

DPAC
RISING STAR
—AWARDS—

presented by  North
Carolina



HANDBOOK

2026 / 2027 School Year

The DPAC Rising Star Awards are made possible by the generous support of



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Welcome Message

From DPAC's Director of Community Engagement



Megan Rindoks

Welcome to our Sweet 16!

It is with great excitement that DPAC celebrates the 16th season of the DPAC Rising Star Awards (Rising Stars).

Since this program began, Rising Stars has grown and evolved in so many ways, but our mission has remained the same: to celebrate the incredible work happening in high school musical theatre programs across central North Carolina and the students and educators who bring those productions to life.

Each season, I am inspired by the talent we meet, the creativity we see on stages across our region, and the passion that our participating schools pour into their work. Whether you are stepping into Rising Stars for the first time or have been part of this program for many years, we are so glad you're here.

This handbook is designed to guide you through the season, answer your questions, and help you make the most of your Rising Stars experience. But above all, I hope this program gives you opportunities to celebrate your work, connect with fellow theatre-makers, and feel proud of everything you create along the way.

Here's to a very sweet 16th season filled with creativity, collaboration, growth, and plenty of unforgettable performances. DPAC is honored to be a part of your school year, and we can't wait to cheer you on!

Quick Start

Three Steps, Deadlines & Where To Find Help

#1

CHECK WHETHER YOUR SCHOOL AND SHOW CAN PARTICIPATE

Please reference Pages 6-7 of this handbook for more information on eligibility requirements.

- Is your school in an eligible county?
- Does your production fall within Rising Stars' adjudication window?
- Is your musical on the Jimmy Awards' approved list? If not, contact DPAC before ruling yourself out.

#2

KNOW WHAT PARTICIPATION INVOLVES

Please reference Pages 8-9 of this handbook for a complete list of participation agreements.

- Registration and participation is **free** for schools and students.
- Participating high school musicals provide complimentary tickets for Rising Stars judges.
- Participating high school musicals designate one adult representative to submit all application materials to DPAC.
- Participating high school musicals agree to submitting application materials by each required deadline.

#3

FOLLOW THE THREE STEP APPLICATION PROCESS

Please reference Pages 14-18 of this handbook for more details on each step of the application process.

- **Step 1: Register Your Musical** (due December 1, 2026)
- **Step 2: Prepare For Adjudication** (due two weeks before your opening performance)
- **Step 3: Wrap Up Your Application** (due two weeks following your closing performance, or by April 18, 2027, whichever comes first)

About

Learn more about the DPAC Rising Star Awards



The DPAC Rising Star Awards (Rising Stars) celebrates outstanding achievements in high school musical theatre throughout central North Carolina. Since 2010, this program has focused attention on the meaningful work being done both on and off the stage by dedicated teachers and students.

Area high schools with theater programs are welcome to register for participation in the early fall. Then, throughout the school year, DPAC sends adjudicators to review musical productions presented by these participating high schools.

The Rising Stars judges who attend school musicals are tasked with identifying the biggest successes made each season, and they are also responsible for selecting 24 student performers as “finalists”. Finalists participate in roughly three weeks of coaching and rehearsals leading up to the DPAC Rising Star Awards ceremony, an event that takes place on DPAC’s stage each May.

The awards ceremony showcases the finalists’ incredible talent, includes a full student-run tech team, and highlights a large ensemble consisting of students from each participating high school. Awards are distributed all evening long, recognizing student talent and overall production achievements made by participating school musicals.

The awards ceremony is adjudicated live by a panel of three esteemed ceremony judges who determine which two student finalists are named “Best Actor” and “Best Actress”. These two winning students advance to participate nationally at the National High School Musical Theater Awards® (also known as the Jimmy Awards®) in New York City.

The DPAC Rising Star Awards are made possible by Blue Cross and Blue Shield of North Carolina.

About

Learn more about the National High School Musical Theatre Awards®

The DPAC Rising Star Awards are a member of the National High School Musical Theatre Awards® (NHSMTA®), affectionately known as the Jimmy Awards®, named for Broadway impresario James Nederlander Sr. This is a national program that unites high school musical theatre awards programs from across the country.

The Jimmy Awards® impacts over 180,000 students annually from 2,600 high schools who participate in high school musical theatre competitions sponsored by over 55 professional theatres (like DPAC) throughout the US.



Nominees selected by regional awards programs (like Rising Stars) travel to New York City to participate in the national program each June. Nominees undergo a rigorous theatre intensive that includes coaching sessions, training, and rehearsals led by some of Broadway's most accomplished professionals, culminating in an extraordinary one-night-only talent showcase on the Minskoff Theatre stage where Disney's *The Lion King* performs year round.

The Jimmy Awards® have been the catalyst for more than \$9 million in educational scholarships, and over 90 alumni have performed on Broadway and/or in National Tours since this program began in 2009.

Based on feedback provided to NHSMTA®, school administrators across the country are directing more human and financial resources to improve the quality of arts education in their districts as a result of this program. This renewed enthusiasm for the performing arts in high schools is also helping invigorate local theatres and the communities they serve.

The Jimmy Awards® and the DPAC Rising Star Awards offer incredible exposure to young theatre artists, and have the potential to catapult the careers of Broadway's future stars.



MISSION

The DPAC Rising Star Awards celebrate and elevate excellence in high school musical theatre across our region. Through recognition, educational experiences, and community connection, we honor the students, educators, and creative teams whose talent and dedication bring stories to life on stage.

Our mission is to empower students by providing hands-on opportunities both on stage and off, and to inspire the next generation of theater artists, teachers, and advocates by shining a spotlight on the transformative power of the performing arts in schools.

GOALS

- 1) To encourage, recognize, and honor excellence in high school musical theater performances across central North Carolina.
- 2) To provide quality educational experiences for Rising Stars student finalists, technicians, and ensemble members.
- 3) To grow advocates for arts education across central North Carolina.

COST

Thanks to Blue Cross and Blue Shield of North Carolina, our volunteer judges, and other important community partnerships and sponsors, the DPAC Rising Star Awards program is **free** for participating schools and students.

School Eligibility

Rising Stars is open to public and private high schools producing musical theater in central North Carolina. Please consider the following three eligibility guidelines before registering your musical. Schools must meet the first two requirements to participate. The third determines eligibility for Best Actor and Best Actress nominations.



THE SCHOOL MUST BE LOCATED WITHIN DPAC'S DESIGNATED REGION

High schools in the following counties are eligible for participation this season:

Alamance, Caswell, Chatham, Cumberland, Davidson, Durham, Edgecombe, Forsyth, Franklin, Granville, Greene, Guilford, Halifax, Harnett, Hoke, Johnston, Lee, Montgomery, Moore, Nash, Orange, Person, Randolph, Rockingham, Sampson, Stokes, Vance, Wake, Warren, Wayne, Wilson.

If your school's county is not listed above, we're sorry that we cannot expand our region this season. Our geographic boundaries help us make travel manageable for the volunteer judges who attend school productions and for students selected as finalists, who must travel to DPAC regularly for an intensive rehearsal schedule. For students living more than 80 miles away, those repeated trips can be especially demanding and difficult.



THE MUSICAL MUST BE SCHEDULED WITHIN THE ADJUDICATION WINDOW

For the 2026/2027 season, high school musical theater productions must take place between October 5, 2026 and April 18, 2027. Due to Rising Stars' schedule and timeline, we are unable to review any musical productions that take place outside of this window.



Student Eligibility

Rising Stars celebrates student performance and technical achievements. Use these guidelines to learn if your students are eligible for nominations in any of those awards categories.



TO NOMINATE STUDENTS FOR A PERFORMANCE AWARD CATEGORY, THE MUSICAL AND ROLE(S) MUST BE DEEMED 'ELIGIBLE' BY THE JIMMY AWARDS®

In order for student performers to be eligible for a finalist position, they must also be eligible for Jimmy Awards® participation. For this reason, each participating high school who wishes to nominate their students for Best Actor or Best Actress awards categories must select a show that has been approved on the national level. While High School Versions and Teen Editions of musicals are almost always approved, please note that Junior versions of shows are never qualified under the Jimmy Awards® guidelines. The complete and current list of qualifying musicals can be found at jimmyawards.com or by clicking [here](#).

Is a musical or role not listed? Reach out to Megan Rindoks at mrindoks@dpacnc.com to learn about submitting an appeal.



