



North
Carolina

Presents

THE

DPAC

RISING

STAR AWARDS

PART OF THE NATIONAL HIGH SCHOOL MUSICAL THEATRE AWARDS



HANDBOOK

2025 / 2026 School Year

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Welcome Message

From DPAC's Director of Community Engagement



Megan Rindoks

It is with excitement that DPAC celebrates the 15th anniversary of The DPAC Rising Star Awards this season.

Over the past 15 years this program has certainly evolved, but the mission remains the same: to pay tribute to the incredible work being done by high school musical theatre programs across central North Carolina.

Each year I am inspired by the young talent we meet through this program, and by the creativity and passion we see from all of our participating schools.

Whether you are an educator or a student, the commitment and joy you bring to your craft is the reason this program shines so brightly.

This handbook is here to support you through the participation process, answer your questions, and help you make the most of your Rising Star experience. I hope you find inspiration, clarity, and encouragement in these pages.

Here's to another season of excellence, collaboration, and unforgettable performances. DPAC is honored to be a part of your school year, and we can't wait to cheer you on.

About The DPAC Rising Star Awards



The DPAC Rising Star Awards 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.

Throughout the school year, DPAC sends adjudicators to review musical productions presented by participating high schools.

Rising Star judges are tasked with identifying the biggest successes made by schools each season, and they are also responsible for selecting 20 student performers as “Finalists”. Finalists participate in two 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 incredible talent possessed by the 20 Finalists, and also highlights a large Ensemble consisting of students from every participating high school. Awards are distributed all evening long, recognizing student talent (both on stage and off), and overall production achievements made by participating school programs.

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 compete nationally at the National High School Musical Theater Awards® in New York City.

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

About The National High School Musical Theatre Awards[®]

The DPAC Rising Star Awards are a member of the National High School Musical Theatre Awards[®], also affectionately known as the Jimmy Awards[®] (named after 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 150,000 students annually 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 The DPAC Rising Star Awards) 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 on-night-only talent showcase on the Minskoff Theatre stage where Disney's *The Lion King* performs year round.

The DPAC Rising Star Awards and the Jimmy 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 inspire and empower the next generation of theater artists 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 in dance, theater, and music for high school student Finalists and Ensemble members.
- 3) To grow audiences and advocates for arts education across central North Carolina.

COST

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

Eligibility

The DPAC Rising Star Awards program is open to public and private high schools producing musical theater in central North Carolina. To be eligible for the current season, schools must meet the following three requirements.

1) THE SCHOOL MUST BE LOCATED WITHIN OUR DESIGNATED REGION.

High schools located in central North Carolina are invited to participate in The DPAC Rising Star Awards. This includes these counties:

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.

2) THE MUSICAL MUST BE SCHEDULED WITHIN THE DPAC RISING STAR AWARDS' ADJUDICATION WINDOW.

For the 2025/2026 season, high school musical theater productions must take place between October 13, 2025 and April 19, 2026.

3) THE MUSICAL MUST BE DEEMED 'ELIGIBLE' BY THE NATIONAL HIGH SCHOOL MUSICAL THEATRE AWARDS®.

Schools must choose a musical from the National High School Musical Theatre Awards'® list of qualified productions.

The current list of qualifying musicals can be found at jimmyawards.com or by clicking [here](#).

The National High School Musical Theatre Awards® require that a musical has been on Broadway among a number of other things. Each year, the list of approved shows is edited and extended. The DPAC Rising Star Awards are allowed to submit an appeal to add a shows that are not currently listed. For more information about the appeal process, email Megan Rindoks at mrindoks@dpacnc.com.

How Things Work

Here's a general outline of how The DPAC Rising Star Awards operate each season.

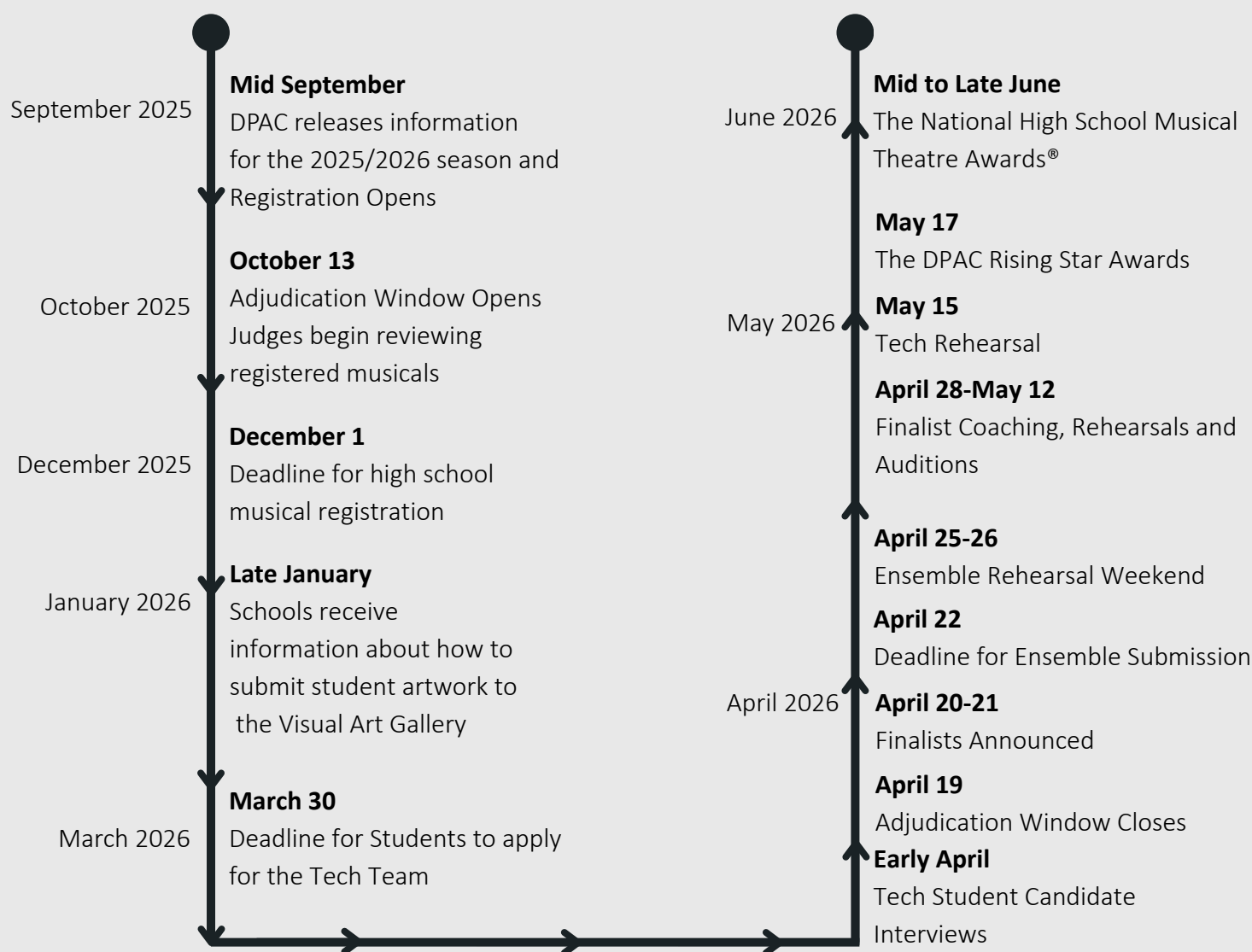
- 1) REGISTRATION**
Schools register their musical for participation.
- 2) REVIEW**
Judges attend high school musical shows and submit scores and comments.
- 3) LEAD JUDGES MEETING**
Judges meet in the spring to determine Finalists in all awards categories.
- 4) FINALISTS ANNOUNCED**
DPAC announces Finalists in all awards categories.
- 5) RISING STAR REHEARSALS**
Best Actor and Best Actress Finalists have two weeks of rehearsals and workshops leading up to The DPAC Rising Star Awards ceremony.
- 6) THE DPAC RISING STAR AWARDS**
Winners in all awards categories are announced live at The DPAC Rising Star Awards ceremony.
- 7) THE JIMMY AWARDS®**
Winners of Best Actor and Best Actress advance to compete nationally at the National High School Musical Theatre Awards® (aka the Jimmy Awards®).

