

Reading Public Schools

Instilling a joy of learning and inspiring the innovative leaders of tomorrow



Fine and Performing Arts Curriculum Guide

Course: Musical Theatre

Course Description

Musical Theater will focus on the history of musical theater and the development of associated performance skills through the observation of professional productions, personal preparation and background research, and in-class performances. Students will explore the development of musical theatre over the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, from its roots in vaudeville, musical revues, and the musical comedies of the 1920s and 1930s, to the emergence of the modern musical. Students will listen to and watch performances and shows from each period, including *Oklahoma*, *Sweeney Todd*, and *Billy Elliot*. Students will also study the performance style of each period, using acting, singing, and movement skills and techniques to comfortably perform solos, duets, and small group scenes in class.

Standards for Artistic Practice

Based on the 2014 National Core Arts Standards, these practices describe the processes and skills students learn as practitioners throughout the elementary, middle, and high school years in order to achieve artistic literacy.

- ⇒ *Creating art with artistic intent.*
- ⇒ *Presenting, performing, or producing artistic works to evoke, express, or communicate.*
- ⇒ *Responding to art through intellect and emotion.*
- ⇒ *Connecting the arts to the self, society, history, culture, and other disciplines and bodies of knowledge.*

Source: MA Arts Curriculum Framework 2019, page 20

Content Standards for a Foundations Theatre Course

Creating:

1. Create theatrical ideas (e.g. plot, setting, character) that reflect characteristics of different artistic movements.
2. Create an outline for an original scene or short play, including details such as costumes or scenery.
3. Refine and revise character dialogue, stage directions, and sensory details of imagined worlds.

Presenting:

4. Identify historical sources that explain drama/theatre terminology and conventions.
5. Identify theatrical staging conventions in a scripted theatrical work.
6. Describe how decisions about a performance are connected to what the student wants to express, evoke, or communicate.

Responding:

7. Analyze the style of a playwright and how it manifests in a given theatrical work.
8. Identify theatrical decisions from a work that connect it to a specific genre or style.
9. Compare and contrast different rubrics or criteria for evaluating theatrical presentations.

Connecting:

10. Describe what influenced changes in one's own dramatic style and preferences in theatre.
11. Identify the connections between historical and cultural contexts and defining stylistic elements of theatrical movements (e.g. how the existential movement and absurdist theatre are connected).

Source: MA Arts Curriculum Framework 2019, page 55

Units	Essential Questions	Key Activities May Include:
Introduction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How can we create trust in our classroom community? • What behaviors and expectations will be necessary to reach our goals in this class? • What do we need to do as a class and personally to prepare ourselves to participate or perform? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introductory games and activities • Warm-ups for voice, body, and mind • Building classroom community • Classroom feedback and self-assessment
1. “An Era Exploding”/ The Libretto	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How did historical art forms shape what we know of as the “musical” today? • What is the importance of the “book” or libretto? • What are the personal areas of growth in performance we wish to further develop? • How were the practices of early Broadway like and un-like Broadway today? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduction to vaudeville, opera, operetta, and the musical revue • Elements of the musical: libretto, playwright • Observational material including: PBS’ <i>Broadway</i> documentary, soundtracks, librettos, and scores • Acting and vocal exercises and performances • Inquiry based classroom discussion • Classroom feedback and self-assessment
2. “I Want to Be Happy”/ The Score	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What role did race play in early Broadway’s development? • How did innovations in music during the early twentieth century effect the theater? • What is the role of the composer in a musical? • What is the purpose of a jukebox musical? • How do you best determine if a song is “right” for your voice? • What performance skills were respected in the past that might not be as valued today? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduction to the jazz age, Tin Pan Alley, and Harlem • Elements of the musical: score, composers, orchestrators • Observational material including: PBS’ <i>Broadway</i> documentary, soundtracks, librettos, and scores (including <i>Porgy and Bess</i> and <i>Showboat</i>) • Acting and vocal exercises and performances • Inquiry based classroom discussion • Classroom feedback and self-assessment
3. “Gotta Dance”/ The Choreography	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What impact did the world events of the 1930s and 1940s have on theater? • What broadened the popularity and audience for musical theatre during this time? • How does choreography contribute to storytelling in a musical? • How can performers use their bodies to portray emotions or important information to the audience? • Why did performers like Ethel Merman leave such an impact on the theatrical community? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduction to the 1930s/Depression era • Elements of the musical: dance, movement, choreographers • Observational material including: PBS’ <i>Broadway</i> documentary, soundtracks, librettos, and scores (including <i>Anything Goes</i>) • Acting and vocal exercises and performances • Inquiry based classroom discussion • Classroom feedback and self-assessment