TO NOMINATE STUDENTS FOR TECH & PRODUCTION AWARDS CATEGORIES, YOU MUST FOLLOW THESE GUIDELINES

Student Costume Design: A school may nominate a student, or group of students, for this awards category. The student(s) must be fully responsible for the design and build of at least one prominent costume featured in your show. If they are responsible for multiple costumes, one costume must be chosen as the nominated costume for review.

Student Lighting Design: A school may nominate a student, or group of students, who were solely responsible for the lighting design of either one complete Act of your musical, or for the entire production. The student(s) must be responsible for the design and execution of the lighting design.

Student Choreography: A school may nominate a student, or group of students, who were solely responsible for the choreography of at least one group number. If they choreographed multiple pieces, one number must be submitted for adjudication.

Student Set Design: A school may nominate a student, or group of students, who were solely responsible for at least one prominent set featured in your show. The student(s) must have been solely responsible for the design and have led any building efforts. It is okay for adults to assist with the build, as long as it's following student direction. If your show uses multiple sets, you must specify which set is student designed.

Student Orchestra: A school may nominate their orchestra for this category so long as there are no tracks used in the production, and the majority of the musicians are students currently enrolled in that high school.

Participation Agreement

By registering to participate in the DPAC Rising Star Awards, area high schools agree to the following things:

#1 SELECT ONE ADULT REPRESENTATIVE AS DPAC'S CONTACT

- Each registered musical will be asked to select one main point-of-contact, or designated school representative. This should be a responsible adult with access to and knowledge of the high school theater program producing the musical, and is most often a theater teacher or director.
- The school representative will be responsible for submitting all application items by the deadlines provided.
- While all application items must be submitted by the school representative, DPAC highly recommends and encourages delegating work to students involved in your production so that the workload is manageable.

#2 PROVIDE COMPLIMENTARY TICKETS FOR JUDGES

- The Monday before your opening performance, DPAC will email your designated school representative with an exact ticket request, and will always ask for tickets to be placed at will-call for pick up.
- Rising Star judges are allowed to bring a plus-one, but no judge will ever request more than 2 tickets total.
- DPAC will never require a school to provide more than 12 complimentary tickets.
- DPAC will always send at least three judges to review your show, and those judges will be spread out amongst more than one showing.

#3 MEET DEADLINES

- Rising Stars has a three step application process with various deadlines that often depend on your musical's opening and closing performance dates.
- By registering to participate, you should understand what those deadlines are and be prepared to meet them.
- DPAC will provide email reminders and additional resources to help make meeting these deadlines as simple as possible for your program.

#4

REFRAIN FROM DOUBLE CASTING

- Double casting is almost always **not allowed** for musicals participating in Rising Stars.
- Having multiple casts almost always complicates the judging process, as judges are usually tasked with scoring specific student performances. When there are multiple casts, it's hard for DPAC to know which shows are appropriate for our judges to attend in order to submit scores for each nominated student.
- If you must double cast your production, please reach out to Megan Rindoks at mrindoks@dpacnc.com before you register to discuss how arrangements might be made that keep things fair for schools, students, and the judging process.

#5

UNDERSTAND WHAT'S AUTOMATIC, AND WHAT'S OPTIONAL

We recognize that, especially for first-time participants, the Rising Stars process can feel overwhelming. A lot of what this program offers is optional for participating school musicals, and we want to make sure that is very clear this season.

Automatic

- By registering, your musical will automatically be scored for school production awards categories, which includes: Best Musical and Best Ensemble awards categories.

Optional

- It's up to each registered musical to nominate specific students for any awards category, including student performance categories and student tech and production awards categories.
- Schools have the option of submitting students to perform in the Rising Stars ensemble.
- Schools have the option of encouraging students to apply to be on the Student Tech Team or to be one of the Student Reporters.

#6

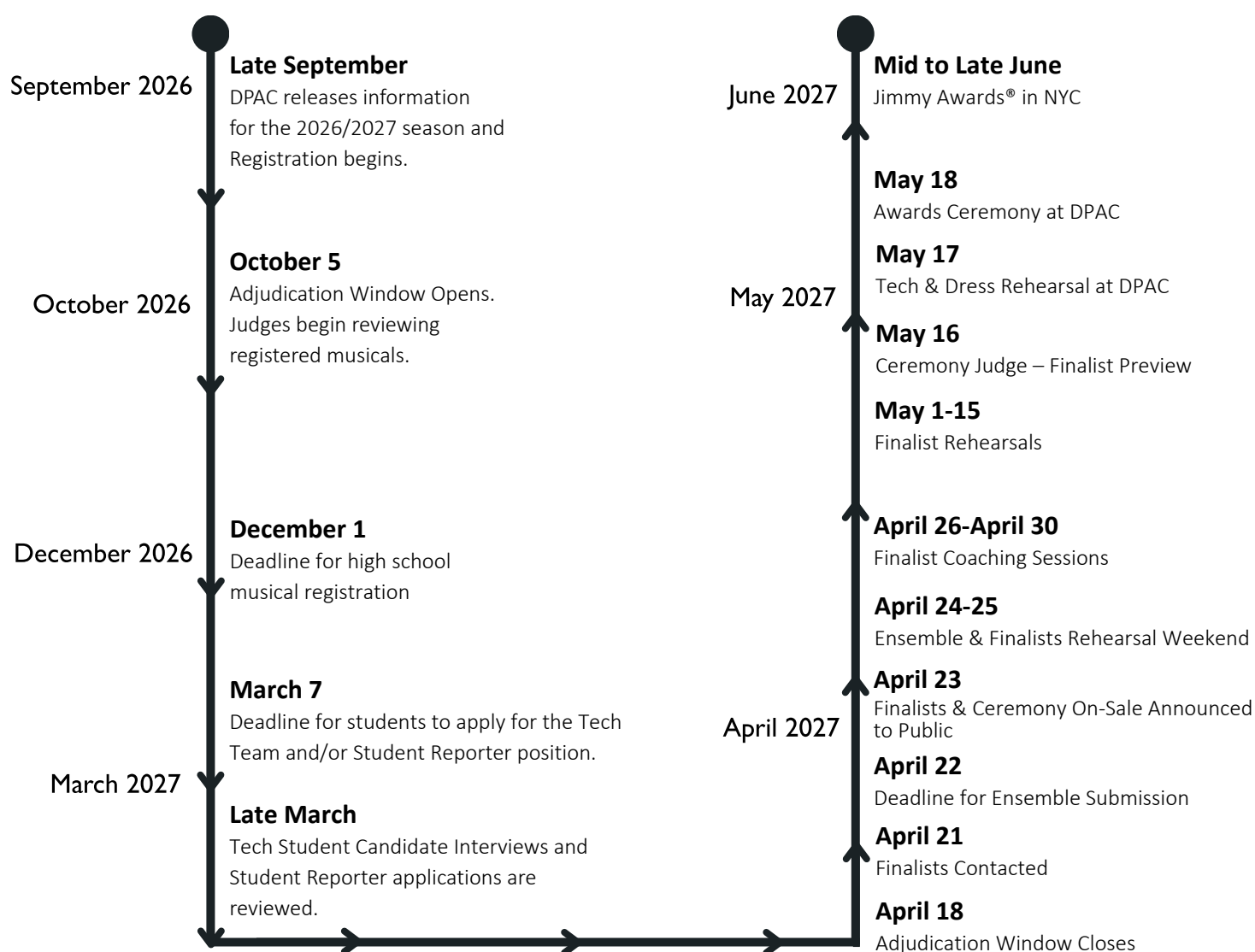
UNDERSTAND FINALIST ANNOUNCEMENTS, AWARDS CEREMONY PROTOCOLS, AND THE SHARING OF FEEDBACK

- Rising Stars will announce finalists in all awards categories no later than Friday, April 23. All school representatives will be informed of results prior to this announcement, as will all students who selected as a finalist in any awards category.
- Each school will receive 10 complimentary tickets to the awards ceremony, and a link to purchase additional seats with a discount. The 2027 on-sale date is TBD, and will be communicated clearly with all participating schools when the time comes.
- Winners in all awards categories will be announced live at the awards ceremony.
- The awards ceremony is a General Admission event. Seats are always first-come, first-serve.
- Detailed feedback direct from Rising Stars judges will be compiled and shared with the designated school representative following the awards ceremony. It's up to the school representative to pass this along to colleagues, students, or anyone else involved in the production.

This Season at a Glance

2026 / 2027 School Year – Important Dates

- The adjudication window for participating productions opens on **October 5, 2026**.
- The adjudication window for participating productions closes on **April 18, 2027**.
- The 16th annual DPAC Rising Star Awards ceremony is **Tuesday, May 18, 2027**.



