

ANDOVER PUBLIC SCHOOLS
Andover, Massachusetts

PERFORMING ARTS DIRECTORS' HANDBOOK

July 2019



ANDOVER PUBLIC SCHOOLS
ANDOVER, MASSACHUSETTS

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INTRODUCTION

The performing arts program is a vital component of school life for many students. The impact of this program—which encompasses theatre arts, vocal arts, and instrumental groups — stretches beyond the students to the families, staff, district, and community. The Andover Public Schools (APS) takes immense pride in its performing arts program and in the accomplishments of every participating student.

The directors and instructors who direct the activities and who interact most closely with the students play a key role in shaping our students and, by association, the culture of our school. Their actions, decisions and leadership styles help to determine whether the arts program has a positive or negative impact, whether it bolsters or undermines the district’s mission, and whether it enhances or hinders a student’s growth.

Every director/instructor recognizes the importance of nurturing teamwork in our multiple ensembles. Operating as an effective team is vital to all members of the ensemble attaining their highest levels of growth and success. Teamwork is essential, and teaching this ideal is an important aspect of the performing arts in the Andover Public Schools.

Directors/instructors play an important role in each student’s development. Directors/instructors, parents/guardians, students, teachers, and administrators all work together as part of the district team—teaching, endorsing, commending, reflecting, and modeling the traits embodied in Andover Public Schools’ theory of action.

THEORY OF ACTION

WHEN we collaborate to . . .

- Create safe, caring, and culturally responsive classrooms and schools, and partner with families and the community to support students’ academic growth and their social, physical and emotional wellbeing;
- Ensure that every student engages in a rigorous curriculum that is implemented consistently within and across schools;
- Provide inclusive instruction that engages every student in authentic learning experiences, demonstrates the power of effective effort and fosters inquiry, creativity, and positive risk-taking; and
- Monitor student progress diagnostically and plan instruction after thorough and thoughtful data analysis to ensure each student reaches proficiency . . .

THEN all students will . . .

- Demonstrate academic growth in foundational content and skills;
- Communicate effectively, think critically, problem-solve creatively, work collaboratively, and evaluate objectively;
- Be self-directed and persevering agents of their own learning; and
- Demonstrate cultural awareness, an appreciation of self, empathy toward others, a sense of responsibility, and commitment to civic engagement . . .

SO THAT all students are prepared to . . .

- Be lifelong learners able to pursue their personal and professional goals;
- Face adversity and ambiguity with intellectual skill, open-mindedness, adaptability, courage, and confidence;
- Make informed, just and ethical decisions; and
- Be connected and compassionate citizens who contribute to a diverse and global society.

Beyond their obvious role with student-performers, directors/instructors interact with many people in the course of carrying out their responsibilities. Parents/guardians entrust their children to the guidance of the directors/instructors for many out-of-school hours. These parents/guardians have the right to expect that all directors/instructors have the students' best interest at heart and that the directors'/instructors' decisions place students' welfare above any emphasis on performance, competition, or winning.

Accordingly, all directors/instructors in Andover Public Schools (APS) are expected to take a developmental approach to the performing arts, recognizing that students are at a critical growth phase of their lives—not just physically, but mentally, emotionally, and socially. This developmental approach accepts all students at their present level and then provides the skill training, encouragement, and other support needed to progress to the next level, with the goal of enabling students to continually improve their personal best. In addition, because a developmental approach views the arts as a lifelong experience, it is intended to help students find enjoyment and personal satisfaction in the arts so they will be more likely to continue engaging in some type of group or individual artistic endeavor long after high school.

Directors/instructors also have obligations toward their colleagues in the classroom. Recognizing the need for an appropriate balance between students' performing and academic pursuits, directors/instructors should actively support teachers' expectations for quality performance from students in such areas as homework and assessments. Keeping in mind that students are addressing academic goals throughout their school careers as they look towards future endeavors, directors/instructors should work with students, their families, and their classroom teachers and counselors to help students reach both their academic and artistic objectives.

The mission statement for the Andover Public Schools' arts program reads:

The Performing Arts Program provides learning opportunities in music and drama emphasizing ensembles and the study of the performing arts where arts skills, critical thinking, and creative problem solving are emphasized on stage and in the classroom. Central to this creative work is utilizing one's risk-taking, curiosity, and collaborative abilities. The Performing Arts Department strives to build student confidence and resiliency that fundamentally transforms students into creative learners, supporting 21st-century learning skills. The curriculum focuses on developing creative sensitivities and technical proficiency, literacy in a variety of mediums and expressions, and multiple opportunities to develop a lifelong relationship with the arts. The department supports collaborative cross-curricular opportunities and encourages students to communicate and advocate through the fine arts, seeing this as an important life skill that extends into and complements all other disciplines.

