

# 2025 - 2026 Drama Festival Bulletin & Rule Book

Maine Principals' Association and Maine Drama Council

## **Festival Dates 2026**

December 12th, 2025 - Interest Form Due

January 16th, 2026 - Registration Form and Payment Due

March 6-7, 2026 - Regional Drama Festival

March 20-21, 2026 - State Drama Festival

April 30, May 1-2, 2026 - New England Drama Festival, Paramount Theatre, Rutland, VT

## **Festival Dates 2027**

March 5-6, 2027 - Regional Drama Festival

March 19-20, 2027 - State Drama Festival

## **Notable Changes from 2025 Rule Book:**

Class A/B cutoff changed from 450 to 500

Additional language under Disqualification

## **Notable Changes from 2023 Rule Book:**

Registration Fee increased to \$125

Class A/B cutoff changed from 500 to 450

## **Notable Changes from 2020 Rule Book:**

Point Penalty for going over 40 minute performance time

## **Notable Changes from 2019 Rule Book:**

Changed registration deadlines

Updated school classification numbers

Updated Musical Theatre Rule

Added rights check to Tech Saturday under Disqualifications

## **Notable Changes from 2018 Rule Book:**

Changed Conduct section to apply to everyone

Clarification of Timing Protocol

Addition of Suggested Schedule from previous Bulletin

Addition of Awards section from previous Bulletin

## **Notable Changes from 2017 Rule Book:**

Removed 5 point penalty for over 35 minutes

Added 3 minute Q/A time to critiques

## DRAMA CLASSIFICATION

CLASS A 500+	CLASS B 0-499
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Lewiston, 1,655</li> <li>2. Thornton, 1,287</li> <li>3. Portland, 1,146</li> <li>4. Edward Little, 1,136</li> <li>5. <i>Bangor, 1,069</i></li> <li>6. Bonny Eagle, 1,034</li> <li>7. Deering, 1033</li> <li>8. Oxford Hills, 1,021</li> <li>9. South Portland, 990</li> <li>10. Noble, 940</li> <li>11. Windham, 935</li> <li>12. Scarborough, 911</li> <li>13. Massabesic, 870</li> <li>14. Gorham, 813</li> <li>15. Hampden, 749</li> <li>16. Messalonskee, 738</li> <li>17. Camden Hills, 737</li> <li>18. Westbrook, 704</li> <li>19. Skowhegan, 696</li> <li>20. Falmouth, 695</li> <li>21. Mt. Blue, 694</li> <li>22. Brewer, 693</li> <li>23. Marshwood, 665</li> <li>24. Fryeburg, 663</li> <li>25. Freeport, 629</li> <li>26. <i>Morse, 629</i></li> <li>27. Gray-New Gloucester, 591</li> <li>28. Yarmouth, 562</li> <li>29. Hermon, 556</li> <li>30. Lincoln Academy, 555</li> <li>31. Leavitt, 552</li> <li>32. Medomak Valley, 552</li> <li>33. Old Town, 536</li> <li>34. Erskine, 533</li> <li>35. Lawrence, 528</li> <li>36. Ellsworth, 522</li> <li>37. Cape Elizabeth, 511</li> <li>38. York, 503</li> <li>39. Oceanside<sup>^</sup>, 498</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <b>Poland, 493</b></li> <li>2. <b>Waterville, 484</b></li> <li>3. <b>Mount Desert Island, 476</b></li> <li>4. Belfast, 471</li> <li>5. Presque Isle, 456</li> <li>6. Foxcroft, 431</li> <li>7. Caribou, 422</li> <li>8. Spruce Mountain, 407</li> <li>9. Oak Hill, 389</li> <li>10. Cheverus, 388</li> <li>11. Houlton, 382</li> <li>12. Casco Bay, 381</li> <li>13. Winslow, 367</li> <li>14. Orono, 365</li> <li>15. Baxter Academy, 364</li> <li>16. Lisbon, 362</li> <li>17. Bucksport, 358</li> <li>18. Central, 311</li> <li>19. <i>Washington, 306</i></li> <li>20. Traip, 290</li> <li>21. Mt. View, 288</li> <li>22. Maine Central, 268</li> <li>23. George Stevens, 254</li> <li>24. Waynflete, 254</li> <li>25. Fort Kent, 251</li> <li>26. Sumner, 238</li> <li>27. Winthrop, 226</li> <li>28. <i>Maine Arts Academy School, 221</i></li> <li>29. Old Orchard, 203</li> <li>30. Carrabec, 196</li> <li>31. Monmouth, 188</li> <li>32. Madison, 167</li> <li>33. Boothbay, 163</li> <li>34. Piscataquis, 143</li> <li>35. Wiscasset, 141</li> <li>36. Stearns/Schenck, 132/102</li> <li>37. <i>CRCS Overman Academy, 124</i></li> <li>38. Searsport, 120</li> <li>39. Lee, 117</li> <li>40. Deer Isle-Stonington, 91</li> <li>41. Shead, 83</li> <li>42. <i>Washburn, 81</i></li> <li>43. Easton, 73</li> <li>44. <i>Wisdom, 70</i></li> <li>45. <i>Van Buren, 52</i></li> <li>46. Maine Coast Waldorf, 48</li> <li>47. North Haven/Vinalhaven, 25/35</li> </ol>
<p> <sup>^</sup> Asked to Class Higher  <b>Bold</b> indicates Class change from 2025  <i>Italic</i> indicates not in Festival last 3 years         </p>	