Awards Categories

The DPAC Rising Star Awards recognizes achievements made by student performers, student technicians, and made by the collective school production.

SCHOOL PRODUCTION AWARDS

Each participating high school musical will automatically be adjudicated for the school musical production awards categories simply by registering. The school musical production categories take into consideration each musical's budget.

- Tier 1 includes schools with a budget of \$9,999 and under.
- Tier 2 includes schools with a budget of \$10,000 and up.

School Production Categories:

- Best Ensemble (Tier 1)
- Best Ensemble (Tier 2)
- Best Musical (Tier 1)
- Best Musical (Tier 2)

STUDENT PERFORMER FINALIST AWARDS

Each participating high school musical is invited to nominate up to 4 student performers for adjudication. These nominated students are eligible to become one of 24 student performer finalists, also known as "Best Actor" and "Best Actor" finalists, who are all in the running for these awards.

It is **OPTIONAL** to nominate student performers for finalist consideration.

Student Finalist Awards Categories:

- Best Actor
- Best Actress
- Best Dancer
- DPAC Shining Star

STUDENT TECH & PRODUCTION AWARDS

Each participating high school musical who places students in tech/production leadership positions are invited to nominate those students for adjudication.

It is **OPTIONAL** to nominate students in any of these awards categories.

Student Tech & Production Awards Categories:

- Best Student Costume Design
- Best Student Lighting Design
- Best Student Choreography
- Best Student Set Design
- Best Student Orchestra

RISING STARS ENSEMBLE AWARDS

Each participating high school is invited to send 2 students of their choice to perform in the Rising Stars ensemble.

It is **OPTIONAL** to submit students to the Rising Stars ensemble. All students submitted will automatically be nominated for this awards category.

Rising Stars Ensemble Awards Category:

- Outstanding Performance in an Ensemble Award (4)

Awards Defined

Award Descriptions, Scholarships, and Prizes

SCHOOL PRODUCTION AWARDS

Each participating musical will automatically be adjudicated for these awards categories.

- Tier 1 includes musicals with a budget of \$9,999 and under.
- Tier 2 includes musicals with a budget of \$10,000 and up.

Best Ensemble (Tier 1 and Tier 2): Selected by Rising Stars lead judges, two school musicals (one school musical from each budget tier) will receive the Best Ensemble award. These winning productions will receive recognition during the awards ceremony, \$1,000 in scholarships, and a trophy.

Best Musical (Tier 1 and Tier 2): Selected by Rising Stars lead judges, two school musicals (one school musical from each budget tier) will receive the Best Musical award. These winning productions will receive recognition during the awards ceremony, \$1,000 in scholarships, and a trophy.

STUDENT PERFORMER FINALIST AWARDS

Every participating musical has the option to nominate up to 4 student performers for finalist consideration. Rising Stars judges will attend each registered production and submit scores based on students' live performances. In the spring, lead judges will review submitted scores to determine 24 student finalists. These finalists will be eligible for the following awards:

Best Actor & Best Actress: Selected by the DPAC Rising Star Awards Ceremony Judges for their vocal, acting, and dancing abilities displayed during their performance on the DPAC stage. These two students receive \$2,000 in academic scholarships, a trophy, and an all-expense paid trip to NYC for the Jimmy Awards®.

Best Dancer: Selected by the Rising Stars creative team through observation throughout the rehearsal process, this student is recognized for their dance technique and performance quality and receives \$500 in scholarships and a trophy.

DPAC Shining Star: Selected by the group of 24 finalists themselves, this student is recognized for their positivity and enthusiastic spirit displayed throughout the rehearsal process. This student receives \$500 in scholarships and a trophy.

STUDENT TECH & PRODUCTION AWARDS

Each participating musical has the option of nominating students who took on leadership roles in certain technical areas of their production, including:

Best Student Costume Design: Selected by Rising Stars lead judges, this student (or students) will be recognized for their technical abilities and their creative and appropriate approach to costume design. This student will receive recognition during the awards ceremony and a trophy.

Best Student Lighting Design: Selected by the Rising Stars lead judges, this student (or students) will be recognized for their technical abilities and their creative and appropriate approach to lighting design. This student will receive recognition during the awards ceremony and a trophy.

Best Student Choreography: Selected by Rising Stars lead judges, this student (or students) will be recognized for their creative and appropriate approach to choreography, including the execution by cast members. This student will receive recognition during the awards ceremony and a trophy.

Best Student Set Design: Selected by Rising Stars lead judges, this student (or students) will be recognized for their creative and appropriate approach to set design, including set transitions. This student will receive recognition during the awards ceremony and a trophy.

Best Student Orchestra: Selected by Rising Stars lead judges, this student orchestra will be recognized for their excellent ability to accompany the vocal performances of cast members, and for being true collaborators to the story telling of the overall musical. This student orchestra will receive recognition during the awards ceremony and a trophy.

RISING STARS ENSEMBLE AWARDS

Each participating high school has the option of sending up to 2 students to perform on DPAC's stage as a part of the Rising Stars ensemble. Schools will be asked to submit ensemble students shortly after DPAC has announced student performer finalists in the spring. Ensemble students can be any high school student of the school's choice, but they must be able to attend rehearsals, and they cannot also be a Best Actor or Best Actress finalist. Students participating in the Rising Stars ensemble will be eligible for the following award:

Outstanding Performance in an Ensemble: Selected by the DPAC Rising Star Awards' creative team following the rehearsal process, four ensemble students will be recognized for their dedication, preparedness, attitude, and overall performances. These students will receive recognition live during the awards ceremony and a trophy.

Registration & Application Process

The DPAC Rising Star Awards has a **three step process** for participating musicals.

#1

REGISTER YOUR MUSICAL

Due by December 1, 2026.

Tell us you're participating! This first step is quick and simply informs DPAC that you'd like for judges to attend a musical production at your school this season. Submit Step 1 by [CLICKING HERE](#).

#2

PREPARE FOR ADJUDICATION

Due two weeks prior to your school musical's opening performance.

Tell judges what they need to know and identify your student nominees. Plus, share a few items with DPAC so we can help promote your event. Submit Step 2 by [CLICKING HERE](#).

#3

WRAP UP YOUR PRODUCTION

Due two weeks after your school musical's closing performance, or by April 18, 2027 (whichever comes first).

Upload a few materials that help us prepare for judge deliberations and celebrate your students and production. Submit Step 3 via Accepted by [CLICKING HERE](#).

BEFORE GETTING STARTED: Each participating school musical should select one staff member or responsible adult associated with the program to act as the “**designated school representative**”. This is most typically the school's theater teacher or program director. This person will become DPAC's main point of contact for the season, and they will be responsible for submitting all three steps of the registration and application process. **This person must have a Google Account in order to successfully submit steps one and two.**

DPAC RECOMMENDS: While the school representative should always be DPAC's point of contact, we strongly recommend delegating assignments to student participants so the application process does not fall solely on the school representative. We've created worksheets to help delegate tasks, which will be emailed to school representatives after they complete Step 2 of the application process.

Step One

School Musical Registration

CLICK HERE TO REGISTER

The first step is due by **December 1, 2026**.

Note: School musical registration requests received after this deadline will require special approval and will be subject to judge availability.

School Musical Registration: Schools will be asked to provide basic contact and show information, and this step should not take longer than 5 minutes to complete.

You'll share the following with DPAC during the musical registration process:

- School Name
- School County
- Name of Designated School Representative
- Email Address for Designated School Representative
- Cell Phone Number for Designated School Representative
- Name of Musical
- Is this musical currently listed as "qualified" by NHSMTA?
- Production Dates and Showtimes
- Licensing House
- Student Participation Estimate
- Production Budget
- Participation Agreement

Step Two

Preparing for Adjudication

CLICK HERE TO SUBMIT STEP 2

This second step is due **two weeks prior to the opening performance** of the registered musical.

Pre-Show Details: These details will help the inform the judges before they attend your musical. The school representative will be asked to submit the following information:

- Show Location / Address
- Parking Instructions
- Building Entry Instructions (including any applicable bag policy)
- How to Locate Will-Call Instructions
- Brief Description of Rehearsal Process

Show Promotion: These items will help DPAC promote and celebrate your show.

