



# ACTAA

ARKANSAS COMMUNICATION  
& THEATRE ARTS ASSOCIATION

think. speak. act.

MARCH 2024 · ISSUE 3 · VOLUME 3

## SIGNING OFF: A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

GREETINGS, ACTAA members!

I hope this finds your classrooms thriving, your theaters full of kiddos witnessing all your hard work, and the competition hallways filled with wall talkers and giggles.

I am proud to be a part of this community of passionate teachers and creative individuals. I am beyond grateful for the experiences we all share together and I hope you are as well. I know it can be exhausting but it is SO rewarding...the opportunities we provide for our kiddos to experience.

Friends, I have reached the end of my tenure as your President. Looking back, I am proud of the accomplishments we have all achieved. It was three years filled with growth, expansion, and building a more diverse, inclusive environment for all of our members.

We welcomed many more voices to our organization as well as on our board and I could not be prouder. I am grateful for each and every one of you and thankful to have you in our organization pushing for your kids and for us to be better in every capacity.

I will be forever grateful for your love and support and encourage you to continue in the work ahead. To our ACTAA Board of Directors, I thank you from the bottom of my heart for all your love and support and look forward to a bright future with each of you at the helm.

With that being said, we have a lot more in store for our organization. Under the extremely capable leadership of Mr. Zack Tucker, we must pick up the torch and continue moving forward with strength, diligence, and leadership. We cannot back up...we have to move forward with the initiatives we have started.



June 1st will be our next issue  
of the newsletter.  
Please share all the magic  
happening in your programs  
with tam.m.friend by May 17th.

SCAN FOR  
ACTAA  
WEBSITE



## Brandon, cont'd.

Everyone deserves a voice at the table. Our children need the best possible US we can give them. Our children deserve to have their voices heard, understood, and appreciated.

We need to be present for each other and lift each other up as we navigate the rough terrain in front of us.

We cannot allow legislators a pass when it comes to ALL of our students and their voices. ACTAA needs to move forward as advocates for them AND ourselves, for all curriculums and backgrounds.

This upcoming summer conference has been set up to continue the work of our organization. If you have not already planned to attend, PLEASE do so! Your voice is important and your focus on ACTAA's future endeavors starts at summer conference!

Lots of work has gone into this event (thank you, Jessica Skordal) and while we have work to accomplish, we also have lots of FUN events planned! Time together is SO VERY important!!

Never forget, I will always be here for you if you need to bend my ear!  
Thank you for always being the ROCKSTARS you are!!!

~ Brandon

# ACTAA Summer Workshop 2024

*Summer! Tropical! ACTAA!*



Mark your calendar to join us for a tropi-good time this summer at the ACTAA Summer Workshop!

This summer, we will spend our time focusing on how to unite as a body and advocate for our profession....all while celebrating in true luau style!

**Mark your calendar for June 21-23, 2024, and join us in Little Rock!**

**We can't wait to see you then!**

**P.S....don't forget to fill out [this PD interest form sent by Laurie Harrison](#). This will help us shape our offerings!**

# BUSINESS UPDATES

Zackery Tucker, First Vice President

## Board adopts new Professional and Ethical Standards of Conduct



Early in Spring 2023, the Board of Directors asked Zackery Tucker, 1st Vice President & Dean of Students at ASU-Beebe, to draft a more comprehensive standard of conduct document for the association. At the Fall Conference, September 7-9, 2023, Tucker presented a draft document in a professional development session, which was based on modifications of the National Debate Tournament's, a unit of the American Forensic Association, Conduct Policy (Rule 1.C Standing Rules for the Operation of the National Debate Tournament, December 2022).

