

**ROMEO AND JULIET PROJECT  
2025 PARTNER SCHOOLS**

School	Sessions	Students	Performances
1. East High School (MSCS Title 1*)	30	188	1
2. Harding Academy	9	57	1
3. City University Schools (Charter School)	9	46	1
4. Concord Academy (Special Education)	3	64	1
5. Fayette Academy	9	60	1
6. Hope Academy (Partnership between Shelby County Juvenile Court and MSCS)	6	46	1
7. Memphis Business Academy (Charter School)	18	137	1
8. Houston High School (Title 1)	24	220	1
9. University High School (Laboratory Schools of the University of Memphis)	9	100	1
10. Avon Lenox High School	0	60	1
<b>Ten (10) Total Partner Schools</b>	<b>111</b>	<b>978</b>	<b>10</b>

*\*MSCS: Memphis-Shelby County School. Title 1: As stated by the U.S. Department of Education, "Title 1, Part A (Title 1) 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  
2025 STUDENT MATINEE PERFORMANCES**

School	Students	Performances Attended
1. First Assembly Christian School	4	1
2. MS Homeschool Life	2	1
3. Memphis Area Home Education Association	30	1
4. Classical Conversations	6	1
5. Olive Branch High School	42	1
6. Homeschool Roster	3	2
7. Compass Orange Mound	21	1
8. Individual/Independent homeschool families	23	2
<b>Seven (7) Total Schools</b>	<b>131</b>	<b>2 Total Student Matinees</b>

**PROJECT TOTALS**

SCHOOLS.....17  
SESSIONS.....111  
PERFORMANCES.....12  
UNIQUE STUDENTS.....1,109  
POINTS OF CONTACT.....3,315

## **2025 SCHOOL EDUCATOR QUOTES:**

“My students were asking for more Shakespeare by the end of this experience with TSC. They asked me daily if TSC was coming back for more workshops. The play came alive for them, and I am forever thankful.”

*- Erica Hipp, University High School*

“TSC’s Project is the best experience students can have - especially with Shakespeare. They continue to have a positive view throughout high school. It gets students excited about the play as opposed to dreading it. They also look forward to being involved - and they love the pool noodles that are used as swords.”

*- Ginny Hunter, Houston High School*

“I first experienced Tennessee Shakespeare Company’s Romeo and Juliet Project as an educator. I watched my students, who were initially wary about their first experience with Shakespeare, become comfortable with the language and feel a connection to the play that they were not expecting. They saw the characters in the play as relatable, experiencing the same essential conflicts teenagers face today. Over the years, I witnessed students in tears because they or someone they know had experienced violence; and through literature, they saw what steps could be taken to achieve a more favorable outcome in the future.

“Fast forward 10 years, and I am now a parent whose children are in high school. My son is a typical student who has never shown much interest in reading. He is good at it, but does not prefer it. When he was a freshman, he was dreading *Romeo and Juliet* because of the ‘old English.’ However, after the first time Tennessee Shakespeare Company visited his classroom, he came home talking about how the play actually made sense. He said it was fun, and he couldn’t wait to act out the next part when the actors returned. At the end of the Project, he came home and told me he didn’t realize the problems in Shakespeare’s times were the same as those in our times. My daughter is a freshman this year. She has ADHD and dyslexia, so we have fought about reading since she was in kindergarten. I reached out to make sure she would get the same experience my son got when he was a freshman. I can’t wait for her to hear and live the literature that is generally not accessible to her because of her disabilities.

“I don’t know that parents realize the rich experience that their children have when they work with the actors at Tennessee Shakespeare Company. When I first worked with them in 2014, I hoped that they would still be doing the same work in 2025 so that my kids would be able to learn in such a rich and impactful way. As a teacher, I got to see my students’ eyes opened. As a parent, it is so important that I see my kids have the same realization that Shakespeare’s messages are important. So many times, Shakespeare is thought to be for the ‘smart’ kids, but Tennessee Shakespeare Company has made sure that all students have access to the powerful message of Shakespeare through the Romeo and Juliet Project. From this teacher and parent, I can’t say thank you enough to Tennessee Shakespeare Company for their contribution to our young people.”

