



Young Playwrights' Theater

YPT Company Policies

School and Teacher Partner Expectations

Young Playwrights' Theater (YPT) is committed to providing high quality arts-integrated programming with all of our partner institutions. Our partners can expect YPT to provide standards based workshops, professional teaching artists, and a deep commitment to ensuring all of our participants have an equitable experience. In order to achieve these goals, it is vital that our partners are committed to providing the following:

David Andrew Snider

Producing Artistic Director
and CEO

Karen Zacarias

Founding Artistic Director

YPT Advisory Council

Nilo Cruz
Sarah Ruhl
Anna Deavere Smith
Paula Vogel
Charles Randolph Wright

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- **A Flexible Space** – YPT uses an active, “on your feet” approach to playwriting. It is essential that we conduct our workshops in a space that has room to for the students to explore character and play theatre games, but also has a space with desks for their writing assignments. Most importantly, we need a **consistent** space for our students.
- **A Strong Advocate** – Our most successful programs have a strong advocate at the workshop site. Whether it is a teacher or after-school coordinator, it is important that someone on site is working with us to encourage and fortify student recruitment, participation and investment. Our programs teach high level literacy skills. It is vital to students’ success to revisit and reflect on the concepts we teach in between our visits.
- **Active Classroom Teachers** – in order to ensure the success of our programs, we ask that the classroom teachers participate in each workshop in order to model behavior for the students and help maintain the focus in the room. If the teacher uses YPT workshop time as an opportunity to get other work done, the students will not be as invested in the work.
- **A Clear Discipline Policy** – YPT Teaching Artists are trained in classroom management; however, we expect our classroom teachers to handle any disciplinary issues that arise in the classroom during our workshops.
- **A Structured Environment** – We are intentional in designing the structure of each workshop because students achieve more in our programs when surrounded by structure. We expect to conduct our workshops at a consistent time and space as defined by our partners. Any changes to this structure should be communicated directly to the YPT representative working at your school.
- **A Consistent Student Population** – Our curriculum is designed to continually build upon skills introduced in each workshop. Since many students have never participated in dramatic writing, it is imperative that they attend our program regularly, and that new students are only permitted with the consent of the teaching artist.
- **Prepared Students** – Students will write in each workshop with YPT and we ask that teachers have paper and writing utensils available for students at all times.
- **A Sustainable Funding Model** – Through grants and the generous support of individual and corporate donors, YPT is often able to provide its programming free of charge. In circumstances where funding is not available for the operation of a program, YPT will expect its partners to negotiate payment for services.

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Teaching Artist and Contractor Expectations

Young Playwrights' Theater (YPT) is committed to providing high quality arts-integrated programs and productions for all of our stakeholders. In order to achieve the quality we demand we hire exceptional teaching artists and contractors who are professional artists with the sensibility of educators. As representatives of YPT and as integral partners in our success, YPT has the following expectations for our teaching artists and contractors:

- **Professionalism** – Teaching Artists and Contractors will be working with a variety of stakeholders for YPT (teachers, administrators, students, potential donors, etc.); therefore, it is imperative to act professionally in all circumstances while working as a representative of YPT. In any situation where a conflict arises or the teaching artist or contractor feels they cannot maintain a professional demeanor, YPT expects the teaching artist or contractor to remove him/herself from the situation and notify YPT management immediately.
- **Advocacy** – YPT expects all contracted workers to advocate strictly for Young Playwrights' Theater when fulfilling a contract for our organization. It is imperative for contractors to have full knowledge of our organization, including our: mission, core values, programmatic goals, etc. YPT also expects that teaching artists and contractors to refrain from advocating for other arts organizations while working directly for YPT.
- **Preparation** – YPT expects its teaching artists and contractors to be fully prepared for every assignment they are given. This includes ensuring that all materials needed for the particular assignment are ready for use. **The YPT staff is not responsible for producing any materials needed for the successful implementation of any workshop or event; however, any teaching artist or contractor can use the equipment in the YPT office in order to prepare materials, free of charge.** For teaching artists preparation also means fully understanding the lesson plan and being ready to implement it as written prior to the start of the workshop.
- **Timeliness** – It is imperative to be on time for all contracted events in order to maintain the highest professional image for YPT. If a teaching artist or contractor is going to be late for any reason, s/he must call the affected parties (including YPT management) to explain the situation and give an estimated time of arrival. If a class or event is missed for any reason, it is the teaching artist's or contractor's responsibility to reschedule with the invested parties. Teaching artists should have an agreed upon mechanism to communicate directly with the classroom teacher as well, based on that classroom teacher's preferences.
- **Communication** – YPT maintains an ambitious schedule of programming and events. In order to ensure program quality, it is essential for those working under contract for us to remain in constant communication with the YPT staff. We have set up tools to make communication efficient and effective and expect adherence to the requests for updates regarding the state of the contract.
- **Consistent Conduct** – Teaching artists and contractors are expected to follow all YPT policies on professional conduct, especially in dealing with students and teachers. Any contact with students, including online, over the phone or in person, must be accompanied by either a YPT staffer (with a cc on email or conferencing on a call) or with at least one teacher or YPT staffer in the room when in person. In order to protect everyone involved, YPT can not allow nor condone any contact between students and teaching artists or contractors outside of these program parameters. Any contact with students without YPT approval and monitoring may be cause for immediate dismissal.

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Producing Partner Expectations

Young Playwrights' Theater (YPT) is committed to providing high quality performances and community dialogues with all of our producing partners. Our partners can expect YPT to provide high quality, professional performances and a deep commitment to ensuring all of our students, artists and audience members have a positive experience in the theater. In order to achieve these goals, it is vital that our partners are committed to providing the following:

- **A Ready Space** – YPT needs a performance space that is clean and prepared for the expected event, whether for rehearsal or performance. Because we strive to honor our students, artists and audiences with high quality experiences we expect all of our producing spaces to be ready to serve that purpose. In addition to cleanliness, YPT expects the previously agreed upon equipment, power supply, human resources and physical plant to be ready for rehearsal and performance at the agreed upon time.
- **Planned Safety** – YPT expects all producing partners to maintain requisite safety plans, procedures and equipment in case of any and all emergencies, and to inform YPT staff of proper procedures (safety exits, alarms and equipment necessary) in case of an emergency.
- **Clear Expectations** – YPT relies on partnerships and therefore works carefully to craft clear contracts with all partners months in advance of any event. We expect partners to communicate clearly in the contract their own needs and expectations and to return the signed agreement to YPT staff on the agreed upon timeline.
- **Smooth Implementation** – We work diligently to clearly communicate expectations between YPT and all producing partners months in advance, via meetings and clearly defined contracts. We expect our partners to clearly communicate their own needs or expectations and to carry out the agreed upon contract without question. If questions regarding implementation of any event or performance arise, YPT expects these questions to be expressed at least 24 hours prior to the event to YPT management. If emergency last minute questions or requirements are necessary YPT expects the producing partner to communicate directly with the signer of the YPT contract, usually the CEO or Associate Director.
- **Professionalism** – Any producing partner, as a host of YPT, also partially represents YPT to the community during the duration of the event. YPT expects all interactions with fellow staff to be positive, productive and professional, especially between producing partner staff and any YPT staff, artists or audience members. Disputes between partner staff with any participants should be taken directly to either the CEO or Associate Director of YPT whenever possible. YPT expects to check in with producing partners after the event, to evaluate both partners' experience of the event and clarify any confusion for future events.