This Season at a Glance

Important Dates for the 2025 / 2026 School Year

The *15th annual* DPAC Rising Star Awards' ceremony will take place at DPAC on **Sunday, May 17**.

The adjudication window for participating productions is October 13, 2025 - April 19, 2026.



Awards Categories

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

STUDENT FINALIST PERFORMANCE 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 20 student Finalists. Finalists are all in the running for these awards.

Student Finalist Performance Categories:

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

STUDENT ENSEMBLE PERFORMANCE AWARDS

Each participating high school is invited to send 2 students of their choice to perform in the Rising Star Ensemble. All Ensemble members are eligible for this award. 4 students from the Ensemble will receive this award.

Student Ensemble Performance Category:

- Outstanding Performance in an Ensemble Award (4)

STUDENT PRODUCTION AWARDS

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

These are optional awards categories – if your school does not have students in charge of these parts of your production, you will still be eligible for the School Production Categories defined in the section below.

Student Production Categories:

- Best Student Costume Designer
- Best Student Lighting Designer
- Best Student Choreographer
- Best Student Set Design
- Best Student Orchestra

SCHOOL PRODUCTION AWARDS

Each participating high school musical will be adjudicated for the overall production, and will be eligible for these school production awards categories.

These overall 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)

Awards Defined

Award Descriptions, Scholarships, and Prizes

STUDENT FINALIST PERFORMANCE 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 American Dance Festival representatives who observe a dance audition during the rehearsal process. This student is recognized for their dance technique and performance quality and receives \$500 in scholarships and a trophy.

The DPAC Shining Star: Selected by the group of 20 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 ENSEMBLE PERFORMANCE AWARDS

Outstanding Performance in an Ensemble: Selected by The DPAC Rising Star Awards' creative team following the rehearsal process, these four 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.



STUDENT PRODUCTION AWARDS

Best Student Costume Designer: Selected by The DPAC Rising Star Awards Year-Round Lead Judges, this student 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 Designer: Selected by The DPAC Rising Star Awards Year-Round Lead Judges, this student 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 Choreographer: Selected by The DPAC Rising Star Awards Year-Round Lead Judges, this student 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 The DPAC Rising Star Awards Year-Round Lead Judges, this student (or group of 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 The DPAC Rising Star Awards Year-Round 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.

SCHOOL PRODUCTION AWARDS

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 The DPAC Rising Star Awards' Year-Round Lead Judges, two school musicals (one school musical from each budget tier) will be recognized for their Ensemble's ability to work as a cohesive unit and for their successful telling of the story while keeping the audience engaged throughout. 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 The DPAC Rising Star Awards' Year-Round Lead Judges, two school musicals (one school musical from each budget tier) will be recognized for overall production excellence, including execution, direction, story telling, performance by cast members, and more. These winning productions will receive recognition during the awards ceremony, \$1,000 in scholarships, and a trophy.

Registration & Application Process

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

BEFORE GETTING STARTED: each participating school musical should select one staff member or responsible adult associated with the program to act as the “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.

1)

SCHOOL MUSICAL REGISTRATION

Due by December 1, 2025.

This step asks for basic contact information for each school, the name of the musical being registered, and the dates of the production.

2)

PRE-SHOW DETAILS & STUDENT NOMINATIONS

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

This step asks for more detailed show information which DPAC will provide to the judges attending that production.

3)

POST-SHOW PRODUCTION SUBMISSIONS

Due two weeks after your school musical’s closing performance, or by April 19, 2026 (whichever comes first)

This final step asks for sheet music, along with photos and videos highlighting the overall production and/or nominated student performances. These items are used to help refresh judge’s memories during the decision-making process, and some photos might be used on DPAC’s social media pages.

Step One

School Musical Registration

CLICK HERE TO REGISTER

The first step, School Musical Registration, is due by **December 1, 2025**.

Any school submissions received after this registration deadline will require special approval and will be subject to the judges' availability.

Schools will be asked to submit the following things when completing this step:

- School Name
- School Address
- Name of Designated School Representative
- Email Address for Designated School Representative
- Cell Phone Number for Designated School Representative
- Name of Musical
- Licensing House
- Production Dates and Showtimes
- Production Ticket Sales Info (so DPAC can promote your show!)
- School Logo
- School and/or Theatre Department Instagram Handle
- Comp Ticket Agreement (agreeing to provide complimentary tickets for judges to attend your show)
- Visual Arts Teacher Name
- Visual Arts Teacher Email Address

School Musical Registration Guidelines

Don't know all of the details yet?

- Please go ahead and register, and fill us 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.

Does your school want to register more than one musical this school year?

- 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).

Are you planning on double casting?

- Please note that 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 Best Actor and Best Actress nominees). It is also very challenging for each nominated student 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.

Why does DPAC ask for the visual arts teacher contact information?

- Each school will be invited to submit artwork to be on display in DPAC's lobby at The DPAC Rising Star Awards' ceremony in May.
- This contact information will allow us to reach out to the appropriate person at your school to provide further details.

Step Two

Pre-Show Details and Student Nominations

CLICK HERE TO SUBMIT STEP 2

The second step, Pre-Show Details and Student Nominations, is due **two weeks prior to Opening Night** of the registered musical.

Pre Show Details: These details will help the inform the judges before they attend your musical.

Schools will be asked to submit the following information:

- Production Budget
- Parking Instructions
- Building Entry Instructions
- How to Locate Will-Call Instructions
- Brief Description of Rehearsal Process
- Does your musical use tracks, or will you have a live orchestra accompanying?
 - If you'll have an orchestra, is this a student orchestra or professional?
- [OPTIONAL] Comments (anything you'd like the judges to know before adjudicating)

Student Nominations: Rising Star judges will need to know which student categories they are reviewing.

