

THE TATTOO

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Taking the stage when the spotlight is on you

By KATE HAIRE and KATIE JORDAN
The Tattoo

Asking someone about auditions to a show can sometimes cause more butterflies in your stomach than actually going on stage.

But luckily, there is no need to be so nervous about trying to become an active member of theater at your school.

If you're interested in getting involved with your school's drama department, start by getting informed: Listen to announcements, search the walls for flyers, and talk to your local drama geeks. (You know who they are.)

It shouldn't be too hard to find out what you need to know to get into the drama club.

You may be enthusiastic and want to jump right into all the excitement of a school play, and that's great. But don't get ahead of yourself: Before you can become a star, you'll have to audition.

Knowledge of several basic details is essential for any successful audition. Find out when the auditions will be held and — unless your voice really carries — what room they'll be in.

Also know what the play will be, and if possible, get familiar with the material ahead of time. Practice may not make perfect, but it will help you win over your audience.

If you're comfortable with the play already, you'll feel calm and self-

assured at the audition. That's a definite plus. It's crucial to be as relaxed and confident as possible.

When it's your turn to audition, remember the rules of drama: Stand straight, project your voice, and say the lines slowly, clearly, and with emotion. Even if you mess up, keep going as if nothing happened, because that's what you'd have to do on stage.

Your stage presence is really key to getting you a part in the production. Also, it couldn't hurt to bake cookies for the director.

Try your best, but don't worry if you're no Tom Hanks when you audition. Directors know that the actors they choose will have time to improve and really get into their roles.

Another important tip is not to worry about what part you get. Keep in mind that, although you may think you'll be perfect for one part, the director of the show knows best, and will place you where they see fit.



Kate Haire/ The Tattoo

Officers from the Bristol Eastern Troop of Actors are getting ready for a dramatic year. In the back row are, from left, senior Tom Degan, junior Emily Thigpen, seniors Caitlin Saporito and Hannah Clifton, juniors Kristy Smith, Kate Leber and Josh Lessard. In the front are teacher Lisa Carroll, junior Michaela Sullivan, sophomores Kayla Hickerson and Theresa Degan, junior Amber-Leigh Brzezinski. Junior Kate Haire is not pictured.

Remember, every single part in the play is important, and you have to put them all together to make a great performance.

That great performance will also

take a lot of hard work. There are lines to memorize and rehearsals to attend, so you have to be willing to put in the time and effort.

Even if you have no desire to be in

the spotlight, there are still lots of ways that you can help out backstage.

"Techies," as the cast affectionately calls them, assist the director during shows by putting out scenery, doing light cues, and communicating between the director and the cast. They also get to dress in black and wear really snazzy headsets.

There's no denying that the set is a big part of every production, so anybody who will help build and paint it is welcome. This is a great option for kids who really want to be involved, but don't have a lot of time for rehearsals. Just show up, help out for as long as you can stay, then you're off the hook.

You might also be able to assist in the search for props and bits of costumes that are needed. The school drama department has quite a bit of stuff, but there's always something missing.

Overall, a lot of work has to be done to put on a successful show in the world of theater. There are sets to be painted, props and costumes to be bought, roles to be cast, lines to be learned, and a show to be made.

No one can do it alone, and the more people helping out, the better. And even if it is a lot of work, it's definitely worth it.

After your performance is over and the final curtain closes, that feeling of accomplishment is something that you'll treasure for a long time.

Or, at least, until your next show.

First day of high school: the good, the bad, the ugly

By ZACH BROKENROPE
The Tattoo

I am one of those people who believes that there is a mental soundtrack constantly running to my life. For example, when I broke the glass window in our living room for the SECOND time, the song "Oops ... I did it again" played ominously in my head. That doesn't make me sound crazy, does it?

So it's pretty understandable that I awoke on my first day of freshmen year with Pink Floyd's "Another Brick in the Wall" droning inside my brain. Was that an omen for my first day of high school? Is being a freshman as bad as I'm told it is? Well ... let me tell you about my day.

As soon as I arrived in the freshly-cleaned commons area, my backpack filled to the brim with school supplies, I was pulled aside by Mrs. Vetter, the ninth grade English teacher.

"Well Zach, I'm very pleased to tell you that you were one of the students *randomly chosen* to receive one of the new lockers in the connection hallway between the lunchroom and the practice football field," she said in perfectly articulate English.

"Thanks," I said, my best fake smile plastered on my face. Having a locker in the connection hallway meant that I would be really far away from any classroom and my friends.

