The Lead Critic

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Getting Started

As your school's Lead Critic, you are responsible for helping your school's Cappies Advisor make sure your school follows the rules. Specifically, you are responsible for:

- Attending Lead Critics meetings
- Assisting in training
- Making sure everyone at your school follows all rules
- Keeping your database current.
- Maintaining your roster and schedule
- Helping your Mentor and Show Director
- Assisting at year end
- Using—and Helping Others Use—C.I.S.
- Maintaining contact with program officials

These extra tasks involve an extra time commitment, but they can enhance your experience as a Cappie Critic. If you don't do these tasks well, or if you're not setting a good standard for other Critics from your school, your Advisor can replace you, as Lead Critic, at any time.

It is important for you to read (and, when requested respond to) Cappies emails. Through the year, please make sure your school's database is complete and accurate, with correct names, phones, and emails.

You must attend the Lead Critics Training and Schedule Meeting. If you cannot attend that, for any reason, it is your responsibility to make sure another Critics from your school attends in your place.

For all other critic responsibilities, please see the Critic Manual

Attending Lead Critics Training and Meetings

In all likelihood, on the day you were given this binder, you took part in a Lead Critics meeting, where you set the year's assignments for all Critics Teams.

If your Program Director schedules any additional Lead Critics meetings, you must either attend it personally or, if you cannot, make sure another Critic from your school attends in your place. *You (or a designee) must attend every Lead Critics meeting*. Your program's Steering Committee may impose a sanction—adding to your school's minimum review requirement—if your school is not represented at a Lead Critics meeting.

Assisting in Training

Binders

As Lead Critic, one of your first responsibilities—on the next school day after your training—is to explain to your school's Critics, Advisor, Show Director, and Mentor how to download their binders from the Cappies website through CIS.

Meeting with Advisor, Show Director, and Mentors

Your school may have more than one Mentor or Show Director (for two Cappies Shows), in which case each one should have a binder. Your Program Director can supply you with these, as needed.

When you give them their binders, please schedule a meeting with them. You can do this together or separately, but please meet with everyone before the first Cappies Show on the schedule. For your Advisor, schedule 30 minutes if your Advisor is familiar with the Cappies, or schedule one hour if he or she is not.

For Show Directors or Mentors who are familiar with the Cappies, this meeting should take only about 15 minutes. For others, it could take between 30 and 60 minutes, depending on how many questions they have.

If any of these persons are not teachers, please ask your Advisor to ask them to come to the school to pick up their binder—and then, on a later occasion, to come again to meet with you.

In all likelihood, they are all very busy people. Please tell them that this initial meeting with you is a Cappies rule, as a way to conserve their time. This way, it isn't necessary to ask them to attend a meeting away from school with Cappies officials.

If anyone at your school is a new Mentor, they are required to attend a training session led by Cappies officials. Check with your chapter to see if there is a mandatory meeting requirement for returning mentors. Please make sure they get their binders before that session, so they can have a chance to look through it.

In your meeting with any of these individuals, please do the following:

- Review the materials in their binder. Point out what needs to be read carefully, and what can be scanned more quickly. (See the "Binder" section for a list.)
- If they are new to the Cappies, go through the "The Cappies Advisor" section.
- Go over the "Glossary" section, very quickly.
- If they are familiar with the Cappies, go through the "New Rules" section.
- Go through the "Consequences" section.
- For everyone who is a Show Director or Mentor, go through the Award Category Guide, page by page, and the Award Category Eligibility form. Take as much time as needed to review the basics.
- Try to answer any questions. If you can't answer something, please email your Program Director, and he or she will try to help.
- Make sure your Advisor knows how to log into and use C.I.S.

In your meeting with your Advisor, please also do the following:

- Decide whether you will ask Critics to take part in a writing exercise, like the one suggested in the "Review Writing" section, before their first Cappies Show—and, if so, how this will be done.
- Discuss how you and the Advisor will together oversee Critic attendance and review writing performance over the year.
- Schedule an initial meeting with Critics, at which you and the Advisor can both be present.

Meeting with Critics

After all Critics (including Regional Critics) at your school have been trained, please schedule a meeting with them, with your school's Cappies Advisor present. If necessary, the Advisor can help schedule this and impress on everyone the importance of attending this meeting.

You and the Advisor should together run this meeting, during which please do the following:

- Review with them the materials in their binders. Show them what the need to read carefully, and what they can scan more quickly. (See the "Binder" section for a list.)
- Go through the "Consequences" section. They should each take note only of those that apply to Critics.
- Go through the Award Category Guide, page by page, to make sure everyone understands the basics.
- Make sure they know how to log into and use C.I.S.