Schools will be asked to submit the following information:

- Are you nominating students for **Best Actor** and/or **Best Actress**? If so, please provide:
 - Student's Full Name
 - Student's Role
 - Student's Email Address
 - Student's Pronouns
 - Student's Headshot
 - Student's Year in School
 - Student's Parent Email Address

-
- Are you nominating a student for **Best Student Costume Designer**? If so, please provide:
 - Student's Full Name
 - Student's Email Address
 - Student's Year in School
 - Describe this student's contributions and process.
 - If this student designed multiple costumes, they should select one costume to be nominated. Which costume is nominated for Best Student Costume Design?
 - Character Name
 - Act/Scene Featuring the Costume
 - Are you nominating a student for **Best Student Lighting Designer**? If so, please provide:
 - Student's Full Name
 - Student's Email Address
 - Student's Year in School
 - Describe this student's contributions and process.
 - If this student designed multiple scenes, they should select one scene to be nominated. Which scene is nominated for Best Student Lighting Design (Act and Scene)?
 - Are you nominating a student for **Best Student Choreographer**? If so, please provide:
 - Student's Full Name
 - Student's Email Address
 - Student's Year in School
 - Describe this student's contributions and process.
 - If this student choreographed multiple numbers, they should select one number for nomination. Which number is nominated for Best Student Choreographer (Act and Scene)?
 - Are you nominating a student, or group of students, for **Best Student Set Design**? If so, please provide:
 - Student's Full Name, or Name of Class/Student Group
 - Student's Email Address, or Email Address for one Group Representative
 - Student's Year in School, or Range of Years in School
 - Describe this student's (or group of students') contributions and process.
 - If this student (or group of students) designed multiple set pieces, they should select one set to be nominated. Which set is nominated for Best Student Set Design (Act and Scene)?
 - Are you nominating your school for **Best Student Orchestra**? If so, please provide:
 - How many total musicians are in the orchestra?
 - How many musicians are students who attend your school?
 - Music Director or Conductor's Full Name
 - Music Director or Conductor's Email Address
-

Best Actor and Best Actress Nomination Guidelines

How many students can each school nominate for Best Actor & Best Actress?

- Each registered musical may nominate up to 4 students for adjudication.
 - DPAC recommends nominating 2 students for Best Actor and 2 students for Best Actress.
 - While even distribution is recommended, the distribution of student nominations is entirely up to each participating school.
 - Example 1: Your school is presenting *Legally Blonde The Musical*. You are welcome to nominate one student for Best Actor for the role of Warner, and three students for Best Actress for roles like Elle Woods, Paulette and Vivienne Kensington.
 - Example 2: Your school is presenting *SIX The Musical: Teen Edition*. You are welcome to nominate four students for Best Actress for roles like Anne Boleyn, Jane Seymour, Catherine Parr, and Katharine Howard.
 - 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.
 - Example 1: Your school is presenting *The Sound of Music*. You are welcome to nominate one student for Best Actor for playing Captain von Trapp, and two students for Best Actress for playing Maria and Mother Abbess.
 - Example 2: Your school is presenting *Little Shop of Horrors*. The student playing Audrey does not wish to be nominated. You are welcome to nominate one student for Best Actor for playing Seymour.

How does a school nominate students if the show is double cast?

- As mentioned in the Guidelines for School Musical Registration, The DPAC Rising Star Awards do not allow for double casting.
- Double casting can cause major complications for our judges knowing which performance dates to attend, and/or evenly reviewing each nominated student.
- If your school has double cast, you must:
 - Only nominate students from one cast
 - Only share the performance dates that will feature that cast which includes those nominated students.
- Otherwise, DPAC cannot guarantee that your student's performances are adjudicated fairly.

Best Actor and Best Actress Nomination Guidelines (Continued)

Can we nominate any student we want to?

- Each nominated student must be cast in a 'Qualifying Role' – these roles are pre-determined by the National High School Musical Theatre Awards®.
 - A complete list of approved roles can be found at jimmyawards.com, or by [clicking here](#).
 - If you notice that a lead role is not currently approved, DPAC is able to submit an appeal for the National High School Musical Theatre Awards® 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 students 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 the National High School Musical Theatre Awards®.
- We proudly welcome and support students of all gender identities. While the titles "Best Actor" and "Best Actress" are gendered, students are encouraged to be nominated in the category that feels most appropriate and affirming to them.
 - Example: Your school is presenting *Something Rotten* and a non-binary student is cast as William Shakespeare. After consulting with the student, they feel most comfortable being nominated within the Best Actress category. You are welcome to nominate this student for Best Actress.
- DPAC 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).
 - Example: Your school is presenting *Tarzan*. You cast a female identifying student in the role of Tarzan. This student can be nominated for Best Actress.
- 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 guidance.

Student Production Awards Nomination Guidelines

Guidelines for Best Student Costume Designer, Lighting Designer and Choreographer Nominations:

- Each registered school musical that has placed a student in one of these leadership positions is welcome to nominate that student for these awards categories.
- Any nominated student must have been in charge of these areas, not acting as an assistant to a hired professional or school staff member.
- The DPAC Rising Star Awards will accept student nominations if that student contributed to part, but not all, of the production. They must still be fully responsible for a complete scene or piece.
 - Example 1: Your school is presenting *Mary Poppins*. If a student is fully responsible for the choreography of “Step In Time”, but did not choreograph the rest of the show, they are still eligible for nomination.
 - Example 2: Your school is presenting Disney’s *The Little Mermaid*. If a student is fully responsible for designing Ursula’s costume, but did not design costumes for all other characters, they are still eligible for nomination.

Guidelines for Best Student Set Design Nominations:

- Each registered school musical who has a student, or a group of students, responsible for set design is welcome to nominate them for this awards category.
- Nominees in this category must be students who not only built the set, but were involved in the designing of the set as well.
- The DPAC Rising Star Awards will accept nominations if the student, or group of students, contributed to part, but not all, of the production.
 - Example: Your school is presenting *The Sound of Music*. If students are fully responsible for the set design for all scenes taking place at the Abbey, but not for the sets used in other scenes, they are still eligible for nomination.

Guidelines for Best Student Orchestra Nominations:

- 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.

Step Three

Post-Show Production Submissions

CLICK HERE TO SUBMIT STEP 3

The third and final step, Post-Show Production Submissions, is due **two weeks following Closing Night** of the registered musical, or by April 19 (whichever comes first).

PLEASE NOTE: this final phase of the application process is the most time consuming for participating schools to complete. We recommend working ahead whenever possible. While the designated school representative is ultimately responsible for uploading these materials, we highly encourage putting some of these tasks into the hands of the students.