Units	Essential Questions	Key Activities May Include...
<p>4.) "Oh, What a Beautiful Morning"/ The Song</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How was <i>Oklahoma</i> different than the shows that came before it? • Why are comedic skills and timing essential for musical theatre performers? • How does a song melody portray mood and emotion? • What impact can song have on plot? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduction to musical theatre of the 1940s • Elements of the musical: song types • Observational material including: PBS' <i>Broadway</i> documentary, soundtracks, librettos, and scores (including <i>Oklahoma</i>) • Acting and vocal exercises and performances • Inquiry based classroom discussion • Classroom feedback and self-assessment
<p>5.) "Let the Sunshine In"/ The Revival</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How were the culture clashes and generation gaps of the 1950s and 1960s reflected on the stage? • What defines a "character" actor? • When is it ok to not "sound pretty" in vocal performance? What are the other choices a singer can make? • Why were shows like <i>West Side Story</i> and <i>Hair</i> so controversial at the time of their release? • Does theater have a role beyond entertainment? • What is the purpose of a revival production? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduction to musical theatre of the 1950s and 1960s • Elements of the musical: revival • Observational material including: PBS' <i>Broadway</i> documentary, soundtracks, librettos, and scores (including <i>Hair</i> and <i>West Side Story</i>) • Acting and vocal exercises and performances • Inquiry based classroom discussion • Classroom feedback and self-assessment • Revival show project
<p>6.) "In Comes Company"/ The Lyrics</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Why did composer and lyricist Stephen Sondheim leave such an indelible mark on the theater world? • Why is it vital to understand the context and subtext of lyrics as a performer? • If music can portray mood, what is the function of lyrics? • What techniques can be used to perform complex lyrics or challenging rhythms and tempos in song? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduction to musical theatre of the 1970s, including Stephen Sondheim • Elements of the musical: lyrics • Observational material including: PBS' <i>Broadway</i> documentary, soundtracks, librettos, and scores (including <i>Company</i> and <i>Sweeney Todd</i>) • Acting and vocal exercises and performances • Inquiry based classroom discussion • Classroom feedback and self-assessment • Playlist project
<p>7.) "Do You Hear the People Sing?"/ The Adaptation</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is there a "golden age" of Broadway? • How does the theatre world keep reinventing itself for new audiences? • What steps are required to adapt pre-existing works into musicals? • How did Lin-Manuel Miranda "rewrite the game" with <i>Hamilton</i>? • How have we personally grown as performers over the course of this class? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduction to musical theatre of the 1980s, the West End, rock operas of the 1990s, and modern Broadway • Elements of the musical: adaptation • Observational material including: PBS' <i>Broadway</i> documentary, soundtracks, librettos, and scores (including <i>Rent</i>, <i>Billy Elliot</i>, <i>Newsies</i>, <i>Shrek</i>, and <i>Hamilton</i>) • Acting and vocal exercises and performances • Inquiry based classroom discussion • Classroom feedback and self-assessment • Adaptation project

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Fine and Performing Arts Curriculum Guide Overview

Curriculum Guide

Curriculum guides are public documents aligned with the Massachusetts Department of Education Curriculum Frameworks. They outline and highlight the set of standards that students will learn within certain disciplines at each grade level. Curriculum guides are intended for teachers, parents, and the wide school community to provide an overview of the course of study for the year.

Curriculum Map

Curriculum maps are internal documents utilized as planning tools for teachers and administrators. Curriculum maps keep a focus on the end-of-year standards and chart a course for teaching and learning over the year. They are typically organized by month and/or marking period and may include: genres/topics or units of study, methods of assessment, and major content resources. Maps are fluid documents that are revised and revisited regularly to ensure students' needs are being met.

Content Standards

The standards used as the foundation of our curriculum come directly from the Massachusetts Arts Curriculum Framework. State standards may be viewed here: <http://www.doe.mass.edu/frameworks/>

Standards for Artistic Practice

The standards for artistic practice describe the processes and skills students learn as practitioners throughout the elementary, middle, and high school years in order to achieve artistic literacy. Based on the processes presented in the 2014 *National Core Arts Standards*, these practices are grouped into four clusters that focus on creating, presenting/performing, responding, and connecting across the five arts disciplines (dance, media arts, music, theater, and visual arts)."
- *MA Arts Curriculum Framework 2019*, p.20

Essential Questions

Essential questions are questions that are not answerable with an easy answer or a simple instruction. The purpose of essential questions is to provide opportunities for inquiry into learning and act as an umbrella to anchor the unit/lesson.

Structures for Learning

Structures for learning are examples of the instructional contexts and activities that students and teachers *might* be engaged in during arts instruction. Those listed represent a sampling and the list is in no way exhaustive. The list is not intended to mandate or require certain types of instruction at any given time, merely to suggest best practices.