The arts program is committed to the emotional, social, and intellectual development of all who participate. To help ensure that this commitment is honored, APS provides this handbook for its directors/instructors. The handbook does not create new policies nor

does it specify procedures for implementing the performance program. That information is available elsewhere. Rather, this handbook is intended to bring clarity to the standards by which APS directors/instructors are expected to conduct their programs. While directors/instructors are the primary audience for the pages that follow, parents/guardians and colleagues can also find herein the expectations that directors agree to uphold and abide by when they sign a contract with the district. By committing these beliefs and concepts to paper, Andover Public Schools are publicly affirming the value placed on the role of performing arts as a means of uplifting every student, regardless of individual artistic talent. Translating that role into action and interpreting those beliefs in daily situations are hereby acknowledged as critically needed and deeply appreciated functions of the APS directorial staff, operating both individually and collectively—as a team.

STANDARDS, PRINCIPLES, AND PRACTICES

APS directors/instructors are expected to conduct themselves and carry out their duties within a framework of standards, principles, and practices. This framework clarifies and solidifies the consistency with which the philosophy of the Andover Public Schools should be implemented throughout both its arts and academic programs.

THE STANDARDS OF DIRECTING

A standard is something that provides essential support, something that is reliable and dependable and something you can count on even in difficult situations. APS has identified seven standards—education, respect, communication, equity, ethical standards, leadership, and community service—that establish the foundation for its directing practice. These standards are the qualities that APS parents and students can expect to see reflected in the day-to-day activities of each coach who is connected with the school district’s artistic program.

STANDARDS, PRINCIPLES, and PRACTICES of ANDOVER PERFORMING ARTS

The seven standards serve as the foundation for a system of operating within the Andover performing arts program. Each of these standards can be expanded upon in terms of principles of behavior that clearly align with the district’s core values and statements of belief. These principles, stated below, define the intrinsic nature of the APS arts program.

Education: Directors/Instructors will use the arts to support the APS mission of providing all students with a high-quality education that prepares them to succeed in the global community.

Respect: Directors/Instructors will at all times and in all situations interact with students, parents, teachers, administrators, judges, and other directors/instructors in a respectful manner, requiring the same level of respect to be displayed by all.

Communication: Directors/Instructors will establish and utilize modes of two-way communication with students, parents, and APS faculty/administrators that strengthen the artistic program, develop positive relationships with others, and maintain confidentiality regarding matters associated with their students, ensembles, parents, school and community.

Equity: Directors/Instructors will treat all students equitably, helping all individuals to develop academic and artistic skills to the best of their ability.

Ethical Standards: Directors/Instructors will carry out their duties with honesty and fairness and will avoid even the appearance of a conflict of interest between their responsibilities to the APS community and their personal pursuits.

Leadership: Directors/Instructors will serve as role models for students and will work to build skills that enable each student to be a leader within the community.

Community Service: Director/Instructors will foster pride in the school and town, helping students recognize the connection between the privilege of participating in the arts and their responsibility to give back to the community at large while building school and town spirit.

TRANSLATING THE PRINCIPLES INTO DAILY PRACTICES

A “practice” is the application of an idea, belief, or method. It is the customary way that things are done, the expected procedure in a given circumstance. Each of the principles underlying the APS performing arts program can be translated into the practices that directors/instructors implement as they fulfill their daily responsibilities. These principles and practices apply across all ensembles and imbue the arts program with a consistent culture of expectations and behaviors. Practices define the way directors/instructors interact with student-performers, parents, colleagues and the community and the way directors/instructors interpret what the performing arts program is all about.

EDUCATION

The term “student-performer” begins with “student.” That word order is purposeful. It reflects the mindset that education is the primary mission of the school, and the arts play a supporting role in achieving that mission. Directors/instructors are key to establishing and preserving an appropriate balance between these two components of many students’ lives.

A primary means of achieving this goal is for directors/instructors to set a good example by taking advantage of opportunities for professional self-improvement. Directors/instructors are responsible for mastering the rules and developing their skills to help students grow and be competitive. To keep their professional knowledge up to date, the attendance of directors/instructors is required at relevant district, regional, and statewide meetings, workshops, and clinics in specific aspects of the program and similar in-service training programs. Directors/instructors should maintain membership in professional

organizations, music teacher associations, and similar groups geared towards enhancing performance.

