

# Christian School Education

A Magazine for Christian School Educators | 2008–2009

## EXEMPLARY school programs 2008–2009



ACSI 

Enabling Christian Educators and Schools Worldwide

## Shakespearean Immersion

**PROGRAM OBJECTIVE:** to cultivate in students a deep understanding of human virtue and frailty by examining the great works of William Shakespeare through stage performance and curricular parallels

### PROGRAM SUMMARY

At The Bear Creek School, the Shakespearean Immersion experience allows students at various grade levels to investigate and theatrically experience how aspects of character, cultural context, power, and social status affect and potentially alter life outcomes. This window into the world of others is an exceptional platform to teach and expose the condition of the human heart while making substantive connections to biblical themes.

We begin the immersion in the kindergarten through grade-3 classes as the children learn plotlines of four Shakespearean plays. We discuss character traits and introduce the children to rhyme, meter, and the syntax of our language. By grade 4, students receive a broad exposure to Elizabethan culture through English history,

number of plays, and this participation culminates in a full-cast performance of *Julius Caesar*.

We tie drama performances to Greco-Roman social studies, Latin content, and biblical history. The lower-school immersion experience is foundational to the middle- and upper-school curricular preparation in music, drama, literature, and history. Students in the middle and upper school receive a richer and more intense exposure to the Shakespearean mirror through annual drama productions. Past performances have included *The Tempest*, *Twelfth Night*, *Othello*, *Taming of the Shrew*, and *Much Ado About Nothing*. By the end of the high school journey, students have experienced a substantial repertoire and have developed a deep appreciation for the beauty, emotion, tragedy, comedy, treachery, and conflict illustrated throughout all these great works.

This intentional sequence of Shakespearean immersion achieves the following goals that we have set for students: memorization, linguistic appreciation, expansion of vocabulary and root meaning, stage presence, and,

earthly and eternal consequences of Shakespearean characters.

### SCHOOL PROFILE

**Grade Levels:** pre-K–12

**Enrollment:** 671

**Year Founded:** 1988

**Chief Administrator:** Patrick Carruth

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history of drama in England, issues of gender and class structure, the life of William Shakespeare, and the historical significance of each play. The 4th graders perform a yearly rotation of the following plays: *The Comedy of Errors*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, and *The Merchant of Venice*. By grade 6, students have participated in vignettes of a

most critically, the exposure to human beings' inherent fallen nature. At all grade levels, the simulation of life while on stage and the connection to other curricular experiences serve as powerful tools for examining with students the impact of life choices. Through an immersion in the masterful works of Shakespeare, students experience the