



SCHOOL DISTRICT OF THE CHATHAMS CURRICULUM PROFILE

CONTENT AREA: Theater

COURSES/GRADE LEVEL(S): 6th, 7th, 8th Grade Theater Elective

The middle school child exhibits independent, critical thought and is a curious learner who prefers active over passive learning experiences. Opportunities to combine learning with social experiences can be productive, as social issues tend to dominate their thoughts and activities. They strive to use skills to solve real-life problems. Physically, middle school is a time of marked increase in height, weight, heart size, lung capacity, and muscular strength. Uneven muscle/bone development can result in a lack of coordination and awkwardness. Boys will experience the changing voice.

Intellectually, Middle school students have short-term memories as well as short attention spans. Consequently, students should be presented with limited amounts of new information, allowing them time to retain material. Teachers should also provide opportunities that will help to reinforce prior lessons and concepts. Middle school learners look for relationships between lessons and life, and they desire active involvement in learning. They will also begin to clarify their ideas and discuss thoughts with others. Although students can be argumentative and inquisitive, they do not have the ability to fully comprehend abstract ideas. Therefore, middle school teachers should assign activities that will help students develop their problem solving and critical thinking skills.

Socially, middle school learners generally desire more autonomy. However, students also crave social acceptance and interaction. Students will begin to interact with the opposite sex, but their same-sex relationships will supersede those with the opposite sex. During this time, middle school learners will challenge significant adults and educators by testing their limits. However, it's important for all adult family members and educators to continue expressing their love along with rules and expectations. Despite their behavior, middle school learners yearn for adult role models and guidance.

Emotionally, middle school learners are usually self-conscious, persistently judging themselves by their physical appearance and development. Due to fluctuating moods, middle school students are easy to offend yet can be inconsiderate to others. In addition to this, middle school students often believe that their problems and experiences are unique to who they are. Despite adult interaction, students feel that adults can't possibly understand what teens are experiencing. Overall, middle school students seek to find out who they are as individuals.

The focus of middle school theatre is to provide students with an introduction to theatre including history, acting techniques, and play production. It is the purpose of the curriculum to introduce students to ways in which to use their voices, bodies, and emotions as productive instruments for life as well as the theater and to instill in each student a sense of self-confidence in front of an audience.

I. Course Overview

The study of Theater can significantly contribute to the intellectual, physical, creative, and emotional development of a student. Valuable qualities such as commitment to a long-term goal, self-discipline, responsibility, cooperation and teamwork, as well as self-expression and aesthetic perception (appreciation of theater as an art form) are among the lifetime benefits derived by the student.

The CMS Theater Arts elective program is designed to introduce interested students to the basics of theater and how to use these skill sets in everyday life. Creativity is a driving force in the 21st-century global economy, with the fastest growing jobs and emerging industries relying on the ability of workers to think unconventionally and use their imaginations. Experience with, and knowledge of, the arts is an essential component of the K-12 curriculum in the 21st century. As the state of New Jersey works to transform public education to meet the needs of a changing world and the 21st century workforce, capitalizing on the unique ability of the arts to unleash creativity and innovation in our students is critical for success, as the arts enable personal, intellectual, social, economic, and human growth by fostering creativity and providing opportunities for expression beyond the limits of language.

II. Units of Study

- 1.1 Theater: The Creative Process:** All students will demonstrate an understanding of the elements and principles that govern the creation of works of art in Theater. **1.1.5.C.1, 1.1.5.C.2**
- 1.2 Theater: History of the Arts and Culture:** All students will understand the role, development, and influence of the arts throughout history and across cultures. **1.2.5.C.1, 1.2.5.C.2, 1.2.5.C.3**
- 1.3 Theater: Performance:** All students will synthesize those skills, media, methods, and technologies appropriate to creating, performing, and/or presenting works of art in Theater. **1.3.5.C.1, 1.3.5.C.2, 1.3.5.C.3, 1.3.5.C.4**
- 1.4 Theater: Aesthetic Responses & Critique Methodologies (A, B):** All students will demonstrate and apply an understanding of arts philosophies, judgment, and analysis to Theatrical works. **1.4.5.C.1, 1.4.5.C.2, 1.4.5.C.3, 1.4.5.C.4, 1.4.5.C.5**
- 9.1 21st Century Life Skills; Critical Thinking and Problem Solving (A), Creativity and Innovation (B), Collaboration, Teamwork and Leadership (C), Cross-Cultural Understanding and Interpersonal Communications (D), Communication and Media Fluency (E), Accountability, Productivity, and Ethics (F):** All students will demonstrate creative, critical thinking, collaboration and problem solving skills to function successfully as global citizens and workers in diverse ethnic and organizational cultures. **9.1.4.A.1, 9.1.4.A.2, 9.1.4.A.3, 9.1.4.A.5, 9.1.4.B.1, 9.1.4.C.1, 9.1.4.D.1, 9.1.4.D.2, 9.1.4.D.3, 9.1.4.E.4, 9.1.4.F.2, 9.1.4.F.3**
- 9.3 21st Career Awareness, Exploration & Preparation (A):** All students will apply knowledge about and engage in the process of career awareness, exploration and preparation in order to navigate the globally competitive work environment of the information age. **9.3.4.A.3, 9.3.4.A.4, 9.3.4.A.5, 9.3.4.A.6**