Make sure every critic submits a Parental Authorization Form—*very important!*

- If they submitted one last year, they must do it again this year. They cannot review a show until Cappies officials have this in hand.
- Your Advisor should collect these forms for your entire team, and then mail them wherever your Program Director requests. You can help with this, as needed.

For rosters and schedules, please make sure every Critic on your team does the following:

- Be able to receive emails and submit reviews online. (If any critics do not have home email, please ask your Advisor to help find a way to do this—at school or somewhere else. Remember that critics generally need to write reviews on weekends.
- Check their emails at least once every other day.
- Use C.I.S. to volunteer for, or decline shows.
- Whenever they decline a Cappies Show, they must (at the same time) volunteer for a replacement show.
- Alert you, as Lead Critic, when they decline a Cappies Show assigned to your Team, so you can make sure your Team has at least half its members attending that show.

When attending Cappies Shows, please make sure every Critic on your team does the following:

- Get to shows on time (45 minutes before curtain).
- Not arrive less than 10 minutes before curtain, or they might not get a ticket.
- Stay until the post-show discussion is over.
- Bring their binders, and a writing implement.
- Bring the forms they need.
- Make sure they know how to get to Cappies Shows
- Drive safely—or, better, have an adult drive them to and from Cappies Shows.

At a Cappies show, please make sure every Critic on your team does the following:

- Dress, and use language, in a manner appropriate to a school setting.
- Keep the Cappies Room for Critics only—before shows, too.
- Don't sit with friends or family members in the theater.
- Safeguard their valuables.

- Don't meet and greet friends at the school whose show they're reviewing.
- Don't talk about the Cappies Show outside the Cappies Room.

During discussions, please make sure every Critic on your team does the following:

- Treat Mentors with the respect appropriate to a teacher in a school setting.
- Respect other critics like they would other students in a school setting.
- Refrain from side conversations during discussions, and stop talking when shushed.
- Raise a hand to speak, speak only when called on, and stand when speaking.
- Make points briefly, allowing time for others to speak.
- Listen courteously and attentively to comments from others.
- Respect opinions that may be different from their own.
- Don't make comments that are sarcastic or unduly harsh.
- Discard any personal trash, and help clean up the Cappies Room.
- Be courteous to parent boosters who provide refreshments.
- Leave the host school promptly, after turning in their forms.
- Alert a Mentor if they need to wait for a pick-up, after a show.

After a Cappies Show, make sure every Critic on your team does the following:

- Never discuss anything said in the Cappies Room about the Cappies Show with anyone.
- Never reveal how they scored a show.
- Meet deadlines.
- Follow rules on criticisms.
- Do not copy-and-paste (i.e., do not plagiarize) from anything on the Internet.
- Always submit a review for every show they attend.

IMPORTANT: If you are aware of persistent or substantial Critic misbehavior at Cappies Shows, or in writing reviews, please inform your Advisor immediately. If you don't, you run the risk that your school's own Cappies Show could be disqualified from awards.

Speaking with the Booster

Please speak briefly with your school's Cappies Booster about the need for Critics to get to and from Cappies Shows safely, and about what is required for your school's own Cappies Show.

Keeping Your Database Current

Please help your Advisor keep your school's Cappies database current. It is especially important that everyone be reachable by C.I.S. emails.

Your school cannot participate effectively in the Cappies if any part of your database is incomplete or inaccurate. Please help your Advisor keep your school's Cappies database complete and accurate. If you know of any changes to any critic's email address or phone number, please make sure that person updates his or her database, via C.I.S.

Early in the year, make a quick check to make sure all persons are getting Cappies emails. If they are not, either there is an error in the database, or that person's spam blocker may be blocking Cappies emails. If the latter, please help them fix this. If you don't know how to do this, please find another student who knows how to adjust spam blockers, and they can teach you how to do that.

Maintaining Your Roster

Critics must be students in grades 9 through 12 who are currently enrolled in your school, and who has not been prohibited by school authorities from participating in extracurricular activities.

If any Critic fails twice to submit a review for an attended show, that Critic will be removed from the roster.

Maintaining Your Schedule

You are responsible for setting, and if necessary updating, the assignment schedule for your school's Critics Team.

Team Attendance at Assigned Shows

You need to manage the Critics Team to be sure every one of your assigned shows is covered. For each show, the team must submit at least half as many reviews as there are members of the team. If your team has 3 or 4 Critics, then the team must submit at least 2 reviews. If 5 or 6 Critics, then 3 reviews. If you have 7 or 8 critics, then 4 reviews and if you have 9 critics, 5 reviews.

