



New York State
nystea
Theatre Education Association

Perform. Transform.

Adam Shatraw
President
Tony Ravinsky
Vice President
Meg Test
Secretary
Colleen Law-Tefft
Treasurer

Board of Trustees
Scott Eckers
Diana Gruninger
Regina Hartman
Michael Limone
Amy Martin
Carlene O'Connor
Marshall Pokrentowski
Christine Spring
Dean Vallas

June 2024

Hello fellow NYSTEAs friends,

I hope your school year went smoothly and you all are onto a relaxing summer. The summer can serve as a wonderful time to reflect, recharge and be ready for the next year. As you relax in your favorite place (with your favorite cocktail perhaps?) I would like to plant a seed in your brain. Have you thought about your retirement and who will replace you? Is there a process to replace yourself or your position when you retire? Will your program and all that you have put into it continue without you?

Some of you will remember that I was not a teacher but spent almost 25 years directing the drama club in our high school. I thought I had “retired” from it in 2022 but this spring I ended up going back in and helping to direct a show. The person they hired to be the advisor this year did almost nothing with the kids, then disappeared and no shows were ever produced. So, a former student and I went to the school board and asked to do a spring show with the students. They were happy that we approached them. The question that was never answered was, why did no one do anything? Had no one noticed what was happening? Why was this person allowed to shirk their duties? After talking with the superintendent, it became clear that he had no idea what the position entailed, and it became clear that there were no checks in place to make sure that someone in this position did their job. For 25 years they never had to have anything in place because there was a responsible person in charge. (Of course, I imagine if the football coach didn’t show up, someone would notice!) I am sure if you are lucky enough to be in a school where there is a theatre program in place, actual theatre classes are offered and it is part of the curriculum, then you may not have ever run into this situation. But if you are not, you may want to check into that and not take anything for granted.

On the happier side of things, during my 25 years of working with high school students, I created a program that grew from about 7 students involved to over 30 students each year. For our small school, this was a major accomplishment. The drama club became an inclusive place for all students. It was never my goal to make “stars”, but I was fortunate to work with and guide some incredible students. This year one of my students was involved in a new musical that started in Berkley, California, then moved to Washington, DC. We just found out that the musical is moving to Broadway this fall! He is one of the four leads in the production, and I couldn’t be prouder! When we saw the show in Washington in December, my student introduced me around to the cast and one of them said “Do you know how important you are?!” The rest of them chimed in, raving about their high school theatre teachers.

So the next time you’re exhausted and feel like you aren’t appreciated or that what you’re doing isn’t getting through to all your students...”Do you know how important you are?!”

Enjoy your summer!

Colleen Law-Tefft

NYSTEAs Treasurer