Post-Show Production Submissions: These items will help Rising Star judges when they meet in the spring to determine Finalists in all awards categories, and Winners in production awards categories.

Schools will be asked to submit the following items:

- **Production Photos**

- Production Photos Featuring the Ensemble (3 photos)
 - Saved as: Musical Name_School Name_Ensemble 1
- Production Photos Featuring the Set (3 photos)
 - If you've nominated a student, or group of students, for Best Set Design, these should include a photo of the set that they were nominated for.
 - Saved as: Musical Name_School Name_Set 1
- Production Photos Featuring the Costumes (3 photos)
 - If you've nominated a student for Best Costume Designer, these should include a photo of the costume that they were nominated for.
 - Saved as: Musical Name_School Name_Costume 1
- Production Photos Featuring Best Actress and Best Actor Nominees (2 photos per nominated student)
 - Saved as: Musical Name_School Name_Student Name 1

Post-Show Production Submissions (Continued)

- **Best Actor and Best Actress Nominees – Solo Song Selection**

- Each nominated student should select one song from their nominated role as their “Solo Song Selection”.

- **Best Actor and Best Actress Nominees – Solo Song Sheet Music**

- Piano Conductor Score for each nominated student’s Solo Song.
 - This should *not* be pulled from the vocal score or chorus book.
 - DPAC will want to know about any key changes or other alterations made to the song to best suit that student nominee. If this applies to any of your nominated students, please make sure it’s noted on the sheet music before uploading.

- **Best Actor and Best Actress Nominees – Video Uploads**

- Solo Song Video For Each Best Actor or Best Actress Nominee
 - Please record and upload a video of each student nominated for Best Actor or Best Actress singing their Solo Song Selection.
 - This video can be pulled from production video footage, from a rehearsal, or can be a self tape. Whichever option is chosen, please make sure that the video quality and sound quality are good and consistent. There are no requirements for accompaniment, use of tracks, or choice to sign acapella.
- Dance Video For Each Best Actress and Best Actor Nominee
 - Please record and upload a video of each student nominated for Best Actor or Best Actress performing a simple dance routine.
 - Learn the dance routine [HERE](#).



Video Submission Guidelines – Our Promise

Video submissions are *not* scored or adjudicated. Only live performances are scored and adjudicated. This year, DPAC is not asking any school to submit a highlight reel or other videos from their production. We will still require videos featuring each student nominated for Best Actor and Best Actress.

Why does DPAC ask for these videos? These videos are incredibly important for the Year-Round Lead Judges, who use them as reference points when looking back at nominated students performances from the full season.

Last season, Rising Star judges reviewed 44 high school musical productions that spanned over 6 months time. While all judges take thoughtful and detailed notes, they consume high volumes of high school musical theatre each season. Additionally, not all judges attend each registered musical, so these videos are useful tools in getting all judges on the same page. Rising Star judges remain adamant that some video elements are crucial to their decision-making process.

The DPAC Rising Star Awards promise that any videos submitted will not be used publicly. We also guarantee that these videos are only used as tools to jog memory, and as supplementary materials that provide context for any judge in the decision-making room who was not assigned to adjudicate that particular production.



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 send an email to each school representative on the Monday prior to the Opening Night performance.

This email will include the exact number of tickets needed for Rising Star judges for each performance. 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

While DPAC does not have any specific requirements relating to where judges should be seated, we recommend placing judges in

seating areas where they will have a clear, unobstructed view of the entire show.

Anonymity

It is important that Rising Star judges maintain anonymity when attending school productions.

Rising Star 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 with The DPAC Rising Star Awards printed, and refraining from offering any special welcome directed towards the judges.

DPAC's Promise

DPAC promises to send at least 3 adjudicators (1 Lead Judge and 2 Year-Round Judges) to review each participating show.

Judges will be spread out, ensuring coverage at more than one performance.

DPAC also promises to place a cap on judge sign-ups: DPAC will *never* request more than 12 tickets to any musical production.

Additional Opportunities

Wait, There's More!

THE DPAC RISING STAR AWARDS – STUDENT ENSEMBLE

Each participating school is invited to send up to 2 high school students to perform in The DPAC Rising Star Awards Ensemble. These students will have the opportunity perform on the DPAC stage and to work with The DPAC Rising Star Awards creative team. The Ensemble will be featured in both the Opening and Closing Numbers during the awards ceremony.

For the first time ever this year, Ensemble members are eligible for one of four “Outstanding Performance in an Ensemble” Awards.

It is entirely up to each school to determine how these 2 students are selected. While it is not required, our Music Director would love if each school sent one who is either Soprano or Alto and one who is Tenor, Baritone or Bass. DPAC’s only requirement is that the Ensemble students may not also be any student named as a Finalist.

The deadline to submit students for the Ensemble is **Wednesday, April 22, 2026**. This deadline falls shortly after all student Finalists are contacted, to help prevent any overlap.

[CLICK HERE TO SUBMIT ENSEMBLE STUDENTS](#)

THE DPAC RISING STAR AWARDS – 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 **Monday, March 30, 2026**. DPAC will bring candidates in for in-person interviews in early April.

Additional Opportunities (Continued)

THE DPAC RISING STAR AWARDS – STUDENT REPORTERS

In partnership with **ABC11**, 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. Student Reporters will be mentored by media professionals at ABC11, will interview performers at an exclusive red carpet pre-show event, and will report live from DPAC throughout the evening during the awards ceremony. These two students will be recognized during the awards ceremony, receiving a trophy presented by ABC11.

The DPAC Rising Star Awards' Student Reporters will also be submitted to the Jimmy Awards' national Student Reporter search, making them eligible for selection to be reporters in New York City at the Jimmy Awards. 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.

THE DPAC RISING STAR AWARDS – VISUAL ARTS GALLERY

In partnership with **Durham Art Guild**, The DPAC Rising Star Awards will have a visual arts gallery on display in DPAC's lobby during the awards ceremony. This gallery will feature visual artwork created by students who are currently enrolled at a participating high school.

Jurors appointed by Durham Art Guild will review all submissions and will select pieces to be on display at DPAC during The DPAC Rising Star Awards.

Information about how to submit artwork for consideration will be emailed to participating high schools following the December 1 registration deadline.

Adjudication Details

Illuminating the Judging Process for The DPAC Rising Star Awards

The DPAC Rising Star Awards includes three different groups of judges.

1) YEAR-ROUND JUDGES

Who are they? The DPAC Rising Star Awards has a team of about 30 year-round judges. These year-round judges undergo special trainings and attend an annual Orientation, making them qualified to participate that 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) YEAR-ROUND LEAD JUDGES

Who are they? The DPAC Rising Star Awards has a total of 8 year-round lead judges. These lead judges also undergo special trainings and attend an annual Orientation, making them qualified to participate that 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? Year-round judges volunteer their time and expertise by attending between 8 to 12 high school musical theater productions each season. At least one lead judge (often more than one) is guaranteed to attend each registered musical. Lead judges also submit scores and comments after attending each show which are combined and tallied with the year-round judge scores.

