

**EXPLORING MUSICAL THEATRE  
ENRICHMENT GRADE 6, 7, 8**

THE EWING PUBLIC SCHOOLS  
2099 Pennington Road  
Ewing, NJ 08618

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In accordance with The Ewing Public Schools' Policy 2230, Course Guides, this curriculum has been reviewed and found to be in compliance with all policies and all affirmative action criteria.

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## Preface

This curriculum guide is intended to provide vertical and horizontal frameworks for the music program of the Ewing Township Public Schools. It is designed to identify the essential components needed by teachers when they prepare instruction in musical theatre, in a way that will best suit the needs of their students. The teachers' knowledge of the students' level of development, learning styles, and general readiness to learn should be used as guiding factors in selecting the most appropriate ways to reach the goals and objectives as outlined in this guide.

There is no textbook for *Exploring Musical Theatre*. Footage and information pertaining to the musicals themselves are the primary source material. Teachers should feel free to integrate other resources where appropriate, as long as they are consistent with the goals and philosophies outlined. Integration of knowledge and skills developed in *Exploring Musical Theatre* into other content areas is encouraged to stimulate real-life experiences and meaning.

## **Course Description and Rationale**

*Exploring Musical Theatre* is designed to help students better understand the place of the American Musical and its place within the world of the performing arts. Students will learn where the idea of the modern musical was established, and what other performance art forms lent their influence to it. Additionally, students will learn about the professional atmosphere of musical theatre, including careers in musical theatre as well as the elements and materials necessary in the production of a musical.

Students will closely analyze classic pieces of musical theatre to investigate how words, music, dance, and physical elements are synthesized into a unique piece of art. Students are expected to share their thoughts and findings through class discussion, journals, activities, as well as individualized presentations.

Students will gain the ability to identify arts elements within a musical to articulate informed emotional responses to the work, cultural and historical reflection, and communicate effectively through critical evaluation. Students will arrive at informed judgements of the relative artistic and aesthetic merits of the works examined through observation, description, analysis, and interpretation.

Through the creation and performance of their own musical, they will enhance their perceptual, physical, and technical skills to gain a deeper understanding of the imaginative and creative processes of musical theatre as they relate to themselves and others.

The combination of the skills mentioned above will enable students to understand and analyze the role, development, and continuing influence of musical theatre in relation to a world of culture, history, and society.

### **Pacing**

This enrichment will be offered to 6th, 7th, and 8th graders and is designed as a semester- long course that will be taught for 42 minutes every other day. Each unit is laid out over the course of a certain number of days, with days integrated in between to work on our feet with acting and improvisational games and exercises.

## Unit 1: Elements of Musical Theatre (8 days)

### Why is this unit important?

This introductory unit will provide students with a working vocabulary and understanding of Musical theatre and all its elements. Students will use the skills and knowledge gained in this unit throughout the rest of the course to analyze and describe various pieces of theatre, as well as write and perform in their own musical.

### Enduring Understandings

- Key elements of a musical include the *libretto* and the *score*. The *libretto* is divided into acts and scenes.
- Specific roles are designated for individual responsibilities involving the creative process of making a musical, such as the *director, composer, choreographer, lyricist*.
- Specific roles are designated for individual responsibilities involving the process of producing a musical, such as the *stage manager, company manager, producer*.
- Visual components such as costumes, sets, props, and lighting/sound are integral parts of the creative production of a musical.

### Essential Questions

- What is a book/score?
- Who is involved in the making of a musical?
- What is a show tune and how does it function in a musical?

### Acquired Knowledge

- The book and score are both narrative structures of the show, which can be original ideas or adapted from other sources (novels, folk tales, opera, etc.)
- Show tunes can be characterized and labeled according to who sings it and what their intention is (the Production Number, the I Want song, the 11 o'clock number, etc.).
- The composer, lyricist, librettist, director, and choreographer are all key members of the creative team of a musical.
- The producer, stage manager, sound designer, costume designer, and set designer are all key members of the production team.

## **Acquired Skills**

- Identifying different types of show tunes and their function within the storyline/character development
- Identifying the work of key members of the creative team, and production team.
- Defining appropriate source material for a musical.

