induction ceremony. Please note that conducting a ceremony alone does not constitute induction. Suggestions for three types of induction ceremonies for new Thespians are available by download from the EdTA website.

**Process payment of purchase orders.** If your troupe paid for the induction roster form with a purchase order, we will send the troupe director a numbered invoice for the amount of the fees. It is the troupe director's responsibility to forward all invoices and statements for processing and prompt payment as required by your school's payment policies and procedures. See "Appendix 2: Paying by purchase order and collection procedures" below.

### ***Benefits of Thespian induction***

- Membership in the only international honor society for high school theatre arts students—a recognized demonstration of achievement and a valuable addition to college and employment applications.
- A membership certificate (see "Thespian credentials" below).
- A personalized membership card (see "Thespian credentials" below).
- A one-year (nine issues) subscription to *Dramatics* magazine (a \$35 value). The first issue will arrive within 6 to 8 weeks for students inducted August through March. Students inducted April through July will receive their first issue in September.
- The ability to renew the subscription at a special member rate (\$14 as of 8/1/07). Note: All Thespians are sent renewal notices before their subscription expires. This provides them the opportunity to continue receiving the magazine at our lowest member rate, and is a lifelong benefit.
- Leadership opportunities at the troupe, chapter, and international levels.
- Eligibility for scholarships through EdTA chapters and the home office.
- Eligibility to apply for student grants, including the Doug Finney Festival Grants (juniors and seniors), which are need-based grants to help Thespians attend the ITS Festival.
- Eligibility to audition at the Thespian Festival for admission to college theatre programs.
- Eligibility to submit original plays to the Thespian Playworks program.
- Eligibility to audition for chapter Individual Events programs and qualify for the National Individual Events Showcase (NIES) at the Thespian Festival.
- Eligibility to receive Thespian graduation and honor items (honor cords, guards, point stars, pins, etc.).

- Eligibility to advance to Thespian ranks of Honor, National Honor, or International Honor Thespian.

### ***Thespian credentials***

Thespian credentials are documents used to verify affiliation with the International Thespian Society. There are two types:

**Membership certificate.** The home office sends one blank certificate to the troupe director for each new inductee. The troupe director fills out the membership certificate and presents it to the inductee, traditionally as part of an induction ceremony. Paper stars and honor bars, added to the membership certificate, symbolize point levels and ranks earned after initial induction.

**Membership card.** The personalized membership card is proof that students have been inducted. High school Thespian cards are mailed directly to the students' home addresses. Membership cards are usually mailed within 4 to 6 weeks of processing.

Using your Thespian membership card: Some chapters require proof of induction to participate in auditions and other activities at their chapter conferences. Some member schools extend special deals and privileges (discounted tickets, free preview performances, special seating, etc.) to cardholding Thespians as part of a "good neighbor" program. Some local theatres and businesses may also extend similar deals to cardholders. Many companies jump at the opportunity to build a steady clientele of easily identifiable honor students. We encourage troupe directors to ask local businesses about offering Thespian perks to enhance the benefits of Thespian membership.

**Replacement of lost, damaged, or incorrect Thespian credentials.** Troupe directors can order replacements from the home office for a small fee by filling out and submitting the High School Thespian Credentials Replacement Order Form. If the home office misprinted the card or certificate, please note the error and the correct information, and we will replace it at no charge.

### ***Recognizing exceptional Thespian achievement***

**Thespian honor ranks.** All Thespians are theatre arts honor students, and induction as a Thespian is the first of many honors that troupes may bestow on a student. However, the International Thespian Society recognizes three achievement ranks beyond induction. Troupe directors should continue tracking Thespian points after induction and use these points to recognize ongoing Thespian achievements.

Thespian stars are presented to acknowledge each additional 10 points (or 100 hours) earned. Star ratings should be designated on the student's membership certificate under "Thespian Stars Earned." We also encourage the troupe to indicate star ratings (1 through 4 stars) and honor ranks after the student names on playbills, membership rolls, and in other printed materials.

Below are brief descriptions of Thespian honor ranks and the point totals associated with each. See "Thespian and graduation honors program" below for details.

1. **Honor Thespian.** 60 total points earned or the equivalent of 5 stars. For outstanding contributions to the ideals of the Society and meritorious work in the field of theatre.
2. **National Honor Thespian.** 120 total points earned or the equivalent of 11 stars. For exceptional commitment to the ideals of the Society and distinguished work in the field of theatre.
3. **International Honor Thespian.** 180 or more total points earned or the equivalent of 17 or more stars. For extraordinary dedication to the ideals of the Society and exemplary work in the field of theatre.

**Thespian and graduation honors program.** ITS offers a wide variety of items for recognizing Thespian achievement. Graduation and honor items can only be purchased by official troupe directors of active Thespian troupes for presentation to inducted Thespians. Presentation of induction pins and other honor items is a Thespian tradition, but it is not mandatory. Actual use varies from troupe to troupe, often based on local economic factors and school policy. Work closely with your school administration to determine which honor items are appropriate.