Lead judges come together in the spring to review all tallied scores and comments. Lead judges also review all submitted video and photo materials. Lead judges select Finalists in all awards categories, and the Winners of all production awards categories.

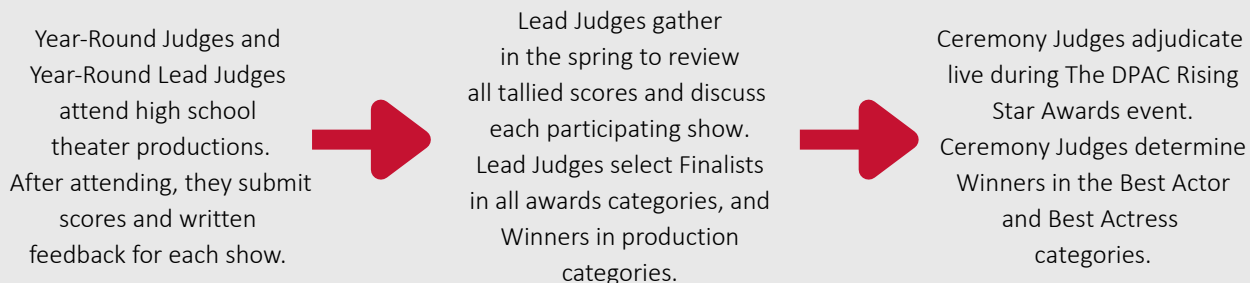
Adjudication Details (Continued)

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 judging panel.

What's their role? Ceremony judges will review performances by the 20 Finalists and will select which student is named “Best Actor” and which student is named “Best Actress”.

Adjudication Process



Sharing Feedback

Transparency is Key – Direct Critiques from Our Judges

The DPAC Rising Star Awards will provide a summary of feedback, including both scores and comments, that were submitted by Year-Round and Year-Round 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, including:



- School Production Feedback & Comments
 - Ensemble
 - Overall Musical
- Best Actor and Best Actress Nominee Feedback & Comments
- Best Student Choreographer Feedback & Comments
- Best Student Lighting Designer Feedback & Comments
- Best Student Costume Designer Feedback & Comments
- Best Student Set Design Feedback & Comments
- Best Student Orchestra Feedback & Comments

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

Adjudication Rubrics

What Our Judges Are Scoring

BEST ACTOR AND BEST ACTRESS

The Best Actor and Best Actress rubric used by The DPAC Rising Star Awards is the same rubric used for Jimmy Awards® nominees at the National High School Musical Theatre Awards®.

CRITERIA	1 - 3 Emerging – Rarely	4 - 6 Developing – Sometimes	7 - 9 Proficient – Often	10 Excellent – Always
VOCALS	<p>Performer rarely sang with emotional understanding, adequate volume, proper diction, correct pitch and tone, supported breathing and dramatic expression.</p> <p>The performer rarely executed the correct notes and rhythms.</p> <p>The performer rarely produced a fluid and audibly pleasing quality in music.</p>	<p>Performer sometimes sang with emotional understanding, adequate volume, proper diction, correct pitch and tone, supported breathing and dramatic expression.</p> <p>The performer sometimes executed the correct notes and rhythms.</p> <p>The performer sometimes produced a fluid and audibly pleasing quality in music.</p>	<p>Performer often sang with emotional understanding, adequate volume, proper diction, correct pitch and tone, supported breathing and dramatic expression.</p> <p>The performer often executed the correct notes and rhythms.</p> <p>The performer often produced a fluid and audibly pleasing quality in music.</p>	<p>Performer always sang with emotional understanding, adequate volume, proper diction, correct pitch and tone, supported breathing and dramatic expression.</p> <p>The performer always executed the correct notes and rhythms.</p> <p>The performer always produced a fluid and audibly pleasing quality in music.</p>
ACTING	<p>Pace and physicality rarely supported the performers understanding of their audition pieces throughout the performances.</p> <p>The performer rarely “sold” the song through believable enactments with clear acting choices.</p>	<p>Pace and physicality sometimes supported the performers understanding of their audition pieces throughout the performances.</p> <p>The performer sometimes “sold” the song through believable enactments with clear acting choices.</p>	<p>Pace and physicality often supported the performers understanding of their audition pieces throughout the performances.</p> <p>The performer often “sold” the song through believable enactments with clear acting choices.</p>	<p>Pace and physicality always supported the performers understanding of their audition pieces throughout the performances.</p> <p>The performer always “sold” the song through believable enactments with clear acting choices.</p>
OVERALL PRESENTATION	<p>The performer rarely demonstrated an overall cohesive understanding of stage presence, artistic interpretation, appropriate character choices and movement, and the ability to engage an audience.</p>	<p>The performer sometimes demonstrated an overall cohesive understanding of stage presence, artistic interpretation, appropriate character choices and movement, and the ability to engage an audience.</p>	<p>The performer often demonstrated an overall cohesive understanding of stage presence, artistic interpretation, appropriate character choices and movement, and the ability to engage an audience.</p>	<p>The performer always demonstrated an overall cohesive understanding of stage presence, artistic interpretation, appropriate character choices and movement, and the ability to engage an audience.</p>

Adjudication Rubrics (Continued)

BEST STUDENT LIGHTING DESIGNER

Only schools who have students in charge of this area (not acting as an assistant to a professional) are eligible for this award category. Schools who have adults fully responsible for lighting design are not eligible for this category. Schools *are* allowed to nominate a student if that student is fully responsible for *part* of the production's lighting design (meaning they fully designed *some* scenes but not *all*).

Schools will be asked to nominate one scene that was fully designed by a student. This scene will be scored based on the criteria below.

CRITERIA	1 - 3 Fair – Rarely	4 - 6 Good – Sometimes	7 - 9 Excellent – Often	10 Superior – Always
CREATIVITY	The student lighting designer did a fair job at setting creative lighting that added to story telling. Considering the lighting capabilities of the venue, they did a fair job at finding creative ways to use lighting to enhance the overall performance.	The student lighting designer did a good job at setting creative lighting that added to story telling. Considering the lighting capabilities of the venue, they did a good job at finding creative ways to use lighting to enhance the overall performance.	The student lighting designer did an excellent job at setting creative lighting that added to story telling. Considering the lighting capabilities of the venue, they did an excellent job at finding creative ways to use lighting to enhance the overall performance.	The student lighting designer did a superior job at setting creative lighting that added to story telling. Considering the lighting capabilities of the venue, they did a superior job at finding creative ways to use lighting to enhance the overall performance.
USE OF COLOR	The student lighting designer rarely succeeded in the use of color to create atmosphere.	The student lighting designer sometimes succeeded in the use of color to create atmosphere.	The student lighting designer often succeeded in the use of color to create atmosphere.	The student lighting designer always succeeded in the use of color to create atmosphere.
RELEVANCE & EFFECTIVENESS	The student lighting designer rarely lit the stage in a way that was appropriate and relevant to the overall story. They rarely succeeded in effectively lighting cast members when appropriate.	The student lighting designer sometimes lit the stage in a way that was appropriate and relevant to the overall story. They sometimes succeeded in effectively lighting cast members when appropriate.	The student lighting designer often lit the stage in a way that was appropriate and relevant to the overall story. They often succeeded in effectively lighting cast members when appropriate.	The student lighting designer always lit the stage in a way that was appropriate and relevant to the overall story. They always succeeded in effectively lighting cast members when appropriate.

