

## **School Play -- Frequently Asked Questions**

### **Q: What is the mission/philosophy of our school play program?**

A: The goals of the IC School Play are to:

- Provide a fun, positive learning experience for the children.
- Deliver a “best it can be” production, on time and on budget.

Among the many things that children learn are the elements of stagecraft, how to perform in front of an audience, memorization and movement, creativity, dance, and vocal ability. The play also instills many intangibles such as hard work and responsibility, respecting and supporting your fellow cast mates, appreciating your own and others’ talents, and responding to challenges, both on-stage and off. From the school play experience, children learn self-control and discipline, while at the same time having fun and achieving a sense of accomplishment.

### **Q: How is the School Play chosen? Why is it kept a secret?**

A: Choosing a play each year is the responsibility of the Producers, with input from the Directors, and final approval by the Principal. The primary goal is to select a play that affords the largest number of children an opportunity to participate in a meaningful way. Generally speaking, we try to select a musical that is upbeat, positive, and fun.

Factors that we consider include: in line with Catholic school values; appropriate for junior high levels; availability and cost of the license and royalty; large number of parts for both boys and girls; balance of songs, dancing, and speaking; variety from previous years and different from other shows being done in the area (Vis, Elmhurst Children’s Theatre, ICHS); subject and type of show (fairy tale, turn-of-the-Century, modern-day, etc), etc.

We announce the show right before auditions for a couple reasons: First, we don’t want the kids to become anxious about it until it’s time. Next, things happen, so even if we decide on one play, we may end up changing, and that would cause more consternation. Finally, we want everyone to find out at the same time. (Also, the suspense is kind of fun.)

### **Q: How is the Director, Music Director, and Choreographer selected?**

A: Our Director Group (Director, Music Director, and Choreographer) is hired on an annual basis. We search for individuals who have experience working with junior high children, are qualified theater professionals, are organized and willing to work within our production guidelines, and hold the

same values and principles as our ICGS Community. All must be certified in accordance with the Protecting God's Children guidelines. Final decisions are approved by the Principal.

**Q: How is casting done (who decides and how is it decided who gets what parts)?**

A: Casting is a primary role of the Director, with assistance from the Music Director and the Choreographer. The Director follows the guidelines set forth by the Producers (noted below). The Producers review the cast list to ensure the guidelines were followed. The final cast list is reviewed and approved by the Principal. The final cast list is usually posted shortly after auditions and callbacks are completed.

During the audition process, the Director, Music Director, and Choreographer are evaluators. The Producers do not evaluate – they are at the auditions to organize the students, manage the logistics, and assist both the students and the directors with whatever is needed.

**Casting Guidelines**

Any 6th, 7th, and 8th grader from IC Grade School may audition for the play. Each and every child who auditions has the same opportunity for every part in the show.

Students are cast based on the following criteria: voice projection, diction, energy, character expression, ease of movement on stage, vocal quality, dance/rhythm ability, and behavior/attitude. Other secondary factors used in casting include special skills (e.g., juggling, gymnastics, etc.).

Using the criteria above and the requirements of a particular role, the Directors determine the best person for that role, regardless of prior experience in IC or other plays. Grade level is considered when two individuals are best suited for a particular role. In this case, the person who is in the higher grade will get the part. For example, if an 8th grader and 7th grader are equally fit for a particular role, the 8th grader will get the role. However if a 6th grader is best suited for a particular role over all others, the 6th grader will get the part.

Because of this guideline, generally speaking, preference is granted to 8th graders first, 7th graders next, and then 6th graders. Again, however, if a 6th or 7th grader is best for a certain part over an 8th grader, he or she will get the part.

Preference is not given to students who have parents serving on the Production Team (producer, directors, costumes, sets, props) or in any other significant volunteer capacity or because of donations of time or other resources.

The number of students cast depends on the number who audition. Each year the producers and directors target a cast size based on the selected play. Some students may not be cast; in past few years, those who were not cast were 6th graders.

**Q: How do auditions work? What are callbacks?**

A: Auditions are held over three days, with the fourth day being callbacks. We generally have each grade on one particular day (for example, 6th graders on Monday, 7th on Tuesday, etc.), just for convenience, however we make exceptions for sports events and anything else we're aware of.

At auditions, students are placed into groups: half do their Read & Sing auditions, and half do the dance auditions, and then we switch. The Read & Sing auditions are done individually. Each person is called individually for a 5-minute time slot into the Band Room with the Director and Music Director. There they read their monologue (which can be memorized) and sing their song. The Director may ask for a candidate to repeat his or her monologue, sometimes with direction, for example, repeat the monologue as if you were very shy and afraid. The Music Director accompanies each candidate on the piano, and works to find the right key so that the candidate is comfortable singing his/her song.

If someone gets really nervous or makes a mistake, we may suggest that they try again, or even take a break. We will do everything we can to make each student comfortable and to enjoy the process as much as possible.

