



Secondary Festival Guidelines

Please refer to the Secondary Division section of the MTA Handbook for complete rules, guidelines, code of conduct, and other important information for the Secondary Festival.

Eligibility

1. A Traditional High School will be defined as a single school recognized within a school district and consisting of secondary students.*
2. Secondary students will be defined as those students attending a Traditional High School and enrolled in grades 9-12.*
3. Traditional High Schools will be eligible for all awards, as well as the right to advance.*
4. Non-school groups will include all community-based programs with students in grades 9-12 or the equivalent.*
5. Non-school groups may include homeschool students as well as students enrolled in a traditional high school, charter, or magnet school.*
6. Any non-school group or combined school group will be placed on a waiting list and granted entry into a regional festival based on registration numbers.*
7. Non-school groups will be notified of their admission into the festival following the close of the festival registration window.*
8. Non-school groups will be eligible to compete in the regional festivals and may earn all awards EXCEPT the Distinguished Play Award.*
9. Non-school groups are not eligible to advance to the MTA State Festival.*

10. A non-school group may not take a slot in a regional festival from a school group that is eligible to advance to the MTA State Festival.*
11. A student may only compete in one show at a regional festival. (e.g. The same high school student may not participate in a show with their school and a show with a non-school group.)*
12. The regional festival adjudicators will treat a non-school group the same as all other entrants in the regional festival by providing educational, critical feedback in the 15-minute response block and by providing the group's director with written feedback at the close of the festival.*
13. Homeschool student groups are those community-based programs that ONLY include homeschool students.
14. No students enrolled in a traditional high school may participate in this group or it will be classified as a non-school student group.
15. Homeschool groups will be eligible to advance to MTA State Festival (as long as they qualify as a homeschool group).
16. Homeschool groups will be eligible for ALL awards.
17. Non-Traditional schools will be eligible to participate in Regional and State MTA Festivals
 - a. Example: Adept School
 - b. Non-Traditional schools will be eligible for all awards and benefits of a traditional high school
18. While no one on the committee, the Board, or the Host sites want to limit the number of productions at the regional festival, the festival capacity (in normal years) is 17 participating schools.
19. The first 17 entries the festival coordinator receives following the opening of festival registration will be accepted.
20. Schools that meet the registration deadline but exceed the festival capacity will be placed on a waiting list and notified in the event a school withdraws.
21. The order of performance will be randomly generated immediately following the deadline date.
22. Regional festival coordinators will communicate performance order to the participating schools as soon as possible.
23. Performance order will not be based on the order the packets are received by the Host site.

24. Schools with extenuating circumstances (such as administrative mandates due to state testing, etc.) must communicate their special needs with the respective regional festival coordinator.*
 25. The MTA Board adopts a “one show per festival rule” which means that a theatre group cannot enter a Secondary show in Regional Festival and also enter that production in the Community Theatre Festival, Theatre for Youth Festival, or any other festival.*
 26. As with any production of a copyrighted work, the producing organization will contract with the copyright/royalty holders to obtain written permission to perform the play. A copy of permission will be required prior to performing.
 27. If a production must be edited to conform to festival production length requirements, obtain written permission from the publisher/royalty agent to perform in the festival. A copy of permission will also be required prior to performing.
 28. If your production uses copyrighted music as part of the production, obtain written permission from the copyright holder in order to use their music. A copy of permission will also be required prior to performing.
- *Items 1-3 approved by the MTA Officers in September 2013.*
 - *Item 4 approved by the board on June 7, 2012 and revised on July 11, 2020.*
 - *Items 5-8 approved by the Executive Committee in August 2008.*
 - *Items 9-12 approved by the MTA Board of Directors on July 24, 2010.*
 - *Item 24 approved by the MTA Board of Directors on July 24, 2010.*

General Rules and Guidelines

1. Schools will be assigned specific load-in times and held responsible for adhering to the festival schedule.
2. Each school will have five (5) minutes to load in from their truck/vehicle to the designated loading area and will have ten (10) minutes to move from the loading area to their 10x10 box.
3. Schools exceeding their allotted load-in time will have two (2) points automatically deducted from their final production score.
4. MTA and regional festival hosts will return both the written evaluation forms and the score sheets from the adjudicators to each participating school.
5. Participating schools will receive these documents following the close of the Awards Ceremony.
6. If participating schools are obligated to leave prior to the Awards Ceremony, the forms will be emailed to the primary contact's email address provided at the time of registration.