Adjudication Rubrics (Continued)

BEST STUDENT COSTUME DESIGNER

Only schools who have students in charge of this area (not acting as an assistant to a professional) are eligible for this award category. Schools who have rented all costumes or who have adults fully responsible for costume design are not eligible for this category. Schools *are* allowed to nominate a student if that student is fully responsible for *some* of the costumes but not all of the costumes.

Schools will be asked to nominate one costume that was fully designed by a student. This costume will be scored based on the criteria below.

CRITERIA	1 - 3 Fair – Rarely	4 - 6 Good – Sometimes	7 - 9 Excellent – Often	10 Superior – Always
QUALITY	The student costume designer did a fair job producing a well constructed garment. Cast members were visibly struggling in costume, affecting their overall performance.	The student costume designer did a good job producing well a constructed garment. Cast members were sometimes visibly struggling in costume, affecting their overall performance.	The student costume designer did an excellent job producing a well constructed garment. Cast members often appeared visibly comfortable in costume, enhancing their overall performance.	The student costume designer did a superior job producing a well constructed garment. Cast members always appeared visibly comfortable in costume, enhancing their overall performance.
CREATIVITY	The student costume designer did a fair job finding creative ways to dress the cast. The student costume designer rarely offered creative costumes and props that helped tell the story.	The student costume designer did a good job finding creative ways to dress the cast. The student costume designer sometimes offered creative costumes and props that helped tell the story.	The student costume designer did an excellent job finding creative ways to dress the cast. The student costume designer often offered creative costumes and props that helped tell the story.	The student costume designer did a superior job finding creative ways to dress the cast. The student costume designer always offered creative costumes and props that helped tell the story.
RELEVANCE & EFFECTIVENESS	The student costume designer did a fair job at dressing the cast in costumes thought to be relevant to the story. The costumes were rarely effective, meaning that cast members were rarely portrayed accurately during the show.	The student costume designer did a good job at dressing the cast in costumes thought to be relevant to the story. The costumes were sometimes effective, meaning that cast members were sometimes portrayed accurately during the show.	The student costume designer did an excellent job at dressing the cast in costumes thought to be relevant to the story. The costumes were often effective, meaning that cast members were often portrayed accurately during the show.	The student costume designer did a superior job at dressing the cast in costumes thought to be relevant to the story. The costumes were always effective, meaning that cast members were always portrayed accurately during the show.

Adjudication Rubrics (Continued)

BEST STUDENT CHOREOGRAPHER

Only schools who have students in charge of this area (not acting as an assistant to the choreographer or as a dance captain) are eligible for this award category. Schools who have adults fully responsible for choreography are not eligible for this category. Schools *are* allowed to nominate a student if they are fully responsible for *part* of the production's choreography (meaning they fully choreographed *some* scenes but not *all*).

Schools will be asked to nominate one number that was fully choreographed by a student. This number will be scored based on the criteria below.

CRITERIA	1 - 3 Fair – Rarely	4 - 6 Good – Sometimes	7 - 9 Excellent – Often	10 Superior – Always
CREATIVITY	The student choreographer did a fair job at assigning creative and dynamic movement appropriate to the moment.	The student choreographer did a good job at assigning creative and dynamic movement appropriate to the moment.	The student choreographer did an excellent job at assigning creative and dynamic movement appropriate to the moment.	The student choreographer did a superior job at assigning creative and dynamic movement appropriate to the moment.
RELEVANCE	The student choreographer rarely assigned movement that was relevant to the story. The movement rarely added to the story telling.	The student choreographer sometimes assigned movement that was relevant to the story. The movement sometimes added to the story telling.	The student choreographer often assigned movement that was relevant to the story. The movement often added to the story telling.	The student choreographer always assigned movement that was relevant to the story. The movement always added to the story telling.
EXECUTION	The student choreographer rarely assigned movement that could be executed well by the cast. They did a fair job at understanding the capabilities of the cast, and choreographing accordingly.	The student choreographer sometimes assigned movement that could be executed well by the cast. They did a good job at understanding the capabilities of the cast, and choreographing accordingly.	The student choreographer often assigned movement that could be executed well by the cast. They did an excellent job at understanding the capabilities of the cast, and choreographing accordingly.	The student choreographer always assigned movement that could be executed well by the cast. They did a superior job at understanding the capabilities of the cast, and choreographing accordingly.

Adjudication Rubrics (Continued)

BEST STUDENT SET DESIGN

Only schools who have students, or a group of students, in charge of this area are eligible for this award category. Schools who have adults fully responsible for set design or who rent/purchase all of their sets are not eligible for this category. Schools are allowed to nominate students if they are fully responsible for *part* of the production's set design (meaning they fully designed the set for *some* scenes but not *all*).

Schools will be asked to nominate one set that was fully designed by a student. This set will be scored based on the criteria below.

CRITERIA	1 - 3 Fair – Rarely	4 - 6 Good – Sometimes	7 - 9 Excellent – Often	10 Superior – Always
CREATIVITY	The student set designer(s) did a fair job at finding creative ways to design set pieces appropriate to the overall needs of the production.	The student set designer(s) did a good job at finding creative ways to design set pieces appropriate to the overall needs of the production.	The student set designer(s) did an excellent job at finding creative ways to design set pieces appropriate to the overall needs of the production.	The student set designer(s) did a superior job at finding creative ways to design set pieces appropriate to the overall needs of the production.
QUALITY	The student set designer(s) rarely provided reliable sets that were structurally sound. The cast rarely appeared confident and comfortable interacting with set pieces.	The student set designer(s) sometimes provided reliable sets that were structurally sound. The cast sometimes appeared confident and comfortable interacting with set pieces.	The student set designer(s) often provided reliable sets that were structurally sound. The cast often appeared confident and comfortable interacting with set pieces.	The student set designer(s) always provided reliable sets that were structurally sound. The cast always appeared confident and comfortable interacting with set pieces.
RELEVANCE & EFFECTIVENESS	The student set designer(s) did a fair job at producing a set that was relevant to the needs of the story. The ease of set transitions was rarely successful. The overall the set design was rarely effective or easy to understand based on its visual appearance.	The student set designer(s) did a good job at producing a set that was relevant to the needs of the story. The ease of set transitions was sometimes successful. The overall the set design was sometimes effective or easy to understand based on its visual appearance.	The student set designer(s) did an excellent job at producing a set that was relevant to the needs of the story. The ease of set transitions was often successful. The overall the set design was often effective or easy to understand based on its visual appearance.	The student set designer(s) did a superior job at producing a set that was relevant to the needs of the story. The ease of set transitions was always successful. The overall the set design was always effective or easy to understand based on its visual appearance.

