
Evaluation Summary
Tennessee Shakespeare
Company

Last Updated
December 28, 2021

THE ROMEO AND JULIET PROJECT



ROMEO AND JULIET PROJECT COMPLETED/ CONFIRMED PARTNER SCHOOLS

School	Sessions	Students/Option	Performances
1. Soulsville Charter School	15	101/ In-Person	1
2. East HS (SCS Title 1*)	15	83/ In-Person	1
3. Bartlett Ninth Grade Academy (Title 1)	87	745/ In-Person	1/ Virtual
4. Collierville MS	10	280/ In-Person	1/ Virtual
5. West Collierville MS	17	420/ In-Person	1/ Virtual
6. Concord Academy (Special Education)	3	8/ In-Person for Teaching	52 students in 1 Performance
7. Rossville Christian Academy	12	130/ In-Person	1
8. Fayette Academy	9	48/ In-Person	1
9. Hope Academy (Partnership between Shelby County Juvenile Court and SCS)	3	57/ Virtual	1/ Virtual
10. Memphis Business Academy (Charter School)	18	138/ In-Person	1/ Virtual
11. White Station HS (SCS Title 1)	42	330/ In-Person	1/ Virtual
12. Hutchison School	0	88/ In-Person	1
12 Total Partner Schools	231	2,428	12

**SCS- Shelby County School; Title I- As stated by the US Department of Education, "Title I, Part A (Title I) of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, provides financial assistance to local education agencies and schools with high numbers or high percentages of children from low-income families to help ensure that all children meet challenging state academic standards."*

ROMEO AND JULIET STUDENT MATINEES PERFORMANCES

School	Students	Performances
1. Harding Academy	51	1
2. Homeschoolers	44	1
2 Total Schools	95	2 Total Student Matinees

PROJECT TOTALS

SCHOOLS SERVED.....14
SESSIONS TAUGHT.....231
PERFORMANCES.....14
VIRTUAL SESSIONS.....3
VIRTUAL PERFORMANCES.....7
UNIQUE STUDENTS SERVED...2,523
POINTS OF CONTACT.....8,187

What the Educators Say:

“Please continue to fund this project. My students were very engaged and excited about this opportunity. TSC makes Shakespeare easier to understand for students, and they love role-playing various scenes. This experience was priceless and meant so much to students. I look forward to working with TN Shakespeare Company again next year.”

- Christina Cunningham, East High School

“Students were so much more engaged in classroom learning because of the 3 sessions. They were able to draw literary parallels more easily and remember characters. They did delve into the material more deeply and more meaningfully than in other units. One student who has failed every test this year made a 97 on his *Romeo and Juliet* test. When I told him, he said, ‘This is the best story I’ve ever read. I’ve never even heard of *Romeo and Juliet* until two weeks ago.’ It is SO well done and engaging. It really blessed our little school to get to have TSC work with our students and perform for them. It was astounding.”

- Lauren Moore, Rossville Christian Academy

“When you think of Shakespeare, teenagers - especially teenagers of today - don’t come to mind. However, TN Shakespeare manages to connect the students with text more than 400 years old and with almost 25,000 words. It is so important to continue to teach and watch Shakespeare. TN Shakespeare Company enables us to do both.”

- Kristen Kellum, Bartlett Ninth Grade Academy

“The Romeo and Juliet Project is the only opportunity some of these students have to be exposed to actors and theater. It is a field trip without having to leave the classroom; plus, it is an unforgettable experience that makes high school fun. Students are able to try new things, like acting, while also learning valuable lessons about the preciousness of life.”

- Hannah Harris, Bartlett Ninth Grade Academy

“TN Shakespeare Company’s sessions ignite my students’ interests, curiosity, and love of the play. Students look forward to the sessions and reading parts of the play because of the actors. The actors’ message at the end of the play is beneficial for students to hear. It is even better for them to hear it from young adults, and not just their teachers. My unit on *Romeo and Juliet* is successful because of these sessions.”

- Bartlett Ninth Grade Academy Educator

“Please continue to support the efforts of these talented actors who bring literature to life. Our students need to know that reading and writing are sources of enlightenment and entertainment, not for just a test. These talented actors help teach the life lessons I want my students to take away from this play, while gaining an appreciation for the genre. Past students still tell me how much they loved working with the actors and *Romeo and Juliet*.”

- Mary Frost, Bartlett Ninth Grade Academy

“This was such a success at our school. My class was so much more ‘into’ reading the play after just our first session. By the end of the third session, they were really looking forward to the play that TN Shakespeare performed for our entire school. The actors were great with our students.”