III. Learning Objectives

Theater: 1.1 The Creative Process

21st Century Life Skills; Critical Thinking and Problem Solving

- Distinct pieces of dramatic literature and theatrical trends reflect cultural traditions and periods in history.
- Actors exercise their voices and bodies through a wide variety of techniques to expand the range and the clarity of the characters they develop.
- Emotion and meaning are often communicated through modulations of vocal rate, pitch, and volume.
- The ability to recognize a problem and apply critical thinking and problem-solving skills to solve the problem is a lifelong skill that develops over time.

Theater: 1.2 History of the Arts and Culture

21st Century Life Skills: Cross-Cultural Understanding and Interpersonal Communications Communication and Media Fluency

- Technological changes have and will continue to substantially influence the development and nature of the arts.
- Tracing the histories of dance, music, theatre, and visual art in world cultures provides insight into the lives of people and their values.
- The arts reflect cultural mores and personal aesthetics throughout the ages.
- Communication with people from different cultural backgrounds is enhanced through the understanding of different cultural perspectives.

Theater: 1.3 Performance

21st Century Life Skills: Creativity and Innovation, Collaboration, Teamwork and Leadership, Accountability, Productivity, and Ethics

- Effective scripted and improvisational performances require informed, supported, and sustained choices by actors, directors, and designers. Techniques for communicating a character's intent vary in live performances and recorded venues.
- Dramatic context and active listening skills inform development of believable, multidimensional characters in scripted and improvised performances. Mastery of physical and vocal skills enables actors to create dramatic action that generates a sense of truth and credibility.
- Collaboration and teamwork enable individuals or groups to achieve common goals with greater efficiency.
- Leadership abilities develop over time through participation in groups and/or teams that are engaged in challenging activities.
- The nature of the 21st-century workplace has shifted, demanding greater individual accountability, productivity, and collaboration.

Theater: 1.4A,B Aesthetic Responses & Critique Methodologies

21st Century Life Skills; Career Awareness, Exploration & Preparation

- Contextual clues to artistic intent are embedded in artworks. Analysis of [archetypal](#) or [consummate works of art](#) requires knowledge and understanding of culturally specific art within historical contexts.
- Art may be used for [utilitarian and non-utilitarian](#) purposes.
- Performance technique in dance, music, theatre, and visual art varies according to [historical era](#) and [genre](#).
- Abstract ideas may be expressed in works of dance, music, theatre, and visual art using a [genre's](#) stylistic traits.
- Symbolism and metaphor are characteristics of art and art-making.
- Awareness of basic elements of style and design in dance, music, theatre, and visual art inform the creation of criteria for judging originality.
- Artwork may be both [utilitarian and non-utilitarian](#). Relative merits of works of art can be assessed through analysis of form, function, craftsmanship, and originality.
- Assessing a work of art without critiquing the artist requires objectivity and an understanding of the work's content and form.
- Visual fluency is the ability to differentiate formal and informal structures and objectively apply observable criteria to the assessment of artworks, without consideration of the artist.
- Universal elements of art and principles of design apply equally to artwork across cultures and [historical eras](#).
- Career exploration includes investigation of the contemporary workplace and an understanding of the relationships among personal abilities, education, and knowledge/skills needed to pursue 21st-century occupations and careers

Levels of proficiency can be assessed through analyses of how performers apply the elements of Theater.