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## Participation and eligibility

A participating school must be a member of the MPA. The Director shall be an adult employed by the school who has responsibility for the production. A student-directed show must have an adult supervisor, who will sign all registration forms and be present for the entire festival weekend. All students who participate in the Maine Drama Festival performance shall be in grades 9-12 and must meet local eligibility standards. Schools with fewer than 120 students in grades 9-12 may use 8th graders.

## Classes

Schools who participate in the festival shall be divided into 2 classes. As of June 2025, those are Class A for schools of 500 students and over, and Class B for schools of 499 students and under. That cut-off shall be set by the MPA Classification Committee. The enrollment figures used are those from April 1, 2025, compiled by the Maine Department of Education. These enrollment figures are updated every two years at the same time as the athletic reclassification enrollments.

## Cooperative Teams

Two schools may form a cooperative team under MPA rules, subject to the following guidelines:

- The principals of both schools must approve the cooperative team and apply to the MPA Executive Director for permission to establish a cooperative team;
- The application for a cooperative team must be submitted in writing by January 15th. The application must include a rationale for the formation of a cooperative team and written confirmation that the school boards of both schools have approved the school's participation in the cooperative team;
- Only one of the schools may have entered the Drama Festival in the previous year;
- The combined enrollment of the two schools may not exceed the 9-12 enrollment of the largest high school in Maine.

If the Executive Director approves the cooperative team, then classification shall be based on the combined enrollment of the two schools. The name of the team must include the names of the two schools. The cooperative team will be approved for no more than a two year period. Once a cooperative team is approved, neither school may enter the Drama Festival singularly that year, however the second year of the cooperative team may be dissolved by written application to the MPA Executive Director, signed by both principals.

## Conduct

The MPA Representative has the right to ask anyone to leave the Festival if their conduct becomes overly disruptive.

## School Administrators

Each participating school is requested to have one of their local administrators present for their performance at the Festival. This administrator should make themselves known to the MPA Representative at the festival, and is responsible for any issues, with students or parents, that may arise involving their school.

## Substance Abuse

Student participants in the Maine Drama Festival who are found to be under the influence of, or in possession of, illegal substances or paraphernalia shall be immediately removed from participation in the festival. The MPA Representative, in consultation with the host school's administration and the administration of the violator's

school, shall take immediate appropriate action consistent with the host school's policies. Furthermore, depending on the circumstances of the violation, the violator's school may be disqualified from the festival. All incidents will be referred to the MPA Drama Committee for review and possible further action.

