



SCHOOL DISTRICT OF THE CHATHAMS CURRICULUM PROFILE

CONTENT AREA: Theater

COURSES/GRADE LEVEL(S): 4th and 5th Grade Theater Elective

Children in fourth and fifth grade (upper elementary) are energetic, active, curious, and enjoy humor, adventure, kinesthetic experiences, and imaginative activities. Fine motor skills are more developed and students can concentrate on a single activity for longer periods of time than they were as K-3 (lower elementary) students. Students are able to evaluate the performance of themselves and others. Many may express interest in performing in small groups or alone, as they are becoming increasingly confident in their abilities. Students are able to participate in problem-solving experiences and to think creatively and critically.

In addition, children in fourth and fifth grade often display several learning attributes:

- *Their reading ability varies considerably*
- *An emphasis on learning the facts; memorizing is easier now than later*
- *Students love to gather and classify facts and dig into a subject; have a growing sense of time and space, cause and effect; can deal with timelines and maps; are often interested in historical stories or heroes of the past*
- *Students are still “concrete thinkers” and are unable to reason with these facts in an adult way—to do logical analysis, to “think about thinking;” it’s easier for them to talk about things than about ideas*
- *Students tend to have thinking that is anchored in personal experience (“You said it was impossible; well, I know someone who did it”); their thinking also colored by emotion and by a sense of fair play*
- *Students are identifying their preferences for certain learning styles; some children in this age group have a fairly strong sense of what they’re good at and may be somewhat self-conscious when asked to do things they don’t do well*
- *Students still love to learn by doing—participating in games, dramas, role plays, group projects, art projects, service projects, etc.*
- *Students often have a strong interest in nature, the environment, animals*

The focus of elementary theatre is creative drama, a form of theatre in which teachers guide learners through processes of imagination, enactment, and reflection. A form of play-acting based on improvised dramatization, creative drama uses stories drawn from literature, history, and current events to inspire children’s original thought. The success of creative drama depends on the choice of relevant, appropriate resource materials. The skills and knowledge of creative drama are carefully structured throughout the elementary curriculum. Young children build perceptual skills by participating in experiences in which they:

- Imitate and re-create the world around them
- Develop body awareness and sensory and emotional perception
- Explore the environment
- Play with sound

The study of Theater can significantly contribute to the intellectual, physical, creative, and emotional development of a child. 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.

In the Fourth and Fifth Grade Theater elective classes, students will study, perform, and experience grade-level appropriate Theatrical repertoire and activities that will increase their proficiency in a positive and supportive environment emphasizing teamwork and collaborative effort. The Lafayette School Elective Theater program allows students to fulfill their creative interests while engaging the study of history, world cultures, languages, literature, and the physiology of acting.

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; the arts enable personal, intellectual, social, economic, and human growth by fostering creativity and providing opportunities for expression beyond the limits of language.

The curricular Theater program is open to all students interested in participating; no audition is required. There are enrollment limitations due to staffing/scheduling limitations. Each class meets once every six-day cycle; academic classes are not missed to participate.

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.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

1.1 Theater: The Creative Process

9.1 21st Century Life Skills; Critical Thinking and Problem Solving

- The elements of theater are recognizable in theatrical performance.
- Theater artists use precise vocabulary when staging a play.
- Creative drama and storytelling use voice, movement, and facial expression to communicate emotions. Creating characters is an act of intention in which actors play themselves in an imaginary set of circumstances.
- The [technical theatrical elements](#) and theatre architecture are inherent in theatrical design and production.
- The well-made play uses a specific, identifiable narrative structure (e.g., inciting incident, climax, dénouement, etc.).
- The actor's physicality and vocal techniques have a direct relationship to character development.
- Time, place, mood, and theme are enhanced through use of the technical theatrical elements.
- [Sensory recall](#) is a technique actors commonly employ to heighten the believability of a character.
- 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.

1.2 Theater: History of the Arts and Culture

9.1 21st Century Life Skills: Cross-Cultural Understanding and Interpersonal Communications

Communication and Media Fluency

- Dance, music, theatre, and visual artwork from diverse cultures and [historical eras](#) have distinct characteristics and common themes that are revealed by contextual clues within the works of art.
- The function and purpose of art-making across cultures is a reflection of societal values and beliefs.
- Art and culture reflect and affect each other.
- Characteristic approaches to content, form, style, and design define art genres.
- Sometimes the contributions of an individual artist can influence a generation of artists and signal the beginning of a new [art genre](#).
- Communication with people from different cultural backgrounds is enhanced through the understanding of different cultural perspectives.
- Effective communication skills convey intended meaning to others and assist in preventing misunderstandings.
- There are ethical and unethical uses of communication and media.