## **Assessments**

### Formative Assessment

- Student self-assessment/critique/analysis
- Oral responses
- Teacher Observation
- Class discussion
- Active participation acting/improvisational exercises

### Summative Assessment

- Worksheets
- Unit vocabulary quiz
- Rough draft of original musical assignment

### Benchmark Assessment

- Oral/virtual quizzes
- Presentation of ideas for final assignment
- Analysis of a musical, including identifying overarching structure, types
- Of songs, and their placement within a show.

### Alternative Assessment

- Oral/virtual quizzes
- Group work/individual work

## **Interdisciplinary Connections**

- Students contrast and compare the role of writer/novelist and librettist: language arts
- Students examine the various roles of those involved in the production of a musical: business/financial literacy
- Students evaluate the role of a show tune within a musical: Music, Language Arts
- Students examine the importance of visual technology within theatre: art

## Technological Integrations

- YouTube archives
- International Broadway Database
- Playbill.com

## Suggested Learning Experiences and Instructional Activities

- Based on learned knowledge of the core elements of musical theatre, brainstorm an idea for a new musical, based on a concept/story that has not yet been made into a musical adaption. Select members of the group to adopt key roles within the production process.

### Example:

Title: Tik Tok, the musical

Plot Summary: a high school group of friends become Tik Tok famous overnight with an original song. A record label offers a contract to only one of the friends. She must now decide between her best friends and a chance at stardom.

Musical inspirations: Ed Sheeran, Sara Bareilles

Visual inspirations: Tik Tok layout and logo

All-star cast: Dove Cameron, Bella Thorne, and Miranda Cosgrove

## 2020 NJSL

1.4.5.TheatreCR.1.a	1.3A.5.GeneralMusic.Re.7.a
1.4.5.TheatreCR.1.b	1.3A.5.GeneralMusic.Re.8.a
1.4.5.TheatreCR.1.c	1.3A.8.GeneralMusic.Re.7.a
1.4.5.TheatreCR.2.a	1.3A.8.GeneralMusic.Cn.11.a
1.4.5.TheatreCR.2.b	1.4.5.TheatreRE.2.b
1.4.5.TheatreRE.8.c	1.4.8.TheatreCR.2.b
1.4.8.TheatreRE.8.a	

## Instructional Resources

### Core

- Google Slides presentations: *What Makes a Musical a Musical? Who's Who in Musical Theatre, Plots and Storylines, Storytelling Through Song, Technical Theatre* -with video/audio clips, as well as scripts scores from selected musicals.

### Supplemental

- Worksheets, Unit 1 quiz, virtual games/quizzes

## **Unit 2: History of Musical Theater (10 days)**

### **Why is this unit important?**

This unit is designed to help students understand the origins and inspirations of musical theatre, from Greek theatre, to opera, to vaudeville. Over the course of the unit, students will work their way through an historical timeline of the development of musical theatre, and how it has evolved over the past 100+ years. Additionally, students will establish an understanding of the societal implications that affected its development, as well as iconic composers and performances from each era.

### **Enduring Understandings**

- Musical Theatre is an American art form that has been inspired by older performance art forms such as Greek tragedy, opera, Shakespearean works, and the vaudeville/cabaret performances of the turn of the last century.
- Societal and political shifts over the course of history have shaped the development and evolution of the musical.
- Each era of musical theatre contains its own musical trends, many that were established, in part, by groundbreaking composers.

### **Essential Questions**

- What historical performance art forms did the modern musical evolve from? Which traits/components have remained?
- How does the socio-political environment of the world around affect the influences of musical theatre?
- How has musical theatre changed over time?
- How have trends in music been exhibited in musical theatre? What specific people were involved in these trends/changes?

### **Acquired Knowledge**

- The timeline of musical theatre can be broken down into specific eras, in which musical and societal trends are represented.
- Each era of musical theatre contains iconic shows and composers who have changed the styles and trends of musical theatre.
- The historical events that shaped the musical, such as WW2.



## **Acquired Skills**

- Conducting in-depth research via internet resources
- Identifying the key facts surrounding a musical (who wrote it, what it was about, why it was important, etc.)
- Connecting history to the arts
- Critical analysis of theatrical performances

## **Assessments**

Formative:

- In-class discussions, critical analysis of performances
- Oral responses to video/audio footage
- Teacher observation

Summative:

- Musical Theatre History journal compilation, using template and analysis skills as learned in class.