There is a clear sanction for failure to do this. For every review the team is short, one review gets added to the team's yearly minimum. If the school fails to submit any reviews twice, the Steering Committee can impose additional sanctions, including disqualification of your school's own Cappies Show. Please work with team to make sure this does not happen.

Your Advisor will see the same Critic attendance and review record you will, so he or she can help you make sure all Critics are on path to meeting their required minimum number of reviews—which will prevent your school's own Cappies Show from being disqualified.

Changes in Team Assignments

If your team needs to request a change in show assignments, you should be the one to email your Program Director. This must be done not later than 14 days before the assigned show, and the request must be accompanied by a list of at least three acceptable replacement dates.

Leading Your Team at Cappies Shows

One key responsibility of a Lead Critic is to make sure all critics from your school show good decorum at Cappies Shows. You cannot control what other Critics from your school may do, but they will take cues from you, especially if you're sitting together in a Cappies Room, and again in the theater. As Lead Critic, you have a responsibility to set a high standard for decorum.

If your Advisor receives a report from a Mentor, or (more likely) from your Program Director, that any individual critic from your school—or your entire team—broke the rules on decorum, you—as Lead Critic—might also be held accountable, if you were present.

In case of serious critic misbehavior, Mentors are authorized to reprimand a Critic, request the Critic's name and school name, and make a report to the Program Director. A Mentor can order a Critic to leave the Cappies Room, and/or Performing School, in case of disruptive misbehavior.

Upon receiving a report of serious Critic misbehavior, the Program Director will notify your Advisor, who can take whatever disciplinary action may be appropriate.

At any time, for any reason, your Advisor can request that a Critic be removed from the roster. If, for any reason, a Critic who has been taken off the roster wants to be reinstated, and the Advisor agrees, the Advisor should email a request to the Program Director.

Critic safety and security is very important. You should help your Advisor (and Booster) to keep an eye on how Critics from your school are planning to travel to and from Cappies Shows.

Helping Your Mentor

Several months may pass between the time you first meet with your school's Mentor and his or her first assignment. Sometime during the week before that assignment, please check in with theMentorand ask if he or she has any questions about the role of Discussion or Editor Mentor, any rules, and C.I.S.

Emergency Critic-Mentor

Every Lead Critic must be capable of being an emergency Critic-Mentor, if for some reason no Mentors attend a Cappies Show. (This has only happened once in the history of the Cappies, but it could happen again at any show.) Here's what to do, in such a case.

At any Cappies Show at which both Mentors are absent, for any reason, and if there is no member of the Steering Committee present (who, if so, would be the Mentor), the Lead Critics who are present will select two among them—preferably volunteers, selected (if need by) by a vote of all critics who are present. The Critic-Mentors will lead discussions, collect pre-show and post-show forms. Upon returning home, both Critic-Mentors will notify the Program Director, who will give them additional instructions. The Critic-Mentors should each write a review of that show, and may later vote for that show, but they may not select their own reviews for publication.

Helping Your Show Director

As your school's Cappies Show nears, check in with your school's Show Director, to make sure he or she knows what to do. Make sure your Show Director completes the Award Category Eligibility form. Alternatively, you can complete it, and the Show Director can approve it. However it's prepared, this form must be given to the Editor Mentor not later than 30 minutes before curtain.

Help your Show Director and Tech Theatre Students with the requirements for the tech boards (Costumes, Sets, Make-up, Lighting, Sound, Stage Management, Stage Crew, Marketing and Publicity) and help them get set up in the Cappies Room.

Help your Show Director prepare other materials that may be useful for the Critics—for example, something about the history of the show, or anything unusual in your production.

You or another Critic may wish to serve as the Usher for the Cappies Room, and perhaps you can help in other ways. Please make sure your school's Cappies Booster understands what's required at a Cappies show.

Make sure your Advisor has checked with your school's Newspaper Contact, to ask if the school paper is willing to publish one or two Cappies reviews of your school's Cappies Show. Most school papers publish at least one Cappies review, and many publish two.

On the Monday after the Cappies Show, please check with your Show Director to see if the reviews have arrived. The rules require a Show Director to share reviews with the cast and crew. Most Show Directors prefer to let cast and crew see all the reviews, but three reviews (no more than that) may be withheld, for any reason.

With your Show Director's permission, you might want to identify a few reviews worth sharing with parents, or posting on a school bulletin board. You and your Booster might uncover some good quotes that could be read during school announcements or used in publicity for upcoming shows.

Your Program Director may send emails about special media opportunities to publicize your upcoming shows. If articles or photos are requested, please make sure they are provided (and coordinate it with your Show Director).