7. The MTA Awards Ceremony will announce the third-place production and note that this school will represent Mississippi at SETC in the case that one of the advancing schools is unable to attend.
8. This award will be announced before the announcement of the runner-up and winning production.
9. The third-place production will receive a physical award.
10. Prior to performance, the school may move their items up to the Go Line.
11. The Go Line will be indicated by taped lines on the floor in the back and wings.
12. Schools will preset their items during the adjudication time of the previous performance.
13. The presetting of all items to the Go Line must be done in absolute silence and must not be seen by the audience. We insist on not disturbing the adjudication time. Out of fairness, we require the same procedure for the first show of the block even though there is not an adjudication in progress.
14. Official time begins when the festival director says “go” after the school’s response.
15. The school is allotted 45 minutes to set up from the Go Line, perform, and strike the set to behind the Go Line.
16. A designated representative from each school will be instructed to call “clear” once everything has passed the Go Line.
17. Official time will then be stopped and recorded.
18. A second time will begin from the “clear” call.
19. The school will have 5 minutes to reset their production items back into the 10x10 block and to make their way to the front row of the auditorium for adjudication.
20. Adjudication time will begin after the allotted 5-minute strike time has ended.
21. The reset back to the 10x10 box runs just like it did before. Everything must fit in the 10x10 at the reset.
22. It is important in order for the festival to remain on schedule. Practice your reset to the box so as not to go over the allotted time. Also, practice the preset to the Go Line in order to be as efficient and unobtrusive to the adjudication as possible.
23. The dividing line between the North and South will continue to be I-20. Any school North of I-20 will go to the festival at Mississippi State University and any school South of I-20 will go to the University of Southern Mississippi Festival.

24. Both regional festivals will cap the number of productions at 17. This does not include observing schools.
25. Each regional festival will advance four (4) productions to the State Festival. If a region has fifteen (15) or more participating schools, the adjudicators have the discretion of advancing five (5) productions to the State Festival. This does not include observing schools attending the festival.
26. A drop fee will be added to each regional festival to deter schools from dropping out at the last minute.
 - *Items 1-3 approved by the Board of Directors in June 2020*
 - *Items 4-8 approved by the Board of Directors on July 11, 2015*
 - *Items 9-12 approved by the Board of Directors on July 7, 2012*

Secondary Performance Technical Rules & Procedures

1. **Time.** Shows may not run longer than forty-five minutes. Timing begins when called by host site (and the Go Line is crossed). Timing ends when the set is completely struck: the stage must be completely cleared (and behind the Go- Line).
 - a. The forty-five minute period includes the time for setting up the stage (including any offstage sound or lighting equipment brought to the site by the participating school), lighting and sound checks at Regional Festival, performing the play, and clearing the stage.
 - b. At THE STATE FESTIVAL (MTA) there will be a twenty-minute rehearsal time. All actors and set pieces must remain in the area behind the Go Line designated by the host site until time begins and return to that area before timing will stop.
 - c. Set-up and strike are the sole responsibility of each participating school.
 - d. If any production exceeds the forty-five minute time limit, it cannot receive a Superior Rating or Best Production, advance to the State Festival from a Regional Festival, or advance to SETC from the MTA State Festival. Productions exceeding the time limit are still eligible for all other awards.
 - e. The time clock may be stopped at the discretion of the site coordinator if unforeseen and extenuating circumstances arise during the forty-five minute time allotment.
2. **Running the show.** Only students from the performing school and members of the host site crew are allowed in the sound/light booth or backstage during the run of the show.
 - a. No non-students, directors or teachers may enter the booth, backstage area or communicate with their students in the booth by headset or otherwise during the run of the show except in case of a safety emergency.
 - b. Teachers and technical directors may assist with load-in, and load-out only.
 - c. Please note-not all productions last a full 45 minutes.
3. By entering the festival, each participant assumes responsibility for making arrangements with the author and/or publisher for the right to use the play they are performing and to pay any required royalties.

- a. No MTA-affiliated organization - including the South Regional Festival, the North Regional Festival, The Annual Festival (MTA), nor the host site - shall be held responsible for any unpaid royalties.
 - b. Payment of royalties must be shown prior to performance.
4. **Technical requirements and limitations.** Each participant must provide all technical materials, such as set, hand and furniture properties, makeup, costumes, recorded music and special sound effects.
5. **The organizing committee for the MTA High School Play Festival has determined that some standardization in technical guidelines is desirable.** Therefore, each Regional Festival site, and the State Festival sites will provide the following:
 - a. Multiple isolated lighting areas.
 - b. One 20-amp outlet for use by participants to power their own equipment. Said equipment must be approved prior to the date of the Festival by the host site coordinator and must meet all applicable safety codes and regulations. The host site coordinator reserves the right to refuse to allow the use of a particular piece of equipment. Schools should bring their own extension cords.
 - c. An auxiliary cable for running sound through the facility's sound system from a participant's computer or sound device.
 - i. Festival participants must provide their own computer or sound devices.
 - ii. Schools with questions about site-specific sound capabilities should direct them to the appropriate festival coordinator.
 - d. Light effects and follow spots:
 - i. Simple area lighting is provided; special lighting effects are allowed within the limitations of the host site.
 - ii. Lighting needs other than those listed here must be approved by the site coordinator in advance (with a minimum of two weeks' notice), and any such equipment must be supplied by the participant.
 - iii. The placement and removal of additional lighting equipment must be included in the allotted time.
 - iv. One follow-spot may be provided at the local host site coordinator's option.
 - v. The participating school must provide the operator. Some technical assistance may be provided by the host site to show how things work, but the host facility will not provide anyone to run the follow spot for a show. The host site coordinator will notify performing groups of whether this option is available.
 - e. **There will be a designated holding space where each participating school will load in and strike to as part of your time.** Your local host site coordinator will provide detailed technical specifications for their facility well in advance of the Festival.
6. **Safety.** Participants must adhere to all state, federal, county, and/or city fire codes. Absolutely no fire, pyrotechnics, combustibles or other unreasonably dangerous matter may be brought into the host facility or used in the production. Violation of this rule is grounds for disqualification and immediate removal from the festival site.

