Washington County School District
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Administrative Letter A120

Student Safety in High School Theaters

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Date: January 1, 2017

FROM: Larry Bergeson, Superintendent

REGARDING: Student Safety in High School Theaters

This letter is drafted to clearly define the Washington County School District's (WCSD) position on several common safety concerns that are not otherwise addressed in district policy. When WCSD personnel are responsible to supervise students in theaters, they must ensure that the protocols addressed in this letter are both understood and enforced. Additionally, the following list should not be considered comprehensive and may be added to as practices or concerns arise that present inherent safety risks to staff or students.

GENERAL SAFETY

- Theater teachers must administer an orientation addressing how to properly utilize powered equipment, fly systems, theatrical electrics, theatrical sound systems, and other hazardous processes for all students enrolled in technical theater classes, or who may be authorized to utilize theatrical equipment.
    - Orientation should be administered *before* students are permitted to engage in such processes.

EGRESS

- Hallways should not be utilized as storage rooms – even temporarily. Egress hall width must be maintained wall to wall.
- Pursuant to NFPA Chapter 2.5.6.3 theatrical auditoriums, small theaters, gymnasiums, lecture halls, etc. must not have additional seating added to aisle ways (folding chairs for example). Aisle width must never be reduced to accommodate additional seating.
- Pursuant to OSHA CFR 1910.37(b)(2) each exit must be clearly visible and marked by a sign reading "Exit."

- Pursuant to OSHA CFR 1910.37(a)(3) Exit routes must be free and unobstructed. No materials or equipment may be placed, either permanently or temporarily, within the exit route.

WEAPONS

- Real weapons such as knives, swords, guns, etc. may never be used as props
- Prop weapons such as knives, swords, guns, etc. should be cleared by the school administrator before use.

ELECTRICAL

- Household type extension cords with only two prongs are inappropriate and may not be utilized in WCSD facilities.
- Equipment that utilizes three-pronged power cords must have all three prongs in order to operate. In the event that the grounding prong on an electrical cable becomes damaged, the equipment should be taken out of service until the defective cable can be replaced.
- It is never appropriate to utilize cables that have been spliced together using electrical tape in a WCSD facility.

FIRE SAFETY

- The use of pyrotechnics in WCSD auditoriums is prohibited.
  - This includes, but is not limited to open flames and fireworks
- WCSD theatre professionals are prohibited from adjusting, disabling, or otherwise tampering with fire panels.
- Access to fire panels is restricted to approved personnel.
  - With rare exception, teachers are not considered approved personnel.
  - Students are never considered approved.

WELDING

- Students, parents, and volunteers are prohibited from welding in school district facilities outside of automotive and welding shops.
  - Auditoriums, parking lots, technical theater classrooms and hallways are not considered welding shops.
- Except when in use by a custodial or maintenance professional for facility maintenance, welding materials will not be stored within a theater or technical theater shop.
- When welding on WCSD grounds, students, parents, and volunteers are prohibited from welding without the direct supervision of a welding or shop teacher.

FALL PROTECTION

- Students exposed to significant falling hazards must stay within “safe zones”
  - Safe zones are defined as areas behind handrails, areas that are clearly marked with tape or

paint, catwalks, etc.

- Should a student need to cross beyond the safety of a handrail, to hang theatrical lighting for example, they must wear a full body harness with a rip-stop lanyard and a point of tie off that can withstand a 5000 lb. shock load.
- Pursuant to OSHA's general duty clause, hard to see fall hazards such as the edges of theatrical stages must have glow tape affixed so as to clearly define the edge of the stage in dim lighting.

HOUSEKEEPING

- Pursuant to WCSD policy 1500.3.1.10 and OSHA 29 CFR 1910.22(a)(1), all places of employment, passageways, storerooms and service rooms shall be kept clean, orderly, and in a sanitary condition.
- Theatrical technical rooms must dispose of excess material remnants, oil-soaked rags, sawdust, metal shavings, salvage, debris, etc. that could create a fire hazard, impede egress or access.
- Pursuant to OSHA 159(c)(10), excess material, remnants, salvage and debris should not be stacked within 18 inches of the ceiling.
- Excess material, remnants, salvage and debris should be stacked in a clean an orderly manner.
- Excess material, remnants, salvage or debris should be discarded if there is insufficient storage space.

VOLUNTEERS

- Pursuant to WCSD Policy 1105, all WCSD Volunteers must fill out form 544, Volunteer Orientation and Agreement.
    - Pursuant to Utah HB175, volunteers who may have significant unsupervised access to students must submit to a criminal background check and provide references for each qualifying position in the last 3 years.
- Within the context of theatre education, a volunteer may include, but not be limited to the following:
    - A vocal coach
    - An individual who assists in the construction of theatrical sets
    - An individual who assists in painting theatrical sets, signage, auditorium stage, etc.
    - An individual who applies make-up
    - An individual who creates theatrical costumes
    - An individual who transports students or set pieces
- WCSD students are never considered volunteers

MOBILE EQUIPMENT

- Pursuant to WCSD Administrative Letter 114, students and non-employees are prohibited from using mobile equipment. This includes, but is not limited to the following:
    - Forklifts, man lifts, cherry pickers, scissor lifts, Gators, four-wheelers, golf carts, riding lawnmowers, etc.

- Pursuant to WCSD Administrative Letter 114, only WCSD personnel who have been trained and authorized to operate mobile equipment may access lights, set pieces, props, and other items that

may require a lift in order to reach
    - Regardless of training, students may never be authorized to operate mobile equipment

LADDER SAFETY

- Always maintain 3-points of contact (two hands and a foot, or two feet and a hand) when climbing. Keep your body near the middle of the step and always face the ladder while climbing
- Never use the top step/rung of an a-frame ladder as a step/rung
- An extension or straight ladder used to access an elevated surface must extend at least 3 feet above the point of support and it must be tied off at the top
- Do not stand on the three top rungs of a straight, single or extension ladder

Employees who willfully disregard established safety policies and procedures have no expectation of liability coverage. When working within the course of employment, WCSD personnel who supervise students have a duty to ensure student safety. Failure to abide by or enforce these safety procedures may result in disciplinary action.

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Larry Bergeson
Superintendent
Washington County School District