A week before Award Voting, C.I.S. will send your Show Director the list of Critics' Choices for your own school's Cappies Show, to make sure all names are spelled correctly and no obvious error exists (like a female dancer listed as a male). Under the rules, the Show Director may share that list with no one—including you—but a week before Award Voting you should ask your Show Director if that list has arrived. If so, please ask him or her to review it and respond if anything is amiss. (If no response is received, the Program Director will conclude that all names are correct.)

After Award Voting, your Program Director may request email addresses for your school's Nominees. If so, please respond quickly and assemble them. (Please assure everyone that C.I.S. does not share email addresses with anyone who is not a program official.) Please also respond to any requests for photos of Nominees.

As the Cappies Gala nears, make sure the Show Director, and nominees from your school, know what to do.

Assisting at Year End

As Award Voting nears, you should keep close track of the review writing performance of Critics from your school, to make sure you are together submitting enough reviews to qualify your own school's Cappies Show for awards. If your program requires each Critic to submit five reviews, then all Critics from your school must together submit at least 15 reviews, and have two voting Critics, to qualify your show for awards. (If your program requires four reviews per critic, your minimum is 12—if three per critic, then the minimum is 9.)

Your minimum number may be higher—if, at any of your Team's assigned shows, your Team failed to submit the required number of reviews, or if you failed to attend a Lead Critics meeting (or send a designee).

Awards Voting

Make sure all Critics know the date of Award Voting. All Critics must vote at the same place on the same day, and no exceptions are allowed (except for religious observance). Make sure all Critics at your school know that date and plan to be there.

Most programs schedule numerous start times on the day of Award Voting. You may need to schedule your school's critics for a start time. As that date approaches, your Program Director will give you information about that.

The Cappies program has a specially designed voting procedure, described in the "Award Voting" section of these materials. As Award Voting nears, you (and all Critics) will receive further information about voting.

Through the year, the rules prohibit Critics from discussing with anyone—including Critics at their own school—how they think they might vote.

Nominations are announced within one to two days after the voting. Most Cappies programs post the nominations online. Per the cliché, the chips fall where they may. Your school may receive several nominations, or not many. (In large programs, some schools receive no nominations.)

Cappies Gala

Tickets for the year-end Cappies Gala, tickets will be made available for your school. The number of available tickets, per school, will depend on the size of your Cappies program and the size of the Gala venue. Your school's Show Director will be in charge of this.

Understandably, the size of each school's Gala ticket request may depend to some degree on the number of nominations that school has received and on any invitation for students from that school to perform at the Gala. As Lead Critic, you should encourage other critics from your school—and cast and crew from your Cappies Show—to attend a Cappies Gala, even if some disappointment is felt about a school's list of nominations.

We encourage you and all other Critics at your school to attend the Gala, to cheer for students from all schools and celebrate all the fine shows performed through the year.

Cappie Awards are announced at the Cappies Gala. Students from your school may win the awards for which they're nominated, or not. If they do, kudos to everybody. If not, hooray for whoever won, and it's on to summer (and next year).

No voting system is perfect, of course—and any outcome merely reflects the viewpoint of the judges, not any absolute truth—but great care is taken by program officials to make sure Cappies voting meets very high standards of fairness and integrity.

No matter where the awards go, students at your school will have a wonderful time at the Cappies Gala—and all year long, whether a student is reviewing Cappies shows, putting them on, or both.

Using (and Helping Others Use) C.I.S.

The Cappies is a web-based organization, with a web site (*www.cappies.com*) and "C.I.S.," the password-accessible Cappies Information Services. Nearly all the email you'll receive from the Cappies will come via C.I.S.

Check your email daily, and read Cappies emails promptly. If an email asks for a response, or some action by you, please respond, or take that action, as soon as you reasonably can.

Make sure your spam blocker does not block out emails from any Cappies address. If you do not know how to do this, please ask another student who knows about these things.

You will have access to your own C.I.S. page. This will enable you to find up-to-date information about schedules, the performance of your own school's Critics Team, and other items.

Your C.I.S. "username" will be your school's two-letter code, followed by a dash, followed by the first letter of your first name, followed by the first seven letters of your last name. (If your school is South High, initials sh, and your name is Sam Johnston, your username would be: sh-sjohnsto). You will receive a password as soon as your school's on-line application is approved.

Please read the instructions for C.I.S. Spend some time with your school's Lead Critic to make sure you understand how to log-in, and how to use it. C.I.S. may seem daunting, when you first encounter it, but it's simpler than it looks.

Maintaining Contact with Cappies Officials

Through the year, you and your Advisor will be your school's main point of contact with Cappies Officials.

If you change your email address, or any of your phone numbers, during the year, please use C.I.S. to insert the change in the Cappies database.

If you have any questions or comments, as you read this or anytime thereafter, please send an email to your Program Director via C.I.S.