Benchmark:

- Virtual quizzes pertaining to material and information from specific eras of theatre
- Teacher observation of use of research materials
- Teacher observation of development of critical analysis of theatrical pieces.

Alternative:

- In-group versus independent research
- Alternative resources such as cast recordings or script/scores.

## **Interdisciplinary connections**

- Students make connections between historical and societal shifts and their impact on the arts: Social Studies/History
- Students identify artistic trends in the Visual Arts: Art
- Students identify artistic trends in composition: Music

## Technological integrations

- YouTube.com
- International Broadway Database
- Wikipedia
- Playbill.com
- Original scripts and scores
- Cast albums, both original and revivals
- Footage of live performances and movies

## Suggested Learning Experiences and Instructional Activities

Students will keep a journal over the course of this unit, in which they will record pertinent information, as well as personal thoughts on musicals from certain eras of musical theatre history. They are provided with an overview of each era of musical theatre, as well as multiple resources and instruction on how to conduct their own personal research. Each era contains a Composer Spotlight that highlights the composer(s) responsible for the most iconic musicals of that era.

### Example:

Era: The Golden Age of Broadway, part 1 - 1935-1955

Musical: *Oklahoma!*

Composer/lyricist: Richard Rogers and Oscar Hammerstein II

Based on: *Green Grow The Lilacs*, play in 1931

Date/location opened: 1943, St. James Theatre, NYC

Famous songs: *Oh, What a Beautiful Mornin'*, *People Will Say We're In Love*

Viewing/listening resources: Original cast album, YouTube London revival

Musical style: still classical sounding, with vocals that reflect the classical singing technique of Gilbert & Sullivan pieces.

Dance: Ballet, traditional American folk dance

## 2020 NJSL

1.4.5.Re.Theatre.9.a

1.4.5.Re.Theatre.9.b

1.4.8.Re.Theatre.7.a

1.4.8.Re.Theatre.7.b

1.4.8.Re.Theatre..9.b

1.4.8.Cn.Theatre.10.a

1.4.8.Re.Theatre.8.a

## **Instructional resources**

Core:

- Written information pertaining to each show as found on multiple virtual resources
- Video/audio resources of each show as found on multiple virtual resources, as well as original material owned by the teacher.

Supplemental:

- Template demonstrated by the teacher pertaining to conducting research that contains both factual material, as well as personal thoughts and reflections.

### **Unit 3: Stage Direction and Blocking (6 days)**

#### **Why is this unit important?**

Within this unit, students will shift from learning about musicals from an historical and factual standpoint, and begin to experience work on stage from a physical perspective. Students will begin to make important connections between the meaning and message of a musical, and how that meaning translates into physical motivation, as well as how to interpret physical movement on the stage.

#### **Enduring understandings**

- All movement on stage should be motivated by a want, need, or goal
- The physicality of acting on a stage is different from acting on film
- Specific terms are used to identify stage directions, and these terms are commonly used within the actors', director's, and stage manager's scripts/notes
- Movement on stage usually reflects real human movement and reactions, and is informed by that character's traits/environment.

#### **Essential questions**

- Why would a character move on stage?
- How does the actor or director decide how or when a character should move?
- How does stage movement impact the way the audience perceives a character or event?
- How does an actor memorize staging/blocking?

#### **Acquired knowledge**

- Common stage direction terms and their abbreviations, such as *downstage right* (DSR)
- How a character wants or needs inform their physical movement

## **Acquired skills**

- How to stage a scene within a small group that is informed by motivation and events within the plot
- How to use correct stage direction terminology both verbally and as written within a script
- How to act/react based on external motivation
- How to act/reach based on internal motivation
- Improvisational skills

## **Assessments**

### Formative

- Participation in improvisational games and activities on the stage
- In-class discussion
- Analysis of peers' work on stage and within activities

### Summative

- Scenes staged and performed, with stage directions recorded in the script, as blocked entirely by the student and their group

### Benchmark

- Activities that test improvisational skills and reactions to motivations
- Quiz on stage direction terminology

### Alternative

- Choosing the role of director, as opposed to actor, to assist in staging a scene.