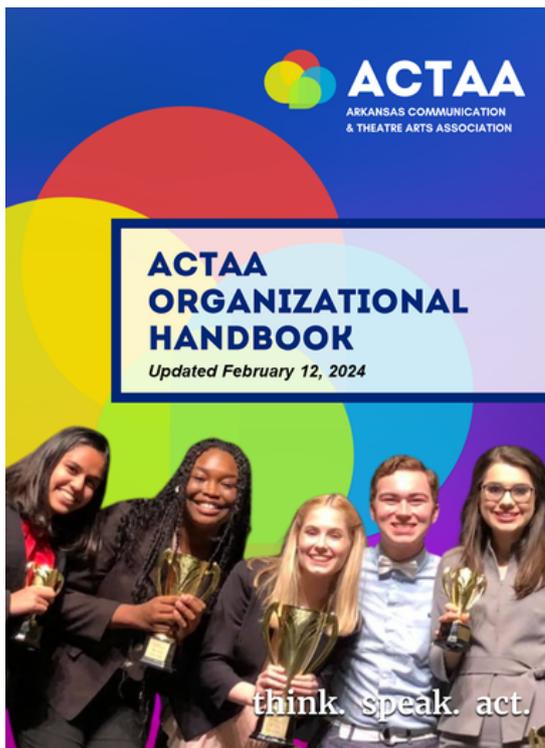
Following feedback from members at the Fall Conference, a final proposal was submitted to the Board of Directors at their Winter Meeting on December 16, 2023. At the Winter Meeting, the Board approved an electronic vote to be held on the document 30 days following the meeting. The Board adopted the proposed document, and a unanimous vote was certified on February 12, 2024, by ACTAA President Brandon Box-Higdem.

**The newly adopted Professional & Ethical Standards of Conduct for the association has been incorporated into the ACTAA Organizational Handbook linked [here](#).**

ACTAA recognizes that the adversarial and competitive nature of academic competition (whether debate, forensics, acting, etc.) may place participants in the position of weighing

the merits of competing strategies that may have ethical implications. At the same time, ACTAA is an association of professional educators committed to promoting a respectful form of expression, communication, and argumentation. In adopting this policy, ACTAA recognizes the need to clearly communicate civility, ethical behavior, inclusion, and respect expectations in a competitive environment. Additionally, ACTAA acknowledges the need for an equitable and consistent process for hearing grievances in the association to avoid any long-term adversarial relationships.

Members should be aware of this new policy of the association and know all students, coaches, judges, staff, and all other individuals present at or participating in an activity sanctioned by ACTAA, in any capacity whatsoever, are expected to know and are required to abide by these new Professional & Ethical Standards of Conduct.



# BUSINESS UPDATES

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## Special Committee on Tournament Research to be Formed Late-Spring

On Saturday, February 10, the Board of Directors met in person in Russellville to hear several proposals from Eric Gamble related to the Arkansas State Forensics and Debate Championship (ASC) and smaller schools equity in the Arkansas circuit.

At the meeting, the Board moved for the President to appoint a Special Committee to research and thoroughly review the cumulative results reports related to ASC, ASC qualifying invitational tournaments and the Arkansas Student Congress from Fall 2018 to Spring 2024, and report findings related to smaller school (1A-5A) equity compared to larger schools (6A-7A).

A college member will chair the special committee, which consists of one member from each AAA designation (1A-7A). If no representative is identified, that AAA division-designated position will remain vacant.

The committee is planned to be formed post-ASC, April 12-13, with expectations to report findings to the Board of Directors at the Summer Workshop, July 21-23.

## Save the Date!

**Sept 19-21, 2024**

Join us on historic Petit Jean Mountain this September.

Fall conference is where the business of ACTAA is voted on and changes are made.

Eighteen hours of professional development will be provided, including caucuses for our discipline areas: Communication, Debate, Forensics, & Theatre.

Share your thoughts on professional development by completing this form.

Fall on Petit Jean will be a rustic experience of working and learning together to advocate for speech and debate in Arkansas.



# Theatre

Graci Johnson

*Hello, friends!*

I hope your semester is starting well! As I have been thinking about what to write about for our newsletter, a couple of things came to mind.

***Always keep an open mind, you never know when your efforts for one area will pay off in another way.***

For example, I used our Best in Show script, Blithe Spirit, as a class project in my Advanced Tech class. I had each student choose a tech element to then design. They could choose from scenic, costume, props, sound, lighting, or publicity. Little did I know that that project, coupled with

their design of last November's children's play, would land the students into a great frame of mind when heading into the team design challenges at the State Thespian Festival. Teams from my school landed in the top three for both costume and scenic design.

