

# **NEW ENGLAND YOUTH THEATRE STUDENT/PARENT HANDBOOK 2010**

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## **Mission Statement**

New England Youth Theatre provides professional training and production experience in theatre arts to young people of all abilities by engaging their

intellects, bodies, and imaginations in the creative endeavor.

## **Our vision**

“Teach Respect, Always Help, Never Hurt”

The New England Youth Theatre is founded on the passionate belief that young people can run their own theatre with the guidance of theatre professionals. We strive to create an atmosphere of harmony and respect where children and adults can work together as equal creative spirits, empowering initiative, positive mental attitude, kindness and teamwork. We explore our creativity through a wide variety of dramatic mediums, exposing students to every aspect of theatre production. From acting to advertising, choreography to lighting, directing to designing, we'll cut capers on stage as we cut the platform legs that support it! And always, we'll have fun.

## **NEYT philosophy**

NEYT has always promoted a culture of inclusion. We are like a family that is friendly to all ages and all kinds of people. This means that everyone is welcome. It means that all students mix together without fear of being teased, scolded or bullied. Children at NEYT are free to be their true selves and are appreciated for that. All NEYT students are asked to bring their “best selves” to the theater. We do our best to practice tolerance, patience, positive mental attitude, personal initiative, honesty, trustworthiness and consideration for the needs of others.

As we work together in harmony at NEYT, we each work to raise our own personal character to the highest level possible. People at NEYT help each other to get over and through things in their lives that are hard or hurtful. We have a mentorship program whereby older students function as big brothers and big sisters to the younger students, sharing with them skills and feelings of confidence and worthiness. At NEYT we say “if it isn't fun for everyone, we won't do it!” We help to keep each other safe and ready to create great theater. We never force anyone to do anything; every student at NEYT is encouraged to learn in his or her own way.

The NEYT community is created by the individuals involved in each class, production or project. Through working together, playing together, listening to each other and wrestling with interpersonal conflicts, a sense of community builds slowly and steadily over the course of the time together. It takes work and commitment and the result is remarkable! Community is paramount; relationships that exclude others, or displays of affection that make others uncomfortable, are not appropriate. Moreover, they limit the individual's participation in the community.

At NEYT, alcohol, drugs, tobacco and violence have no place. This policy is absolute. If a student uses or has possession of alcohol, drugs or unauthorized

weapons while at the theater, they will be asked to leave immediately, their parents will be informed and no tuition refunds will be made.

If someone at our theater engages in risky or destructive behavior, the staff or students will ask them to stop. If you choose to join NEYT, you also agree to the implicit contract that you will never bring illegal substances to NEYT. Participation in an activity or action which is against the law or which places a person or our theater in danger will result in an immediate discussion between staff, parents and the student. NEYT reserves the right to ask a student to leave on disciplinary grounds. A continuous effort is made to foster respect and responsibility in every one, yet if a student persists in anti-social activities and/or behaviors he/she will be liable for disciplinary action as serious as suspension or expulsion from the theatre and its programs.

If you have concerns to share or misconducts to discuss, your name will not be revealed to the people you are speaking about; you can always be honest with NEYT faculty and staff because what you say to them will be kept completely confidential. Your name will not be revealed to the people you are speaking about. By speaking out about dangerous or unacceptable behavior you are helping to foster and maintain a culture at NEYT that is creative and safe and free for everyone. You are always free to discuss with NEYT Staff or Faculty any behavior that makes you uncomfortable or that feels inappropriate to you. We seek to understand the individuals involved, to understand the truth about, and causes of, the behavior that is taking place. If necessary, we seek professional help for students who are at risk.

The NEYT Staff and Faculty are prepared to help solve many kinds of issues. If a student or family member has a problem or grievance to discuss, we encourage approaching the individual(s) involved first. If that is unsuccessful or unsatisfactory, then any staff or faculty member is available to help you find more effective mediation. We retain certain professionals for outside assistance in such matters.