Honor items are available through the *Thespian Honors and Spirit Catalog*, which is mailed to troupe directors each February. Troupe directors may also order honor items through our online EdTA Store by using their log-in IDs and passwords (see “Website log-in IDs and passwords” above).

**Thespian honor and graduation items and their use.**

Note: These items may only be purchased by the official troupe directors of active Thespian troupes. Certificates may be hand-lettered or printed using any high-quality laser printer.

1. Thespian membership certificates. These are also considered membership credentials (see “Thespian credentials” above). All ITS certificates are printed in two colors and feature heat-resistant gold foil seals and trim.

2. The Thespian pin and guard system. Thespian induction pins are the foundation of the ITS system for recognizing point awards and honor ranks. Guards are pins with small chains that attach to the back of the Thespian pin. “I” guards (for “ITS”) are standard. Additional guards are available for officers and Honor Thespian ranks. Point stars are hung from the chain. Each represents 10 additional Thespian points earned. Pins and guards are traditionally displayed at induction ceremonies, the Thespian Festival, chapter conferences and festivals, and other formal troupe activities. They are often displayed on Thespian letter patches or worn as a lapel pin on shirts, sport coats/suit jackets, or dresses. All items are available in the *Thespian Honors and Spirit Catalog*.

The following chart provides guidelines for the Thespian pin and guard system.

Thespian points earned	Honor item awarded	Honor item signifies
10	Thespian induction pin.	Official Thespian induction achieved. First 10 points accumulated.
10+	“I” guards and officer guards may be worn with the Thespian pin and in conjunction with other Thespian honor guards earned.	Officer guards are presented to troupe president, vice president, treasurer, secretary, and clerk/scribe.
20	One Thespian point star attached to officer or “I” guard chain.	20 points accumulated. Induction pin = 10 points. 1 point star = 10 additional points (1-star Thespian).
30	Second star added to guard chain.	30 points accumulated (2-star Thespian).
40	Third star added to guard chain.	40 points accumulated (3-star Thespian).
50	Fourth star added to guard chain.	50 points accumulated (4-star Thespian).
60	All stars removed from guard chain. Honor Thespian guard replaces “I” guard. This may be added to officer guard.	Honor Thespian rank achieved. 60 points accumulated (5-star Thespian).

70–110	One point star added to guard chain for <i>each</i> additional 10 points earned.	70–110 points accumulated (6- to 10-star Thespian).
120	All stars removed from guard chain. National Honor Thespian guard replaces Honor Thespian guard.	National Honor Thespian rank achieved (11-star Thespian).
130–170	One point star added to guard chain for <i>each</i> additional 10 points earned.	130–170 points accumulated (12- to 16-star Thespian).
180	All stars removed from guard chain. International Honor Thespian pin replaces National Honor Thespian guard.	International Honor Thespian rank achieved. Highest ITS rank attainable (17-star Thespian).

3. Honor rank certificates. Specific certificates are available for presentation to students who earn Honor Thespian, National Honor Thespian, and International Honor Thespian ranks.

4. Thespian letters. Any inducted Thespian is eligible to receive a felt or chenille letter patch. Letters are also available for Best Thespian recipients and Honor Thespians. Thespian pin and guard items are often displayed on Thespian letters applied to the front of a school jacket or worn as a lapel pin on shirts, sport coats/suit jackets, or dresses.

5. Graduation honor cords, stoles, and tassels. According to ITS guidelines, any inducted Thespian is eligible to receive these items. Cords and stoles are worn around the neck over the graduation gown. Tassels are attached to the graduation cap. Each troupe director should work closely with the school administration to determine school policy regarding display of these items at the graduation ceremony.

6. Thespian beanies. These traditional caps harken back to the early days of ITS. They are frequently worn for at induction ceremonies and other troupe activities.

7. Thespian award medallions. Medallions may be presented to any inducted Thespian. Some schools permit display of medallions with, or in place of, graduation honor cords or stoles. They can represent any level of achievement the troupe director or EdTA chapter director deems appropriate.

8. Thespian honor medallions. Honor medallions are most often presented to Thespians who have achieved the Honor Thespian rank. Your school may permit wearing honor medallions with, or in place of, graduation honor cords or stoles.

9. Best Thespian certificates. According to ITS tradition, one male and one female Thespian are awarded the title of Best Thespian each year. Troupe directors set standards for this distinction at the troupe level.

10. Thespian seals. These self-adhesive, embossed, gold-foil seals are commonly used to create official troupe documents, seal induction invitations, or seal envelopes for official troupe correspondence.

