

The Pitch Project

Westmont Drama includes an after-school performance program which produces six shows a year including a fall play, a faculty play, a student-directed play, a spring musical, an advanced drama show, and a one act play festival.

The production season is chosen by the students.

Each May, the drama classes sort through play catalogues, write pitches and propose 20-30 different plays and musicals to their respective classes.

Each class then chooses 2-3 plays and 2-3 musicals from those that have been pitched to place as their contributions to a department ballot.

That ballot is then put to a vote at an open Drama Club meeting which any Westmont student (or staff member) can attend.

This exciting, collaborative process has a hidden instructional value in that students learn about 20-30 shows and thus broaden their knowledge of theatre history as they work through the process.

Day One

Introduce how a show is created, birthed on Broadway, toured across the country, and then hopefully picked up by a publisher, royalty company or an agency. This helps them understand why they can't do shows like Wicked or Lion King - yet!

Introduce the different royalty companies:

- Samuel French, Inc
- Dramatists Play Service
- Dramatic Publishing Co
- Music Theatre International
- Tams Witmark
- Playscripts
- Eldridge
- Pioneer Drama Service

Give the students time to explore the royalty company catalogues.

Day Two

Explain what they should be looking for, like:

- casting necessities (I always encourage them to find shows with a lot of female roles because we always have so many girls audition)
- genre (example: if it's time to do a contemporary comedy, I tell them to look for that - if we just did a sci-fi musical, I tell them to avoid those)
- appropriateness (not just for material [ie: Bat Boy is really not an appropriate choice for a high school], but also - do we have the talent pool the show requires [to do Ragtime or [Big River] - you need a large African American casting pool] [to do West Side Story you need a good looking, healthy male tenor - Marias will come to audition - but do you have a Tony?]

Have each student find a show and fill out the pitch sheet.

Day Three / Four

Students present the first round of pitches

For plays: they share the plot and act out a significant scene

For musicals: they share the plot and play 3-4 song excerpts

Day Five

Students vote on their class's choices - selecting 2 plays & 2 musicals

Days 6-10: One Week

All the choices are explained on an info sheet of show descriptions and that info sheet is on display for all to see and discuss informally around the department.

Daily bulletin announcements get the whole school excited about the selection process and about the shows on the ballot.

Teachers and administrators are also invited to come vote.

Day 11

All the choices placed on a ballot and the ballot is put to a vote at an open Drama Club meeting.

Day 12 - 13

The votes are counted and calls are immediately made to the royalty companies to find out if there are any restrictions on the selected shows.

Day 14

The shows are ceremoniously announced at the Drama Awards show.