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Funding Partner Expectations

Young Playwrights' Theater (YPT) relies on contributed income for almost 90% of its annual budget. As such YPT maintains relationships with a wide variety of funders and donors, including government agencies, foundations, corporations and individuals. It is important therefore for YPT to articulate clear expectations of these partners, so that each relationship can be assessed in comparison to these expectations. This is an internal document and not meant to be shared beyond the staff and board of YPT. Our funding partners can expect YPT to fulfill our mission with high quality programs, productions and performances while maximizing the use of their donated resources to serve our students to the best of our abilities. In order to achieve these goals, it is vital that our funding partners are committed to providing the following:

- **Clear Expectations** – YPT expects funders and donors to clearly articulate their expectations for use of their funds (or if no expectation is expressed, to allow YPT to use the funds as needed) and delineate their requirements for reporting on said use, including clear deadlines and contacts for reporting.
- **Reasonable Reporting** – While recognizing that different parts of the funding world require different levels of reporting (i.e. government grants require more paperwork and detailed financial back-up), YPT expects reporting requirements to be reasonable, including the amount of paperwork, times of reporting or financial minutiae required.
- **Clear Communications** – YPT strives to stay in close contact with our funders and donors and therefore expects clear communications, including notices of moves, changes in priorities or new initiatives, from all established funders.
- **Clear Timeline** – YPT relies on funders and donors to articulate a clear timeline for notifications of opportunities, application acceptance (both LOIs and full proposals), consideration, notification and, if awarded, payment. If an articulated timeline needs to change for any reason YPT expects funders to communicate that need and any necessary changes well in advance of expected deadlines.
- **Timely Payment** – Because YPT relies on contributed income, we expect funders to deliver payment on time, as scheduled, unless a timeline has been altered well in advance in coordination with YPT staff.

Addressing Disturbing Issues in Students' Writing

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At Partner Institutions

Young Playwrights' Theater (YPT) teaches students to express themselves clearly and creatively through the art of playwriting. We believe each student has a story worth telling, and to that end, we do not prescribe content for our playwrights. For any writing process to be truly creative, freedom of expression must exist. However, participants in our programs also acknowledge and accept that the work of the playwright is intended to be shared with an audience and will, therefore, be openly read by numerous parties. In the case of any writing deemed questionable – that seems threatening to the writer or others in any way – YPT's professional teaching artists, serving as guests in the school, will share their concerns directly with the classroom teacher or an official administrator at the school. While YPT hires professional artists to ensure the highest quality programming, the teaching artists are not trained counselors; therefore, it is understood that once the teaching artist has referred a student to the classroom teacher or school administrator, the responsibility for further action is assigned to the appropriate support staff at the institution and not the teaching artist. In cases where a student raises a significant personal issue in his or her own work that seems, to the teaching artist, to be a request for help, the teaching artist will ensure the classroom teacher is aware of the issue raised and is dialoguing with the student or referring the student to experienced professionals who can help. The teaching artist will also notify YPT staff members, who will then follow up with the teacher and/or proper authorities at the school to ensure action has been taken to assist the student.

Young Playwrights' Workshop

The *Young Playwrights' Workshop* is an on-site after-school program; therefore, the process of reporting student writing (either in script form or performance) follows a different protocol. In the case of questionable writing or performances, the facilitator will ask the student for a private meeting to discuss the issue at hand. There must be at least two adults in any private meeting, and if the primary facilitator is not a staff member of YPT, then a staff member must be present for the meeting. The facilitator will inform the student of her/his concern and initiate a conversation with the student describing the reasons for requesting the meeting and give the student the opportunity to respond to the concern. If the facilitator feels that no further action is necessary after the conversation, s/he will remind the student that the workshop is a safe place and that words are powerful and need to be carefully considered. However, if the facilitator(s) feel further action is required; s/he will tell the student that s/he will be contacting the students' guardians and/or the school counselor to discuss the issue. At this point the facilitator will call the guardian/counselor to discuss the questionable writing or performance. After the phone conversation, the facilitator will fill out an YPT Incident Report and give it to the Associate Director. The Associate Director and the facilitator will decide whether the incident requires temporary or permanent suspension from the program. In cases where a student's writing or performance poses a threat him/herself or others (including illegal activity), the facilitator will follow the procedure above, but will also be required to report the incident to the parent/guardian.

Assessing the Need to Report Student Writing

The following questions were developed by the English Department at Virginia Tech University and may help you assess the student's situation and whether the writing reflects creative exploration or something more idiosyncratic.

Is the creative work excessively violent? Do characters respond to everyday events with a level or kind of violence one does not expect,

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or may even find frightening? If so, does the violence seem more expressive of rage and anger than it does of a literary aesthetic or a thematic purpose?