11. Thespian paper stars and honor bars. These self-adhesive foil stickers are usually placed at the bottom of the Thespian membership certificate under the heading, “Thespian Stars Earned.” Each paper star represents an additional 10 points earned. Honor bars indicate Honor Thespian rank.

12. Thespian trophies, plaques, and awards. EdTA has licensed a top national awards company to provide a full complement of outstanding personalized trophies, plaques, and presentation pieces. Troupes may present these items to anyone. Each item features the ITS icon. Text is sublimated (print



that is bonded *into* the metal) rather than engraved for greater impact. There are recognition items to suit every need a troupe or chapter director has. See the full line in the *Thespian Awards Catalog* or online at the EdTA Store.

13. Thespian certificates of recognition. Certificates of recognition are presented for many reasons at the troupe and chapter level. They may be presented to Thespians and non-Thespians (parents, patrons, administrators, and volunteers, for example) at the troupe or chapter director's discretion.

### ***Inducting Honorary Thespians***

Honorary Thespians are adults who perform outstanding service for a Thespian troupe. They are typically parent or community volunteers, school employees, or generous patrons. They receive an Honorary Thespian membership card, certificate, and a one-year subscription to *Dramatics* magazine. Many troupes also add Honorary Thespians to their official membership roll. Troupe directors induct Honorary Thespians via an Honorary Thespian membership roster form. See "Who is a member of the Thespian troupe?" section above for more details.

### ***Transferring Thespians to a new school and troupe***

When a Thespian transfers to a school that has an active Thespian troupe, the troupe director at that school must submit a Thespian membership transfer form to the home office to make the student an official member of their new troupe. There is no fee for this transfer.

Note: Transferring Thespians should not be submitted as new members, and do not need to pay any additional fees to the home office. A new membership certificate and/or membership card that includes the student's new troupe information can be ordered using the transfer form.

Once the transfer form is processed, the Thespian will be a member of the new troupe. Troupes must accept transferring Thespians with a minimum of 10 points. The new troupe director, as guided by the troupe constitution, will determine whether or not points over the 10 required for induction will be recognized at the new troupe. Similarly, all, some, or none of the points of Thespian apprentices may be accepted by the new troupe. Transferring Thespians may be required to fulfill certain additional expectations to receive local troupe benefits at their new school.

If a Thespian transfers to a school without an active Thespian troupe, he or she will remain a member of their original troupe. The student may or may not be eligible to earn additional points and receive local troupe benefits through that troupe at the discretion of its troupe director and the troupe constitution. We encourage Thespians transferring to unaffiliated schools to ask about chartering a new troupe there. Many successful troupes were founded by transferring Thespians.

### **The Thespian transfer process.**

1. Verify induction. If the student does not have a Thespian membership card, the troupe director should verify the student's induction with the home office. The Thespian's name, previous school name, previous troupe number, and previous city/state should be faxed to (513) 421-7055 or sent by e-mail to members@edta.org.

2. Submit a transfer form. Download a High School Thespian Transfer Student Membership form from the EdTA website.

3. Order new Thespian credentials (optional). The transfer form permits you to order a new induction certificate and/or membership card for your new Thespian. Please allow 2 to 3 weeks for membership certificates and 4 to 6 weeks for personalized membership cards.

### ***Troupe record requests***

Troupes should keep accurate records of all student inductions, including copies of all induction roster forms. If those are lost, destroyed, or unavailable due to a troupe director transition, the troupe director should locate a current year's *Thespian Honors and Spirit Catalog* and order "troupe records research." This will provide the troupe director with copies of all rosters sent to us in the years requested. Records going back five years should provide an accurate picture of your troupe's current membership. Ordering records past five years could help with outreach or fundraising efforts to Thespian alumni. The troupe director can use his or her website log-in ID and password to order this and other troupe director-only items from our online EdTA Store.

### ***Addressing Thespian or parent concerns about the troupe***

**Check the EdTA code of regulations and membership policy.** Most questions are answered by these documents, which define the mandatory components of membership and the Association.

**Check the troupe's constitution.** Every Thespian troupe or Junior Thespian troupe is guided by a troupe constitution (see "Troupe constitution and bylaws" above).

**Meet with the troupe director, concerned parent, or student.** Often a meeting is all that's needed to address concerns by providing additional information and/or dispelling rumors. It is vital that all parties approach meetings in a professional and respectful manner. The troupe director is in the best position to see the big picture, and it's important for students and family to respect their authority and responsibility.

**Meet with the school administration.** Because a school administrator signs the application to charter a troupe, the ultimate authority rests in that office. It is the administration that appoints the troupe director and oversees performance. The administration is in the best position to diagnose local problems and implement adequate solutions.

### ***Additional student opportunities***

**Chapter conferences.** Most EdTA/ITS chapters conduct an annual Thespian festival or conference. Most include performance opportunities for troupes and individuals, various workshops, college/university exhibitors, and scholarship auditions. The chapter director will provide information about this and any other chapter activities.

