

Welcome to the first iteration of the EdTA Rapid Response Advocacy Center toolbox. A work in progress, it is intended to provide support for teachers seeking to "make the case" for the continued presence of their school theatre programs in the COVID-19 era. The documents provided here--presentations, fact sheets, and templates—should get you started. In most cases, you are welcome to adapt, borrow, and re-imagine everything that's included here—the goal is to provide you whatever you need to create the most persuasive and successful case for maintaining your program.

In the future, along with redesigned web pages, we'll be adding new support content, including materials created by EdTA's Advocacy Leadership Network.

For the moment, here is a summary of what you'll find in the toolbox:

**The Need to Know ads**—This series of four-color PDF ads include research-based facts about the value and status of theatre education. Suitable for digital or print sharing, they are a particularly valuable resource that can be included in digital or print show programs or as part of a virtual presentation before a school decision making body.

**The Do's and Don'ts of Advocacy**—There are fundamental things to do and say (and not say) when making an advocacy "ask." These do and don't lists offer guidance on such things as the need to know your facts and figures and preparing an elevator speech, and things not to say, such as "Your cutting my program because I didn't give your daughter the lead in *Millie* last year."

**Ten Skills that Every Student Learns**—We all know that theatre nurtures the four Cs of creativity, communication, collaboration, critical thinking, but what about the other life and career skills that students learn from theatre experiences. Based on the 2013 21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills Map, this list details a broader list of those skills.

**Economic Impact Form**—Your theatre program is a community asset for multiple reasons. One of those is that, when you produce a show, you generate economic activity—you buy lumber and fabric; rent microphones and other tech hardware; order pizza and drinks for cast and crew; and prompt your audience to buy tickets and transportation, eat out, and pay caregivers. This form is designed to help you figure out the annual economic impact of your program.

**Program and Student Achievement Form**—You have a successful theatre program and good news to share with school decision makers, parents, legislators, and others interested in positive educational outcomes. This form can help you track those successes annually to help you make a powerful statement about the value of theatre education to your school, its students, and the community at large.

**Theatre Education FAQs**—Sometimes a one-page handout that supplies straightforward facts and figures is needed, particularly when time and attention is short in an advocacy meeting. These basic research-based factoids state some fundamental academic benefits of theatre education and challenging reality numbers regarding teacher professional development opportunities and student access and equity to the art in schools across America.

**Theatre in Our Schools—31 Facts**—Every year in March, the Educational Theatre Association celebrates our subject through showcased events created by schools and their students. The celebration also uses social media throughout the month to highlight research that confirms the value of theatre education by posting a fact a day. Here are those facts, with links to the source research, suitable for whenever you need them to support your advocacy pitch.

**Customizable Conference Power Point**—This two-part Power Point presentation makes the case for why theatre education still matters in the COVID-19 era of education. Specifically designed to be adapted and presented at EdTA Chapter Conferences by your Advocacy Leadership Network representative, the EdTA director of educational policy, or any designated Chapter member. In part 1, the presentation details the fundamental talking points that teachers need to know to support their advocacy on behalf of their programs in the new education normal. Part 2 offers some step-by-step guidance regarding who they should direct their advocacy to, what they should say, and notes the availability of many of the resources listed here.

**Customizable Decision Maker Power Point**—This slide deck is intended for presentation before decision makers—principals, legislators, curriculum directors, etc—and features theatre and arts-based data and links to seminal support documents, including the “Arts Education is Essential” statement and EdTA’s *Recommendations for Reopening School Theatre Programs* guide. The deck also includes a faux slide in which teachers can add specific strengths and highlights about their own programs and students.

**Dear Ms. Smith Editable Administrator Letter**—It’s understood that theatre programs, like all of education, are facing budget cutbacks. Even before you convene a meeting with your administrator or school board, consider writing a letter that “makes the case” for the value of your discipline within the broader educational landscape of your school. This editable letter emphasizes theatre’s role in nurturing the social and emotional needs of students, lists skills that every theatre student learns, and includes a faux list of imagined program and student successes that you can replace with information about your own program.

**SWOT Exercise**—An analysis of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats—a SWOT—is a useful strategy to help you plan a short- and long-term advocacy plan. You can do this independently or include it as a facilitated exercise as part of Chapter conference or professional development convenings. There are four elements to our SWOT Exercise:

1. The *Exercise Power Point* that list four fundamental advocacy steps that can be leveraged as part of a SWOT analysis
2. The *Exercise Template*, a four-cell page that participants can enter in their analysis information.

3. The *Actional Promotional and Growing Template* in which participants can begin to enter in their short- and long-term advocacy plans, based on what they learned in their SWOT analysis.
4. The *Actional Promotion and Growing Your Program* one-pager listing some additional tips that participants might consider implementing as part of their advocacy plans

Two other very important documents that appears elsewhere in these advocacy pages: EdTA's [Recommendations for Reopening School Theatre Programs](#). This guide, drawing on multiple sources, offers suggestions for how schools might safely restart their theatre programs, whether in-person, virtually, or in a hybrid model; and the [Arts Education is Essential](#) document signed by nearly 70 national arts and education organizations.