- *Christi Marin, Concord Academy*

Out of eight Project Educators surveyed, 100% reported that students were more engaged in their study of the play as a result of TSC’s Participation. All Educators reported either a half-letter or full-letter grade increase in their ELA class due to participation in the Project. All Educators said that they would like to participate in the Project again next year.

WHAT TSC’s TEACHING-ARTISTS HAVE TO SAY

“I have worked in similar contexts before, touring Shakespeare's works to schools across New England, but never before have I seen such engagement during performances. Getting to know students over the three teaching modules allows us to foster relationships with them, and ensures they understand why they are reading this work. In one recent show, they were so engaged, they were reminding us of the de-escalation tactics we taught them about how these situations could be avoided! It was uplifting, and I believe these students will apply these skills we taught them in their lives outside of studying Shakespeare's work.”

- *Riley Fox Hillyer*

“Benvolio bearing witness has become a really special moment to watch, both onstage and in the classroom. The realization that we can use the truth to save lives is an invaluable lesson for students and an important reminder to each of us adults, as well.”

- *Kellan Oelkers*

“The Romeo and Juliet Project continues to demonstrate to me the need for this work to be explored in high schools. The Project allows for the students to explore the work outside of any pre-conceived notion of ‘right answers’ while still asking them to contemplate real grave issues that can directly apply to their communities today. And without fail, those that truly latch on to investing in the themes and characters are some of the most encouraging and intentional theatrical audiences for whom I have ever performed.”

- *Lauren Gunn*

“I remember several young men (specifically) talking about the cause of some of these characters ‘prideful’ behavior. Whether it was from Paris, Tybalt, Romeo, or Mercutio, the students found empathy for the choices made or the walls these characters put up. ‘Maybe they don’t want to appear vulnerable?’ ‘Even their friends mock them for trying to do the right thing.’ It became apparent to me that the students had a connection to the characters that was deeply felt and understood.”

- *Michael Khanlarian*

“During a discussion about dignity, one of the students who had up to this moment been disconnected from the session locked eyes with me and began nodding in agreement. I could tell that they needed to hear that they had dignity and inalienable value.

“At least two different students, in the midst of the deaths in Session 3, began to have an emotional response to the subject matter. Without hesitation, these students’ fellow classmates offered physical comfort: a touch on the shoulder, an embrace. These students were building a community of trust and love and openness, very unlike the Verona of *Romeo and Juliet*.”

“Multiple students at Memphis Business Academy, after going through session 2, mentioned that they related to the characters in meaningful ways. This was coming from students who had, moments before, voiced the difficulty they had with understanding *Romeo and Juliet*.”

- *Nic Picou*

“Being able to work in an environment that allowed me to reach my greatest creative potential, while I led the next generation into reaching theirs... led to one of the most fulfilling experiences of my young career. The work TSC does is wildly necessary-- and as a former student and current teacher of their lessons -- I hope it never stops.”

- *Austin Russell*

HOW PROJECT STUDENTS RESPONDED ON THE COMPASSION SCALE

Total of 698 Assessments:

1. I am equipped with some tools to help avoid a violent situation.

There was an 11% increase in the percentage of students who said they feel equipped with some tools to help avoid a violent situation.

2. If I ever have thoughts of harming myself, I know where I can find help to get me through the moment alive.

There was a 24% decrease in the percentage of students who said they didn’t know where they could find help to get them through the moment alive if they ever had thoughts of harming themselves.

WHAT STUDENTS HAVE TO SAY

“I want to give a special thanks to the man that was there. I absolutely LOVED how he explained how things will be OKAY. Suicide is NOT the way to go about your problems.”

- *Memphis Business Academy Student 1*

“Thanks for making high school less difficult for me.”

- *Memphis Business Academy Student 2*

Student Prompt: Choose one character from the play that made decisions that led to negative outcomes. Please help that character by offering alternate choices that might lead to a positive outcome.