**International Thespian Festival.** In late June, hundreds of Thespian troupes and thousands of students gather for six days of performances, workshops, scholarship and college auditions, Individual Events, and camaraderie. Festival attendees are treated to some of the best high school theatre in the world, from fully mounted, invitation-only, main stage productions; chapter selected shows; and short cuttings and one-acts that any troupe is welcome to share (Freestyle Theatre). This is truly the ultimate high school theatre experience.

Each fall the *Festival Opportunities Guide* (FOG) is posted to the Festival section of our website. It contains details about the many ways a troupe or student may choose to participate in the next Festival. Troupes that haven't already done so will want to begin planning their Festival trip right away.

Festival offers a unique opportunity for students to gain a more global perspective of our art and to perform for an international audience of peers. It is an approved activity of the National Association of Secondary School Principals. Registration begins in February.

### **Student scholarship opportunities.**

International Thespian Society scholarships. These assist Thespians who will continue their education in the communicative arts or in theatre education. Selection is based on scholastic and artistic excellence, participation in Thespian activities and leadership positions held at the troupe, chapter, or national level. Auditions occur at the Thespian Festival and more details can be found in the Festival Opportunities Guide.

Chapter scholarships. These total more than \$100,000 annually, and are awarded at the EdTA chapter conferences and festivals. Information is available from chapter directors and chapter websites.

Named scholarships. These scholarships bear the names of generous individuals who either helped create them or whose families have created them in memoriam. Many do not require an audition before a scholarship committee. Applications can be found on the EdTA website.

College auditions. The Thespian Festival also provides Thespians the opportunity to audition before more than 40 college and university representatives from across the country. Each troupe may send as many Thespians to audition as it chooses. There are scholarship and enrollment opportunities available. Pre-registration is required for the scholarship auditions. Additional scholarship and auditioning information is available in the “Thespian Stuff” section of the EdTA website.

**Chapter and international student leadership.** In addition to the leadership opportunities available to Thespian students within their troupe, dedicated Thespians can seek office at the chapter and International Thespian Society levels.

Chapter officers. EdTA encourages each chapter to conduct leadership training and to hold an annual election for chapter student officers. These students join their adult board members in planning and running chapter activities. Thespians interested in serving as student officers should contact their chapter director for more information.

International Thespian Officers (ITO). Six students are elected to serve as International Thespian Officers each year. In addition to the chair/international liaison and webmaster/secretary positions, four additional officers represent regions established by the EdTA governing board. ITO candidates must be Thespians who have served as past or current officers at the troupe, chapter, or national level.

Candidates are required to attend the daily leadership training sessions at the International Thespian Festival, where they may run for an office. They must also accept Festival responsibilities in the year following their election. For more information about running for the ITO, contact the director of education at the EdTA home office.

## **Services and benefits for Thespian troupes and directors**

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### ***Professional member benefits of the troupe director and affiliate professional members***

Troupe directors and affiliate professional members are professional members of the Educational Theatre Association, the professional association for theatre education. The troupe director’s membership is active as long as the troupe’s membership is active and the individual remains the troupe

director. Affiliate professional membership remains active for a full year from the start date and may be renewed as long as the individual remains affiliated with an active ITS troupe.

**Troupe director and affiliate member benefit list.** See below for details on some of the listed benefits.

- A one-year subscription to *Teaching Theatre*, our quarterly journal for theatre educators (a \$34 value)
- A one-year subscription to *Dramatics* magazine (nine issues, September through May) (a \$27 value)
- Member rates for EdTA educational programs and events
- Special member pricing for classroom resources through our catalog or online EdTA Store
- Access to members-only features of our website, including the EdTA Store and online member directory
- The ability to nominate and be considered for EdTA awards and grants
- The ability to nominate, vote, and run for elected office in the Association
- Advocacy support and representation at the national, chapter, and local levels
- EdTA e-bulletins with timely and important information from the EdTA/ITS home office

### **Publications and resources.**

*Dramatics*. Published monthly September through May, *Dramatics* is the only magazine that is edited exclusively for students and teachers of theatre to use in the classroom as an educational resource. The magazine publishes at least six new plays each year and features articles on all aspects of theatre arts, profiles of theatre professionals, instructional pieces on technical theatre, and more. Thespians receive a one-year subscription with their membership. Subscriptions can be renewed at a special members-only rate as long as the subscription does not lapse.

#### *Dramatics* annual special issues.

- The Festival recap in the September issue features a celebratory look back at the summer's Thespian Festival and publication of the winning Thespian Playworks submissions.
- The College Theatre Directory, published in December, lists and describes hundreds of college and university theatre programs.
- The Summer Theatre Directory in the February issue annually lists and describes opportunities for students to study, perform, or find work in theatre over the summer break.