Are the characters' thoughts as well as actions violent or threatening? Do characters think about or question their violent actions? If one set of characters demonstrate no self-awareness or moral consciousness, are other characters aware of or disturbed by what has taken place? In other words, does the text reveal the presence of a literary sensibility mediating and making judgments about the characters' thoughts and actions, or does it suggest unmediated venting of rage and anger? If the literary sensibility is missing, is the student receptive to adding that layer and to learning how to do so?

Is this the student's first piece of violent writing? If yes, what is the nature of his or her other work? Is violence at the center of everything the student has written, or does other writing suggest that violence is something the student is experimenting with for literary effect?

Are the violent actions in the work so disturbing or so extreme as to suggest they go beyond any possible sense of purpose in relation to the larger narrative? Do they seem to be the point of the piece, or a component? Does the nature of the violence—or the nature of the writing overall—suggest extreme depression or suicidal inclinations?

Is the writing full of expressions of hostility toward other racial or ethnic groups? Is the writing threateningly misogynistic, homophobic, racist, or in any way expressive of a mindset that may pose a threat to other students?

Virginia Tech Department of English. "Responding to Disturbing Creative Writing: A Guide for Faculty and GTAs.

<http://www.colorado.edu/studentaffairs/victimassistance/quickassist/disturbingwriting.pdf>

Policy for Dealing with Discrimination in the Classroom*

Young Playwrights' Theater has a Zero Indifference policy for discrimination in the classroom because we believe the success of our programs depends on our students feeling safe and respected. Simply put, this means that we take direct action to stop discrimination and/or bullying in our workshops by consistently and openly intervening in situations where these issues arise.

First, stop the behavior immediately. Do not ignore the incident or allow fear to keep you from speaking up. Then, educate those involved either publicly, in the moment, or later, in private. In making the decision whether to publicly or privately address the issue, you must carefully consider the needs of the students involved, both the targeted student(s) and the student(s) showing discrimination or bullying. In general, private meetings are preferable because it allows you to move on with your lesson and protects all parties involved from public humiliation or potentially dangerous scenarios that could arise from the feelings of being called out in public. The appropriate time to have a public intervention would be a case where the incident would serve as an example to illuminate the content of the workshop. (For example, there might be a way to connect a discriminatory remark to the power of language.) Remember, in any private meeting with a student there **must** be another adult present, which in many cases would be the classroom teacher.

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Since we are a creative writing program, there might be an occasion where a student uses discriminatory or abusive language in her/his writing as a means to create a character. In these cases it is important that the Teaching Artists understands the intended outcome of the playwright to asses the need to intervene.

**adapted from "Zero Indifference: A How-to Guide for Ending Name-Calling in Schools found at www.glsen.org*

Contact with Students

Any contact with students, including online, over the phone or in person, must be accompanied by either a YPT staffer (with a cc on email or conferencing on a call) or with at least one teacher or YPT staffer in the room when in person. In order to ensure the safety and security of both students and facilitators (staff or contractors), there should always be more than one adult in any room with a student or students (may include one contractor or employee, with an employee of a partner institution, including classroom teachers). When no other adult is present, the YPT employee or contractor should excuse themselves from the room and, if the student is un-chaperoned, either take the student to another adult or alert an adult responsible to the space of the student's presence. If contacted online or over the phone by a student without YPT knowledge, teaching artists and contractors should immediately alert YPT staff and the classroom teacher. Staffers should alert their immediate supervisor.

YPT cannot allow nor condone any contact between students and teaching artists or contractors outside of these program parameters. Any contact with students without YPT approval and monitoring may be cause for immediate dismissal.

Meeting with Students

In order to ensure the safety and security of both students and facilitators (staff or contractors), there should always be more than one adult in any room with a student or students (may include on contractor and employee with an employee of a partner institution, including classroom teachers). When no other adult is present, the YPT employee or contractor should excuse themselves from the room and, if the student is un-chaperoned, either take the student to another adult or alert an adult responsible to the space of the student's presence.