

**ROMEO AND JULIET PROJECT
2024 PARTNER SCHOOLS**

School	Sessions	Students	Performances
1. East High School (MSCS and Title 1)*	24	163	1
2. Harding Academy	9	63	1
3. Crosstown High School (Charter School)	18	121	1
4. Concord Academy (Special Education)	3	70	1
5. Fayette Academy	12	45	1
6. Hope Academy (Partnership between Shelby County Juvenile Court and MSCS)*	0	30	1
7. Memphis Business Academy (Charter School)	18	128	1
8. Houston High School (Title 1)*	54	418	2
9. University High School (Laboratory Schools of the University of Memphis)	15	85	1
10. Avon Lenox High School (Special Education)	0	57	1
Total of 10 Partner Schools	153	1,180	11

**MSCS: Memphis-Shelby County School.*

**Title 1: As stated by the U.S. 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
2024 STUDENT MATINEE PERFORMANCES**

School/Group	Students	Performance
1. Jackson Homeschool Group	6	1
2. MS Homeschool Life Group	18	1
3. Omnibus Homeschool Group	20	1
4. Olive Branch High School	33	1
5. Park Place Christian Academy	39	1
6. MSE at Cordova Secondary School	45	1
7. Homeschoolers (five unattached groups)	27	1
Total of 11 Schools/Groups	188 Students	2 Student Matinees

PROJECT TOTALS

SCHOOLS.....13
SESSIONS.....153
PERFORMANCES.....13
UNIQUE STUDENTS.....1,368
POINTS OF CONTACT.....4,647

2024 SCHOOL EDUCATOR QUOTES:

“TSC’s Romeo and Juliet Project helps to make Shakespeare's plays, his characters, and his language accessible to my students. It also helps them consider the consequences of rash actions on the part of both teens and adults.”

- *Janelle Phipps, Harding Academy of Memphis*

“We discussed how we, as a society, don't believe in settling things by fighting to the death in the streets these days. We discussed that sometimes these tragedies still occur, but the hope is that each generation will continue to do things better than the last.

“PLEASE keep funding Tennessee Shakespeare Company! The Romeo and Juliet Project not only helps to give students an appreciation for why we study Shakespeare, but it also inspires interest in a story that could be blown off by teens because ‘it's old.’ It helps to give them an understanding of what *Romeo and Juliet* is really about, regardless of what era the writing style is from.

“I feel like I learn something new, myself, each time I get to be a part of the Project.”

- *Christi Miran, Concord Academy*

“This experience with the play and Tennessee Shakespeare Company helped kids get out of their seats and engage in the reading. There was a full-letter increase in grades for this unit after the Project.”

- *Courtney Brookshire, Houston High School*

“TSC’s teachers-actors do a wonderful job engaging students in the play and helping them consider how the conflicts the characters face are relevant in their own lives. It's honestly one of the highlights for us every year. The kids always have a wonderful experience, and it resulted in approximately half a letter grade increase after the Project.”

- *Jason Middlekauf, Houston High School*

“My classes were more engaged with the play because of Tennessee Shakespeare Company. They provided a fun learning experience for my students. They will remember the complex characters because of the playshops. The discussions the TSC teachers led about violence were beneficial, and my students and I enjoyed the experience.”

- *Lindsay Cloer, Harding Academy of Memphis*

“Thank you for this wonderful experience. *Romeo and Juliet* became my students' most memorable reading of the year and it's due to this experience. It is also most of their first experiences seeing a live play, which they thoroughly enjoyed. They learn so much, and so do I!”

- *Sarah Condra, Houston High School*

“I have partnered with Tennessee Shakespeare Company for six years now, and every year, I look forward to turning students' expectations around from dreading Shakespeare to loving it. It's clear that old, classic art that would otherwise seem irrelevant and distant to my students is

valuable and impactful for students growing up in Memphis in 2024. Students get an opportunity to step into characters' motivations and emotions and find personal connections while studying rigorous content and language. That's when the best learning happens - at the intersection of personal connection and high academic rigor.”

- Quinn Katherineberg, East High School

“Our Tennessee Shakespeare Company Educator was amazing in developing a trusting relationship with students. The Romeo and Juliet Project is something that is needed to spark student interest and respect for live theater. I hope this Project never goes away. We would love to continue to bring this performance to our students, mainly to spark their interest in choosing theater as either a career and/or a lifelong passion.”

- A University High School Educator

Out of nine Project Educators surveyed in 2024, all said that students were more engaged in their study of the play as a result of TSC's participation. Six Educators said that their students had a half-letter grade increase, and three said that their students had a full-letter grade increase due to their participation in TSC's Project. All Educators said that they would like to participate in the Project again next year.

2024 TSC TEACHING-ARTIST QUOTES:

"The Romeo and Juliet Project has been an incredibly fulfilling experience. It never failed that in every classroom there would always be at least one student who was excited and enamored with the work. Not only the Shakespeare work but the lessons we taught for violence and suicide prevention were also taken with a sense of maturity that I had not expected from the students. This is the first time I have ever worked with this Project, but I can already feel the impact and importance of the work being done."

- Logan McCarty

“I have been doing the Romeo and Juliet Project for many years now and something that is undeniable about teaching this work is that this Project relates every one of these students to the all of characters in the play. This puts the story into the students’ perspectives, and that helps them realize that the alternatives to violence that we teach in the sessions can actually help in their real-world situations. Just knowing how to approach some of these situations can be the determining factor of life and death. I’ve had students in classes come up and thank me after they have completed the Project. That’s why the Romeo and Juliet Project is so important.”