## **Interdisciplinary connections**

- Students will explore the motivations and needs of a specific character within the plot, through scene and script study: Language Arts/Literature
- Students will explore how visual representation and movement can impact artistic meaning and interpretation: Visual Art

## Technological integration

- Promethean board virtual “maps” of the stage, and the “tracks” of each actor on stage, as designated within the stage directions
- Visual markers on the stage to designate set pieces and specific placement, such as a number row at the foot of the stage.

## Suggested learning experiences and other activities

Students will choose a scene from within the teacher’s collection of scripts that best suits their chosen group of 3 or 4 members. Based on knowledge and skills learned through improvisational games and activities, they will spend several days staging their own scenes, being sure to outline all stage directions within the script, as well as provide in-depth character analysis for each group member that informs their physicality and movement.

Improvisational games include:

- Zip, Zap, Zop
- Thank You
- Pirate Ship
- Tableau

## 2020 NJSLs

1.4.5.Cr.Theatre.1.a  
1.4.5.Cr.Theatre.3.b  
1.4.5.Re.Theatre.9.c  
1.4.8.Cr.Theatre.1.c  
1.4.8.Cr.Theatre.3.c

1.4.5.Cr.Theatre.3.a  
1.4.5.Pr.Theatre.6.a  
1.4.8.Cr.Theatre.1.a  
1.4.8.Cr.Theatre.3.a  
1.4.8.Pr.Theatre.6.a

## Instructional resources

Core:

- Google Slides Presentation *Stage Direction and Blocking*, including links to video footage and images of performances

Supplemental

- Scripts and selected scenes from musicals such as *Wicked*, *High School Musical*, *The Lion King Jr.*, *Annie*, *The Sound of Music*, *Anything Goes*, *Hello Dolly!*

## **Unit 4: Song and Dance in Musical Theatre (5 days)**

### **Why is this unit important?**

Musical theatre is unique in that it integrates several different forms of performance art into one presentation. Both the crafts of sung music and choreography are woven into a plot to help further the story, as well as help to emphasize and illustrate the environment and emotions surrounding the characters.

### **Enduring understandings**

- Song and dance are used in musical theatre to help propel the plot, and to help illustrate an event or emotion
- Styles of song and dance within musical theatre are derived from many various other styles, ranging from classically-based to modern
- Styles of song and dance within musical theatre can be used as a tool to illustrate time-periods and cultures
- A song or dance is essentially performed using similar tactics to a monologue or a scene

### **Essential questions**

- Why do characters break into song and/or dance within a musical?
- What can song and dance symbolize?
- What kind of dance and voice training is necessary for musical theatre performance?

### **Acquired knowledge**

- How song and dance can inform the storyline of a musical, through using music and the body as an extension of the character
- Famous song and dance moments from iconic musicals and why they're important
- How composers and choreographers write material for the performer to best emphasize the environment/emotion/message of a scene
- The term "arc" in reference to a song or dance number

## **Acquired skills**

- Applying critical analysis and evaluation to real performances, identifying how they further the plot
- Analysis of a musical number as a message or monologue, identifying the “arc” and key moments
- Dance and/or vocal performance techniques, based on the students’ choice of assignment

## **Assessments**

### Formative

- In-class discussion
- Participation in movement/acting activities
- Group work analyzing performances

### Summative

- Interpretation and/or performance of a musical number, with arc and key moments outlined in score/script

### Benchmark

- Peer evaluation
- Virtual quizzes on terms and concepts

### Alternative

- Students are given the opportunity to complete assignments according to their terms. Those who wish to perform vocally or choreographically may choose to do so, with assistance and instruction from the teacher. Those who do NOT wish to perform may complete these assignments through written interpretations of musical numbers.



## **Interdisciplinary connections**

- Students will learn how the entire physical self is used in the performance of a musical. This requires knowledge of the mechanics of our bodies and attention to physical health: Physical Education/Health
- Students will learn how musical numbers contain key material used to further a plot and are written according to song form to provide an arc of emotion, similarly to dialogue and literary works: Language Arts
- Students will learn how the human vocal mechanism is the model on which modern musical instruments and sound equipment have been developed: Science/Physics

## **Technological integration**

- Use of audio/video recordings of musical numbers and moments in musicals throughout history
- Use of audio recordings to assist in development of vocal technique and vocal performance

## **Suggested learning experiences and instructional activities**

Students will choose a song and/or dance moment from a selection given by the teacher. According to knowledge and skills learned about song form, arc, and storyline (as well as performance techniques and knowledge gained in previous units), they will interpret and perform their own musical number. They may choose to sing, dance, or provide a written evaluation of a musical number. Those who choose to perform will be given personalized instruction in voice and dance by the teacher.