*Teaching Theatre*. Published quarterly, *Teaching Theatre* is the journal of record for the field of theatre education and is written to be used by theatre educators, college students pursuing an educational theatre degree, and supporters of educational theatre. This publication features articles on theatre curriculum, profiles of exemplary theatre programs, advocacy news, stories about the latest trends in theatre education, and hands-on, how-to pieces on everything from scenery to directing.

### **Professional development opportunities.**

EdTA Annual Conference. The event for busy theatre education professionals, Conference features practical workshops designed to be integrated into the classroom. Attendees learn about the latest trends in theatre education, hear from some of the most respected voices in the field, explore new subjects and techniques, and discover the newest programs and products in our Theatre Expo area. Continuing Education Units (CEUs) and college credit are available.

EdTA Professional Development Institute (PDI). These intensive training programs for theatre education professionals are one- or two-day workshops focused on a single topic. PDI attendees explore subjects that extend their professional arsenal. Sample topics include: directing musicals, curriculum mapping, teaching acting, and lighting. Continuing Education Units (CEUs) and college credit are available.

For more information on EdTA's Professional Development Institutes and Annual Conference, see the "Educational events" section of EdTA's website.

### ***Additional troupe benefits and services***

**List of additional troupe benefits and services.** See below for details.

- Thespian honors and spirit gear merchandise
- Rush service for merchandise processing
- Royalty adjustments for productions
- EdTA/ITS awards and recognition
- TOTS-EAT community service initiative
- Affiliate professional memberships
- Free troupe recordkeeping supplies

**Thespian honors and spirit gear merchandise.** To signify special achievement, troupe directors may wish to award students with official Thespian honors pins, trophies, graduation items, and more (see "Thespian honor and graduation items and their use" above). Thespians can show their theatre spirit with a variety of items available for purchase such as magnets, buttons, key rings, stickers, etc. A catalog of available items and information about how to order them is sent to all troupe directors each year. All items are available for purchase through the online EdTA Store as well. Thespian apparel and customized banners are available at special member rates through officially licensed vendors. Contact the home office at [members@edta.org](mailto:members@edta.org) for details.

**Rush service for dues and merchandise processing.** While the home office recommends that troupes induct new Thespians throughout the year after each production, many troupes hold a single induction ceremony in the spring. In fact, 85 percent of all inductees and catalog orders are received between April 15 and June 15. We call this time period "rush season." With this in mind, we recommend that troupe directors plan for their inductions well in advance. Normal processing during rush season is two to three weeks. Troupe directors may purchase priority rush service to receive their induction or merchandise materials within five business days after *receipt* of the forms and payment by the home office. Details and fees are on each form. Each transaction requires a separate rush fee for priority service.

Note: Allow extra days for orders submitted by mail. We suggest that rush orders be submitted online or faxed with an official purchase order or credit card information. This is the best way to establish the beginning of the five-day processing and delivery period. The five-day process period does not begin until the roster or order is error-free and paid in full.

**Royalty reductions for productions.** The ITS royalty reduction program permits troupe directors to apply for discounted rates on royalties for upcoming productions through cooperating play publishers. This program is only available when:

1. The school is unable to pay the regular catalog fee because of limited finances.
2. There is a desire on the part of the troupe director to introduce the school and community to better plays that might have higher rates than those traditionally sanctioned by the school.
3. There are unusual circumstances under which the play will be produced.
4. The play is a non-musical. Royalty reductions are not available for musicals because of difficulties publishers face negotiating with multiple creators (author, lyricist, composer, etc.).

5. The play is not published by TAMS-Witmark. This company does not participate in any royalty reduction programs for educational institutions.

To apply, submit a completed application form to the home office. Download the form from EdTA's "Troupe documents" webpage.

Note: One easy source for determining the official title, author, and publisher of a play is online at [www.findaplay.com](http://www.findaplay.com).

Approved applications are forwarded to the publisher noted on the form. The publisher has sole authority to determine whether or not a royalty reduction will be made. If an adjustment is granted, the publisher will contact the troupe director with details. The adjusted fee is payable to the publisher five days before the opening of the play; otherwise the adjustment is no longer available.

**EdTA/ITS awards and recognition.** EdTA offers numerous international-level awards that recognize quality theatre programs, students, educators, and administrators for outstanding achievement in educational theatre. Awards information is sent to troupe directors each fall. Award information and applications are available at [edta.org/awards](http://edta.org/awards).

**EdTA Administrator's Award.** With this award, troupe directors honor exemplary service and support for theatre education by outstanding school district administrators.

**EdTA Outstanding School Award.** EdTA annually acknowledges up to twelve high schools whose theatre programs promote high standards of quality in theatre education.

**EdTA Hall of Fame Award.** Each year EdTA bestows its highest honor on up to four individuals who have devoted more than 20 years of service to the educational theatre field.

