



HONORING THEATRE STUDENTS FOR 90 YEARS

International Thespian Society Reaches New Membership Milestone with 2.4 Million Honored *Introducing New Opportunities for Students and Teachers*

In 2019, the International Thespian Society (ITS) is marking the [90th anniversary](#) of its founding with a yearlong celebration of the power of theatre education to instill confidence, empathy, and compassion to build better communities.

In the 2018-19 school year 59,000 new Thespians were inducted, and since its founding, ITS now counts more than 2.4 million theatre students who have been honored.

ITS is the honor society of middle and high school students who participate in theatre in their schools. It is a program of the Educational Theatre Association (EdTA). It was [founded in Fairmont, W.Va.](#), during the 1928-29 school year, chartering its first troupes in April 1929.

Today, Thespian troupes are active in all 50 states and 13 countries. The newest troupe, at the Olentangy Berlin High School in Delaware, Ohio, is number 8839. Troupe 1 is from Casper, Wyoming. Both were present at the organization's signature event, the [International Thespian Festival](#), last June, along with 4,000 fellow Thespians. In total, nearly 10,000 troupes have chartered since ITS' founding.

"This membership milestone, coming as it does in the midst of the 90th anniversary year of ITS, is a testament to the clarity of [vision of the ITS founders](#): to 'better high school dramatics' and recognize participation in dramatics 'as is true with high school athletics,'" says EdTA Executive Director Julie Cohen Theobald. "The values instilled by participation in school theatre benefit those students every day for the rest of their lives."

Today, the organization is fulfilling the [founders' aims](#) through a variety of programs and services—including new initiatives launching this anniversary year.

Aim 1: Furnish suitable reward and recognition for participation in dramatics.

How EdTA achieves it: Thespians enjoy induction into the honor society and get honors recognition at graduation in addition to unique opportunities to learn and develop skills at chapter and national events.

New this school year, the [International Thespian Excellence Awards](#), or ThespyTM, will debut as the premier recognition for student theatre achievement—both performance and technical. Formerly called National Individual Events, the revamped program offers Thespians constructive feedback on prepared theatrical material and technical designs. Students who achieve overall Superior scores at their chapter and earn the top scores in their category at the International Thespian Festival will earn Thespy Awards and be honored on the main stage at the International Thespian Festival Showcase.

Aim 2: Serve as a powerful agent in aiding the director of dramatics in securing more and better cooperation in his or her field of activity.

How EdTA achieves it: EdTA's journal [Teaching Theatre](#) celebrates its 30th anniversary this year. Since its establishment in 2014, EdTA has been a member of the National Core Arts Standards education partnership, instrumental in

developing and publishing the [Core Theatre Standards](#); the Opportunity to Learn [Standards](#); Theatre Educator [Evaluation Workbook](#); and the Theatre [Curriculum Framework](#)

EdTA's annual National Conference includes keynotes from thought-leaders in the fields of education, theatre, and beyond; day-long professional development intensives; and dozens of workshops. The [2019 event](#) attracted 600 educators to New York, and registration is open for the [2020 event](#) in Florida, which is focused on new and diverse training, practice, and resources for the next generation of theatre education.

At this year's conference, EdTA unveiled [Theatre Educator Pro](#), a brand-new professional development portal offering standards-aligned, field-tested materials designed by educators for educators. Resources and tools include adjudicated lesson plans, curriculum, model assessments, and student work examples. EdTA created [Theatre Educator Pro](#) to affirm and support the professionalism of theatre educators and elevate their professional development.

Aim 3: Acquaint its various member troupes with the best available plays for high school dramatics;

How EdTA achieves it: *Dramatics* magazine remains, after 90 years, the only publication exclusively devoted to the high school student interested in theatre. [Earlier this year](#) EdTA launched a companion website, [dramatics.org](#), featuring more tips on acting and technical theatre as well as photos and videos from across "Thespian Nation."

The Annual Play Survey published the [results of its 81st survey](#), with a comprehensive, [interactive database on NPR](#), bringing to light trends in high school theatre across the country.

Aim 4: Offer members the advantages gained through the exchange of ideas and suggestions relative to the field of dramatics.

How EdTA achieves it: The award-winning [Theatre Education Community](#) is open to all educators and students, and is the most robust site in the field with more than 26,000 members and an average of 15 daily posts.

Aim 5: Encourage more experimentation in dramatics.

How EdTA achieves it: EdTA's [Next Generation Works](#) programs promote original writing by and for members of ITS, including student-written works and professional commissions. At the [International Thespian Festival](#), the student writer finalists workshop with professional directors, dramaturgs, and musical directors, and student actors to prepare their work for presentation there.

Aim 6: The society upholds the belief that the spirit of democracy must prevail in school dramatics, serves only as a reward for having done creditable work.

How EdTA achieves it: "ITS today has a worldwide reputation for being an inclusive home, a safe space, and a place where students can find and exercise their voice," says Theobald. "We are proud of the fact that, for nearly a century now, we have stayed true to the vision and mission of ITS by bringing recognition to school theatre."

[Reconnect with ITS](#). Follow #ThespianForever, #ITS90th and the #ThespiansOfNote campaign in social media.

SEE MORE MILESTONES:



HONORING STUDENTS. SHAPING LIVES THROUGH THEATRE AROUND THE WORLD.

Founded in
FAIRMONT, WV



Headquartered in
CINCINNATI, OH



Has grown from
THESPIAN TROUPES in **26** States to **50** States & **13** Countries

Over 90 years

2.4 MILLION
Thespian alums



243,936,150
Hours of quality work
in theatre arts



Since 1929

700 Issues of *Dramatics* magazine published



Since 1938

80 Years of publishing **TOP-10** Plays performed in high schools



60 Years of publishing **TOP-10** Musicals performed in high schools



Since 1941

56 International Thespian Festivals



Since 1994

25 Years of publishing student-written plays via Thespian Playworks



Since 1999

190 Mainstage productions at International Thespian Festival



Since 2009

1 MILLION Honor items given to ITS graduates



In 2019

59,000 New Thespians inducted



12,000 ITS Instagram followers