## **2020 NJSL**

1.4.5.Cr.Theatre.1.a  
1.3A.2.Pr.Music.6.a  
1.4.8.Cr.Theatre.3.b  
1.4.5.Cr.Theatre.3.a  
1.4.5.Cr.Theatre.3.b  
1.4.5.Cr.Theatre.3.c  
1.4.5.Pr.Theatre.6.a  
1.4.5.Re.Theatre.8.a  
1.4.5.Re.Theatre.9.c

1.4.8.Cr.Theatre.3.a  
1.4.5.Cr.Theatre.1.c  
1.3A.2.Cn.Music.10.a  
1.4.8.Cr.Theatre.3.c  
1.1.Cr.Dance.1.a  
1.1.5.Pr.Dance.4.a  
1.1.5.Pr.Dance.4.c  
1.1.5.Re.Dance.8.a  
1.1.5.Cn.Dance.1.a

## **Instructional resources**

Core:

- Audio/video footage of actual professional performances of famous musical numbers

Supplemental:

- Printed sheet music
- Worksheet templates for evaluating and interpreting professional performances
- Worksheet templates for written interpretation of a musical number for personal assignment

## **Unit 5: Build a Musical (8 days)**

### **Why is this unit important?**

This unit is designed to incorporate all of the elements and concepts learned in previous units into a comprehensive product. The making of a musical is not as important individually as they are when combined into a production. Combining all of the elements of song, dance, storytelling, and visual art provides deeper meaning for the overall production. In this unit, students will use their newly acquired skills and knowledge to write and perform their own short musicals.

### **Enduring understandings**

- Musicals are a unique art form that are made up of other existing performance and visual art forms
- The creative process of writing a musical involves people taking on specific roles that pertain to the making of a comprehensive product (example: the composer, the librettist, etc.)
- The production of a musical involves people taking on specific roles that pertain to the business end of the process (example: the producer)
- The designing of a musical involves people taking on specific roles that pertain to the visual product (example: the costume designer, the scenic designer, etc.).

### **Essential questions**

- What is the timeline of events that is involved in the writing of a musical?
- What is the timeline of events that is involved with the production of a musical?
- Which people are in charge of artistic decisions?
- Which people are in charge of business decisions?
- How do you write a script?

### **Acquired knowledge**

- Students will learn the timeline of events that makes up the process of a making a musical production
- Students will identify key team players in the production of a musical and what their role is, as well as how it works with other roles

- Students will learn how the previously learned elements of musical theatre operate in tandem to form an end product

### **Acquired skills**

- Students will write their own scenes based on instruction in scene-writing
- Students will design their musical, using inspiration from online resources for costumes, scenery, etc.
- Students will operate within a group setting, designating each group member as a specific role both on and off the stage
- Students will perform their original material for the class, based on performance techniques and staging instructions from previous units

### **Assessments**

Formative:

- Google slide presentations of visual design inspirations

Summative:

- Final performance of finished product (one scene from their own musical, involving all group members)
- Final vocabulary quiz

Benchmark:

- Staging and directing sessions with each group individually

Alternative:

- Design of commercial/website to advertise and sell tickets to their Production

### **Interdisciplinary connections**

- Students will develop a plan and materials to advertise their musical, considering such elements as targeted audience, advertisement platform: business
- Students will engage in the writing of a script, using elements learned in previous lessons pertaining to storytelling and arc, as well as information learned in language arts classes: Language Arts
- Students will design visual properties of their musical, such as costumes, scenery, etc.: Visual Art and History

## **Technological Integration**

- Use of online resources such as YouTube, playbill.com, etc. to explore commercials and advertisements for musicals
- Use of the internet to research clothing, architecture, and technology that is applicable to the time period in which their piece is set.
- Use of Google Slides to create a comprehensive presentation of all design elements