- Link to Purchase Tickets
- Ticket Price
- School Logo
- Cast Photo or Show Poster Images

Student Nominations [Optional]: These details will inform DPAC which students each musical would like to nominate. Schools are not required to nominate students in any awards category. If you choose to participate in this way, the school representative will be asked to submit the following information:

- The name, role, and headshot of any student performers nominated.
 - Note: nominated student performers must be cast in role that's approved by NHSMTA.
- The name, role, and brief description of involvement for any students nominated for student tech & production awards consideration.
- The name of the Music Director/Conductor if nominating the orchestra for Best Student Orchestra, along with student orchestra participation numbers.

Step Three

Wrap Up Your Production

CLICK HERE TO SUBMIT STEP 3

The final step is due **two weeks following the closing performance**, or by April 18, 2027 (whichever comes first).

Schools must submit post-production materials for each award category they're participating in. These supplementary materials are not scored, but they do help during the judging process by jogging memories and providing context for any judges who did not personally review your show.

School Production Items:

- Best Musical – 3 production photos of Director's choice, brief description (written by Director) of their process and summary of the overall experience.
- Best Ensemble – 3 production photos featuring ensemble, total headcount of students in ensemble.

Student Performer Nominees (Best Actor & Best Actress) [when applicable]:

- Student name, role, and email address
- Parent/guardian name and email address
- 3 production photos featuring the student nominee
- Brief summary (written by student) about their experience playing this character
- Solo song selection and sheet music
 - Students selected as finalists will perform one solo song from their nominated role on DPAC's stage. The student nominee should choose the song they feel most confident in.
 - Sheet music should be the piano conductor score, not the vocal score or chorus book
 - Indicate any desired key changes if applicable.
- Solo song video
 - Upload a video of the student nominee singing their selected solo song. This video can be performance footage, rehearsal footage, or it can be filmed separately with a track or accompanist.
- Dance video
 - Students should use [THIS LINK](#) to learn a quick dance routine.
 - Students can use [THIS MUSIC LINK](#) for ease of recording.
 - Upload a video of the student nominee performing this routine. This can be filmed in any location (at home is fine, it does not have to be filmed in a dance studio or on a stage, especially if the student doesn't have access to those kinds of spaces).

Student Tech & Production Nominees [when applicable]:

- Student Costume Design – name and email address of nominated student(s), photo of the original sketch/design, photo of the final nominated costume, brief description (written by student) of their process.
- Student Choreography – name and email address of nominated student(s), video of the nominated number, brief description (written by student) of their process.
- Student Lighting Design – name and email address of nominated student(s), identification of the Act or parts of musical that the student(s) designed, images of lighting plot design and/or from production featuring the student lighting design, brief description (written by student) of their process.
- Student Set Design – name and email address of nominated student(s), images of the original sketch/design and/or photos of the final nominated set, brief description (written by student) of their process.
- Student Orchestra – sample recording of the student orchestra. This can be an audio track or video recording taken during a live performance, or during rehearsal. The Music Director/Conductor should select one sample song from the musical production for this sample recording – we are not asking for, nor do we expect, a highlight reel or any edited video featuring the student orchestra.

Feel like a lot? We want to help!

We know that this final step will be the most time consuming for our participating musicals, and it's a challenge to compile all items within the two week window that Rising Stars provides. That said, these post-production materials are very important to the Rising Stars judging process, so we thank you for your work in submitting all items as requested.

While the designated school representative is ultimately responsible for uploading all of these materials, we highly encourage:

- 1) working ahead as much as possible, and
- 2) putting most of these tasks into the hands of your students

To help with the delegation of tasks, we will email worksheets to school representatives for all applicable awards categories after Step 2 of the application process has been completed. It's our hope that these added resources and the early reminder will help make this final step of the application process feel more manageable.

Application FAQs

Answers To Our Most Frequently Asked Questions

We don't know all of the details for our musical yet, but we want to register, is that possible?

- Yes! Please go ahead and register, and fill DPAC in when you know the rest.
- If you are unable to confirm show specific details (including show dates or even the name of the musical) by the registration deadline, but you do know that your school plans on participating, you are still welcome to register.
- We just ask that you follow up with us as soon as you're able so that we can update things accordingly.

We want to participate, but the musical we are doing this school year is not listed as an "approved" show by the National High School Musical Theatre Awards®. What should we do?

- Email Megan Rindoks at mrindoks@dpacnc.com to discuss submitting an appeal for your show.
- If your show is not approved through a submitted appeal, DPAC will still welcome your participation and your production can be reviewed/eligible for the student tech and production awards categories, as well as the school production awards categories (Best Ensemble and Best Musical).
- If you participate with a musical not deemed eligible by the National High School Musical Theatre Awards®, your student performers will not be eligible for finalist positions (Best Actor & Best Actress categories).

The regular and/or High School Version of the musical we are doing is listed as "approved" but we are doing the Junior version of the show. Is that okay?

- The National High School Musical Theatre Awards® do not ever approve or allow Junior versions of musicals. High School Versions and Teen Editions are always allowed.
- The reason behind this policy (set on the national level) is because Junior versions of shows are often significantly abridged/reduced from the original production.
- Due to this policy, Junior versions of shows are welcome to participate in Rising Stars, but schools are not able to nominate their student performers for a finalist position. They are still welcome to participate in all other awards category areas (including student tech & production categories, and school musical award categories).

Our school produces multiple musicals each school year. Can we register more than one for Rising Stars?

- Schools are welcome to register up to **two** musical productions for review each season.
- If you choose to register a second musical, you must complete two separate registration forms (one for each musical).

Is double casting allowed?

- No, DPAC does **not allow** for schools to submit musicals that are double cast.
- When a school musical has been double cast, it becomes very challenging for DPAC to know how to send judges to review the appropriate performances (the shows that feature your student performer nominees). It is also very challenging for each nominated student performer to be adjudicated by the same amount of judges – making the judging uneven and unfair.
- DPAC has made a few exceptions to this rule in the past, and we will do our best to work with your program this season if this rule creates havoc.
 - If you must double cast a production, DPAC requires that you only nominate students from one cast for the Best Actor and Best Actress awards.
 - If you must double cast a production, DPAC requires that you only share the dates of your production that will feature all of your nominated students.
- Please reach out to Megan Rindoks at mrindoks@dpacnc.com before you register if you have no option but double casting. Megan will help guide you through the registration process to ensure that Rising Stars has the exact information needed for any double casted production.

What exactly should be included in the production budget that we report?

- Please provide the approximate amount your school spent to produce this musical. Include production-specific expenses such as:
 - licensing/royalties
 - sets and scenery
 - costumes, props, lighting/sound rentals or purchases
 - orchestra/musician expenses
 - specialty equipment
 - and other materials or services purchased specifically for this production
- Do not include staff salaries, the value of school-owned equipment or facilities, or the estimated value of donated/borrowed items.
- We understand that your final expenses may not yet be known. Your best reasonable estimate, or the musical budget as approved by your school for the year, is perfectly acceptable.

How many student performers can each musical nominate for a finalist position?

- Each registered musical may nominate up to 4 student performers for adjudication.
 - DPAC recommends nominating 2 students for Best Actor finalist consideration and 2 students for Best Actress finalist consideration.
 - While even distribution is recommended, the distribution of student nominations is entirely up to each participating school.
 - Additionally, schools are not required to nominate a total of 4 students, or any students at all. You are welcome to nominate however many students feels appropriate, so long as the number of nominated students does not exceed 4.

Can we nominate any student performer for finalist consideration that we want to?

- Each nominated student performer must be cast in a 'Qualifying Role' – these roles are pre-determined by NHSMTA®.
 - Review the definitions of an Approved Musical and a Qualifying Role by [clicking here](#).
 - A complete list of approved roles can be found at jimmyawards.com, or by [clicking here](#).
 - A complete list of roles which have been rejected even after an appeal was submitted can be found by [clicking here](#).
 - If you notice that a lead role is not currently approved nor is listed on the rejected list, DPAC is able to submit an appeal for NHSMTA® to review and consider.
 - If you would like to inquire about making an appeal, please email Megan Rindoks at mrindoks@dpacnc.com.

How do we nominate student performers who are non-binary or gender-diverse? Or, what if we play with gender bending when we cast our production?

- The category names "Best Actor" and "Best Actress" align with the structure of NHSMTA®.
- Rising Stars welcomes and supports students of all gender identities. While the titles "Best Actor" and "Best Actress" are gendered, students are encouraged to participate in the category that feels most appropriate and affirming to them.
- Rising Stars also supports any decisions to play with gender bending when casting. If you cast a female identifying student in a traditionally male role, that student can still be nominated for Best Actress (or vice-versa).
- If you have any questions about nominating a non-binary or gender-diverse student, please don't hesitate to contact Megan Rindoks at mrindoks@dpacnc.com for further discussion.