## Registration

Schools who wish to participate in the Maine Drama Festival must fill out an Intent to Participate Form by December 12th, using the link on the MPA website. Payment of \$125, along with a signed registration form, must be received at the MPA office by January 16th. Schools who bring 10 or fewer students may pay a \$100 registration fee instead of \$125. Forms received after the January deadline will be subject to a \$50 late fee.

## Content

Script selections should be reflective of the maturity level of the performers and in keeping with the family-type audience that is usually in attendance. Directors and principals must be sensitive to the appropriateness of their script choices, particularly when another host school is providing the performance venue. Shows that utilize vulgarity and/or lewd acts expressly for shock value, with no regard to theme or message, are to be avoided. Principals should also be aware that a script that makes them uncomfortable may nonetheless have great literary merit. In addition to script considerations, use of props and the onstage actions of the actors during a performance should not reflect gratuitous or inappropriate sexual content.

*Please note, schools that push the boundaries of appropriateness may be asked to explain their choices to the MPA Drama Committee. If a suitable explanation can not be provided, schools risk a one year loss of eligibility to take part in the Festival.*

## Disclaimer

Directors should be cognizant of material in their production that may be overly disturbing to audience members. Such material may include subject matter concerned with sex, violent acts or language, religion, illness/death/suicide, or anything else your experience tells you may be a potential issue to any audience member.

All directors must submit, on paper or by email, a brief description of any potentially upsetting material to the Host Director at their site prior to the start of February break so that it may be distributed to other participating directors. This must be submitted, even if it simply states that the performance contains no potentially upsetting material.

## Weapons

All weapons to be used in a performance must be physically presented to the Host Director on Tech Saturday. Weapon's use must be consistent with the policies of the Host School, as stated in the information packets they provide. During the festival, weapons must be turned over to the Host Director for storage until the performance time begins. Weapons will be returned to the Host Director after the performance, unless arrangements are made to remove them from the building before the next performance starts.

## Tech Saturday

The Saturday immediately prior to the festival is Tech Saturday. Tech Saturday is a time for schools to see the technical capabilities of the Host School, including load-in and set storage, lighting, sound, etc.

## Specials

Within the capabilities of the Host School, schools are allowed to use special lighting, sound, or other equipment. Any special equipment should be cleared with the Host Director to make sure that its use is allowed at the Host School. Special equipment that is installed during Tech Saturday must be made available to all schools. Use of special equipment by other schools can not interfere with the use of that equipment by the school that installed it. Anything not installed at Tech Saturday must be installed during the five minute setup, and removed during the five minute Strike.

## Set Size

Schools that plan on building a large set should check with their Regional Festival Tech Director to make sure that the Host Site can accommodate a large set. Until a Regional Site is known, schools should make sure all set pieces will fit through a standard 30" x 78" door. Schools should also take into account the limitations of the State Site when designing their set. Host directors will attempt to accommodate schools in a consistent manner. A director who is unfamiliar with the host site assigned is advised to visit that site or at least to ask for stage specifications before finalizing a set design.

## Festival Weekend

Regionals of the Maine Drama Festival are held on the third weekend after President's Day. States of the Maine Drama Festival are held two weekends after Regionals. Exact dates are listed on the first page of this Bulletin.

## Schedule

Individual Festival schedules will be set up by the Host Directors in coordination with the MPA Representative and should be given to directors on or before Tech Day.

A variety of schedule suggestions will be shared with Host sites to accommodate specific site circumstances.

## Tech Check

Each school gets 55 minutes for their Tech Check. There should be no other schools present during a Tech Check.

## Time limits

Each school has 5 minutes to set up the stage before their performance, 40 minutes for their performance, and 5 minutes to strike the stage after their performance. These times may not be combined.

A school exceeding the 40 minute performance time by less than 30 seconds will be assessed a penalty of 25 points on their first step score. Each additional 30 seconds over the 40 minute time limit will be an additional 25 point penalty.