- Marquis Dijon Archuleta

“I was really touched by the effect the Romeo and Juliet Project had on numerous groups of students. While teaching at East High, we had a student who was quite reluctant to volunteer as an actor. We eventually were able to get him to be the Prince, and to our delighted surprise, he transformed into a powerful actor the second we started feeding him in! He had such presence and power, and his classmates applauded him as well!

- Kristina Hinako

“Facing teenagers in so many demographics, from the uniformed setting of Fayette Academy to the uproarious joy of Avon Lenox to the engagement at Hope Academy, the impact we made as teaching-artists was palpable. It was clear the students were affected, whether that manifested in silent contemplation or passionate interest; from the remembrance of our names as educators to the reverence in the classrooms' sobering moments. I am sure this program reached the hearts and minds of many young folks, and provided the tools and resources necessary to save lives.”

- *Allison Teegarden*

“I truly enjoyed teaching The Romeo and Juliet Project. The students put their own modern spin on some of Shakespeare’s lines. My favorite instance was a student who was excited to sword fight during the opening brawl. She played one of Romeo’s friends and instead of using the lines given, she turned to Romeo and said ‘you are not standing on business’ which is modern slang for ‘dishonorable vile submission’ (Shakespeare’s line). Another point of pride was a student who volunteered to play the Prince. She had been talking for much of the class period and seemed disinterested. But when she played the Prince, she commanded everyone’s attention. It reminded me that much of the impact of what we do may not be seen, but is felt nonetheless.”

- *Cheleen Sugar-Ducksworth*

“This year, we had a really special experience at Avon Lenox, a school for young adults with intellectual and/or physical disabilities. Many of the students remembered us from our *Macbeth* tour and were very excited to see another Shakespeare play. The students were completely engaged, and the actors were noticeably emboldened by having such a receptive and excited audience. It was lovely to see this text become accessible to these students and to see actors so excited to return to this venue.

I had a very special experience with a student whom I pulled up to play the Prince in the first teaching session. The student was reluctant to participate, but as soon as he started speaking Shakespeare he completely bloomed--he broke out into full volume and completely commanded the space. In every following session, that student was in front of the class and eager to participate. It was abundantly clear that the opportunity to embody this text brought this student into more immediate relation to themselves.”

- *Hadley Evans Nash*

“The Romeo and Juliet Project is a very important program that I wish I had when I was in high school. When I see how our message about anti-violence and anti-self-harm really hits our students, I realize that that topic doesn't get a lot of attention in their everyday lives. It was a message I needed to hear in high school, and I would've loved to hear it in the context of one of my favorite plays. The Romeo and Juliet Project is a program that more theaters and high schools across the country should be adopting because it helps students come out of their shells and talk about hard subjects in a safe, positive, exploratory environment. I would do it again in a heartbeat.”

- *Carleigh Boyle*

“During rehearsals, the decision was made for Mercutio and the Prince to frequently speak Spanish throughout the show. Throughout the tour, numerous students (Jonathan & Mario at

Avon Lenox, Noel at Hope Academy, etc.) approached me after the show, shook my hand, and expressed just how ecstatic they were to hear Shakespeare being performed in their first language. Getting to see firsthand the joy and excitement that cultural representation brings to these students made this by far the most gratifying experience in my theatre career.”

- Elijah Hernandez

2024 PARTICIPATING STUDENT QUOTES:

Of the 308 total Assessments returned to TSC:

- 95% of students rarely or never see any live theatre performances.
- 99% of students rarely or never see Shakespeare performances.
- 88% of students said they were more interested in the study of *Romeo and Juliet* due to TSC’s classroom-led sessions.
- 90% of students were able to see Shakespeare as more relevant than before due to the *Romeo and Juliet Project*.

Student Responses to the following prompt...“Please share one thing you learned from The Romeo and Juliet Project”:

“I learned how important it is to value one's life and to respect each other and to know as a person I am valued and loved as everyone else is too.”

- student from University High School

“The program uses *Romeo and Juliet* to help Freshman students practice life-saving decisions in scenarios like armed violence and peer pressure.”

- student from University High School

“All year I had been dreading the Shakespeare unit a bit. Even when we started reading the play in the textbook, I wasn't really enjoying it. But being able to act out the play made the experience of *Romeo and Juliet* much more pleasurable. I also didn't realize how human and relatable it was, which was shown to me through Tennessee Shakespeare Company.”

- student from University High School

“I likely would not have noticed many of the themes that were present in the play had they not come into the class and had us act it out. The performance element helped me actually understand the play since I could see all of the actions happening and connect it with the words.”

- student from Houston High School

“I learned about how deep conflict and hatred can easily and quickly lead to horrible consequences when not dealt with.”

- student from University High School

“I learned how everything that happened in the story correlated to each other, rather than just reading words and trying to figure out what happened.”

- student from Houston High School

“I learned how it is good to get involved and participate, even if it is embarrassing. I also learned the importance of talking to someone if you need help mentally.”

- student from Houston High School

“One thing I learned is how Romeo and Juliet's suicides connect to teenagers in our society who feel stressed and consider suicide to ‘solve’ their problems.”

- student from University High School

“I learned that I like performing and acting.”

- student from Concord Academy