At NEYT we are all roommates who work and play together in the same space. Therefore, we will be good stewards of our theater space. We will treat with respect and care all costumes, props, scripts, stage machinery, booth technology, theater furniture, make-up, tools and materials. We put things back where they belong or where we found them. We go the extra mile to keep all parts of our theater and its equipment in good working order. We do not touch things that are in use by, or for the use of, others, especially props, costumes, sound and lighting.

We are happy to help clean our theater, to do chores and be part of work parties. The excellent physical condition of our theater tells everyone that it is a very important and special place for us where we do our creative, artistic work. Our theater, NEYT, is, in fact, a reflection of ourselves.

## **NEYT Pedagogy**

We offer three levels of instruction - foundations, intermediate theatre studies and advanced theatre studies. In each of these levels students can sample a wide array of classes and instructors while experiencing a variety of challenges. Furthermore, to promote depth of study and maturation, all students are required to take at least two classes within a given level and to be of appropriate age before moving on to the next level. It is vitally important to us that kids share not only the joy and thrill of performance but also the tremendous satisfaction of skill development, knowledge acquisition, fully supported risk-taking and wonderful failure that can happen in the classroom.

At NEYT there are classes for toddlers, youngsters, adults, home schoolers, and differently-abled students of all ages. It is our most ardent ambition that all those who devote their time, effort and passion to this place - be they student, staff, faculty or parent - feel greatly appreciated, satisfied and changed.

### **The casting process for directors**

Another step in the NEYT evolution has been to articulate how we select and implement the shows we do and how we go about casting them. We choose shows for a variety of reasons such as audience interest, director enthusiasm, actor training and seasonal variety. The most essential motivation, however, is often student need. When a student has participated in many classes and shows and demonstrated a level of maturity and excellence, it is our duty to find projects that help them grow; our goal is to challenge all of our actors, from novice to veteran. Every student who maintains an enthusiastic commitment to personal growth as a performer will have his or her chance to shine here at NEYT.

That said, when casting we do our best to balance the needs of individuals against the needs of the company and the play itself. Primarily, we aim to create the most enjoyable and educational experience for all students. Of course, a show is, by nature, a product-oriented venture; the enjoyment of the audience is also important, as is the feeling of success to the cast itself. So that, naturally, has some bearing on casting. Ultimately, casting decisions are artistic; we make them and we make them carefully.

It usually happens like this:

1. At faculty and/or staff meetings discussions arise regarding plays, playwrights, or genres we should consider OR skills sets that need to be developed OR groups of students that are ready for a certain challenge OR individual students who need to be stretched.
2. Shows are chosen to address these articulated needs.
3. Auditions are held and attended by the director AND other faculty, who observe so that they might contribute to the casting decisions AND so that they might stay connected with the growth of all NEYT actors. Often present are members of the show's production team such as asst. director and stage manager. They, too, contribute to the casting discussions.
4. After auditions, the attending adults gather for a lengthy casting discussion during which many topics come up besides just the needs of each child and the

needs of the show. Other items include: actor's age, actor's commitment to and progress in NEYT classes, actor's ability to concentrate, prepare and listen, actor's behavior in other shows and classes. This discussion continues, with much animated and caring debate, until we arrive at our decisions confidently and with mutual support.

However a child is cast, he or she will be stretched and engaged. No part is without challenge; no role is unimportant to the overall success of the production. Parents, too, are vitally important in supporting children in this process where feelings of disappointment sometimes arise. With this in mind, please help us model for your children a positive attitude towards casting - one that allows for both humility and buoyancy. Sometimes a handful of shows might pass without a leading role, but remember to step back and look at the big picture of your child's involvement with NEYT. Developing skills and building confidence takes time. So, have patience and enjoy the ride.