## Timing

Any time limit that results in a penalty or disqualification will be timed by 2 individuals. A school must be over on both timers to be disqualified. In case of any issue with the primary timer that results in a question about the accuracy of that timer, the backup timer will be used as the primary and a school may be penalized from that single timer. When possible, host schools should ensure the use of a neutral timer for their own tech and performance times.

## Performance

Each performance shall begin with a completely dark stage and no actors in view of the judges. The festival Tech Director will check to make sure this is the case and bring any issues to the attention of the performing school who may make the appropriate changes with no penalty. Once the judges are seated, a dim wash may be used to position actors, if necessary. This will be followed by another blackout. The performance time will start on the first light or sound after the blackout. The performance time will end when the stage is back in blackout with no sound audible from the house. Directors should communicate their start and end cues with the stage managers to make sure that timing is as accurate as possible. The stage managers will communicate this information to the MPA Representative before the session of shows.

## Scoring

Each judge will score each school using the official Maine Drama Festival Scoring Rubric. These scores will be entered into the Online Scoring System, which utilizes the following formula: The sum of judge scores will be the Raw Score. The top 3 schools, or the top 5 schools where there are 6 or more schools in a single class, will advance to the second step. In the second step, each school will be ranked by the score of a single judge. No school will receive lower than a 3 in the second step. The sum of the rankings from all judges will be the rank score. The lowest rank score will be the winner. In the case of a tie on the raw score, all of the tied scores will advance to the second step. In the case of a tie on the rank score, the highest Total Production Impact score will be the winner. In the case of a tie on Total Production Impact, judges will be asked to rank the tied schools to determine a winner.

## Critiques

Each school will have a critique session with the judges. Each judge will have 3 minutes to give their feedback. The students will then have 3 minutes to ask questions of the judges. The question and answer time ends if there are no questions from the students. Each critique is open only to students who took part in the production, and all directors and student directors who have a show at that festival.

## Disqualifications

A school that is disqualified will not be eligible for any school based awards, including advancement to the next level of the festival. Eligibility for student awards will be unaffected. Judges will not be told of a disqualification. When in doubt, the MPA Representative will consult with the Festival MDC Representative. If they are still unable to determine if a violation has occurred, then they may consult with the Chair of the MPA Drama Committee and the MPA Drama Festival Coordinator. The MPA Representative shall have final say over a school's disqualification.

The Festival Technical Director will be responsible for preventing disqualifications due to technical errors. However, the Festival Technical Director is not responsible for malfunctions in equipment provided by

participating schools. If directors do not follow instructions from the Festival Technical Director or Festival Host, the school may be disqualified.

Once the Festival Tech Director has called clear, the performance is considered to be in compliance. If a hidden item (such as a prop or piece of equipment) that was not reasonably visible to either the school or the Festival Tech Director is discovered after clear has been called, the item does not affect the judges' viewing of the performance, and does not impede another school from preparing/performing their show, it will not result in penalty or disqualification.

#### Time violations

A tech check over 55:00 minutes, setup or strike over 5:00 minutes will result in a disqualification. A performance over 40:00 minutes will result in a point penalty.

#### Fire/flame/pyrotechnics

Use of any live flame or pyrotechnic device will result in disqualification.

#### Liquid over 5 gallons

Use of more than 5 gallons of any liquid will result in disqualification.

#### Live animals

Use of live animals on stage will result in disqualification.

#### Weapons violation

Use of a weapon in a production that was not handled in accordance with the rules on weapons will result in disqualification.

#### Ineligible student/adult

Any participation in the 40 minute performance by any adult or student who does not meet eligibility rules will result in disqualification.

#### Substance Abuse

The use or possession of illegal substances by one or more students participating in the festival may result in disqualification, at the discretion of the MPA Representative at the site.

#### Musical theatre

A script designated in a play catalog as "Musical Theater," "Musical," "Play with Music," etc., or an original play that would be categorized as such, shall not be permitted whether or not the music from that play is used in the production. Music and/or choreographed movement may be used to enhance a non-musical production. Using the "book" from a musical, however, is not allowed even though the music itself from the show is not used. It is not the intention of the festival to perform musical theater. If a director is unsure of the status of a play, he/she should consult with the MDC President in advance of committing to the play. When in any doubt, written confirmation from the publishing house that the piece in question is not musical theater should be secured before committing to the production, since such written permission shall be the final authority if the production is questioned.

