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Hello Fellow NYSTEA Members!

I hope this letter finds you resting and recovering from your March Musicals...or perhaps just about to go into the final weeks of your early April shows. March was "Theater in Our Schools Month"! I hope that you found some way to celebrate the month with your students and your school community!

As a member of the NYSTEA Board, March was my month to send out a letter to touch base and remind folks of how we can support one another. There's no point in trying to sugar coat it- this letter was very tough for me to write (No kidding- it's almost April). The only way I'm getting through it right now is by committing to myself to be honest, and just... put it out there. Who knows- there may be someone who needs to hear it? This year has been tough for me. The theater program where I work is a shadow of what I had hoped to build 27 years ago when I started teaching, and it is a constant source of sadness for me. When I think of the kind of work I was doing 20 years ago... I can't believe where we are today. Recently, I spent some time with some District Directors of the Performing Arts. Everyone seemed to be prepping for their March musicals, and a common theme among the group was "the struggles of the theater program." They seemed to all be facing interference from administrative or community members or both. Some were being told that they had to edit content for "appropriateness"... content that would never have caused concern just ten years ago. All I kept saying was: "Are you a member of NYSTEA? Reach out to Adam, our president. Give your Region Chair a call. You shouldn't have to fight these fights alone."

Just last week, a teacher in Nassau reached out to me with questions about getting tenured in the area of Theater Arts. The district was under the impression that they couldn't tenure a teacher with only Theater Arts Certification. Within a day, we were able to get in touch with the right folks at NYSED and get some answers and clarity (Thank you Kristie Farr and Adam Shatraw!). I hope that the support network within NYSTEA was a help and comfort to this teacher. The point is... I was so happy to be able to help in some small way. It felt good!

With some of these things in mind, I am setting a goal to put more resources at your fingertips, to help you through the difficult times you might face. The struggles may not always be as dramatic or as pressing as some of these examples, but that's okay. It could just be a programmatic question, like: "How do I interest kids in joining my tech crew? How do I turn around a culture within my program that is headed in the wrong direction?" Or "How do I get kids to fully commit to the program?"

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Below, I am going to list a few resources that I have found helpful. These are just the tip of the iceberg of what I am hoping to be able to house in our Membership Area of the NYSTEA website. Stay in touch, and please-send me the resources that you find helpful, and I will include those as well!!

I hope your programs are thriving and bringing you fulfillment and joy! There are some fabulous programs out there in NY State! I've been privileged to see a number of incredible high school musicals this spring! I'm so proud of all that you do to provide your theater students with meaningful, educational experiences. Keep up the good work!!!

Check these out:

Consider signing up for "The Scene", a weekly roundup of the latest news and hottest topics in theater education.

The Scene: <https://thescene.substack.com>

Do you belong to the EDTA? There are endless resources right on the website:

<https://schooltheatre.org>

Including a daily Open Forum of topics and conversations from Theater Teachers around the county.

"PRESETT" is a website that focuses on resources for School Technical Theater programs.

Preset.org- Advocating for Safe, functional, vocational school theaters:

<https://www.presett.org/>

With love-

Michael Limone
NYSTEA Board Member
Long Island Region Co-Chairperson
Advocacy Committee Chairperson