

Comal Independent School District

NEWS RELEASE

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Austin Shakespeare Players bring unique learning experience to Comal ISD

A unique grant is bringing Shakespeare to life in Comal ISD.

Thanks to a \$7,500 Comal Education Foundation grant, the "Austin Shakespeare Players" paid a visit to Canyon Lake High on Oct. 13, the first of its stops at all four Comal ISD high schools.

There, the members of Austin Shakespeare's acting troop performed a famous scene from *Hamlet* and then selected 10 members of its student audience to come up and read the same scene to their classmates on the auditorium stage.

The professional actors then discussed the scene and held question and answer sessions with the students.

"Our goal is to get kids to speak the language of Shakespeare," said Alex Alford, Austin Shakespeare Players Managing Director. "So many kids get turned off when reading Shakespeare for the first time, but his works come to life when spoken."

The group performed in front of each grade level at CLHS throughout the day, and then had a chance to interact with the school's theater class.

"For us, delivering the message of Shakespeare is what we love," said Ann Ciccolella, Austin Shakespeare Players director. "This is fun, but it's also very rewarding. We think it's wonderful when we get to work with students in a forum like this."

Senior Michelle Roberts was one of the students picked at random on stage to read the famous *Hamlet* scene "*Polonius' Advice to Laertes*."

"It's very educational to hear about Shakespeare from an actor's point of view," Roberts said. "It's definitely different than reading it in the structured classroom forum or at home by yourself."

CLHS theater teacher Rhonda Riali agreed this was an invaluable experience.

“Kids have trouble connecting with Shakespeare,” Riali said. “This is a very unique experience. I think now they’ll have a greater appreciation for Shakespeare.”

The Austin Shakespeare Players will visit Canyon Lake, Canyon, Smithson Valley and Memorial high schools two times each between now and the end of October.

“This is an example of the wonderful educational opportunities the Comal Education Foundation can bring to students,” said Margaret Tenorio, Foundation Executive Director. “We love the fact that students can experience hands-on innovative learning.”

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IN PHOTO:

Canyon Lake High seniors Michelle Roberts and Jacob Burzynske act out a scene from *Hamlet* during a visit from the Austin Shakespeare Players. The unique learning experience was provided by a grant from the Comal Education Foundation.