

Drama Program Q & A

Why do we practice after school and not during the school day?



-The staff involved in the drama production are also on recess supervision or have other classroom or school commitments that make it impossible to commit to drama practices during the school day.

-The gym is used for intramurals on a regular basis during recess.

-The time needed to get the set ready for practice and to put things away would eat up most of the recess.

-Westmount school runs all of its extra-curricular programs after school (track club, basketball, volleyball) to allow the staff and students to focus on their academics during an already busy school year and not on the extra-curricular programs.

-We know that it is a commitment for parents to pick up students after drama practice but, we know that this is the same commitment that parents make if their child is involved in other activities such as the Strathmore Children's Choir, music lessons or for the host of sports that children are involved in. In the end, we leave the decision to you as to whether or not your child can participate in this activity and understand that there are parents who are just not able to make this time commitment work. We want to thank all our parents who have committed to this program. We appreciate your time and energy in helping to make this program a huge success!

Why do we start practices in November?

-The casting process takes about two weeks to complete.

Once this is done we have a read-through and then we start rehearsals, generally in November. We start this early in the year to give each scene adequate practice time. When you consider that there are five acts in this play, and that we focus on an act for one week at a time, that means we practice each act only about five times before the dress rehearsal. We generally combine acts as we get closer to the performance dates however, if students haven't memorized lines we are not able to get through the extra acts during the hour and fifteen minute scheduled drama practice. This, in turn, results in some cast not getting on stage during a practice as we didn't get through all the scheduled acts.

-When you think about all the drama skills we work on with the cast in order to put on a quality drama production (voice projection, expression, stage blocking, character interaction, etc.) we want

to ensure we have adequate time to prepare students for their roles for a wonderful theatre experience. In short, we want to ensure that students learn about commitment, experience personal growth and develop a new sense of self esteem and confidence.

Why do we write our own scripts?

-Generally, scripts that you can purchase have a cast list of between 5 and 15 cast members. A play with 20 cast members or more would be hard to find. We have worked very hard at Westmount School to ensure that all students in Grades 5 and 6 who want to participate in the play have the opportunity to do so. This results in about 40 students, or more, being cast in the production. The only way to accommodate this large cast size is to write our own scripts.

-If we use a script from a drama script publishing company, we have to pay royalties on the play. We also have to pay royalties on the music if we do a musical. The final cost of the royalties will generally be as much as \$500.00. This doesn't include the purchase of all the scripts (1 for every cast member) and the purchase of the CDs and musical scores.

-You are not permitted by law to edit or change a script. This prevents us from writing in extra cast members.

-Writing our own scripts allows us to customize a script for our school stage and students as well as our large cast size.

-We generally incorporate a message into the play that can be used by the entire school and we write music into the script that we can purchase through iTunes at a minimal cost.

-As in all stories or theatre scripts, there is a main character. Sometimes we are able to write more than one large role into a script however, we have to be aware of time constraints (generally, we try to write a script that is about 1.5 hours in length). This length allows us to provide lines for the large cast list and allows us to write in a few singing and or dance numbers into the script all with the intent of providing students with more time on stage.

-We recognize that there ends up being one, or only a few large roles in each script. Unfortunately, we have to make some hard decisions and in the end, not every student gets the role he or she wanted. This is unavoidable and we know that you as parents will support our casting decisions as we have a host of criteria that we work through as we cast a production. In the end, our goal is to provide the best experience for all the children involved.

