

What We Value

As part of an ongoing effort to enhance and supplement the opportunities for students to develop their language and communications skills and to experience and experiment with literacy activities particularly in speaking and understanding the words of William Shakespeare, the Atlanta Shakespeare Company's Education Programs offer innovative and creative approaches to Shakespeare's language and stagecraft. As an integral part of this aim, we stress the following core values. Although presented as a list, these values are not distinct and separable. They should be considered as an interrelated whole.

| We value... | We love it when students... | We love it when we... | This is important to us because... | We assess this with..... |
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| 1 Active Learning Models | ...make a choice to participate in discussions and other activities. (We find this is particularly important for students for whom English is not their primary language.) | ...encourage and enable students to participate in learning activities. | Students are called upon to learn not just visually or aurally, but experientially as well, creating in them a sense of ownership of the material, which in turn enhances retention and a sense of personal relevance. | Student surveys Observation assessments |
| 2 Personal Engagement with Students | ...demonstrate an awareness that they are heard and valued by the artist-educator. | ...elicit, listen to, and utilize student input, encouraging student discovery and enhancing creative knowledge development. | Students respond positively to the belief that their voice is heard and that their input matters. This enhances the students' desire to learn and perform in a positive, productive and personally satisfying manner. Students are then empowered to use language for learning, enjoyment, persuasion, and the exchange of information. | Observation of teaching artists |
| 3 Inclusive Learning Environment | ...all students participate as knowledgeable, reflective, creative, and critical members of the literacy community. | ...encourage participation by all students to whatever degree they can participate. | Many students often feel left out of the loop because the learning model is more results oriented. We work towards a more process oriented learning environment. We also encourage students to explore many avenues where creativity and risk-taking are more important than getting the "right answer." | Portfolio assessment |
| 4 Empathy and Community | ...respond supportively to the work of others and demonstrate a belief that all contributions are valued. | ...encourage students to support and encourage one another. | Those who work in the theatre are particularly interdependent. Likewise, students function best in the environment of a supportive community. While competition is healthy, teamwork is a key component to the success of both the group and the individual members of that group. One of the most significant concepts we teach is the value and importance of "making your partner look good." | Observation Assessment |
| 5 Play Oriented Learning | ...lose themselves in "the game" and overlook the "chore of learning." Students then are free to experience the diversity of communication styles inherent in Shakespeare's text. | ...effectively utilize games as a teaching tool. | When learning is fun, it's easier, active and has a potentially broader and more readily retained impact. Students who learn while engaged in fun activities are making personal discoveries about the material to be learned as well as potentially about themselves and their community. | Observation Assessment |

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| 6 Personal Integrity | ...keep their word and their commitments. | ...keep our word and follow our company touchstones and ethos. | Students learn integrity by both example and experience. In our residency-based programs, one of the first group activities is to develop a group covenant to which students who participate must agree. (We even have each student sign a copy for us to retain and give them one for themselves.) This becomes the basis for our interaction, work and, if necessary, discipline. This is one of many “employee skills;” e.g., punctuality, completion of tasks, etc., we stress in the longer programs. | Company Agreement, Portfolio |
| 7 Clarity of Shakespeare’s Text | ... apply a wide range of strategies to comprehend, interpret, evaluate, and appreciate the play, act out of an understanding of the emotions and motivations of the character, and clearly speak Shakespeare’s language. | ...communicate how our artistic choices are born out of the material (text) itself. | Students best learn new concepts from a meaningful frame of reference, drawing on their prior experience, their knowledge of word meanings and of other texts, their word identification strategies, and their understanding of textual context. By opening up Shakespeare’s language to students experientially, we give them an opportunity to learn the relevance of the language, concepts and cultural mythos to their lives and place in the culture. | Observation, surveys |
| 8 Clarity of Instructions, Goals and Expectations | ...demonstrate confidence in performing tasks; e.g., speaking loudly and clearly onstage. | ...are clear with our expectations and goals for the show/playshop/project/residency, as a means to guide and encourage students toward work that is educationally edifying and personally gratifying. | Students learn and personally grow in an environment which balances clear guidelines (structure) and active personal discovery (substance). If students grasp what is expected and how to achieve those expectations, their chances for success rise significantly. This not only validates the student on a human level, but encourages retention of the material as well. | Portfolio, company agreement, performance tasks |
| 9 Use of Multiple Intelligences and Ways of Learning | ...can learn through multiple intelligences, using a wide range of strategies to communicate with their audience. | ...engage students on many levels using varied learning methodologies. | Different students have individual modes of learning and don’t always succeed in the usual formats of read/lecture/take notes/regurgitate the “right answers” on a written exam. We seek to engage students visually, aurally and kinesthetically, providing multiple avenues for learning. | Observation, portfolio |
| 10 Artist-Educators are Professional Actors from our Company | ...respond to the opportunity to learn from someone who makes his/her living with Shakespeare. | ...bring the personal experience of being a professional actor into the learning process. | Our experience as professional Shakespearian actors gives us a uniquely powerful perspective on communicating Shakespeare’s text. As we have learned our craft by doing, so we invited students to do likewise; i.e., learn by doing. | |
| 11 Artist-Educators are Properly Trained | ...have a fun, positive and lasting learning experience. Demonstrate a firm grasp of character, plot, etc. | ...demonstrate a thorough knowledge of the material being taught and a firm grasp of how to teach it. | In addition to the professional training we have all received as actors, our senior education team has been trained in specific theatre education techniques. We continue this process on a regular basis, and pass along these skills to younger members of our education team both with group training events and personal mentoring. We believe that it’s not enough to simply know what to teach but how to effectively teach it as well. | Observation of teachers, portfolio |