"There is *one tiny* problem with those lockers though," she continued. "You see, they have to have locks on them since so many people go by them. Are you okay with that?"

My eyebrows lifted at this notion. The rest of the freshmen didn't get to have locks, in fact, if you had one you got in trouble. These lockers mean groundbreaking privacy for freshmen.

"Thanks," I replied. This time the smile was genuine.

So once the bell rang signaling us to begin our

day, I departed from the rest of the freshmen as they continued down to their designated section of the school and walked to my own locker in the somber and quiet connection hallway.

Upon arriving, though, I suddenly realized that the people that had these lockers had all *but* been randomly selected. Among us six we were

the freshman diaries

a simple collection of band geeks, math club participants, and quiet honor roll students.

No, our *names* hadn't been randomly selected. *We'd* been randomly selected by how likely we were to cause problems in the secluded hallway. I didn't seem to be the only one to notice the coincidence.

"Oh God, they chose us by how big of geeks we are, didn't they?" someone groaned. We all agreed.

I set my backpack down and pulled the piece of paper with my combination on it out of my pocket.

"Left 13...right two times 35...left 13," I mumbled under my breath as I spun the lock. Confident that I'd done it right, I stood back and tried to lift the handle. Nothing. It didn't budge.

Agitated, I tried again. Nothing. For some reason my locker didn't want to budge, and I soon realized that I wasn't alone.

"Hey ... they're not opening," Janny, the first chair flute player said, as she shook the handle aggressively.

So of course being the stubborn teenagers that we are, we continued to vainly spin the locks, finally resorting to the primal locker instincts — kicking and punching — which proved to be an unsuccessful endeavor. Finally, the prin-

icipal showed up.

"Sorry guys," he said in his best I'm-trying-to-be-your-friend-not-your-enemy-voice, "but I accidentally gave you all the wrong combinations." He handed out the new combinations.

Determined to not lose against the locker again, I concentrated with all my might on the combination. On the last number I took a deep breath and lifted the lock. The door easily swung open. Inside was a freshly painted interior, shiny and new, not yet abused by the many teenagers it was sure to face over the years.

I hung my backpack from the hooks in the locker and looked at my watch. I was 20 minutes late for my first class.

"Just the way I wanted to start my freshmen year," I mumbled aloud as I walked down the hall to first period.

* *

Now, perhaps, would be a good time to tell you about my core teachers. By that I mean the math, science, social studies, and English teachers, all of whom I hope you and I become better acquainted with as this school year progresses.

First off there's Mr. Peterson, the social studies teacher. Being only 26 (or so he claims) he has yet to lose his energy and become a burned-out teacher that so often comes after a number of years of "dealing with" students. Still having the energy has made him the "cool" teacher among us freshmen; it's something we happily all agree on.

What's one thing that makes him cool? Two words: gum chewing.

Next is science, taught by Mr. Huls, the freshly-30 teacher who also happens to be the dream guy of many freshmen girls' dreams.

"God Mr. Huls is sooo hot," a girl who shall remain nameless said to me during study hall.

"Well, um, see being a straight male I really

didn't notice," I teased sarcastically. "You do realize he has a wife and three kids, right?"

"Yeah ... but I can dream, right?" she mused.

"I guess ... just don't let Mrs. Huls find out ... she is the Spanish teacher, you know."

"Shut up!" she said, punching me playfully on the shoulder.

Although I don't think of him as a sexually attractive or sexually anything he is a really cool teacher. He doesn't believe in seating charts, which means we get to sit in any seat we want; and he plays modern rock music over his sound system in his room and tells us to mosh. Yeah right, like we're gonna mosh in school.

Then there's Mrs. Bart, the soft-spoken math teacher that also happens to have a son in my grade, something that often gets embarrassing when they see each other in the hall. Despite this fact, she is really, really nice and believe it or not ... she seems to be making math fun. Yes, F-U-N.

Finally there's Mrs. Vetter, the before-mentioned English teacher. English teacher, enough said.

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As the first day continued, I began to drift off more and more in each consecutive class, mainly because all were required to read from "The Handbook," the manual that directs basically what we are allowed and not allowed to wear to school.

Last year the handbook stated that no "skater clothing" was allowed in school. Feeling discriminated against, skaters complained to the school board about the words and this year the two words were silently removed from the book.