**TOTS-EAT community service initiative.** TOTS-EAT is the International Thespian Society's annual nationwide community service initiative to collect food for the hungry. This is the perfect project for students who want to help the less fortunate in their community. Participating troupes may earn ITS community service awards. Details are available at [tots-eat.org](http://tots-eat.org).

**Affiliate professional memberships.** Adults affiliated with an ITS member school are eligible to join their school's troupe director as a members of EdTA for the special rate of \$50 (\$25 off the standard professional dues of \$75). Any number of local troupe co-directors, assistant directors, faculty, administrators, advisers, and active troupe alumni may take advantage of this opportunity.

Affiliate professional members enjoy the same basic benefits as troupe directors, but only the troupe director has official ITS troupe leadership authority. This gives him or her the ability to do such things as sign forms and applications, award ITS points, induct students into ITS, order and award Thespian honor items, access troupe account information, etc.

The troupe director must verify affiliation for all applicants. The renewal notices for affiliate professional members are sent to the troupe director's attention at the school address. He or she should forward such notices to their affiliate members to ensure prompt renewal. If individuals are no longer affiliated with the school, the troupe director should notify the home office. Unaffiliated individuals may become professional members at the standard professional rate of \$75.

**Free troupe recordkeeping supplies.** The home office stocks an array of supplies specifically designed to assist troupe directors in organizing and managing their troupes. Thespian point record sheets, induction invitations, and other items for maintaining troupe activities are available at no charge to active troupes. The full list is in the *Thespian Honors and Spirit Catalog* and on the “Thespian troupe documents” page of the EdTA website.

### ***EdTA and ITS logos***

We encourage our members to promote their affiliation with EdTA and ITS. You may use the black and white versions of the logos below in theatre programs and on promotional flyers. Please note that these logos are registered service marks of the Association. You may not modify their design without written permission from the EdTA/ITS home office (you may re-size logos if necessary), and you may use them only in the context of proclaiming your school’s membership in EdTA and/or ITS. You may not use these logos in any way that implies that the EdTA/ITS chapter or international organizations are directly responsible for your troupe’s activities or governance, financial or otherwise. For detailed information about the use of EdTA/ITS logos, including color options, editing/distorting, and use/placement, please contact EdTA’s marketing department at the home office.



Honoring excellence in school theatre



ESTABLISHED 1929

**THE INTERNATIONAL  
THESPIAN SOCIETY**

A division of the Educational Theatre Association



## **Appendix 1: Ideas and advice for troupe directors**

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This appendix, while not part of the official *Thespian Troupe Handbook*, offers valuable suggestions from veteran troupe directors. Troupes can find additional advice on specific subjects through the online EdTA discussion board. Often, the EdTA home office staff can help connect you with other troupe directors who have had experience with particular activities that you are considering for your troupe.

Note: Suggestions provided below may require special arrangements with publishers. **Please respect copyright laws and ensure that any performances have the appropriate performance license and meet the royalty payment requirements of the publishing company.**

### ***Making the most of available help***

Keep an index card (or computer) file that lists the talents and services available in the student body, faculty, and community, filed under specific categories for quick reference. Categories might include artists, antique collectors, bakers, carpenters, dancers, hairdressers, lighting technicians, lumber companies, musicians, plumbers, photographers, etc. The more categories you are able to cover, the more useful it will be to your troupe. One troupe member (often the clerk/scribe) should be responsible for the maintenance of the file so that it will always be up to date.

Establish a partnership with the local community or professional theatres—many schools have been adopted by their local theatre, opening the way for professional assistance, facility tours, inexpensive or free attendance at productions, loans of sets or equipment, and use of rehearsal space.

Delegate responsibilities to your troupe officers—that's why they're there. A flexible yet far-reaching calendar will help you and your troupe officers plan for heavy work periods.

Sign work contracts with your theatre students, spelling out your expectations about attending rehearsals, working tech, participating in classes, etc. Don't forget to include what they can expect of you!

Establish a parent booster group. Parents are great resources to connections in the community, possible publicity angles, and fundraising opportunities. This is a great way to encourage parental involvement in your program and to let parents see the value of theatre arts education.

### ***Educational activities***

Arrange with the local college or university and/or community or professional theatre to attend a final dress rehearsal and meet-the-cast session. Many groups are willing to extend this service free of charge.

Offer lectures and discussions related to your current productions. Many schools organize theatre-related field trips, both locally and to national theatre centers such as New York City or Los Angeles.

Arrange for interested students to serve short internships, usher, or otherwise assist at local middle school, professional, and community theatres.

Many troupes will join with others in their area to offer a summer theatre camp for younger students or leadership retreat for Thespians.



### ***Touring and outreach programs***

Some troupes have developed a talent corps on which they maintain an index file to supply various types of talent—on call—to community organizations. The officers easily call upon the talents of all members of the troupe when entertainment is requested. Skits and readings must be kept ready to avoid a last-minute scramble for an act. A touring group can be a great community service or source of extra funds, and students will find having an act ready for immediate use a valuable experience.