IV. Essential Questions (The open-ended, provocative questions that help frame inquiry)

Theater: The Creative Process

21st Century Life Skills; Critical Thinking and Problem Solving

- What are the elements of theatre?
- What is the vocabulary of theatre?
- How are emotions communicated in creative drama and storytelling?
- How is the environment for a production determined?
- What are the structural elements of a well-made play?
- How are characters developed?
- What are the elements of technical theatre and how do they enhance a production?
- How is *sensory recall* used by an actor?
- How can a problem be identified and solved through individual and collaborative efforts?

Theater: History of the Arts and Culture

21st Century Life Skills: Cross-Cultural Understanding and Interpersonal Communications Communication and Media Fluency

- How did modern theatre evolve throughout history?
- How does society influence the function and purpose of the arts?
- How do art and culture reflect and affect each other?
- What defines art genres (historically and culturally)?
- How can an individual artist influence culture?
- What is the impact of significant contributions from individual musical artists from diverse cultures throughout history?
- How can an understanding of theatre (and the arts in general) enhance cultural understanding?

Theater: Performance

21st Century Life Skills: Creativity and Innovation

Collaboration, Teamwork and Leadership Accountability, Productivity, and Ethics

- How are narrative structures used to communicate dramatic themes?
- What are the actor's tools for effective storytelling?
- Why is a knowledge of technical theatre and theatrical elements important to an actor?
- What is improvisation? How is improvisation different than a scripted performance?
- How can individuals make contributions to the goals of a group of performers in rehearsal and performance?
- What is rehearsal etiquette?

Theater: Aesthetic Responses & Critique Methodologies

21ST Century Life Skills; Career Awareness, Exploration & Preparation

- How is Theatre experienced?
- What are some of the skills needed in order to appreciate Theatrical performance?
- What are the distinct characteristics of Theatrical performance?
- What is the purpose of Theatrical performance?
- What is Formalism?
- What are some of the elements of determining the aesthetic merits of a theatrical work?

V. Key Performance and Benchmark Tasks

Theater: The Creative Process

21st Century Life Skills; Critical Thinking and Problem Solving

- Tour the CMS theatre, using appropriate vocabulary to describe technical elements.
- Introduce students to elements of technical theater; concentrate on separate elements and “train” students in the use and maintenance of the theater.
- Introduce students to the various roles of a production team
- Script writing based on imagination, history, and literature.

Theater: History of the Arts and Culture

21st Century Life Skills: Cross-Cultural Understanding and Interpersonal Communications Communication and Media Fluency

- Read and perform age and content-appropriate pieces of theater repertoire representing ancient, Greek, Shakespeare, Elizabethan, comedy, tragedy, American, and Musical Theater.

Theater: Performance

21st Century Life Skills: Creativity and Innovation

Collaboration, Teamwork and Leadership Accountability, Productivity, and Ethics

- Read and perform age and content-appropriate pieces of theater repertoire
- Apply the elements of theatrical production to two class productions; a one-act play and a piece of musical theatre.
- Students will assume character and technical roles in the production process.
- Mime, Improvisation, Monologue, Storytelling, Reader’s theater, Radio drama, Short scenes/plays
- Sensory recall, concentration, diction, breath control, body alignment, body control/body language

Theater: Aesthetic Responses & Critique Methodologies

21st Century Life Skills; Career Awareness, Exploration & Preparation

- Written reflective assignments (self-reflective and ensemble-reflective)
- Traditional teacher-led Q&A
- Introspective written/oral response demonstrating growth over time
- Application of skills assessed leading to ensemble improvement
- Guided critique of excerpts of performances.
- Guided critique of student performances.
- Critique (written and verbal) review.
- Theater etiquette (performer and audience member)
- Self-evaluation
- Appraisal
- Criticism and analysis of theatrical productions and other dramatic media (film, television)

VI. Instructional Materials

Theater: The Creative Process

21st Century Life Skills; Critical Thinking and Problem Solving

Theater: History of the Arts and Culture

**21st Century Life Skills: Cross-Cultural Understanding and Interpersonal Communications
Communication and Media Fluency**

Theater: Performance

**21st Century Life Skills: Creativity and Innovation, Collaboration, Teamwork and Leadership,
Accountability, Productivity, and Ethics**

- Plays selected from age-appropriate and content-appropriate resources such as *Pioneer Drama Service* and *Theatrefolk*.

Theater: Aesthetic Responses & Critique Methodologies

21ST Century Life Skills; Career Awareness, Exploration & Preparation

- Guide questions designed to lead written/oral reflective opportunities
- Online resources (historical/stylistic applications, performance examples)
- Teacher-designed reflective activities