As directors/instructors work to create an environment where academics and the arts are in harmony, it can be beneficial to view interscholastic performers through an educational lens. For student-performers, the arts program is an additional learning opportunity. For directors, it is a teaching opportunity in which they are responsible for every aspect of preparing for practices and competitions, and for supervising training, competition, and post-competition reflection. The director is an important guide in preparing student-performers, just as teachers do in the classroom. And just as teachers know that the lessons they teach will extend far beyond the content of the lesson, directors understand that the lessons student-musicians, actors, and dancers learn will remain with them after they graduate.

One of the most important decisions facing every student-musician, actor, and dancer is what to do after graduation—and particularly where to apply for college if that is the next path. As trusted mentors, directors/instructors can assist with these decisions and help students by writing letters of recommendation. For students who hope to participate in the arts at the college level, directors/instructors can be invaluable in providing video recordings of the students' school performances or in making contacts through their professional networks.

RESPECT

Creating a safe and caring environment is a key element of the theory of action. Such an environment is strengthened by the demonstration of mutual respect among all students and staff. In the arts program, the director must always lead by example and teach respect for self, ensembles judges, rules, etc. Directors/instructors are ultimately responsible for modeling the desired level of respect through their own words and actions. The directors/instructors should also expect APS students to show respect for all peers at APS and for all peers participating in state competitions. The director/instructor is responsible for communicating and reinforcing expected standards of behavior for APS students, parents, spectators and faculty at all events.

APS remains steadfast in its commitment to the APS values of respect, inclusion, and empathy. Through all of its academic and performance activities, the school strives to be a welcoming place for all races, religions, creeds, genders, orientations, and ability levels. Thus, directors/instructors should promote and encourage diversity among their students. They should look for opportunities to foster a sense of school spirit within their own group and through the support of other groups. Directors/instructors will establish and uphold the standard of zero tolerance for hazing, taunting or bullying of anyone, by anyone, for any reason.

Again, it is up to the directors/instructors to set the example of respectful interaction by treating all students with respect. Directors/instructors will not degrade students or direct language toward them that is abusive, discriminatory or offensive, but rather should

address them respectfully and expect the same in return. Directors/instructors must understand the power of their influence over young performers and choose carefully their words and their tone as they strive to motivate the students.

This concept of respectful treatment extends to every aspect of the arts program—even when passions run high in the heat of competition. A developmental approach to directing is not punitive. When student-performers err, it would be contrary to the philosophy of APS to humiliate them in front of other members of an ensemble; rather, mistakes should be used as an opportunity to teach. Fear does not motivate students to do better nor does it build skill or character; rather it undermines their performance and causes everyone to lose confidence in their own decision-making ability. When a student makes a mistake, the director/instructor should seize the opportunity to teach all ensemble members a better way to handle a similar situation in the future. Mistakes are a necessary component of learning; students need to feel comfortable that their mistakes are the next steps in their progress rather than setbacks to their performance. On the flip side, positive reinforcement should be shared as often as possible, but only when sincerely earned based on the skill level of the individual performer.

COMMUNICATION

In any situation that involves learning new skills or concepts, progress is either hindered or enhanced by the feedback that the learner receives. Giving feedback to all students is one of the most fundamental responsibilities of a director/instructor. A strong director/instructor offers continual, high-quality feedback throughout the performing arts experience. To be effective in changing behavior, that feedback must be instructive and constructive, not judgmental or demeaning. It must be growth-oriented and actionable—telling the students the specific steps they need to take in order to improve.

Directors/Instructors need to ensure that students perceive them as approachable and reasonable. A student who contacts a director/instructor in a respectful manner about a concern should experience a director/instructor who is willing to listen and work with that student to address the issue. School-based arts should provide a safe and supportive opportunity for young people to learn how to address and resolve matters that affect them personally. In the absence of extenuating circumstances, parents/guardians should not become involved unless the student has first tried to resolve the matter with the director/instructor.

If a director/instructor does meet with parents/guardians regarding their child, it is advisable to hold the meeting by appointment and to have the student present, if possible. As always, the director/instructor should model professional conduct and respectful language, allowing all parties to speak and maintaining control over the tenor of the exchange. If the conflict cannot be resolved by the program director, it should be referred immediately to the Visual and Performing Arts Program Coordinator.