7. **Running Crew.** Each participant must provide an adequate running crew to ensure swift set changes and proper cues for lights, etc. A student familiar with the production (i.e. stage manager) should be in the control room (or on headset) to call cues.
8. Dressing rooms may be occupied no more than one show prior to your production.
9. Each participating school will have a private, fifteen-minute rehearsal period at the Regional Festival.
 - a. The site coordinator and/or stage manager will schedule technical briefings at regular intervals during each regional festival.
 - b. Each participant may use this time to examine the stage and the technical booth prior to their performance time.
10. No recording devices of any kind (audio or video) are allowed during performances.
11. Each participating school shall provide a one-sheet informational program to the festival coordinator.
 - a. This program should indicate the title of the production, the author(s), publisher (if applicable), school, director, cast and production crew lists, time/place of play, and any special advisory notes (i.e. the use of strobe lights or loud noises).
 - b. Characters may be listed with a sufficient description of their appearance to help adjudicators accurately identify actors.
 - i. Example 1: "BJORIA: dark red pants, combat boots, green army-style jacket, dreadlocks - Zoë Panlener"
 - ii. Example 2: "ENSEMBLE: blonde wig, purple pants - Chance DeLacey"
 - c. This will be the program that regional festival adjudicators receive for each production.
 - d. Any pre-production services by paid professionals or professional volunteers (people who would usually get paid for their work) must be listed in the one-sheet program.
 - e. Any contractual requirements for licensing must be listed in the one-sheet program.
 - f. See the sample one-sheet program in the MTA Handbook.
12. Schools shall also provide one clearly-printed, staged production photo with all actors in costume and labeled with the name of each character and each actor.
 - a. The purpose of this photograph is to assist the adjudicators in accurately identifying actors.
 - b. The size of this photo should not exceed 8"x10".
 - c. See the sample labeled production photo below.
13. Schools are encouraged to bring their own programs to distribute to the audience for their production.
14. Should the production contain any themes, language, activity, or subject matter that are not appropriate for all ages, a notice to that effect must appear in the program.
15. The set should fit into a 10' x 10' space.
 - a. Your set should be contained inside the imaginary walls of the 10x10 space.
 - b. You may stack your set as high as safety allows, but elements may not protrude from the box.

- c. This is a Regional Festival, State Festival (MTA), and Southeastern Theatre Conference (SETC) rule.
 - d. Props that are not costumes or costume props (props worn by actors) must remain behind the “Go line” until they are told GO by the host.
 - i. Student performers may keep musical instruments such as guitars, horns, etc. with them in the dressing room for tuning and warm-ups.
 - ii. Students may not play instruments in the dressing rooms if their instrument can be heard on the stage.
 - iii. The Chair, the regional festival host, or the facilities host will notify students with musical instruments whether warming up or tuning in the dressing room is permissible.
16. No non-student may sing, act, or dance in the production.
- a. Any non-student musical accompaniment included in the production must be in a designated area, as approved by the appropriate festival coordinator (either the site host at a regional festival or the Secondary Chair at the state festival) so as not to detract from the adjudicator’s assessment of the production.
 - i. Schools bringing non-student accompanists must notify the appropriate festival coordinator prior to the start of the festival.
 - ii. The festival coordinator will assess and designate an appropriate area for this individual.
 - b. Non-students may not conduct musical numbers.
 - c. No non-student may assist in any technical aspect during the running of the show or strike.
17. The designated leader of the production may only be a theatre arts educator from the represented school.
- a. Anyone else involved in the production is not the “designated leader.”
 - b. Nothing in this section should be construed to mean that guest artists cannot be involved with the production process.
18. Schools are prohibited from performing a play that was performed at their regional festival or at the MTA State Secondary Festival within the last three years. (The list of Banned Productions is posted on the Secondary Theatre page of MTA website.)