## **Professional Level Support**

### **Actors:**

There are individuals who demonstrate unusual commitment through their actions; they prepare exhaustively, they take on meaningful responsibilities, they exhibit passionate enthusiasm, they demonstrate a great facility for handling themselves in front of an audience and they accrue a long and consistent involvement with NEYT. At some point, at or around the high school age, these adolescents might begin thinking about a life in the theatre in earnest. Usually in concurrence, the faculty and staff may notice the exceptional ability, potential and work ethic of such students and discuss how best to nurture this. Often, the families of these students approach the staff for guidance and advice on this same topic. Thus, it is a three-fold process that occurs as a result of the following cues: student desire, faculty recognition and family support.

After this, the path of these students begins to take some sharper turns. He or she will be asked to take on greater responsibilities and bigger challenges (onstage and off) while meeting with higher and more discerning expectations. Particular roles or shows might be considered in light of that student's strong need for growth in particular areas. Certain opportunities may become available to students of this category, such as our May Award Scholarship for continued professional study, and our faculty coaching for college/conservatory auditions.

### **Technical theatre artists:**

These same indicators and process apply to students working in the technical theatre field. For those individuals who illustrate superlative interest, skill, and responsibility we aim to provide ongoing challenges in lights, costume, sound and set. There will be opportunities for apprenticeship, design & implementation of productions, skill-building workshops and running of shows. Those capable of handling the booth tasks alone may be brought in to work various events – with

occasional paid work as hired technicians when renting artists need technical support.

## **Mentorship Program**

Mentors are students who have shown themselves to be leaders in the NEYT community and have demonstrated an understanding of the NEYT philosophy.

If you wish to become a mentor you should first speak with Sandy Klein, mentor advisor. Keep in mind that to apply for mentorship you must be at least 13 years old, have already contributed 10 hours of volunteer work at the theater, and been in at least 2 NEYT stage productions and 2 classes. After applying, you must accrue 20 hours of volunteer work before submitting a written proposal. The proposal should explain why you wish to become a mentor, and what you believe you can bring of value to younger students and to the theater in general. The request will then be reviewed by the current mentor group. Acceptance into the mentor group will be based on the example you have set in classes and in previous productions.

Mentors meet monthly to talk and learn about the goals and concerns of the theater and about how they are putting their mentorship into practice.

## **NEYT Mentorship Mission Statement**

The Mentorship Program of the New England Youth Theatre was created for the improvement of the theater environment of the community at large. It is our goal to stand as role models and leaders to those around us wherever we may be, and to provide for our peers both the resources and strength for independence and the reason and want for interconnectedness and familiarity.

Because it is our aim to not only lead responsibly but also to live and work responsibly in our own lives, our organization is run by its members and not controlled or managed by those outside of the program. We strive to help those in need of emotional support or financial or material aid. It is essential to have both a means of guiding one another and the means for sustaining and providing the foundation for a thriving community.

The Mentors at the NEYT seek to promote social responsibility, independence, and learning through leadership and exemplary guidance.

## **Financial Aid**

We have never turned a child away for lack of funds. Our theatre is a non-profit organization and, as with many organizations of a philanthropic nature, we rely heavily on donations and grants to cover our operating expenses. We also rely on parent volunteers to keep our operating costs as low as possible. Proceeds

from refreshment sales and specific donations from individuals are the sources of our financial aid funds. In addition, a separate “Angels in the Wings” fund has been created to address ongoing and increasing need for assistance.

We will do our utmost to help all families with critical financial need. To apply for financial aid, contact Michelle Meima in the NEYT office at [michelle@neyt.org](mailto:michelle@neyt.org), or call her at 246-6398 ext.101 and ask for the financial aid form. The form is simple and easy to fill out, though it *must* be returned before the given deadlines. We will review your completed form and be in touch with you.

## **Front of House /Parent Responsibilities**

Parent volunteers have an integral role at NEYT, as they are the ones selling tickets and processing reservations at the box office as well as baking and selling refreshments at the concession stand. The money from the sale of cookies, floats, sundaes, drinks and other snacks goes to support the financial aid fund. Like the students, parents can form a bond through doing the work of the theatre and these relationships make our community stronger.