Troupes have toured children's theatre productions, readers theatre performance groups, storytellers, promotional excerpts of productions, an improvisation group focusing on teen-related themes, one-act plays, puppet shows (about any number of issues and themes), and a myriad of other performances to a vast array of sites, including local arts festivals, other high schools, middle schools, elementary schools, state prisons, public libraries, malls, homeless shelters, senior citizen homes, hospitals, and museum open houses.

### ***Promoting your program***

There are many ways to publicize the theatre activities at your school. Some ideas from our members:

- Send two-for-one coupons for tickets to a community mailing list (check with your local chamber of commerce).
- Perform improvisations or short plays during school lunch periods.
- Have feeder schools participate in regular productions and talent shows.
- Perform excerpts of productions for students in the grade about to enter your program, to recruit for next year's classes and productions.
- Occasionally cast school faculty or administrators in your productions, when appropriate.
- Bus students in from other schools to see shows.
- Hold special open dress rehearsals for other student or community groups.
- Start a mentor program, pairing a high school theatre student with an interested middle school student.
- Hold a playwriting contest for elementary or middle school students, and have winning scripts directed and produced by the high school Thespian troupe.
- March in your community parades.
- Perform at local community festivals.
- Research opportunities to appear on local or public access television programs in order to promote your troupe's activities.
- Send press releases to local papers and public service announcements to local radio stations.

### ***Performance and fundraising ideas***

Troupes have reported success with many variations of dinner theatre. Dinners range from the very informal (a box lunch) to more formal affairs. The meal might be served in the same room as the performance or in a separate dining room—one troupe reports success with a dinner theatre evening on a train. The production could be a collection of skits that have been used earlier in the year, or it may be a talent show, one-act, or full-length production. Troupes have produced dinner theatre evenings with student-written plays as well, while other troupes hold annual murder-mystery dinners to raise funds.

Productions can raise funds in ways other than ticket sales. Many schools sell program advertisements to local businesses/family members. Program ads may not always generate extra revenue, but they allow you to have professional-looking programs printed at no cost to you. Some schools have patron programs that generate upfront money for the program. Patron levels are established (as well as benefits for these levels of giving) and patron names are listed in each program. Anyone working on a production loves to receive notes of congratulations or flowers after the show. Some schools sell flowers, candy,

theatre-related merchandise, or show-grams to allow parents, friends, and other supporters to congratulate the hard work of actors, technicians, musicians, and other production staff members.

Many troupes have raised funds by collaborating with local businesses. You can approach restaurants to allow your students to be servers for the evening. Any tips that are made are kept by the troupe. This type of fundraiser is beneficial for both sides. It cuts costs for the restaurant (fewer wait staff are needed) and brings them business. It allows the troupe to publicize its activities (and reach some new potential audience members in the community) and make money. Many businesses will donate materials in exchange for advertising space in your program. Some will sponsor major purchases. One program had to use folding chairs for their performances and the audiences found them uncomfortable. A local business donated cushions for the chairs that were imprinted with their company logo and location.

Other ideas include special events with a theatrical flair, such as a Halloween haunted house, or a carnival that makes use of the theatre department costumes. Or find a theme or a twist in any production that might lend itself to a publicity activity or fundraising event.

The EdTA Fundraising Toolbox is designed to give you some fresh fundraising ideas, arm you with some basic rules of fundraising, and help you bring in more money with less work. See the professional resources section of the website.

### ***Community service***

Many troupes actively support important causes in their communities. Some examples:

The International Thespian Society's annual canned food drive, Trick or Treat so Kids Can Eat<sup>sm</sup> (TOTS-EAT<sup>sm</sup>), is the perfect combination of a great community service project and a wonderful public relations opportunity. Full details, including ITS community service awards, are at the TOTS-EAT website, [tots-eat.org](http://tots-eat.org).

Stage a drunk-driving accident in cooperation with the rescue squad and police and fire departments for Prom Promise week; perhaps have the Grim Reaper visit during lunch. Have your troupe members put their acting skills to use serving as victims for emergency medical service disaster drills.

Troupes do volunteer work for local theatres; a Junior Thespian troupe in Florida helped rebuild their community's professional theatre after a hurricane. Others reached out from across the country to help the victims of Hurricane Katrina.

Many troupes use some of their funds to help lower-income students attend theatre productions and other cultural events. Others host holiday parties for disadvantaged or physically challenged children, or the elderly. A number of troupes offer theatre workshops for other student groups in their communities.

Productions themselves can serve the community. Troupes tour productions dealing with issues such as AIDS, violence, safety, and drug and alcohol abuse. Still others donate proceeds from a performance to a local charity.