It is the director's/instructor's responsibility to establish clear procedures for communication to and from parents/guardians, to share those procedures at the beginning

of each school year or competition season, to reiterate them as often as needed, and to treat all communications from parents/guardians and students as confidential. The only exception is that in the case of student safety, such as a student's threat of self-harm, the director/instructor is obligated to inform the appropriate authorities. Of critical importance, the director/instructor must maintain confidentiality with respect to any complaint raised by a student or parent/guardian. No information regarding a complaint, or personal information regarding a student, should ever be released to the public or discussed by the director/instructor in an unprofessional manner, whether in a public setting, online, on social media or otherwise. Nor should the director/instructor discuss the players, the team, the arts program, or the school in a manner contrary to the ideals set out in this handbook.

EQUITY

In Andover Public Schools, directors/instructors are charged with enhancing the capabilities of every individual student in a variety of ensembles, while building cohesion and unity among students. All participants, regardless of skill level, should come away from the experience feeling that they grew as team members and as performers, that the director/instructor cared about their development, and that they contributed to the overall success of the ensembles.

The style of directing/instructing embraced by APS does not focus on winning above all else. APS directors/instructors should understand that everyone gains when the focus is on the development of all the team members, rather than on winning competitions.

To the extent possible, every effort should be made to allow all interested students to participate in the arts to some degree and to improve their understanding and skill in a program. Realistically, in programs that involve auditions, not all students will be selected. It is critical that directors/instructors establish and share publicly the objective criteria by which selection decisions are made. Directors/instructors also have a responsibility to communicate to the non-selected students the reason(s) they were not chosen.

ETHICAL STANDARDS

In the course of arts program activities, APS directors/instructors are clearly expected to demonstrate for students how to make ethical choices. Directors should be aware that they have tremendous influence on the education of students. They must never place the value of winning above the value of instilling the highest desirable ideals of character. The development of character is the highest ideal for all directors and students. Directors shall uphold the honor and dignity of our education profession at all times and in all situations. In all personal contact with students, parents/guardians, officials, art directors, school administrators, arts associations, the media, and the public, directors/instructors shall strive to set an example of the highest ethical, moral and professional conduct.

The APS Performing Arts Department encourages all students to take full advantage of the many activities offered and to become involved in more than one program. Participation in

workshops, clinics, or other related performing activities is strictly at the discretion of the students and their parents/guardians. Participation in such activities will have no bearing one way or the other on a student's participation.

Directors/Instructors must comply with state law and with the expectations of Andover Public Schools' policies regarding conflict of interest and the appearance of a conflict of interest. Directors/Instructors are not to profit from interactions with students or their families, nor are directors/instructors to show favoritism toward any student. Directors/Instructors are not to put undue pressure on students to take private lessons in which they have a financial interest or to in any way suggest that such activities are prerequisites to gaining or maintaining membership in an APS ensemble. A director/instructor who has an outside relationship with a student should not participate in decisions as to whether that student is part of the performing arts program. Directors/Instructors may not use APS or school logos to promote private clinics or take any other action implying that such clinics are endorsed, sanctioned, or recommended by Andover Public Schools.

Directors/Instructors and members of their immediate families shall not be involved in the activities of booster organizations or clubs, including fundraising, promotion, and maintenance and expenditure of funds. However, by using approved channels of communication, directors/instructors may provide information to booster organizations or clubs regarding needs and news. Directors/Instructors are advised to maintain their distance from boosters to avoid even the appearance of "pay to play." The size of any potential or actual contribution of monetary value to the arts program shall have no bearing on a student's gaining or maintaining membership in an ensemble or on the competition opportunities afforded the student.

Given the highly public nature of their positions, the integrity of members of the performing arts staff must, at all times, be above reproach. Exemplifying fairness in all relationships, directors/instructors must strive to treat all students with respect, putting the interests of the students' ethical and character development over other considerations. Directors/Instructors must model self-control even in intensely competitive situations, treating students firmly, consistently, and with respect. Directors/Instructors should also promote ethical relationships among students and spectators, striving to eliminate negative behaviors that may arise before, during, or after competitions. Good etiquette is a reflection of good citizenship and as such must be woven into the fabric of our APS performing arts program.