We have students who worked together on technical elements of the show and we would like to nominate them together for Student Tech & Production awards categories. Is that allowed?

- Absolutely! If it's a student duo, please share both names and contact information with DPAC when nominating them.
- If it is a student group of 3+, please identify one point of contact as the "leader" and provide a name for this group of students.
 - Example: an entire class worked together on designing and building the set for your show. You're welcome to nominate the entire class, simply share the name of the class and one contact person (either a student leader or teacher).

Do students nominated for Student Tech & Production Awards categories need to be solely responsible for that technical element for 100% of the show?

- Students nominated for Costume Design, Choreography, Lighting Design, or Set Design must be completely responsible for significant, easily identifiable, parts of the production. Here are guidelines for each of those awards categories:
 - **Student Costume Design:** The student (or students) will be nominated for one (1) costume that is completely designed and constructed by that student (or students). Even if they have done multiple costumes for the production, one costume must be chosen as the nominated costume for this category. Judges will only score this specific costume when considering this awards category, therefore it is okay if a production includes other costumes that are rented, borrowed, or constructed by an adult.
 - **Student Choreography:** The student (or students) will be nominated for one (1) choreographed number in the production for which they are solely responsible. Even if they have choreographed multiple numbers, one must be chosen as the nominated choreography for this category. Judges will only score this specific number when considering this awards category, therefore it is okay if a production includes other numbers that are choreographed by a hired choreographer or teacher.
 - **Lighting Design:** The student (or students) can be nominated for either one Act that they are solely responsible for, or the entire production (if they designed the lighting for the entire show). Judges will review lighting design for either the Act created by the student (or students), or the entire musical, but they will only score the parts of the show that a student is responsible for. Therefore, it is okay if a production includes a hired Lighting Designer, so long as the Act nominated for consideration was entirely designed and executed by the student designer(s).

- **Set Design:** The student (or students) can be nominated for one (1) specific and easily identifiable set. If this set is not being used throughout the entire production, nominated students must have been solely responsible for the complete set design from one scene or Act. Any nominated students must have been completely in charge of the design and they should lead any building efforts. It is okay for adults to assist students during the building process (especially when using tools that require certain safety protocols or training), but adults should not be designing, only helping to execute the student designer(s) vision. If there are multiple sets used during the musical, it is okay for any set not nominated for this student awards category to be built/designed by an adult or rented/borrowed.

We have a student orchestra, but to help round out the sound, we'll probably have a small amount of adults participating. Can we still nominate our orchestra for the Student Orchestra awards category?

- Each registered school musical being accompanied by a live student orchestra is welcome to nominate their student orchestra for this awards category.
- DPAC understands that often orchestras for school productions will include a small handful of adult professionals to help round out the group. As long as the **majority of orchestra members are student musicians**, those school orchestras will be eligible for this awards category.
- The students who comprise the orchestra must be enrolled at that participating high school.

Rising Stars judges are reviewing our musical in person, so why do we have to follow up with photos and video materials in Step 3 of the application process?

- Only live performances will be scored and commented on by our judges.
- The supplementary materials submitted in Step 3 do help greatly in the judging process, however. Keep in mind:
 - Rising Stars judges will have reviewed a total of 50 to 60 high school musicals this school year. Your post-production items will help jog memories when judges gather in the spring to determine finalists.
 - Usually between 3 and 5 judges will attend each registered musical production, but the judges panel is much larger than that. Your post-production items will help judges who weren't assigned to review your musical quickly have context and get on the same page during deliberations.

Video Submissions

Our Promise

Video submissions are *not* scored or adjudicated. Only live performances are scored and adjudicated.

While we do ask for a few supplementary video materials for some awards categories, Rising Stars does not require participating musicals to submit any live performance footage or highlight reels. You'll always have the option to upload rehearsal footage or videos filmed separately from your musical process by student nominees.

Videos submitted to Rising Stars will not be shared publicly. They will only be used as a reference point during judge deliberation, a meeting that takes place at DPAC's offices. Videos will not ever be distributed to judges but will be shown to judges by DPAC staff during the judge meeting as needed.



Adjudication Details

Illuminating the Judging Process

Rising Stars includes three different groups of judges:

#1

YEAR-ROUND JUDGES

Who are they? The DPAC Rising Star Awards has a team of over 40 year-round volunteer judges. These year-round judges undergo special trainings and attend an annual Orientation, qualifying them for participation each season. Year-round judges consist of industry professionals who are employed, or who were previously employed, at area theaters and other reputable arts organizations. Year-round judges may also be media professionals, experienced performers, educators or coaches.

What's their role? Year-round judges volunteer their time and expertise by attending about 4 high school musical theater productions each season. These year-round judges submit scores and comments after attending each production. These scores and comments are combined and tallied, all of which are used to determine finalists in all categories and winners in the production categories.

#2

LEAD JUDGES

Who are they? The DPAC Rising Star Awards has a total of 10 lead judges. These lead judges also undergo special trainings and attend an annual Orientation, making them qualified to participate each season. Lead judges all have deep knowledge of Musical Theater, Broadway and BFA programs. They are producers, directors, educators, and industry professionals who audition regularly and/or audition actors regularly, and who understand the full scope of the theater process.

What's their role? Lead judges volunteer their time and expertise by attending between 8 to 12 high school musical theater productions each season. At least one lead judge is guaranteed to attend each registered musical. Like year-round judges, lead judges submit scores and comments after attending each show which are combined and tallied with all year-round judge scores.

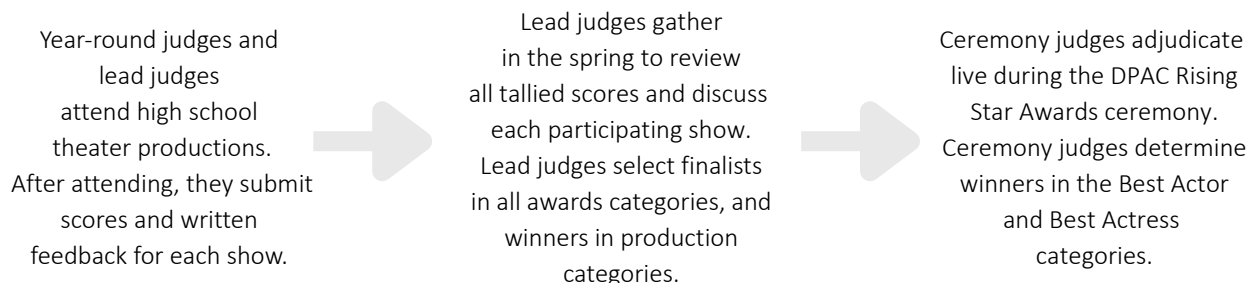
When the adjudication window closes, lead judges come together for a deliberation meeting at DPAC, where they review all submitted scores and comments, and together they determine finalists in each awards category, as well as winners in the production categories.

#3 CEREMONY JUDGES

Who are they? The DPAC Rising Star Awards has a total of 3 ceremony judges each season. Ceremony judges are reputable industry professionals – they are usually actors with Broadway credits, talent agents, or casting directors. Ceremony judges never overlap with the year-round or lead judging panel.

What's their role? Ceremony judges will review performances by the 24 student finalists and will select which student is named “Best Actor” and which student is named “Best Actress”.

ADJUDICATION PROCESS



HOW WE ADDRESS POTENTIAL BIAS

The theatre community is close-knit, and judges may sometimes have a prior connection to a student, teacher, or director involved in a production. At the start of each season, our year-round and lead judges sign a known bias agreement and are asked not to review productions where they know of a potential conflict.

If a judge discovers a connection after being assigned to a show, they must notify DPAC. We then determine whether the judge should refrain from scoring the production entirely or may score only categories unaffected by that connection. This process helps us treat each participating musical fairly while recognizing that connections within our theatre community are sometimes unavoidable.

Ceremony judges are selected for their professional experience, usually before DPAC announces the season's finalists. As a result, a ceremony judge may discover a prior connection to a finalist only after finalists are announced. We expect and trust that ceremony judges will evaluate every finalist with the same care and impartiality, basing their decisions on the performances presented at the awards ceremony.

Tickets For Adjudicators

What Participating Schools Can Expect This Season

As a part of participating in the DPAC Rising Star Awards, each school agrees to provide complimentary tickets to their production for Rising Star judges.

TICKET REQUESTS

DPAC will email the school representative on the Monday prior to each opening performance with exact ticketing needs for Rising Stars judges.