Technical theatre skills can be a valuable community service as well. Troupes report providing services for their local arts festivals, the Chamber of Commerce follies, variety show fundraisers for community charities, and assisting other school organizations such as the PTA with assembly activities.

## ***Social activities***

Most troupes offer social activities for their members, both locally and in cooperation with other troupes. Here are some ideas:

- Attend the induction ceremony at a neighboring school.
- Assist with the induction ceremony at the middle school that feeds into your high school.
- Induction ceremony activities at your school.
- Host get-togethers with other troupes—karaoke, dances, theatre sports day, exchange meetings.
- Host reunions with Thespian alumni.
- Throw cast parties.
- Share transportation with other troupes to chapter conferences or the International Thespian Festival.
- Sponsor troupes from smaller schools to attend chapter conferences.
- Team up with a neighbor school for the Trick or Treat so Kids Can Eat campaign, then celebrate your efforts with a pizza party.

## **Appendix 2: Paying by purchase order and collection procedures**

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Many schools prefer to arrange payment by purchase order (PO), which is a request for short-term credit that allows the school to pre-authorize payments requisitioned by their employees. For most transactions, EdTA/ITS will accept a copy of an official school purchase order complete with a PO number and an administrator's signature—a PO number alone will not suffice. Payment terms are net 30 days. Shortly after processing, EdTA mails an invoice for the amount of the PO to the troupe director. The troupe director must forward invoices to the individual or department responsible for arranging payment to ensure the balance on the troupe's account is paid in a timely manner. For questions regarding outstanding balances, the troupe director should contact the member service center at the home office.

Late payment will result in collection efforts that include:

1. Credit hold. EdTA will decline purchase orders from the school and will not extend credit of any kind until *six months after* payment has been received in full. While on credit hold, the troupe must pay in full by check, money order, or credit card.
2. Contacting the school administration. If EdTA can't establish effective collection communication with the troupe director, the home office will contact the business office, principal, and the superintendent at later stages of the collection process to arrange for payment.
3. Suspension of active status. In addition to a credit hold, the member benefits of the troupe and its troupe director will be suspended until payment is received in full.
4. Withdrawal of active status. In addition to a credit hold, the suspended troupe will be withdrawn from active status. To return to active status, the troupe director must pay the outstanding balance in full as well as a troupe reinstatement fee.
5. Permanent credit hold. EdTA may decline purchase orders from schools with a history of serious collection problems. Troupes on permanent credit hold must pay in full by check, money order, or credit card.

For questions regarding collection efforts, troupe directors should contact the accounts receivable coordinator at the home office.

## **Appendix 3: Thespian troupe documents**

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Below is a list of the most frequently used Thespian membership forms; click on the links to go to the PDF documents on the EdTA website.

High school Thespian troupe membership application (to charter a new high school Thespian troupe)

High school Thespian roster form (to induct new Thespians)

High school membership reinstatement form (to reinstate a troupe whose membership has lapsed)

High school Thespian credentials replacement order (to replace lost or damaged Thespian cards or certificates)

High school Thespian transfer student membership form (for students transferring their membership from one Thespian troupe to another)

Junior Thespian troupe membership application (to charter a new Junior Thespian troupe)

Junior Thespian roster form (to induct new Junior Thespians)

Junior Thespian membership reinstatement form (to reinstate a Junior Thespian troupe whose membership has lapsed)

Junior Thespian credentials replacement order (to replace lost or damaged Junior Thespian cards or certificates)

Junior Thespian transfer student membership form (for students transferring their membership from one Junior Thespian troupe to another)

Honorary Thespian membership roster form (to recognize those adults who, by their service to Thespians, deserve to be inducted as honorary Thespians in a troupe)

Change of troupe director/troupe information update sheet (use when troupe director changes or to update troupe information)

Application for royalty adjustment (to apply for reduced royalties for future productions)

Ceremonies (to celebrate a new troupe charter and the induction of student members)

High school Thespian point record sheet (use this sheet to record students' points as they participate in theatre activities to determine Thespian induction and honor Thespian status)

High school Thespian point system (official point system for determining Thespian induction and honor Thespian status)

Junior Thespian point record sheet (use this sheet to record students' points as they participate in theatre activities to determine Junior Thespian induction status)

Junior Thespian point system (official point system for use in determining Junior Thespian induction status)

Troupe constitution template (formal codification of your troupe's rules and regulations)

High School Thespian Troupe Handbook

Junior Thespian Troupe Handbook

EdTA affiliate professional membership application

Order form for Thespian honors, spirit, and resources

Order form for awards, trophies, and plaques

Order form for ITS banner (file size: 1.4MB)

EdTA code of professional standards  
EdTA code of regulations (formerly known as the EdTA constitution)  
EdTA conflicts of interest policy  
EdTA membership policy  
EdTA chapter governance policy  
2008–2009 EdTA governing board policy manual

EdTA membership FAQs, PDF version