LEADERSHIP

Students look to their directors/instructors for leadership. The style of leadership those directors/instructors demonstrate—by word and especially by deed—influences the style of leadership the young people will themselves display when they are in roles of authority. Directors/Instructors need to recognize that students view them as role models, even when they are not specifically at an arts event, and that the way directors/instructors speak and act as they go about their daily lives is likely being observed and taken to heart

by the young people under their guidance.

The directors'/instructors' leadership function is especially important during interactions with student leadership groups. Directors/Instructors need to model the many skills—such as respect and conflict resolution—that they want students to exhibit in their roles as emerging leaders. Effective directors/instructors also provide formal leadership training to these young people, teaching them how to handle challenging situations and empowering them to serve as leaders both within the program and beyond it. Directors/Instructors will, additionally, show leadership regarding their own time commitment at all practices and competitions. They should always be the first to arrive and the last to leave to ensure proper supervision of all ensemble members.

The director/instructor should impress upon students that they, too, are seen as role models by members of their ensembles, peers and younger students. As such, students have the power to influence the behavior and decisions of others and have a responsibility to ensure their influence is positive in nature in rehearsals/performances, in the classroom, and in the community. Directors/Instructors should help students understand and remember that they are representing APS at all times.

As role models, directors/instructors should actively and consciously promote positive character formation. Successful interscholastic arts programs assist students to develop such values as organization and time management, work ethic and self-discipline, and perseverance in striving toward goals and excellence. As leaders, directors/instructors help students learn to cope with adversity, make decisions under pressure, prepare for difficult situations they may face in the future, and be accountable for their own actions.

COMMUNITY SERVICE

The arts programs within a school district provide distinct value to the community. Directors/instructors should harness the enthusiasm and talent of their student-performers to foster a sense of pride in both the school and the town and work to create experiences for performers that are civic-minded and community-focused.

Directors/instructors can best set the tone for giving back by demonstrating their own commitment to any of a variety of civic organizations, performances, and events. They should also help all participants make the mental and attitudinal connection between pride in their own abilities and the responsibility to share those abilities and strengths with others who may have had fewer advantages in life or who come from different backgrounds.

Community service by a production group is a highly effective way for directors/instructors to guide student-performers in developing such social and emotional skills as empathy, respect, and compassion. Performers can be encouraged to volunteer to host events for visiting schools, mentor younger students within school or community, and serve as ambassadors to programs in local, statewide, and national organizations. They can help organize and oversee further artistic and performance opportunities for other

students or conduct forums for discussion around important artistic choices in their work. Their performances can focus on addressing local, national, or global issues. Skillful and civic-minded directors/instructors should encourage performers to plan, organize, and implement additional activities as appropriate and should seek to make visible to performers and audience members alike the cultural and civic value of their performances and productions.

Community service benefits the community, of course; but it benefits the student-performers as well, building their sense of collective and civic responsibility and influencing their character. Combining community service with a developmental arts program is an effective way to encourage and enable young people to become contributing members of our nation's democratic society.

CONCLUSION

The purpose of performing arts is to prepare students to succeed in their quest to become contributing citizens in a global society, not merely to win contests. Win or lose in a competition, students should learn lessons of a lasting and positive nature. Perhaps the most important lesson directors/instructors can model and teach their students is this one: throughout life, always choose to do what is right and fair—even when no one is watching.

PERFORMANCE EVALUATION

The performance evaluation of directors/instructors will be based on the information contained within this handbook. The evaluation document is directly correlated to each portion of the APS Performing Arts Directors' Handbook.

COMPLAINT PROCEDURE

Following is a modified version of the Complaint Procedure that appears in APS Policy KE. The APS Performing Arts Department believes that complaints are best handled and resolved as close to their origin as possible and that the directing/instructing staff member should be given every opportunity to consider the issues and attempt to resolve a problem prior to involvement by the arts director, assistant principal liaison to arts, or the principal. Therefore, the proper channeling of complaints involving instruction, discipline or learning materials will be as follows:

1. Director/Instructor
2. Visual and Performing Arts Program Coordinator
3. Principal
4. Superintendent
5. School Committee¹

¹ The School Committee will only be involved in complaints that are within their authority. Personnel decisions—including hiring, termination, non-renewal and discipline of performing arts directors—do not fall within the authority of the School Committee.

The Performing Arts Department and Andover Public Schools retain the discretion to interpret and apply the principles set forth in this handbook as they deem appropriate. Matters referred to the Superintendent and/or School Committee must be in writing and should be specific in terms of the action desired. The School Committee expects the directing staff to receive complaints courteously and to make an appropriate and timely reply to the complainant.