*- Former Germantown High School Teacher/Current Parent of an RJP Student*

**Of the responding School Project Educators surveyed in 2025, 100% said that students were more engaged in their study of the play as a result of TSC’s participation. Fifty percent said that their students had a full-letter grade increase due to their participation in TSC’s Project. One hundred percent of Educators said that they would like to participate in the Project again next year.**

## **2025 TSC TEACHING-ARTIST QUOTES:**

“I was highly fortunate to teach all three modules of the Romeo and Juliet Project at the same school. I visited Concord Academy, a school and community-based environment that embraces students' differences, honors their learning styles, and accommodates their varying needs. The class we had been teaching was seated in the front row. I think I was more nervous to perform for them than any of the other schools because of that. During the question and answer after-play session, many of their hands shot straight up. One question that was asked was if any of the actors were famous – on that morning, we may have been. I felt so honored that they allowed me to be a small part of their consistency as a teaching-artist. They are a beautiful reminder that being a Neurodiverse Needs Teaching-Artist could be my future.”

**- Jonathan Dimas**

“The experience of teaching and performing Tennessee Shakespeare Company’s Romeo and Juliet Project is one that I will cherish. As a trained actor recently returned to my hometown after nearly two decades away (in Boston & NYC), being a part of this work has been deeply moving and inspiring. The opportunity to engage with students about Shakespeare and offer lifesaving tools through our in-class playshops is something that every student in the Mid-South deserves. It was apparent that the students we worked with were making personal connections to the work and identifying parallels between their lives and the lives of the young people in *Romeo and Juliet*. The lessons taught, not only about the structure of the play, but also about de-escalating violence, withstanding peer pressure, and how to seek help instead of self-harming are vital to a healthy community. As a graduate of Memphis City Schools and as a parent raising children in Memphis, TN, I am invested in the future of the Mid-South and feel that the Romeo and Juliet Project is a shining example of how theatre and art can make life-saving, positive changes in our world. It truly is an honor to be a part of this deeply impactful work.”

**- Sarah Sakaan**

“I see how the Project inspires creativity in the students. Sometimes after the show, a student will give us fan art of the characters. These pieces that they give us are examples of how the story influences our audience.

“I personally see that the Teaching-Artists’ presence in the classrooms inspires a feeling of comradery among the students who are part of the Romeo and Juliet Project. When the students watch the show, they have a personal connection to the character of the person who taught them in class.

“Because the Romeo and Juliet Project is taught using the Socratic Method, the students get to come up with the answers which means each student gets their chance to shine. After each in-class session, their glows just get brighter.”

**- Marquis Dijon Archuleta**

“Teaching students within the Project has been an incredibly rewarding experience unlike any other. It is truly amazing to witness students’ growth, not only in their understanding of the text but also in their ability to empathize with the characters, a skill that I can see them using ever more readily as we progress through the modules. What makes this experience impactful for me as a teaching-artist is watching them wrestle with the deep, meaningful questions that arise from the play, such as the complexities of mental health, community responsibilities, and the dynamics of healthy relationships. Seeing them engage with these important themes and develop a deeper understanding of both the text and themselves is profoundly inspiring. I have been teaching this curriculum for five years, and every year I learn something new -- not only about the play, but about the immense capacity our younger generations have to impact their world and ours.”

**- Lauren Gunn**

“I am always pleasantly surprised by the reaction from students to the Romeo and Juliet Project. During our first session, we cover the brawl that begins the play. They love having their ‘swords’ to ‘fight.’ It is a shock for them that the first adults they meet in the play don’t stop the fight. One student exclaimed, ‘I’m about to break this up myself! Grown-ups are ridiculous!’ It was how I knew they understood the impact of the feud on the community.”