DPAC requires that participating schools place tickets at **will-call** for adjudicators to pick up in person upon their arrival. If your school uses mobile tickets or any other ticketing process, it is important that you clearly communicate this with DPAC so that the judges can be prepared for a different arrival/entry process.

SEATING

DPAC does not have any official policy or requirement for judge seating locations. We recommend placing judges in seating areas where they will have a clear, unobstructed view of the entire show. Rising Stars judges prefer to be seated on the aisle whenever possible.

ANONYMITY

It is important that Rising Star judges maintain anonymity when attending school productions. Rising Stars judges have reported experiencing situations in previous seasons where staff or students drew great attention to their presence, making the judging process uncomfortable. DPAC asks that schools help our judges maintain anonymity by avoiding the use of seat tags that indicate judge and/or DPAC Rising Star Awards presence, and refraining from offering any special welcome directed towards the judges.

REQUEST VOLUME

DPAC promises to place a cap on judge sign-ups: DPAC will *never* request more than 12 tickets to any musical production. DPAC will always send at least 3 adjudicators (1 lead judge and 2 year-round judges) to review each participating show. Judge attendance will be spread out, ensuring coverage at more than one performance.

Sharing Feedback

Transparency is Key – Direct Critiques from Judges

The DPAC Rising Star Awards will provide a summary of feedback, including both scores and comments, that were submitted by year-round and lead judges.

This feedback will be sent via email to the designated school representative the week following the DPAC Rising Star Awards' ceremony, and it will cover every element a school was nominated for.

It will be up to each school representative to distribute feedback to any appropriate colleagues or students.

Here is a sample of what this shared feedback might look like this season:



DPAC
RISING STAR
AWARDS

A Truly Amazing Musical Name
Awesome High School



ENSEMBLE – TIER I

Cohesiveness: Excellent
Engagement: Excellent
Storytelling: Excellent
Execution: Excellent

Your score average was **7.8**
placing you in the **EXCELLENT** range.



MUSICAL – TIER I

Technical Execution: Effective
Musical Direction: Effective
Artistic Vision & Direction: Effective
Overall Production Quality & Cohesiveness: Excellent

Your score average was **6.3**
placing you in the **EFFECTIVE** range.



FEEDBACK OVERVIEW

- Judges found the ensemble to be one of the highlights of this production. They appreciated how cohesive the group was, and applauded their strong dancing skills. Judges reported that the ensemble did a great job telling the story.
- Judges seemed to have split opinions on certain Directorial choices. Some found the unique vision of placing this musical on Jupiter clever and exciting, and others found it unsuccessful and confusing.
- Judges found Act 2 to be particularly strong, specifically noting the pacing, use of props, and efficient scene changes.



IDENTIFIED AREAS OF IMPROVEMENT

- Consider size of space when blocking. Judges had questions about the lack of upstage use during Act 1.
- Judges encourage added collaboration between Music Director and Director; some noted that sound often felt like it was overpowering the performers, and that it was at times rushing lead performers.



UNEDITED JUDGE COMMENTS

- "My favorite aspect of this show was it's ensemble. All 20 ensemble members worked well together, were incredibly engaged throughout, and committed to telling the story. During Act 1, there were a few times when two ensemble members pulled attention away from the lead performers during pivotal moments of the show, and that did impact my scoring."
- "This musical was one of the most unique shows I've seen so far this season! The decision to set this musical on Jupiter was wild, and while I appreciated the creative approach, it took me too long to understand that's where we were, so I found myself distracted for much of Act 1 as I was attempting to figure that out. The pacing in Act 1 was sluggish at times and there were a few lengthy scene changes. I wondered if the orchestra was trying to speed things up by playing quickly, but the sound then seemed off and I believe it threw some of the leads off as well. Act 2 was much improved in pacing! The props were so well built and designed, they were clearly homemade and I found that impressive."

Adjudication Rubrics

What Judges Are Scoring

Each Rising Stars awards category uses the same scoring scale provided below:

SCORE	RATING	GENERAL GUIDANCE
1 - 3	Developing	Elements were inconsistently successful and/or frequently distracted from the production.
4 - 6	Effective	Elements were generally successful, with some inconsistencies or areas for growth.
7 - 9	Excellent	Elements were consistently successful and made a strong contribution to the production.
10	Exceptional	Elements demonstrated an exceptional level of execution and significantly elevated the production.

BEST ENSEMBLE – TIER 1 & TIER 2

All registered musicals will automatically be adjudicated in this category. Tier 1 includes productions with a budget of \$9,999 and under. Tier 2 includes productions with a budget of \$10,000 and up.

CRITERIA	WHAT JUDGES ARE CONSIDERING
Cohesiveness	How successfully did the ensemble work together as a unified group? Consider teamwork, trust, connection, consistency, and how well performers supported one another.
Engagement	How consistently did ensemble members remain engaged in the production? Consider focus, energy, commitment, and active participation, including when performers were not the primary focus of a scene.
Storytelling	How effectively did the ensemble contribute to the storytelling? Consider how the collective performance helped establish the world of the show, advance the story, and support its overall emotional impact.
Execution	How successfully did the ensemble execute the demands of the production? Consider timing, precision, blocking, choreography/movement, vocals, and overall performance quality.

BEST MUSICAL – TIER 1 & TIER 2

All registered musicals will automatically be adjudicated in this category. Tier 1 includes productions with a budget of \$9,999 and under. Tier 2 includes productions with a budget of \$10,000 and up.

CRITERIA	WHAT JUDGES ARE CONSIDERING
Technical Vision	How successfully did the technical elements support the production? Consider pacing of scene changes, lighting, costumes, props, scenery/set design, and overall technical execution.
Musical Direction	How successfully did the musical elements work together? Consider vocal performance, orchestra/accompaniment (if applicable), balance, and how seamlessly the music supported the production.
Artistic Vision & Direction	How clear and cohesive was the production's artistic vision? Consider interpretation, casting, use of space, consistency, storytelling, and clarity of direction.
Overall Production Quality & Cohesiveness	How successfully did all elements come together as a unified production? Consider the strength of the ensemble, consistency across performance and production elements, and the overall effectiveness of the musical.

STUDENT PERFORMERS – BEST ACTOR & BEST ACTRESS

Each registered musical has the option of nominating student performers for Best Actor or Best Actress finalist consideration. DPAC uses the criteria for these awards categories provided by the National High School Musical Theatre Awards.

CRITERIA	WHAT JUDGES ARE CONSIDERING
Vocals	How successfully did the performer meet the vocal demands of the role? Consider vocal quality, pitch, diction, dynamics, expression, breath support, and overall musical execution.
Acting	How effectively did the performer portray their character and tell the story? Consider characterization, emotional connection, authenticity, choices, and the integration of acting throughout songs and scenes.
Overall Presentation	How successfully did the performer bring all elements of the role together? Consider stage presence, confidence, artistic interpretation, movement, connection with scene partners, and ability to engage the audience.

STUDENT COSTUME DESIGN

Each registered musical has the option of nominating a student (or students) for costume design. Each nominated student will submit one costume for review and adjudication that they were solely responsible for in both design and creation.

CRITERIA	WHAT JUDGES ARE CONSIDERING
Quality	How successfully was the costume constructed and executed? Consider craftsmanship, fit, functionality, attention to detail, and the performers' ability to move comfortably and confidently in the costume.
Creativity	How thoughtfully and creatively did the costume choices contribute to the production? Consider originality, visual interest, use of color, texture and detail, and creative approaches to establishing characters and the world of the show.
Effectiveness	How effectively did the costume support the storytelling? Consider character, setting, time period, tone, consistency with the production's artistic vision, and whether costume choices enhanced rather than distracted from the performance.

STUDENT LIGHTING DESIGN

Each registered musical has the option of nominating a student (or students) for lighting design. If they were not in charge of lighting design for the full musical, nominated students must have been solely responsible for the lighting design of *at least* one full Act of the production.

CRITERIA	WHAT JUDGES ARE CONSIDERING
Creativity	How thoughtfully and creatively did the lighting contribute to the production? Consider artistic choices, visual interest, use of available resources, and how lighting helped establish the world, mood, and storytelling of the show.
Use of Color	How effectively was color used within the lighting design? Consider how color choices established mood, supported the setting and story, complemented other design elements, and created visual impact.
Effectiveness	How effectively did the lighting support the production overall? Consider visibility, focus, transitions, timing, consistency with the artistic vision, and whether lighting choices enhanced rather than distracted from the performance.