Adjudication Rubrics (Continued)

BEST STUDENT ORCHESTRA

Only schools who have a student orchestra accompanying their production are eligible for this category. Schools who use tracks are not eligible. The student orchestra can include a small handful of adult musicians, so long as the majority consists of students.

CRITERIA	1 - 3 Fair – Rarely	4 - 6 Good – Sometimes	7 - 9 Excellent – Often	10 Superior – Always
VOLUME	The student orchestra rarely displayed sensible volume levels and balance.	The student orchestra sometimes displayed sensible volume levels and balance.	The student orchestra often displayed sensible volume levels and balance.	The student orchestra always displayed sensible volume levels and balance.
PITCH & DICTION	The student orchestra did a fair job performing in pitch with proper diction.	The student orchestra did a good job performing in pitch with proper diction.	The student orchestra did an excellent job performing in pitch with proper diction.	The student orchestra did a superior job performing in pitch with proper diction.
SUPPORT TO ON-STAGE CAST	The student orchestra rarely supported the cast well during musical numbers. They did a fair job at working with the cast to help tell the story.	The student orchestra sometimes supported the cast well during musical numbers. They did a good job at working with the cast to help tell the story.	The student orchestra often supported the cast well during musical numbers. They did an excellent job at working with the cast to help tell the story.	The student orchestra always supported the cast well during musical numbers. They did a superior job at working with the cast to help tell the story.

Adjudication Rubrics (Continued)

BEST ENSEMBLE

All school musicals are eligible for Best Ensemble awards. This award will be distributed to two schools, one from each budget tier. Tier 1 includes schools with a budget of \$9,999 and under. Tier 2 includes schools with a budget of \$10,000 and up.

CRITERIA	1 - 3 Fair – Rarely	4 - 6 Good – Sometimes	7 - 9 Excellent – Often	10 Superior – Always
COHESIVENESS	The Ensemble did a fair job working together as a team or unit. There were rarely strong levels of trust displayed amongst the cast.	The Ensemble did a good job working together as a team or unit. There were sometimes strong levels of trust displayed amongst the cast.	The Ensemble did an excellent job working together as a team or unit. There were often strong levels of trust displayed amongst the cast.	The Ensemble did a superior job working together as a team or unit. There were always strong levels of trust displayed amongst the cast.
ENGAGEMENT	The Ensemble rarely showcased active engagement throughout the production. Ensemble members appeared unfocused, uninterested, or distracted.	The Ensemble sometimes showcased active engagement throughout the production. Occasionally Ensemble members appeared unfocused, uninterested, or distracted.	The Ensemble often showcased active engagement throughout the production. Ensemble members often appeared focused and interested.	The Ensemble always showcased active engagement throughout the production. Ensemble members always appeared focused and interested.
STORYTELLING	The Ensemble did a fair job at enhancing the world of the production through their collective performance.	The Ensemble did a good job at enhancing the world of the production through their collective performance.	The Ensemble did an excellent job at enhancing the world of the production through their collective performance.	The Ensemble did a superior job at enhancing the world of the production through their collective performance.
EXCECUTION	The show did a fair job at featuring a cast of performers who drove the story in a well rehearsed and well executed manner.	The show did a good job at featuring a cast of performers who drove the story in a well rehearsed and well executed manner.	The show did an excellent job at featuring a cast of performers who drove the story in a well rehearsed and well executed manner.	The show did a superior job at featuring a cast of performers who drove the story in a well rehearsed and well executed manner.

Adjudication Rubrics (Continued)

BEST MUSICAL

All school musicals are eligible for Best Musical awards. This award will be distributed to two schools, one from each budget tier. Tier 1 includes schools with a budget of \$9,999 and under. Tier 2 includes schools with a budget of \$10,000 and up.

CRITERIA	1 - 3 Fair – Rarely	4 - 6 Good – Sometimes	7 - 9 Excellent – Often	10 Superior – Always
TECHNICAL EXECUTION	The technical elements were rarely successful. The pace of the show was fair due to scene changes, lighting design, costume and props, and set design elements that were rarely successful.	The technical elements were sometimes successful. The pace of the show was good due to scene changes, lighting design, costume and props, and set design elements that were sometimes successful.	The technical elements were often successful. The pace of the show was excellent due to scene changes, lighting design, costume and props, and set design elements that were often successful.	The technical elements were always successful. The pace of the show was superior due to scene changes, lighting design, costume and props, and set design elements that were always successful.
MUSICAL DIRECTION	The musical direction was rarely successful. The music rarely blended seamlessly with the other elements of the show. The vocal performance from the cast at large was fair .	The musical direction was sometimes successful. The music sometimes blended seamlessly with the other elements of the show. The vocal performance from the cast at large was good .	The musical direction was often successful. The music often blended seamlessly with the other elements of the show. The vocal performance from the cast at large was excellent .	The musical direction was always successful. The music always blended seamlessly with the other elements of the show. The vocal performance from the cast at large was superior .
ARTISTIC VISION & DIRECTION	The interpretation, casting, use of space, consistency, artistic vision and clarity of story was rarely successful.	The interpretation, casting, use of space, consistency, artistic vision and clarity of story was sometimes successful.	The interpretation, casting, use of space, consistency, artistic vision and clarity of story was often successful.	The interpretation, casting, use of space, consistency, artistic vision and clarity of story was always successful.
OVERALL PRODUCTION QUALITY & COHESIVENESS	This production did a fair job at producing quality musical theater. They rarely showcased the diverse talents of the cast. They rarely delivered a strong, unified, cohesive production.	This production did a good job at producing quality musical theater. They sometimes showcased the diverse talents of the cast. They sometimes delivered a strong, unified, cohesive production.	This production did an excellent job at producing quality musical theater. They often showcased the diverse talents of the cast. They often delivered a strong, unified, cohesive production.	This production did a superior job at producing quality musical theater. They always showcased the diverse talents of the cast. They always delivered a strong, unified, cohesive production.

Tickets to The DPAC Rising Star Awards

What Participating Schools Can Expect This Season

Complimentary Tickets

- Participating Schools will each receive 10 complimentary tickets to The DPAC Rising Star Awards' ceremony.
- Best Actor and Best Actress Finalists will each receive 4 complimentary tickets.
- The DPAC Rising Star Awards' Ensemble will each receive 1 complimentary ticket, for their personal use when not performing.
- Students who have artwork on display in the Visual Arts Gallery will receive 2 complimentary tickets.
- Visual Arts Teachers who have student artwork on display in the Visual Arts Gallery will receive 2 complimentary tickets.