- *Cheleen Sugar*

## **2025 PARTICIPATING STUDENT QUOTES:**

**Of the 166 total Assessments returned to TSC as of March 12, 2025:**

- 93% of students rarely or never see any live theatre performances.
- 98% of students rarely or never see Shakespeare performances.
- 92% of students said they were more interested in the study of *Romeo and Juliet* due to TSC’s classroom-led sessions and performance.
- 93% 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 understood the storyline better than in the book when I saw the play.”

- *student from University High School*

“I learned that *Romeo and Juliet* can still apply to everyday life.”

- *student from Houston High School*

“I learned how Shakespeare used countless figurative language principles in order to write *Romeo and Juliet*, such as alliteration, 2-bar rhyming, metaphors, personification, and similes.”

- *student from City University School*

“I learned how much Shakespeare impacted our modern day words.”

- *student from Houston High School*

“That the story of *Romeo and Juliet* can be related to a lot of things going on now.”

- *student from University High School*

“During the entire performance, there were so many miscommunications and plot twists, watching the play was as if we were living in the actual thing.”

- *student from Memphis Business Academy*

“I learned how important it is to analyze and read through things carefully because if you do not you could potentially miss something that is a key point to the story.”

- *student from University High School*

“I learned how Shakespeare uses different types of writing elements in *Romeo and Juliet* like iambic pentameter and comic relief.”

- *student from Houston High School*

“I enjoyed being able to see the emotion more than just reading it and understanding the full concept of how the characters felt in certain scenes of the play.”

- *student from University High School*

“I learned how much this makes me want to pursue acting.”

- *student from City University School*

“I learned how to break down what a sentence means when it was written a long time ago.”

- *student from Houston High School*

“I learned more about how Shakespeare writes (like how he matches the rhythm with your heartbeat) and the true story of *Romeo and Juliet* because when I was little I had only watched *Gnomeo and Juliet*.”

- *student from University High School*

“Shakespeare is easier to learn by acting it out rather than reading it.”

- *student from Houston High School*

“That a lot of the time violence is not a solution but just another problem that sometimes goes too far and cannot be solved.”

- *student from Memphis Business Academy*

“One thing I learned from The Romeo and Juliet Project (the sessions and performance) was that when you read and see the same thing, you can always get a different aspect of the topic. You notice things that you never noticed before until seeing it.”

- *student from University High School*

“I learned that a lot of the events in *Romeo and Juliet* correlated with real life controversial topics. For instance, love at first sight or the idea the teenagers could experience love.”

- *student from Houston High School*

“I learned to make better decisions.”

- *student from City University School*

“I learned how serious it is to just tell the truth and don't hide anything behind your back.”

- *student from University High School*

“I learned how to interpret the emotions of the characters more because of the great acting, as opposed to words in the book. I struggle to comprehend what the characters are feeling when reading, and seeing how they felt on stage helped a bunch.”

- *student from Houston High School*

“I understood more information in the text more due them coming in every other week to help us understand and get an image of what was happening.”

- *student from Memphis Business Academy*

“I learned that there doesn't always have to be feuds over everything, and life is too short to be arguing over something stupid when you can just talk it out.”

*- student from University High School*

“I learned all about the play, the characters, the time period and Shakespeare himself. The play that was put on by TSC really helped me have a better understanding of the whole thing.”

*- student from Houston High School*

“I learned more about Shakespeare as a writer and how to write multiple characters that are still individuals (also how to read Shakespeare's writing in general). I didn't know he wrote quite a lot of funny jokes. The actors' performances really brought the characters to life so it was easier to understand their emotions. Breaking down what was happening in the story also made it easier to understand what was going on.”

*- student from University High School*

“I think that seeing the characters being acted out in real life helped me understand them more, like how seeing Mercutio, Romeo, and Benvolio goof off really showed how young and how prone to making mistakes they were.”

*- student from Houston High School*

“Some of the actors are from Memphis, TN like me.”

*- student from University High School*

“The situation was all a big misunderstanding and could've been fixed without any bloodshed.”

*- student from Memphis Business Academy*

“Violence can't cancel violence without painful cost, but it is better to think before making any choice in life.”

*- student from University High School*