1.3 Theater: Performance

9.1 21st Century Life Skills: Creativity and Innovation, Collaboration, Teamwork and Leadership, Accountability, Productivity, and Ethics

- Plays may use narrative structures to communicate themes.
- Actors use voice and movement as tools for storytelling.
- Voice and movement have broad ranges of expressive potential
- A play's effectiveness is enhanced by the theatre artists' knowledge of [technical theatrical elements](#) and understanding of the [elements of theatre](#).
- Performers use active listening skills in scripted and improvised performances to create believable, multidimensional characters. Actors create a sense of truth and believability by applying performance techniques that are appropriate to the circumstances of a scripted or improvised performance.
- Collaboration and teamwork enable individuals or groups to achieve common goals with greater efficiency.
- Brainstorming activities enhance creative and innovative thinking in individual and group goal setting and problem solving.

1.4 Theater: Aesthetic Responses (A) & Critique Methodologies (B)

9.3 21st Century Life Skills; Career Awareness, Exploration & Preparation

- Each arts discipline offers distinct opportunities to observe, experience, interpret, appreciate, and respond to works of art and beauty in the everyday world.
- Active listening with focus, intent, and understanding is an important component of full appreciation of the performing arts and the foundation for language development.
- Each arts discipline (dance, music, theatre, and visual art) has distinct characteristics, as do the artists who create them.
- Works of art may be organized according to their functions and artistic purposes ([genres](#), [mediums](#), messages, themes)
- [Formalism](#) in dance, music, theatre, and visual art varies according to personal, cultural, and historical contexts.
- Criteria for determining the aesthetic merits of artwork vary according to context. Understanding the relationship between compositional design and [genre](#) provides the foundation for making value judgments about the arts
- Decoding simple contextual clues requires evaluation mechanisms, such as rubrics, to sort fact from opinion.

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)

1.1 Theater: The Creative Process

9.1 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?

1.2 Theater: History of the Arts and Culture

9.1 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?

1.3 Theater: Performance

9.1 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 (musical, non-musical) to the goals of a group of performers in rehearsal and performance?

1.4 Theater: Aesthetic Responses & Critique Methodologies

9.3 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

1.1 Theater: The Creative Process

9.1 21st Century Life Skills; Critical Thinking and Problem Solving

- Tour the CHS auditorium to make the elements and vocabulary of the stage come to life.
- At the end of the course, lead a tour of the CHS auditorium to explain the elements as a character actor.
- View a CHS rehearsal in progress, and respond to guided questions in class discussion.
- Stage a class play with students taking on an acting *and* technical role; perform the class play for peer groups.
- Apply concepts from the 4-5 academic curriculum in selecting activities and repertoire to be read/created/performed.

1.2 Theater: History of the Arts and Culture

9.1 21st Century Life Skills: Cross-Cultural Understanding and Interpersonal Communications Communication and Media Fluency

- Research and re-create different historical periods of theatre (ancient, Greek, comedy, tragedy, Elizabethan, Shakespeare, American, Music Theater).
- Explore historical figures and characters in literature present in the 4-5 curricula.

1.3 Theater: Performance

9.1 21st Century Life Skills: Creativity and Innovation

Collaboration, Teamwork and Leadership Accountability, Productivity, and Ethics

- Participation in role-play activities; children must listen, process the intent of the first speaker, respond with coherent thoughts, and maintain the pre-determined story line. Other students in the class may use the same scenario and present the creative drama in a totally different way with very different dialogue. Then students may compare and contrast the different presentations.
- Plot, setting, and character are brought together as learners determine how to portray a specific character by choosing characteristic actions and creating dialogue. Using simple props, costumes, and visual elements, students consistently demonstrate safe and appropriate practices that have been taught and modeled.
- Perform approved excerpts from different historical periods of theatre (ancient, Greek, comedy, tragedy, Elizabethan, Shakespeare, American)
- Create a commercial (in a small group, work collaboratively to script, cast, and produce a new commercial for an existing product which can be purchased in a bookstore).

1.4 Theater: Aesthetic Responses & Critique Methodologies

9.3 21st Century Life Skills; Career Awareness, Exploration & Preparation

- Using a set of guidelines, critique the merits of a theatrical work verbally and in a written format.
- Participate in class discussion of the merits of theatrical works.
- Compare and contrast the relative merits of theatrical works.
- Review the content of a theatrical review.

VI. Instructional Materials

1.1 Theater: The Creative Process

9.1 21st Century Life Skills; Critical Thinking and Problem Solving

1.2 Theater: History of the Arts and Culture

9.1 21st Century Life Skills: Cross-Cultural Understanding and Interpersonal Communications Communication and Media Fluency

1.3 Theater: Performance

9.1 21st Century Life Skills: Creativity and Innovation Collaboration, Teamwork and Leadership Accountability, Productivity, and Ethics

1.4 Theater: Aesthetic Responses & Critique Methodologies

9.3 21st Century Life Skills; Career Awareness, Exploration & Preparation

- Plays, play writing activities, and theater games selected from age-appropriate and content-appropriate resources such as *Pioneer Drama Service* and *Theatrefolk*.
- District-approved age and content-appropriate scripts, monologues, audio/video recordings.
- Curriculum documents from Lafayette ELA and Social Studies courses
- Writing implements, paper, content to critique, teacher-created critique questions.