Purchasing Tickets

Tickets will go on-sale in late April, 2026. Participating schools will be notified in advance of this on-sale date.

Participating high schools will have the option to purchase seats for their program with a 50% discount. This discount is intended to be used for their program only, not to be distributed to the general public. All participating programs will be given an link to purchase at this discounted rate at the same time of the on-sale.

Seating Information

The DPAC Rising Star Awards' ceremony is a General Admission event.

Any person in your group using the complimentary tickets will be able to sit with any person in your group using paid tickets.

DPAC will not reserve seats for any school programs. Seats will be first-come, first-serve.

Application Check Lists

Step One: School Musical Registration

Deadline: December 1, 2025

Submit via Google Form [HERE](#)

Completed	Item	Special Notes
<input type="checkbox"/>	School Name and Location	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Name and Contact Info for Designated School Representative	Each registered school musical must select one adult to be DPAC's main point of contact. This person will be responsible for submitting all three steps of The DPAC Rising Star Awards application.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Name of Musical	The musical should be approved by the National High School Musical Theatre Awards. More info can be found on page 5 of this handbook.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Licensing House	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Production Dates & Times	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Production On-Sale Info	DPAC wants to help promote your show! We'll ask when your show will go on-sale, what tickets will cost, and where DPAC should direct folks to learn more. If you're unable to offer all of that information at the time of your registration, we understand. Simply follow up with us when you know more.
<input type="checkbox"/>	School Logo	Should be an image file. Label as: School Name_Musical Name_Logo
<input type="checkbox"/>	Theatre Department and/or School Instagram Handle	DPAC will tag these in posts referencing your school's participation and production.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Visual Arts Teacher Contact Information	DPAC will contact your school's visual arts department with an offer to submit work for the student gallery at The DPAC Rising Star Awards.

Step Two: Pre-Show Details & Student Nominations

Deadline: Two weeks prior to your musical's Opening Night performance.

Submit via Google Form [HERE](#)

Completed	Item	Special Notes
<input type="checkbox"/>	Production Address	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Arrival Instructions for Judges <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parking Instructions • Building Entry Instructions • Locating Will-Call Instructions 	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Production Budget	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Brief Description of Rehearsal Process	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Is your musical using tracks or a live orchestra?	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Are you nominating your orchestra for Best Student Orchestra?	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Best Student Orchestra Nomination (if applicable) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How many musicians comprise the orchestra? • How many musicians are students who attend your school? • Musical Director or Conductor Name and Contact Info 	<p>Students should make up the majority of any orchestra nominated for this award.</p> <p>When answering these questions, please note that an estimation on size of orchestra will be acceptable.</p>

Step Two: Pre-Show Details & Student Nominations (Continued)

Deadline: Two weeks prior to your musical's Opening Night performance.

Submit via Google Form [HERE](#)

Completed	Item	Special Notes
<input type="checkbox"/>	Are you nominating a student for Best Student Costume Designer?	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Best Student Costume Designer Nomination (if applicable) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student Name and Contact Information • Description of student's contributions and process. • Description of costume being nominated for consideration. 	Schools who are nominating a student for Best Student Costume Designer should select one costume that was fully designed by that student for adjudication.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Are you nominating a student for Best Student Lighting Designer?	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Best Student Lighting Designer Nomination (if applicable) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student Name and Contact Information • Description of student's contributions and process. • Description of scene being nominated for consideration. 	Schools who are nominating a student for Best Student Lighting Designer should select one scene that was fully designed by that student for adjudication.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Are you nominating a student for Best Student Choreographer?	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Best Student Choreographer Nomination (if applicable) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student Name and Contact Information • Description of student's contributions and process. • Description of number being nominated for consideration. 	Schools who are nominating a student for Best Student Choreographer should select one number that was fully choreographed by that student for adjudication.

Step Two: Pre-Show Details & Student Nominations (Continued)

Deadline: Two weeks prior to your musical's Opening Night performance.

Submit via Google Form [HERE](#)

Completed	Item	Special Notes
<input type="checkbox"/>	Are you nominating a student (or group of students) for Best Student Set Design?	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Best Student Set Design Nomination (if applicable) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student Name and Contact Information • Description of student's contributions and process. • Description of set being nominated for consideration. 	Schools who are nominating a student (or group of students) for Best Student Set Design should select one set that was fully designed by them for adjudication.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Are you nominating any students for Best Actor or Best Actress?	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Best Actor and Actress Nominations (if applicable) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student Name and Contact Information • Best Actor or Best Actress • Name of Nominated Role • Parent Contact Information • Photo or Headshot of Nominee 	Each school musical is invited to nominate up to 4 students for consideration in this category. These students should be cast in primary roles that are considered eligible roles by the National High School Musical Theatre Awards. More information can be found on pages 16 and 17 of this handbook. Headshots should be labeled as: School Name_Musical Name_Student Name

Step Three: Post-Show Production Submissions

Deadline: Two weeks following to your musical's closing performance.

Submit via Acceptd [HERE](#)

Completed	Item	Special Notes
<input type="checkbox"/>	School & Show Information <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School Name • Name of Musical • School Representative Name 	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Solo Song Selections <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Name of Chosen Solo Song • Sheet Music for Chosen Solo Song • Solo Song Video Submission 	Each student nominated for Best Actor or Best Actress should select one solo song from their nominated role. Sheet Music will be uploaded as an image files and should be labeled as: School Name_Student Name_Role_Song Title_Sheet Music Solo videos will be uploaded as video files and should be labeled as: Musical Name_School Name_Student Name_Solo Song Video
<input type="checkbox"/>	3 Production Photos Featuring the Ensemble	Ensemble photos will be uploaded as image files and should be labeled as: Musical Name_School Name_Ensemble Image 1, 2, 3
<input type="checkbox"/>	3 Production Photos Featuring the Set	Ensemble photos will be uploaded as image files and should be labeled as: Musical Name_School Name_Set Image 1, 2, 3 If your school nominated a student (or group of students) for Best Student Set Design, the first photo (labeled as Image 1) should feature the nominated set.
<input type="checkbox"/>	3 Production Photos Featuring Costumes	Ensemble photos will be uploaded as image files and should be labeled as: Musical Name_School Name_Costume Image 1, 2, 3 If your school nominated a student for Best Student Costume Design, the first photo (labeled as Image 1) should feature the nominated costume.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Production Photos Featuring Best Actor and Best Actress Nominees	DPAC requires two photos for each nominated student. Best Actor and Actress Nominee photos will be uploaded as image files and should be labeled as: Musical Name_School Name_Student Name 1, 2
<input type="checkbox"/>	Student Nominee Dance Video Submission	Each Best Actor and Best Actress nominee should learn a THIS short dance routine. Each nominated student should record themselves performing this dance routine. Dance video submissions will be uploaded as video files and should be labeled as: Musical Name_School Name_Student Name_Dance Video

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.