STUDENT CHOREOGRAPHY

Each registered musical has the option of nominating a student (or students) for choreography. Each nominated student will submit one number for review and adjudication that they were solely responsible for in creation.

CRITERIA	WHAT JUDGES ARE CONSIDERING
Creativity	How thoughtfully and creatively was movement used throughout the production? Consider originality, variety, visual interest, use of space, and dynamic movement choices.
Relevance	How effectively did the choreography support the storytelling? Consider character, mood, musicality, style, and whether movement choices felt purposeful and appropriate to each moment.
Execution	How successfully was the choreography designed for the performers? Consider the abilities of the cast, clarity and precision of movement, use of the ensemble, and whether the choreography allowed performers to execute the movement confidently and effectively.

STUDENT SET DESIGN

Each registered musical has the option of nominating a student (or students) for set design. If they were not in charge of set design for the full musical, nominated students must have been solely responsible for the complete set design used during one scene or Act of the musical.

CRITERIA	WHAT JUDGES ARE CONSIDERING
Creativity	How thoughtfully and creatively did the set establish the world of the production? Consider originality, visual interest, use of space, and creative solutions that supported the needs of the show.
Execution	How successfully was the set realized and used in performance? Consider construction, functionality, stability, attention to detail, and the performers' ability to interact with the set safely and confidently.
Effectiveness	How effectively did the set support the storytelling and overall production? Consider setting, atmosphere, consistency with the artistic vision, use of transitions, and whether the design enhanced rather than distracted from the performance.

STUDENT ORCHESTRA

Each registered musical has the option of nominating their orchestra for adjudication so long as the majority of the orchestra is comprised of students. A nominated orchestra may still be conducted by an adult, and can contain a small sprinkling of adults to help round out the sound. Schools who use tracks are not eligible for this awards category.

CRITERIA	WHAT JUDGES ARE CONSIDERING
Volume & Balance	How effectively did the orchestra maintain appropriate volume and balance? Consider balance within the orchestra, balance with on-stage performers, dynamics, and whether the music could be clearly heard without overpowering the cast.
Musical Execution	How successfully did the orchestra perform the musical score? Consider pitch and intonation, rhythm, tempo, articulation, precision, and overall musical accuracy.
Support of On-Stage Cast	How effectively did the orchestra support the performers and storytelling? Consider responsiveness to the cast, coordination during musical numbers and transitions, and how the orchestra contributed to the energy, emotion, and overall impact of the production.

Rising Stars Ensemble

How To Submit Your Students

Each participating school has the option of submitting two students to perform in the DPAC Rising Star Awards ensemble. The ensemble will open and close the awards ceremony by performing group numbers, and all ensemble members are eligible to win one of four “Outstanding Performance in an Ensemble Award”. This awards category was inspired by Josiah Jennings (2025 Rising Stars Best Actor) who received this same recognition nationally at the Jimmy Awards.

It’s recommended that each school submit one student who is either Soprano or Alto, and one who is Tenor, Baritone, or Bass. Submitted students must be able to attend all rehearsals, and they cannot also be a student named as a Best Actor or Best Actress finalist. For these reasons, schools are not asked to submit their ensemble students until shortly after finalists are announced in the spring.

DPAC will contact each school representative in the spring to provide a full ensemble rehearsal schedule, and instructions on how to submit ensemble students.

Additional Opportunities

Wait, There's More!

RISING STARS – STUDENT TECH TEAM

The DPAC Rising Star Awards will be selecting a small number of students to assist with important technical aspects of the awards ceremony. Student Tech Team positions include:

- Production Stage Manager
- Assistant Stage Manager (Stage Left)
- Assistant Stage Manager (Stage Right)
- Production Talent Manager
- Talent Coordinators
- Costume and Props Coordinators
- Assistant Lighting Designer
- Assistant Sound Designer
- Teleprompter Operator
- Projection Operator

To apply, students should send their resume, cover letter, and the contact information for one reference to Megan Rindoks at mrindoks@dpacnc.com.

The deadline to apply is **Sunday, March 7, 2027**. DPAC will bring candidates in for in-person interviews in late March.

DPAC STUDENT REPORTERS

DPAC will appoint two students to serve as Student Reporters for the DPAC Rising Star Awards. These two students will have behind-the-scenes access during the Rising Star rehearsal process, and will be given a platform on DPAC's social media channels to report on their experiences. These two students will be recognized during the awards ceremony, receiving a trophy presented by ABC11.

DPAC's Student Reporters will also be submitted to the Jimmy Awards' national Student Reporter search. The Jimmy Awards' Student Reporters get an all expense paid trip to NYC where they'll attend Jimmy Awards rehearsals and meet nominees from across the country. They will work with media professionals on the national level, interview stars on the Jimmy Awards' red carpet, plus will have visibility on the Jimmy Awards social media channels.

Any student who applies for a Student Reporter position with the DPAC Rising Star Awards must be currently enrolled at a participating high school. More information about how to apply will be emailed to all participating schools in the early spring.

Awards Ceremony

What Participating Schools Can Expect This Season

FINALIST ANNOUNCEMENT, MARKETING ASSETS & EVENT ON-SALE

DPAC will reach out individually to each school representative, as well as those selected as finalists in each awards category, following the lead judges meeting on April 20. DPAC will publicly announce finalists in all awards categories by or before Friday, April 23. This public announcement will accompany the awards ceremony event on-sale.

DPAC will provide each participating high school with marketing assets which can be posted online to help promote support and event attendance. DPAC kindly asks each school and student to refrain from sharing screenshots of emails sent by DPAC when announcing areas that they are being recognized as finalists.

COMPLIMENTARY TICKETS

Rising Stars provides complimentary tickets to the awards ceremony as listed below.

- Ten (10) tickets for each participating high school.
- Four (4) tickets for each Best Actor and Best Actress finalist.
- Two (2) tickets for each student finalist in a Student Tech & Production awards category.
- Two (2) tickets for DPAC Student Reporters.
- One (1) ticket for each student on the Rising Stars Student Tech Team.
- One (1) ticket for each Rising Stars ensemble student (to be used by the ensemble student when not performing).

PURCHASING TICKETS

Participating high schools will receive a link to purchase additional tickets for their programs at a discounted rate. This link will be provided to schools when the awards ceremony goes on-sale in April, and is intended only for students and educators within the theater group.

One of the ways that participation in the DPAC Rising Star Awards remains free for schools and students is through the awards ceremony ticket sales. All ticket proceeds directly benefit the upcoming season of this program.

SEATING ARRANGEMENTS

The awards ceremony is always a General Admission event, and seats are first-come, first-serve. It is up to each school group to determine where they'll be sitting and how they'll meet up at the event. DPAC does reserve a selection of seats in the rear Orchestra for folks whose group wasn't able to secure seats in the Orchestra level who are finalists in an awards category and need to be in walkable distance of the stage in case they win an award.

DRESS CODE

Guests are invited to dress up and celebrate! Cocktail dresses, suits, dress pants, button-down shirts, ties, and other festive attire are all welcome. Black tie is not expected – wear something that makes you feel comfortable and ready for a special night at DPAC.

AWARD ACCEPTANCE PROTOCOL

Winners in each awards category are invited to come onto DPAC's stage to accept their award and to make a brief speech. To help keep the awards ceremony moving at a good pace, DPAC asks that acceptance speeches are short and sweet (no longer than one minute). It's expected that the student (or students) who were nominated for student categories are the ones who accept those awards. It's entirely up to each program on who to send onstage for school production awards categories (Best Ensemble and Best Musical) – you're welcome to send a teacher or director or a student.

After accepting the award, each person will be escorted backstage where they will be quickly interviewed by DPAC's Student Reporters and get their photo taken with their trophy. They will then be led back into the seating area to rejoin their party.