## Copyright violation

Shows produced or cut without permission will be disqualified. Schools must bring proof of performance rights with them to Tech Saturday if they are producing a show which requires them.

## Protests

Any director who is participating in a festival and who feels that the MPA Representative has missed a disqualification may submit a written protest to the MPA Representative within 30 minutes of the conclusion of the block when the disqualification occurred. If the MPA Representative determines that a violation did occur, then the school that committed the violation will be disqualified.

## Attendance at other shows

All students who are not actively preparing for their performance are expected to attend all other performances during the festival weekend. Schools that choose not to participate in the full festival by skipping the other performances risk a one year loss of eligibility to take part in the festival. In the event of special circumstances, schools must get approval to miss other productions from the festival host, prior to the beginning of the first production if possible.

## Advancing to States

The top school in each class will be selected as a Finalist and will be allowed to compete at the State level. In the case where a regional has 6 or more schools in the same class, the top two schools will be selected as Finalists. Each regional shall also name a runner-up, who will participate in the State Festival in the event that the Finalist is unable to. If both the Finalist and the runner-up are unable to take part in the State Festival, the next highest school by raw score will advance to the State Festival. Schools will have until noon on the Tuesday after regionals to declare their intent to advance.

## Advancing to New England's

Each year two schools will be selected to participate in the New England Drama Festival. To be eligible for New England's, a school must bring their New England Participation Form, signed by the director, principal, and superintendent, to the State Festival and present it to the MDC Representative. Schools who do not submit this participation form prior to the awards ceremony will not be allowed to represent Maine at New England's, regardless of the final standings. If eligible, the winners in Class A and Class B will be selected to perform at the New England Drama Festival. If the winner is unable to attend, the runner-up from that class will be selected. If the runner-up from that class is unable to attend, the next highest school by raw score in that class will advance to New England's. If no Class B school is able to participate, then two Class A schools will be selected to attend. The final determination about which schools represent Maine shall be made by the Maine Drama Council President in consultation with the Representatives to the New England Drama Council for Maine.

## Judging

Each Festival will be assigned three judges. In the event that a judge is unable to attend, a Festival may run with two judges. The judges will evaluate the performances using the Maine Drama Festival Scoring Rubric. Judges will not be involved in the scoring process beyond the completion of their own rubric, unless a tie needs

to be broken. Judges should rely on their own observations in deciding their scores and *will not* discuss the performances they have seen. Judges may change their score for any performance until 15 minutes after the final critique. Judges should take the stage after all the performances for the awards ceremony. Judges should know the results of the festival before they take the stage.

Schools that perform plays written or directed by students should not be given special consideration in the scoring.

## All-Festival Cast

Each judge may nominate performers to the All-Festival Cast to recognize outstanding acting. Anyone nominated by two or more judges is automatically selected to receive All-Festival Cast standing. Anyone nominated by only one judge may be discussed by all three judges to see if a consensus can be formed.

## Special Commendation

Judges may award Special Commendations to recognize any portion of any performance *done by students*. Care should be taken that these commendations are not given for trivial matters, such as Best Kiss, Best One Liner, etc. Suggested award categories are: Ensemble Acting, Set Design, Scenic Art, Set Construction, Lighting Design, Sound Design, Special Effects, Prop Design/Construction, Costume Design/Construction, Make-up, Choreography, Stage Combat, Overall Technical Excellence, Original Music by a Student, Student Direction, Student-Written Script, etc.

## Awards

There will be an awards ceremony at the close of each festival at which the All Festival Cast and Special Commendations awards will be announced by the Judges. Certificates for those awards will be e-mailed to individual schools after the Festival. At the regionals, the winner and runner-up in each class will receive trophies. At the state festival, the winner and runner-up will receive plaques.