At last the day came to a close, and as the final bell sounded and I headed to my locker I began to think that maybe freshmen year wouldn't be so bad after all. Just maybe.



Jen Plonski / The Tattoo

Bristol Central High School girls practice cross-country running at Rockwell Park Saturday.

The Tattoo seeks teens to write, draw, take photos

This is a great time to join the best teen newspaper in the world. *The Tattoo*, which is in its 11th year, has long been a training ground for teens who want to become writers or reporters. It's also a terrific place for budding photographers and cartoonists to get a start.

This issue is the fourth and final *Insider's Guide to High School* edition this year — there's a lot more online at www.ReadTheTattoo.com — but we've got plenty of other stories in the works.

We're especially eager to recruit 8th graders and high school freshmen, who have plenty of time to learn the ins and out of journalism before they head off to college. But any teen is eligible to join and we're glad to have anybody who's enthusiastic and talented.

Tattoo writers win plenty of awards, some scholarships and much acclaim. For information, contact advisers Jackie Majerus or Steve Collins at 523-9632 or by email at thetattoo@gmail.com.

From torment to terrific

By TEAGUE NEAL
The Tattoo

Until two years ago, I was surrounded by the same kids I'd known since elementary school. Then life took a turn and I had to learn how to adapt to new surroundings and a new school, fast.

I had been with the same group of 60 people since my little first grade days through my eighth grade graduation at my middle school in Oakville, Ontario, Canada. Although these kids weren't my best friends, I liked the structure of the same faces year after year. I always knew who was going to be in that depressed and dusty classroom come the first day of school. It gave me stability and allowed me to branch out from this group in my successful search for some new friends — with a backbone in place.

Until the spring of eighth grade, I assumed I was going to my local high school in Oakville with this same group.

Then discussions began amongst my teachers and parents about a tech program with smaller classes, better suited to my needs. It was a "satellite class" at a school way off in an unfamiliar neighborhood, with new students and strange surroundings.

I knew in my heart the satellite class was exactly what I needed, with much more attention for special needs in school settings, like an aide to help with writing long notes to extra time for writing tests.

Best of all, the tech program included courses cooking and baking, two of my passions.

I was freaking out though, couldn't

believe I was going to a whole new place, leaving my circle of school friends behind. I was paranoid about who I would sit with at lunch and who I would talk to in class. I was happy to go and excited about the program, but scared, too.

Shy to socializing

I sat in my first class listening to the teacher drone away about all her expectations and thought, who in this dark and dingy beast of a school would I be able to talk to and who would help me along?

After getting into an interesting conversation with one of my new classmates, I asked him if I could hang out with him at lunch. I ended up meeting him at my locker after we put our books away and followed him into the cafeteria.

For the next few months, I met and got to know a great group of teens. They were interested in what I was doing, and realized I was new but took it in a positive way.

They introduced me to all their friends, and took me on trips to the convenience store behind the school where they went for a soft drink and candy fix. They genuinely wanted to get to know me and have a fun time with the new member of their club.

I just went with the flow, and although I felt shy, I joined in most of their activities. Instead of burying my head in my books in class, I would turn to the person beside me and strike up a conversation. Those friendships carried over into the cafeteria, where I sat with lots of different people. Now I know

dozens of people and sometimes can't choose who to sit with.

Get involved

At least some of your new high school teachers will tell you over and over to get involved. It may seem like repetitive advice, but let me assure you, those words are golden. Getting involved will help you meet many more people than the classroom and cafeteria will ever offer you, combined.

Go ahead and scan those announcements the secretary posts about the dozens of activities that start up in the fall. You will have an incredible time and get to do things you've never done before. I started writing for a school newspaper, took part in a medieval play and learned new drama skills that exposed me to the hardcore yet incredible world of dramatic arts.

You'll see that your friends start to overlap with your extra curricular activities, in class and in the caf. Choose whichever activity you like, but get involved! You'll build a foundation of good friends, brick by brick over time. Best of all, you'll get to know some wonderful people who share your interests.

Make it work

If you find yourself at a new school for any reason, don't bite your nails off with fear. It's natural to be very anxious about a new setting, meeting new people and starting afresh. You can ease the pain of this seemingly impossible process by initiating a few friendly conversations, planting yourself at a table in the cafeteria and carrying a good, old-fashioned smile as you begin to take steps to build your new school life.

WWW.READTHETATTOO.COM

The best teen journalism in the world. For questions, comments or to join, contact advisors Steve Collins and Jackie Majerus at 523-9632.