Application Check Lists

CHECK LIST – STEP ONE: SCHOOL REGISTRATION

- ☐ Name of High School
- ☐ What county is your high school in?
- ☐ Full name and contact details for Designated School Representative
- ☐ Name of Musical
- ☐ Is this musical listed as “qualified” by NHSTMA?
- ☐ Production Dates & Showtimes
- ☐ Licensing House
- ☐ Student Participation Estimate
- ☐ Production Budget

CHECK LIST – STEP TWO: PREPARE FOR ADJUDICATION

Pre-Show Details

- ☐ Show Location Address
- ☐ Parking Instructions
- ☐ Building Entry Instructions
- ☐ Security & Bag Policies
- ☐ Will-Call Instructions
- ☐ Brief Description of Rehearsal Process

Show Promotion Materials

- ☐ Ticket Purchase Link & Pricing
- ☐ School or Theatre Program Logo
- ☐ Cast Photo or Poster Image

Student Nominations

- ☐ Best Actor / Actress Nominee Name(s), Pronouns, Role(s), and Headshots
- ☐ Best Costume Design Nominee Name(s), description of nominated costume and the student’s involvement
- ☐ Best Choreography Nominee Name(s), description of the nominated number and the students involvement
- ☐ Best Lighting Design Nominee Name(s), identification what parts of the musical the student is responsible for, and description of the students involvement
- ☐ Best Set Design Nominee Name(s), description of the nominated set and the students involvement
- ☐ Does your musical use tracks or have a live orchestra?
- ☐ Best Student Orchestra Music Director/Conductor Nominee name, number of students and adults playing, and anything else you’d like our judges to know.

CHECK LIST – STEP THREE: WRAP UP YOUR PRODUCTION**School Production Items**

- ☐ Three (3) production photos featuring the ensemble
- ☐ Total number of students who performed in the ensemble
- ☐ Three (3) production photos of the Directors choice, showcasing the overall performance and highlighting different aspects of the show as much as possible.
- ☐ A brief description, written by the Director, describing the overall experience of putting this musical on it's feet (max 400 word count).

Best Actor / Best Actress Nominee Items

- ☐ Name and email address for each student nominee
- ☐ Parent/Guardian name and email address for each student nominee
- ☐ Three (3) production photos featuring each student nominee in their nominated role
- ☐ A brief description, written by the student nominee, describing their experience playing this character (max 250 word count).
- ☐ Solo song selection
- ☐ Solo song sheet music (should be the piano/conductor score), and note any desired key changes
- ☐ Solo song video (this can be performance footage, rehearsal footage, or it can be filmed separately with a track or accompanist).
- ☐ Dance video (students use [THIS LINK](#) to learn a quick dance routine. They can film themselves dancing this routine in any location convenient to them – at home, at school, at a studio, etc.).

Best Student Costume Design Nominee Items

- ☐ Name and email address for each student nominee
- ☐ One (1) photo of the original sketch or design
- ☐ One (1) photo of the final nominated costume
- ☐ A brief description, written by the student nominee, describing their experience in making this costume (max 250 word count).

Best Student Choreography Nominee Items

- ☐ Name and email address for each student nominee
- ☐ One video of this number (the video can be performance footage or rehearsal footage)
- ☐ A brief description, written by the student nominee, describing their experience in choreographing this number (max 250 word count).

Best Student Lighting Design Nominee Items

- ☐ Name and email address for each student nominee
- ☐ Two (2) photos of the original lighting plot design and/or production photos featuring the student's work
- ☐ A brief description, written by the student nominee, describing their experience in lighting the show (max 250 word count).

Best Student Set Design Nominee Items

- ☐ Name and email address for each student nominee
- ☐ Two (2) photos of the original sketch/design and/or production photos featuring the student's work
- ☐ A brief description, written by the student nominee, describing their experience in designing this set (max 250 word count).

Best Student Orchestra Nominee Items

- ☐ A sample recording featuring the student orchestra. (This can be an audio track or video recording taken during the performance or during a rehearsal. The Music Director should select one song to submit for this sample recording – it should not be a highlight reel featuring clips of the entire show.)

Remember...

Step 3 is a lot! While the designated school representative is ultimately responsible for uploading all of these materials, we highly encourage:

- 1) working ahead as much as possible, and
- 2) putting most of these tasks into the hands of your students

To help with the delegation of tasks, we will email worksheets to school representatives for all applicable awards categories after Step 2 of the application process has been completed. It's our hope that these added resources and the early reminder will help make this final step of the application process feel more manageable.

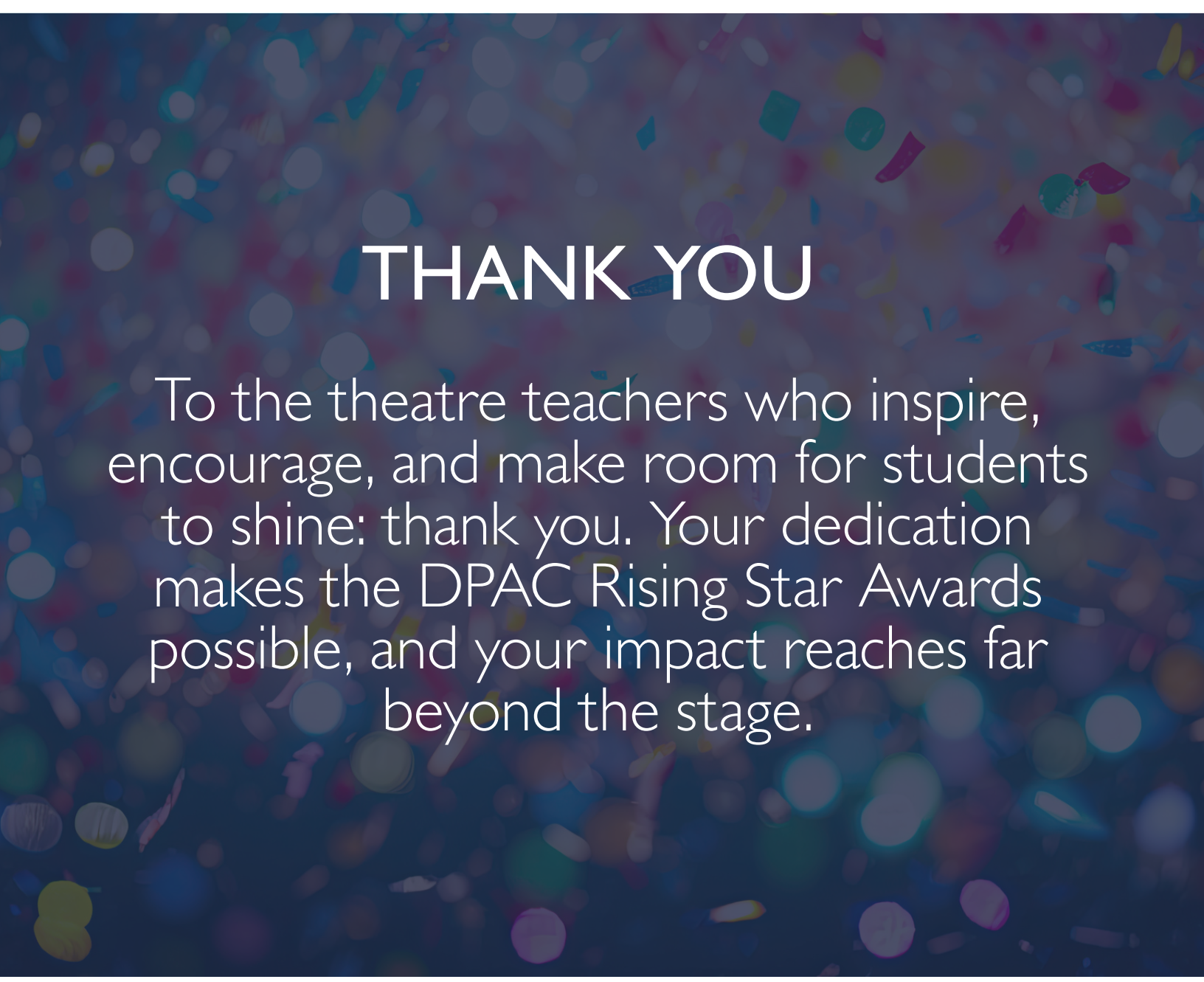
Our Sponsors and Community Partners



The DPAC Rising Star Awards are made possible by Blue Cross and Blue Shield of North Carolina. As our presenting sponsor, Blue Cross and Blue Shield of North Carolina knows that the arts enrich our lives beyond measure... and not just by entertaining us. Extensive research has been done demonstrating that the arts improve mental and physical health, and that experiencing the arts delivers real physiological and emotional benefits. DPAC is honored to work with Blue Cross and Blue Shield of North Carolina in celebration of talented area youth, the beauty they bring into our schools, and the many ways the arts bring strength to our communities.



The DPAC Rising Star Awards are also supported by the above organizations through community partnerships and sponsorships, all of which greatly enhance the experience for our participating schools and students.



THANK YOU

To the theatre teachers who inspire, encourage, and make room for students to shine: thank you. Your dedication makes the DPAC Rising Star Awards possible, and your impact reaches far beyond the stage.