***If I don't ask for help, the answer I will get is ALWAYS no!***

This is a motto that I have adopted since starting a theatre program at a brand new school. A PD I once attended said that help for a program either equates to time or money. So, I ask for specifics.

- "I need X amount of money to do what is going to help serve our students in the best way. Can you help me reach it?"
- "I need someone to man my ticket table. Hey colleague, can you come work the table before our shows?"
- "Parent, we will have long rehearsal nights in tech week, can you organize the meals for our cast and crew?"
- "We need more blood capsules for our production, could you run and get them from this retailer?"
- "If you have time, could you stop and get me a coffee? I really need caffeine!" (I have done this for my colleagues and they have done it for me. Nothing feels as good as to have someone care enough to follow through on their offer of help.)
- "Can we have school-wide spirit days to promote our musical?"
- "I see that the district is planning XYZ is there any way that my troupe or team can help?"

These are just a few specific questions, there are tons more. I find it amazing how much my own brain limited what I asked for because I didn't want to be a bother, but if it is to make our programs better, WE HAVE TO ASK because when we don't, the answer is always no.

So as we go into the final months of the school year, we should ask ourselves the following questions:

- To what questions do I always assume the answer will be no?
- Where do I need to be bolder for our students?
- What does our program need the most?
- What is keeping me from asking?
- What's the worst that can happen if I do ask?

As you mull over those questions, your ASK should become apparent.

I wish you all the best!

**With kindness and love flowing from my heart to yours,  
Graci Johnson, Theatre Rep**

# Communication

*Eric Gamble*

Greetings from your Oral Comm Representative! We have almost made it to Spring Break and those 9 days off are calling all of our names. I know that it is often hard to come up with some new and fun ways to engage our students at this time of the year. It doesn't matter if your Communications class is a year long or one semester this is just a hard time to reach kids. If you ever need help with an assignment or want one of my stand-by assignments please reach out and let me know at [mrgambledhs@gmail.com](mailto:mrgambledhs@gmail.com), and I will help you in any way I can. Thanks and have a great end of the year!



## Summer Youth Classes

Enjoy the Youth Studio Series this summer at the Arkansas Museum of Fine Arts! This program provides hands-on studio and performance activities, gallery tours, and access to professional teaching artists, preparing rising students of all grade levels to become lifelong learners in a fun, safe, and accessible environment.

Each week offers a new selection of visual and performing arts classes, both in the morning and the afternoon, allowing you to build a schedule that fits your student's needs and interests:

- For a half-day experience, sign your student up for either a morning session (9:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.) or an afternoon session (1:00 - 4:00 p.m.).
- For a full-day experience, select both a morning and afternoon session.

Your student will bring their lunch and enjoy a supervised lunch break each day from 12:00 to 1:00 p.m.

**Please review our guidelines and policies before registering for a class. The grade levels listed are intended for students rising into those grades. All supplies are included in the cost of each class.**

**Click [here](#) for more information and to register!**



# ARKANSAS SPEECH & DEBATE MONTH



*In the month of March, we will be sharing on Facebook & Instagram (@actaa\_ar) history and stories of how speech & debate has changes lives.*



## ACTAA

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# ACT Summer CAMPS

JUNE - AUGUST



ACTING UP  
presents

**Annie Jr.**

three week summer camp  
concluding with Annie Jr  
rising 3rd - 12th  
June 10th - 28th

one week intensives  
rising 9th-12th: July 8th - 12th  
rising 6th-8th: July 15th-19th  
rising 3rd-5th: July 22nd - 26th

**BROADWAY  
BOOTCAMP**

**RISING  
STARS**

K-2 PERFORMING ARTS CAMP

one week day camp for rising K-2  
July 29th - August 2nd

To see full camp descriptions, as well as our  
spring & fall class offerings for all ages and  
skill levels:

[argentacommunitytheater.org](http://argentacommunitytheater.org)