- The Montagues' and the Capulets' hatred led them to lose their daughter and son. If they were to talk and figure things out with each other and why they felt that hate, maybe and hopefully Romeo and Juliet wouldn't have to hide their love.
- Bartlett Ninth Grade Academy student (Vigus 1st)
- Juliet made the decision to end her life after she saw that Romeo had done the same. Juliet could have asked the Friar for help while he was still in the tomb or had gone with him. She also could have just walked away. Even though it would've been hard it would've been better in the end for a lot of people.
- Bartlett Ninth Grade Academy student (Kellum 2nd)
- Mercutio, as he could have prevented his death if he didn't go about and look for fights. Mercutio also could have just slowed down and listened to Benvolio whenever Benvolio gave advice.
- Bartlett Ninth Grade Academy student (Kellum 5th)
- I'll say Tybalt could've prevented his death. In my opinion, he was such a hothead. If he would've just sat down and talked to Romeo, then he would've still been alive. *
- A character from the play that made decisions that led to negative outcomes was Romeo. Some advice that I would give to him is to walk away when you see that things are getting bad. Don't just let all the "pain" and "guilt" be on you.
- Memphis Business Academy student (Maynard 3rd)
- Mercutio and Tybalt should learn that violence is not always the key and that a simple discussion does it.
- Memphis Business Academy student (Maynard 1st)
- Friar could have told their parents they were suicidal.
- East HS student (Kathrineberg 3rd)
- Romeo didn't have to kill himself because Juliet was "dead." He could have dealt with his grief a different way.
- Bartlett Ninth Grade Academy student (Vigus 3rd)
- Lord Capulet made the decision of not listening to his daughter not wanting to be married, ultimately leading to her death. He could have listened to his daughter's feelings.
- East HS student (Kathrineberg)

- Friar Lawrence shouldn't have forced himself to deal with Romeo and Juliet alone. He should've asked more people for help when things started becoming deadly.
- *East HS student (Kathrineberg 3rd)*
- Juliet. Don't kill yourself for someone you just met. You are only 13. You have a life ahead of you. *
- Tybalt - take 10 deep breaths, hold your tongue, and walk away when someone makes you mad.
- *Bartlett Ninth Grade Academy student (Harris 5th)*
- Romeo, instead of being impulsive he should've stopped and thought about the possible outcomes. But, since he was so impulsive, there were a lot of bloodshed and consequences for his actions. *

Student Prompt: What did you learn from *The Romeo and Juliet Project* experience?

- I learned that it is always best to talk things out instead of just holding on to anger. *
- Don't keep secrets or make impulsive decisions without thinking about the consequences that follow. *
- I learned a lot. So much can be prevented if you do not have weapons.
- *East HS student (Kathrineberg)*
- Suicide is never the answer.
- *Bartlett Ninth Grade Academy student (Harris)*
- That life is important and our lives have value.
- *East HS student (Kathrineberg)*
- Walking away from a situation can usually prevent further harm.
- *Rossville Christian Academy student (Moore 1st)*
- That sometimes telling the truth could save you.
- *Bartlett Ninth Grade Academy student (Hicks 2nd)*
- I learned an in-depth analysis about *Romeo and Juliet*, since the language in the actual text can be a little hard to understand.
- *Bartlett Ninth Grade Academy student (Hicks 3rd)*

- I learned that Shakespeare's work isn't actually boring, and it was actually very fun.
- *Bartlett Ninth Grade Academy student (Hicks 5th)*
- I learned that it is very important to let someone else know when someone I know tells me about harming themselves.
- *Bartlett Ninth Grade Academy student (Hicks 5th)*
- That I can comprehend stuff better than I thought.
- *Fayette Academy student (McQuiston 1st)*

Student Prompt: Is there a character in the play with whom you identify? If so: whom, and will you please share with us why?

- I identify with Benvolio. I lost a few of my friends to Covid, suicide, or to murder. Benvolio was always the middle man and tried to help everyone.
- *Bartlett Ninth Grade Academy student (Harris 4th)*
- Romeo - I know how it feels to be described as 'woman-ish' and to feel lots of pressure and sadness from rejection and possibly going too far in to love (platonic and romantic) that it hurts me in the end.
- *Bartlett Ninth Grade Academy student (Kellum 2nd)*
- Benvolio, because he is basically the therapist of the friend group, which is what I am to my friend because I would rather have peace than madness and sadness.
- *Bartlett Ninth Grade Academy student (Kellum 3rd)*
- Romeo, because I have trouble thinking before acting sometimes, and it leads to bad things happening.
- *Bartlett Ninth Grade Academy student (Vigus 1st)*
- I identify with Tybalt because I understand how your family can anger you and put pressure on you despite being young.
- *Bartlett Ninth Grade Academy student (Hicks 2nd)*
- Friar Lawrence because he has to come up with quick plans to help his friends and is a confidant for people he cares about.
- *Bartlett Ninth Grade Academy student*
- Mercutio, because I can make some impulsive decisions that aren't always right in the end.
- *Bartlett Ninth Grade Academy student (Vigus 5th)*

- Tybalt. I saw that he had problems with his anger, and so do I. *

** Student did not respond to request for: school, teacher, and class period.*

###