



Massachusetts Middle School Drama Festival



A Distinguished Tradition

The first Middle School Drama festival was held in the spring of 1995 at the Belmonte Middle School in Saugus, Massachusetts. John Gould, drama coach at Belmonte, had wanted to institute a drama festival so students from across the state could share their productions with children from other schools. The festival started with a theatre workshop for all students, followed by a monologue showcase and concluding with performances by participating schools. For the first few years, the festival was held after school, but as interest grew, the festival was moved to Saturdays to allow for more participants. The Massachusetts Middle School Drama Festival, Inc. was formed to assist in the preparation and planning of the yearly event. Having expanded to approximately 18 shows per festival, the Board knew that the time had come to expand to include more festival sites and more opportunities for middle school programs and teachers. During the 1998-1999 school year, the Massachusetts Middle School Drama Festival, Inc. and the Massachusetts High School Drama Guild, Inc. merged. With this merger, the middle school division aligned more with the high school festival, offered workshops for middle school teachers and students and has begun the process of instituting a networking resource for directors.

Organization of Festival

The Festival is organized at multiple sites in the spring. Individual excellence is recognized with the selection of a Festival All-Star Company at each site, with both technical and acting awards presented to participating students. In addition, adjudicators hand out prestigious awards to the productions at the conclusion of the festival.

Overview of Festival Rules

- To enter the Festival, a school must be a member of the Massachusetts Educational Theater Guild, with membership dues paid in full prior to the annual directors' meeting in March.
- **All festival directors must attend the MANDATORY organizational meeting in March at your performance site. At that time, site meetings will take place and you will make arrangements for a technical rehearsal at your assigned site.**
- For the purpose of this festival, Middle School refers to grades five (5) through nine (9), but you may only use students from your own school.
- A play selected for entry must be approved by the participating school's principal as indicated by his or her signature on the "*Drama Festival Entry Form*."
- A school is responsible for obtaining permission from the publisher or author for the performance of its entry and for paying all applicable royalty fees. Permission to perform a cutting of a longer work or to combine two or more works under a banner title must also be obtained from the publisher(s). Proof of permission to perform and payment of royalty must be submitted by or at the Directors' Meeting in March, but no later than two weeks prior to the festival date.
- No play may exceed 40 minutes.
- A musical or cutting from a musical is not permitted unless the publisher grants specific written permission for the play to be performed without the sung material. Scene-change music, incidental music, background music, and songs that occur in the text of a non-musical play are permitted as long as they are no longer than 30 seconds in length. Dance is permitted if it occurs in the text of a

non-musical play. Interpretive movement, with or without music, is also permitted if it occurs in the text of a non-musical play. In any case, all music and/or dance must have prior approval from the Middle School Council President. Directors will fill out a use-of-music request form at the Site Meeting in March.

- Original plays are permitted.
- Plays may be student directed. In this case, a staff member or designated adult must accompany the student director to the Directors' Meeting and festival, and must act in a supervisory capacity.
- Each school will be given five (5) minutes to set up and five (5) minutes to strike their set.
- All technical elements, including set, lighting/sound design, and special effects, must be able to be accommodated by the existing physical and technical capabilities of the host schools. Since host schools vary greatly in their production resources, directors are strongly advised to keep the technical elements of their productions **simple and flexible**. (*This will be discussed in detail at the Site Meeting in March.*)
- The Host Stage Manager will be in charge of backstage supervision and safety* Backstage supervision by an adult from a performing school is encouraged. This may or may not be the director. **An adult supervisor from a participating school may NOT setup or strike the set or participate in the production. The adult may act in a supervisory capacity only.** In addition, students are encouraged to run the lights and sound for each production. There is an opportunity to learn the host school's system at the tech rehearsal. Alternately, the host school will provide a technician to run the system. If so, directors must provide the host technician with a script, lighting and sound cues at the tech rehearsal. (**Safety of students performing is paramount to the Guild. If elements of the set, use of the set, or blocking seem to pose a physical hazard to the students, then the Guild reserves the right to require modifications to be made before performing, and the on-site supervisor has the right to make the decision. Please share any concerns regarding this rule at the site meeting.*)
- School may use whatever set pieces are necessary for their production provided they fit through a standard single doorway. No pre-assembly of set materials is permitted in the wings prior to the beginning of the 5 minute set-up
- Microphone usage is not allowed onstage to amplify voices in any way. Offstage microphones are permitted for sound effects, voice overs, etc.
- Attendance of the director, cast and crew is required at all performances except the one immediately preceding their own.
- Schools must abide by the host school's safety and fire codes.

Festival Entry Deadline

The "Drama Festival Entry Form" must be submitted online by the deadline in January. Any entry submitted after this date will be subject to a \$50.00 late fee. The Guild reserves the right to reject entries for late submission or non-payment of membership dues after the January deadline.

Membership and Festival Applications may be found online.