**Selling Tickets and Refreshments:** NEYT’s Front of House Managers, Bob and Sarah Glennon, are responsible for ticket and refreshment sales and can answer your questions about volunteering for Front of House duties. An explanatory e-mail will be sent to you during the beginning weeks of rehearsal for a show, and a sign-up sheet for baking and ticket selling will be posted in the lobby for the remainder of the rehearsal period. Sign up as soon as you can for both responsibilities. Two people are necessary to work in the box office, and two behind the counter selling refreshments before a show. Depending on the size of the cast and the length of the run, you might work more than one shift. You may be asked to fill in extra shifts, or do more baking.

Parent Front of House volunteers should arrive one hour before show time, prepared to sell tickets and refreshments. Refreshments are also sold during intermission and parents stay for clean up afterwards. The Front of House manager will orient new parents and there will always be one experienced parent in each group. Many parents enjoy this job working together and contributing to the healthy spirit of their children’s theatre. Theatre seats are reserved each show for the parent volunteers. This is one way we can tell you how much we appreciate your help.

**Baking:** Baked goods must be made large enough to be sold for a dollar. Not everyone is an expert baker so here are some suggestions:

**Cookies:** Making big cookies (approximately 4 to 5 inches wide) is challenging and not every recipe lends itself to that size. The following Chocolate Chip Oatmeal recipe is one that has been tested and adapted for this large size. Some molasses cookie recipes are good too.

## Oatmeal Chocolate Chip Cookies

- Mix 2 cups butter  
2 cups sugar  
2 cups brown sugar (an electric mixer helps)
- Add 4 eggs  
2 t. vanilla
- Add 2 1/2 cups rolled oats ground  
(in a blender or food processor)  
2 1/2 cups rolled oats not ground
- Combine  
4 cups flour  
1t. salt  
2 t. baking powder  
2 t. baking soda  
12 oz. chocolate chips then add to above

To make big cookies scoop a large ball with an ice cream scoop, mounding well, then flatten quite a bit on the cookie sheet. They will spread some so leave room in between.

Bake on ungreased cookie sheets at 375\* for about 15 minutes. When they are brown on the bottom they are done. Let them cool a few minutes before moving to a cooling rack. Cool before putting in a container. This is a big recipe, but they freeze well. Makes around 30 large cookies. We usually make a few small ones to keep. If you do, cook those less time: 8 to 10 minutes. Good luck. Brownies are popular with many people. They can be home baked, of course, but mixes are acceptable as are buying pre-made brownies from the grocery store or elsewhere.

Other: If you have other ideas, that you are unsure of, check with the Front of House Manager who is familiar with what sells well.

Ushering: Two ushers are needed for every show to hand out the playbill and take tickets. Check with the Front of House Manager if your cast member has a sibling who would like to help with this job. Ushers can have a seat if the house is not full or sit on the floor to see the show for free if all seats are taken.

Photography at NEYT: There are often photographs, slide shows, posters or videotapes made for a production that are for sale. Watch for e-mails and sign-up sheets if you are interested in these. These visuals are a great way for actors to

view their own work and sometimes get valuable feedback, as well as, of course, bringing back fond memories for years to come.

Parking: Please make sure to park all vehicles in the big designated lot.

Handicapped spots need to be kept free at all times as does the fire lane all the way from the street up to the left side of the building. In addition, cars should not block the walkway to the entrance; this is also necessary for handicapped use.

Promote your business and help NEYT!

\* Sponsor one of our popular shows:  
benefits include advertising,  
media exposure and free tickets!

\* Buy an ad in our annual program book  
and thousands of people will know  
of your business's support.

Please contact Jess Callahan for more information:  
802-380-5090 / jcallahan.84@gmail.com

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