



10 ways ITS will benefit your theatre program

Why is an International Thespian Society troupe such an important tool for maximizing the effectiveness of your school's theatre program?

- 1. ITS recognizes, rewards, and encourages continuing student achievement.** Simply having a theatre arts honor society in the form of an ITS troupe demonstrates the school's commitment to and appreciation of theatre arts. Having this honor status recognized by an international organization lends additional weight to the honor, making it a valuable addition to any student's resume. This provides students with an additional incentive to choose theatre arts over other curricular and extracurricular outlets and helps any theatre department recruit talented, dedicated students. The process of working toward induction and the ongoing opportunity to achieve additional honors after induction provides clear, attainable goals and keeps students motivated to stay involved throughout their high school careers. The ITS troupe quickly becomes a very visible, positive symbol of the theatre program as a whole to the school community.
- 2. ITS celebrates the work all theatre student artists and technicians.** This includes students who perform as well as students who prefer technical or staff positions. Educational theatre programs often highlight the performance aspect of production, but ITS has always celebrated the achievements of all members of a production as integral to the success of any endeavor. Our suggested point system reflects this sensibility. ITS values a well-rounded theatre education as well, so we recommend that all students be required to earn points over the course of more than one production and in more than one discipline. In fact most inductees earn points in several fields, i. e. performance, set construction, publicity, and make-up.
- 3. Student leadership opportunities.** A troupe most often provides the student leadership component for its school's theatre department. Student members are elected to offices within the troupe according to the guidelines set forth in a troupe constitution. Typical offices are president, vice-president, secretary, treasurer, and clerk. These positions provide elected officers with the chance to demonstrate additional responsibility and practice leadership skills in a small and cohesive group. Additional student leadership opportunities at the chapter and even international levels allow dedicated ITS officers to reach beyond the scope of their own troupe's program and interact with students from across the world. Of course, student leadership is a valuable addition to any resume, as well.
- 4. Exceptional promotional opportunities.** Theatre arts programs often suffer in competition with athletics and other student programs when it comes to scarce funding and resources. Sports programs tend to receive extensive press coverage, which raises the school's profile in its community. As is often the case, funding and resources follow attention. ITS can be a valuable tool for raising a theatre program's profile in the school and its community by providing opportunities to showcase its successes. Induction ceremonies, our TOTS-EAT food drive, and other troupe activities make great PR opportunities. In addition, EdTA/ITS chapters provide opportunities for school and individual students to excel in a very public way and bring home recognition in the form of awards and certificates. Our

International Thespian Festival provides recognition at an international level. Participation and success in these events combined with ongoing public relations efforts can be key to raising the troupe's public profile and the school's along with it. Many troupes find that these efforts lead to more prestige, additional resources, and even higher revenues in the form of increased ticket sales and patronage.

5. Chapter conferences and festivals. State/province and local level programming expands students' educational and theatrical horizons by providing exposure to theatre arts educators and professionals beyond the school faculty. They also get the chance to meet and even work with theatre students from other schools. This promotes a strong sense of belonging to a community that is beyond their own school's theatre department. It also provides perspective by allowing them to compare their accomplishments to those of their peers on a larger scale.

6. EdTA/ITS awards programs. The Outstanding School Award and Administrator's Award provide additional opportunities for troupes to spotlight their accomplishments and further raise the profile of their theatre arts programs.

7. Royalty adjustments. ITS troupes may request assistance in obtaining reduced royalties for plays (non-musical) from certain publishers. Reduced royalties mean that more money is available for other production costs or ongoing operational expenses for the troupe.

8. Additional fundraising opportunities. Many schools restrict the number of fundraising drives each student group can have in a single year. In such schools, having a troupe could effectively double the number of fundraising opportunities for your theatre students. The ITS troupe and the school theatre department or program are not one and the same. The troupe is a subset of the theatre arts program, the theatre honor society, and a separate student organization.

9. ITS Graduation and Honor Items. ITS provides a wide range of merchandise to aid troupe directors in student recognition. While good work is its own reward, additional incentives often help to motivate students to reach a little farther. Only official directors of active ITS troupes may purchase ITS graduation and honor items to award to inducted students. These include graduation honor cords, graduation tassels, certificates of achievement, Thespian seals, trophies and plaques, medallions, and an ITS pin system for recognizing induction and subsequent achievement. All ITS honor items are optional, so troupes may incorporate as much or as little as they wish into their program depending on the financial resources available in their school or community.

10. Professional development for troupe directors. All theatre students benefit from having the most knowledgeable and professional teachers available. That's why we extend EdTA professional membership to ITS troupe directors. As the professional organization for theatre educators, EdTA provides innumerable opportunities for professional development, networking, and advocacy. First time theatre teachers and seasoned veterans alike find value in our publications *Dramatics* magazine and *Teaching Theatre* journal. Troupe directors enjoy special member rates for all events and educational programs like the Professional Development Institutes, the EdTA Annual Conference, the International Thespian Festival, and chapter conferences. These provide workshop opportunities for teachers as well as students, often with the opportunity to apply for Continuing Education Units for their participation. Special member-only pricing is also available for the extensive line of educational resources available for sale through EdTA.

These are just a few of the benefits of chartering an ITS troupe. For more information check out our website at schooltheatre.org or contact us at 513-421-3900. We look forward to serving you and your students in the future!