



HARKER
PERFORMING ARTS

The Harker School Casting and Placement Policy for Middle School Students

First and foremost, all performer placement for Harker productions is fair. Whether for chair position in the orchestra, solos in choir or dance productions, or a role in a play or musical, all performers will be considered for all roles or placement. Casting and placement is decided regardless of any exterior factors outside of each student's effort and abilities relative to their peers.

Considerations that will not play a role in casting or placement include: age, race, color, sexual orientation, relationship with directors or other Harker staff, and annual giving contributions. There are no 'favorites' in the middle school performing arts department. We are not able to cast more students than will fit into a given production or ensemble, although we do make an effort to offer as many opportunities as possible.

Directors in the middle school performing arts department will never reconsider casting or placement decisions after the fact. However, students are welcome to come in to speak with a director in private about ways to learn from the audition experience and to get suggestions for the future, at least 72 hours after casting results are posted. It is not appropriate for parents to contact the director to inquire about why certain casting decisions were made; instead, the performers themselves should seek feedback since the learning opportunity is theirs.

What performers should consider when auditioning for the fall play or spring musical:

Professional actors audition often, and all actors regardless of their level must develop a tolerance for hearing the words "no, thank you." Casting is always out of your control, so if you have done your best to prepare for and complete the audition, you have already succeeded.

The only two things you can control around casting are:

1. your preparation, and
2. your attitude

Focus on these and you already have a successful audition. Congratulate yourself for bravely auditioning and the good things that happened in your audition and immediately learn from and forgive yourself for anything that didn't go as well as you'd hoped.

Often, there are many actors considered for a role, and we usually have many more people auditioning for roles than we have room to put into cast or ensemble. This means that a large number of people will always be disappointed and there is no way around that. How everyone deals with the casting is the place where true artists emerge from the pack.

An actor's reaction to casting says a great deal about the kind of artist he or she is, and a poor reaction often confirms the wisdom of the casting that caused that reaction.

What directors consider when casting the fall play or spring musical:

- Scheduling conflicts must be minimal.
- Positive attitude - the cast and crew work closely together and everyone involved must be a member of a positive, collaborative ensemble.
- Demonstration of vocal skill, including projection, diction and expression.
- Movement and comfort with physical characterization (gestures, posture, etc.)
- Arc of a given student's training in the middle school performing arts department - Students may be given a challenge in one show and then a role that plays into their strengths in another. The educational needs of the performer may be the deciding factor for a role.
- Age and character type - This includes the look, as well as the energy and temperament that play well for a role. However, we may cast against type on occasion.
- Comic timing, if required.
- Chemistry with scene partners - the chemistry actors share on stage may play a factor for some roles.
- Courage - taking risks during classes, auditions, rehearsals and performances.
- Professionalism - the artists involved must have good work habits (being on time, demonstrating an ability to listen to and follow directions, respecting and supporting fellow performers, arriving prepared, etc.)

Successful performers must focus on their preparation and attitude and not worry about what is out of their control. Directors do not pre-cast the show, and students and parents should

likewise not try to predict a director's choices. And finally, successful performers trust the director's casting and understand the complexity of creating an artistic ensemble.

Considerations for instrumental group placement and solo assignments:

Orchestra

- All students who wish to enroll in orchestra are welcome to, provided they play one of the approved instruments in the ensemble.
- Auditions consist of a prepared piece from each student on their specific instrument, musicianship skills, and sight-reading. Excerpts may be included for specific sections and are emailed to students by mid-August.
- Students are assessed on musicianship (singing, improvisation and tonal patterns) expression, technique, articulation, phrasing, tone and rhythm.
- Grade and experience level also play a role in placement.
- Orchestra seating is purely organizational and does not impact how involved a student is in the orchestra program.

Jazz Bands

- All students who wish to enroll in Jazz Band are welcome to, provided they play one of the approved instruments in the ensemble.
- Students are placed on their given parts at the discretion of the director.
- Saxophone rotations may include clarinet, flute, tenor, alto, or baritone sax.
- There is no audition to make a jazz ensemble, but experience and knowledge of jazz does play a part in placement.
- Grade and proper balance is considered when staffing both the Lab and Jazz Bands.

Considerations for choir placement and solo assignments:

- Music reading (pitch, rhythm)
- Ability to match pitch
- Ability to sing with beautiful tone
- Basic movement/ dance skills (Harmonics)
- Ability to sing and master one part
- Ability to sing in harmony with others
- Enthusiasm for music study and performance
- Balanced ensemble
- Choral Solos

Solos likewise are treated the same as regular auditions. Those who choose to audition are considered for the appropriateness of the voice to the solo. Sometimes we will stretch a student when we give him/her a solo, sometimes we will play to his/her strengths.

There is no set number of slots to be filled in the vocal ensembles. Ensembles usually range between 20-30 students per group.

Considerations for dance placement, choreography and solo assignments:

- Scheduling conflicts must be minimal.
- Facility in movement and dance experience are primary. What technical dance skills do you possess and at what level are they? Flexibility is also important.
- Style of dance (jazz vs. hip-hop, etc). We want to place you in a style that will best suit your abilities; for example, if you are a lyrical dancer and have never tried hip-hop before, we most likely will not place you in a hip-hop dance. Some dancers are ready to be challenged, so we may push them in the direction of a more difficult routine or style.
- Energy/commitment to the movement, performance (i.e., smiles)

- Attitude and professionalism in rehearsals, backstage, etc. (Are you easy and pleasant to work with?)
- How quickly do you learn the movement? Do you practice outside of scheduled rehearsals? Are you prepared to move on at the next rehearsal?

Considerations for theater technology job assignments

- Scheduling conflicts must be minimal.
- Positive attitude - the cast and crew work closely together and everyone involved must be a member of a positive, collaborative ensemble.

Students will be assigned based on the needs of the show, and the needs of the student's growth. Student requests and experience will be considered, but the production staff will make final decisions. Gender, annual giving contributions, family relationships should not be considerations - all effort will be made to be fair.

Harker's middle school performing arts has a wide variety of exciting opportunities for you. We look forward to seeing you at auditions!