The dance audition is done in one large group. The choreographer teaches the students a dance and they practice it several times, and then line up and do it in groups while the choreographer evaluates them. Everyone has a lot of fun and has several opportunities to show their dance ability.

Certain children are asked to come back for "callbacks" on the final day of auditions. The purpose of callbacks is for the Director, Music Director, and Choreographer to take a second look to decide on particular roles. Not everyone will be called back; those who are NOT called back may still get a part. If the Director is certain of someone's role during the first audition, she may decide not to call back that person.

**Q: How should my child prepare for auditions?**

A: One week before auditions, we will send an "Audition Reminder" to all who completed an Audition Form. The Audition Reminder explains everything your child will need to prepare which includes a monologue and song.

We always try to encourage the children to have fun with the monologue, that is, to try it in a variety of ways, without abandon. (Easy for us to say.) The same is true for singing and dancing. While it's difficult for junior high kids to try not to be self-conscious, cast members must be willing to "let go" and enjoy themselves. The kids who do this always come across well in an audition. This shows that while a cast member takes the process seriously, he or she will take direction and try some new things.

**Q: Will there be cuts?**

A: In order to make the school play the best possible experience for everyone, we may need to limit the number of students. We have made cuts in years past, which was never an easy decision.

If cuts have to be made, they will be from the 6th grade level. Cuts are determined based on the number of students who audition and the number of parts we can handle for a particular show. As always, we will try to accommodate as many children as possible.

**Q: How is the rehearsal schedule determined?**

We start with the directors' schedules and the availability of the facilities. Not every cast member will need to be at every rehearsal, and we often split the rehearsals in half.

We provide you with all possible rehearsal dates in the general schedule so that you can compare it to your calendar. We do our best to work around ICGS sports schedules.

The way that we have been scheduling rehearsals is such that scenes are covered in one or two rehearsals, so if you miss one, you've missed a lot. We allow three absences in total and we expect the cast member to come to the next rehearsal knowing what he or she missed. So he or she needs to contact someone else in the cast and learn what was covered.

**Q: Can we fit this in with other activities?**

A: Only you know how much your child can handle. Our first priority is schoolwork. To that end, we rely on you to decide first whether participating in the play will be overwhelming and grades will suffer. Please know that the entire cast begins to be called to all rehearsals at least two weeks before the performances, if not sooner. If you have any questions about the commitment, please discuss it with us so we can give you more details if needed.

In addition, the School Play is a Parents' Club-sponsored school activity bound by Eligibility guidelines found in the Student Handbook. If a child is suspended from the Play because of Eligibility, and therefore misses more than three rehearsals, his/her part may be recast.

**Q: How are costumes handled?**

A: Over the last few years now, we have been renting costumes. We also might need to sew and purchase a variety of costume pieces for each production. Costume costs vary considerably from person to person. The price range is usually from \$35 - \$65. Dancers and cast members needing

many matching outfits usually receive a bill of \$45-\$85. Students in lead roles may receive a bill for \$60-\$100. In addition to the items supplied by the costume committee, most cast members will also need to supply items such as shoes, undergarments, and make-up.

If there are extra costume items that need to be made or purchased, we always try to keep the costs to a minimum. We will shop at second hand stores, which we find very fruitful. We will also borrow from other theater groups in the area, as well as our own costume room. All costumes and other borrowed items are turned in at the cast party. Costume bills are prepared and distributed at the cast party or sent through backpacks immediately following the final performance.

The costume committee is essentially comprised of all families with students in the play. Many volunteers are needed to help shop, measure, cut, glue, staple, and sometimes to help students decorate or construct parts of their costumes. Sometimes, we also need people to help with hand sewing and machine sewing.

**Q: Do I have to volunteer? What are parent volunteer responsibilities?**

A: We ask that every parent who has a child in the play participate in volunteering in some fashion. We provide you with a list of all the committees and state specifically what each committee entails. We especially need help with costumes, props, and sets. In addition to volunteering on a committee, each parent must cast sit a minimum of one time during rehearsals, tech week or during performances. We will explain all of this at Parent Meeting.

**Q: How much will it cost to participate? Where does all the money go?**

A: The participation fee is \$60. Optional costs include a t-shirt, \$10-15, DVD which in the past has been \$25-30, ads in the ad book, \$15-50, and possibly photos. Our major sources of revenue are ticket sales, participation fees, concession stand sales; and sometimes t-shirt, ad book, and DVD sales.

Our primary costs are directors' salaries, sets, props, costumes, lights & sound, licensing and royalties. Other costs include printing, musicians, cast party, make-up, photos/posters, etc.

We are given a budget from the Parents' Club of \$2,500. We always strive to meet this budget and better yet, make a profit so we can reinvest in the production of the Play!

***Thank you to all of you, the parents, for your constant support of the Play at ICGS!***