## **2020 NJSL**

1.4.5.Cr.Theatre.1.a  
1.4.5.Cr.Theatre.1.b  
1.4.5.Cr.Theatre.1.c  
1.4.5.Cr.Theatre.3.a  
1.4.5.Pr.Theatre.6.a  
1.4.8.Cr.Theatre.3.a  
1.5.5.Pr.Theatre.5.a  
1.5.8.Pr.VisualArt.5.a  
1.5.8.Pr.VisualArt.11.a

## **APPENDIX**

### **Sample Standards Integration**

#### **21st Century Skills & Career readiness Practices**

CRP2. Apply appropriate academic and technical skills.

CRP4. Communicate clearly and effectively and with reason.

CRP7. Employ valid and reliable research strategies.

CRP11. Use technology to enhance productivity.

CRP12. Work productively in teams while using cultural global competence.

Example: Throughout the course, the students are expected to develop personal thoughts and opinions on various pieces of work, and communicate them in a clear a democratic fashion.

In Unit 2, students are expected to utilize the internet and various other resources to conduct research on pieces that span over the past 100+ years, comparing information from different sources, to complete their journal assignment.

Throughout the course, the students participate in various collaborative activities, ranging from independent work to presenting a completed product onstage as a group. These activities rely on their abilities to communicate effectively and work cooperatively with their peers.

#### **Technology Integration**

8.1.5.IC.1: Identify computing technologies that have impacted how individuals live and work and describe the factors that influenced the changes.

8.1.5.IC.2: Identify possible ways to improve the accessibility and usability of computing technologies to address the diverse needs and wants of users.

Example: Throughout the course, students are asked to use the internet to research the history of and trends in musical theatre. Many resources can be found on YouTube, as well as on websites dedicated to the world of musical theatre. Students are asked to consider the impact of musical theatre prior to the most recent 30 years, and how the world of theatre-going has changed because of the world wide web, and audio/visual devices.

## **Interdisciplinary Connections**

NJSLSA.R7. Integrate and evaluate content presented in diverse media and formats, including visually and quantitatively, as well as in words.

NJSLSA.W3. Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, well-chosen details, and well-structured event sequences.

Example: Over the course of the entire unit, students consume various pieces of theatre-related art in multiple ways, from reading, to watching, to performing. By creating their own musical theatre pieces, they are recording their thoughts and ideas, as well as reflecting and sharing with peers. Additionally, they are expected to develop their own narratives and effectively build them into a storyline.

### **Holocaust Mandate**

This curricula addresses issues of bias, bigotry and the history of African-American slavery through viewing pieces of musical theatre that reflect historical time periods. Musicals such as *Fiddler On the Roof* and *Ragtime* are examined for their source material pertaining to a history of prejudice and displacement of the Jewish community, linked to American immigration and war. Additionally, the course will highlight the works of many Jewish composers, writers, and performers.

### **Amistad Mandate**

This curricula addresses issues of bias, bigotry, and the history of African-American slavery through viewing pieces of musical theatre that reflect historical time periods, and how such shows were written with the core message of equality. Musicals such as *Showboat* and *Memphis* are examined for their source material pertaining to the American history of prejudice against the black community. Additionally, the course will highlight the works of many black and African-American composers, writers, and performers, as well as their integration into mainstream involvement in the arts.

## **AAPI Mandate**

This curriculum addresses the issues of bias, bigotry, and the history of African-American slavery through viewing pieces of musical theatre that reflect historical time periods, and how such shows were written with the core message of equality. Musicals such as *South Pacific* and *Flower Drum Song* are examined for their source material pertaining to issues surrounding bias against the Asian American Pacific Islander community. Additionally, the course will highlight works of AAPI writers and performers, as well as their integration into mainstream involvement in the arts.

## **LGBTQ/Disabilities Resources**

Example: This curriculum examines pieces of theatre created by and performed by any individuals of the LGBTQ community, as well as discusses the cultural impact of the LGBTQ community on the world of live theatre.

Unit 2:

The Broadway Blog: [Rainbow Proud: 10 LGBT Moments in Musical Theatre](#)

New Musical Theatre: [Let Pride Be Your Guide](#)

YouTube.com: [Ali Stroker performs at the 2019 Tony Awards](#)