
MUSICAL PARTS

Questions & Answers Regarding Auditions for Musicals (2 pages)

Do you decide parts by yourself?

No. I enlist help from the teachers. I consider behavior, work ethic, and teacher recommendations. For speaking parts, I also consider whether or not students complete homework since they have to memorize lines at home.

When do you have auditions?

Auditions are in the morning when students arrive to school and sometimes during recess. I do not to have them during class because it takes so much time and creates a long wait for students who are uninterested in auditioning. I like doing them at recess because it shows me who really wants to be involved and whether or not they are willing to miss playing outside occasionally for rehearsal. I announce try outs to each class multiple times. Then I make an announcement each day of tryouts in the individual classrooms. The students have several chances to audition even if they are absent during some tryout days.

The Biggest Question: Do you ever give parts to students who have had parts in the past?

Yes, sometimes I do. My first priority when deciding parts is to get as many new people involved as possible. Often times in musicals, the entire speaking cast consists of students who have never had a speaking role. The dance team usually consists of all new students. Some years can be a little different if I only have a small number of students who try out. In some musicals, when the dances are more difficult, I sometimes chose a couple of veteran members who help to lead the group since the dancers have to do their part independently while I direct the rest of the students/choir. The singing soloists tend to be a mix of new and old. Occasionally there are students who get parts who have been featured before. This is because there is a core group of students who try out every year for everything because they are passionate about music. When I review my audition notes, I pick as many new students as I can, and then fill in the rest of the parts with experienced soloists. If there are students who tryout who have not had a part before, but they do not get a solo, please know that they are carefully considered. In most cases, the songs do not match their range (the song/s may be way too high or low for their voices). In some cases, they may not be able to come close to matching the tempo or pitch of the music.

The last thing that I consider when choosing students for parts is my responsibility to differentiate. Sometimes I have students who excel in music because they are very talented and/or skilled, and I try to challenge them as much as possible. They are sometimes students who do not excel in other areas, and music is where they shine. I may see potential in them for a future in theater, dance, music education or performance, and I want to nurture their abilities. Limiting every student in elementary school to only one part during their years here doesn't make educational sense. It would be like having a talented pitcher in baseball, or a great quarter back in football

PARTS CONTINUED...

Questions & Answers Regarding Auditions for Musicals

Do you consider whether or not students have had parts during Veterans Day programs when you choose roles?

No, I do not consider Veterans Day programs when I make decisions for roles in our Christmas and Spring musicals. The majority of our families do not come to our Veterans Day ceremonies. Also, I look at the songs we do for our Veterans as an act of service for our community, rather than a performance.

Do you consider kindergarten programs when choosing roles?

I generally do not consider kindergarten programs when assigning parts because I don't hold auditions at the kindergarten level. Also, the majority of students who have parts in kindergarten are hand-picked by their teachers. I do not know them well enough during their first year to be able to predict who can handle singing or speaking in front of a large crowd.

and telling them that they are only allowed to develop their pitching/ throwing skills for one season, because playing in that position more than one time will make others feel bad. That doesn't usually happen because coaches who see potential in athletes are responsible for helping them develop their skills. They continue to bring new athletes to positions, but they also keep some kids where they are in order to push them forward. With that said, there are times when it is appropriate to take a risk on someone new who might not be the best during tryouts, and there are other times when it is appropriate to choose a student with some experience who is a little more solid on a part. It all depends on the specific role. Sometimes there is only one clear choice for a part. It is far more complicated than I could have imagined when I began teaching music. I try to be transparent with kids and families, and I will tactfully explain my decisions when questions arise. I think it helps students when they audition in the future.

Please feel free to email me if you have additional questions and/or concerns.