

For Immediate Release

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Shakespeare Integrates Common Core Standards

(Livermore) – Livermore Shakespeare Festival (LSF) is providing a 10-week program for each of the 37 second grade classrooms in the Livermore Valley Joint Unified School District over the 2015-16 school year, beginning September 14th. Half of the schools will receive the 10 class visits this Fall, the rest in Winter/Spring 2016. The Shakespeare program is fully integrated with Common Core learning outcomes.

“Theater is actually a perfect way of integrating common core standards with the curriculum,” stated Lisa Tromovitch, artistic director of Livermore Shakes and a tenured professor in theater arts. The students analyze the text, working on reading comprehension and language acquisition, which leads to research and the development of communication skills. Following the critical thinking process, preparing scenes and creating characters enhances communication and collaborative skills, while engaging the creative thinking process. Because Shakespeare production is literature-based theater, the connection between critical thinking and creative thinking is evident. And, because the creative thinking process is done in a collaborative context, communication, collaboration and creative thinking are inextricably linked. Ultimately, these skills are needed in technology, science and business as well, which are all moving to team-based methodologies. Starting the skill building in a literature and arts setting at this level gets the kids off to a good start.

Superintendent Kelly Bowers stated, “This is an amazing opportunity to expose children to poetry and the performing arts, providing a new and special component to the second grade experience.” Upper grades in Livermore already have enhancement opportunities in Livermore and California history and in sciences, most supported by community organizations such as the Livermore Heritage Guild’s third grade program. The second grade was lacking a community partner, and due to the need for car seats, fieldtrips were not an option. “Bringing professional Shakespearean actors *to the students* is the perfect alternative. We hope our students look forward to seeing the summer production Livermore Shakes produces at Wente Vineyards. Regardless, Shakespeare is required curriculum in the seventh grade, so creating a fun and engaging introduction to his work will enhance their attitude and experience later in their studies,” noted LSF managing director Katie Marcel.

The Livermore program is based in part on Lois Burdett's groundbreaking work with Shakespeare in the elementary schools in Stratford, Ontario inspired by the presence of the internationally renowned Stratford Shakespeare Festival there. Her books "Shakespeare Can Be Fun" are a go-to book series for parents and teachers who engage their kids with the master storyteller's works. Certificated teacher Mary Fielding and professional actress Jennifer Le Blanc, both actors with the Livermore Shakespeare Festival, piloted the program at Joe Michell Elementary last Spring. This week, they trained three additional actors from the LSF company to deploy the new program. "We want the students to know they are getting 'the real thing', that they are being taught Shakespeare by actors who do this professionally, so we plan to use teaching-artists who have worked with us," added Tromovitch.

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