Lancaster Performing Arts Center offers many ways to integrate the arts into your lesson plan through our Arts for Youth program. Our School Shows, Workshops and study guides are aligned with the California Department of Education’s Common Core Standards, as well as the Content Standards for Visual and Performing Arts (and more) for K-12 education. We emphasize Education through the Arts by utilizing music, theatre and dance as a tool for students to learn such core subjects as math, science, history and literature. Students will receive a high quality, curriculum-based learning experience in an enjoyable setting.

Dear Educator,

As you make plans for your students to attend an upcoming presentation of the Arts for Youth program at the Lancaster Performing Arts Center, we invite you to prepare your students by using this guide to assure that from beginning to end; the experience is both memorable and educationally enriching. The material in this guide is for you, the teacher, and will assist you in preparing your students before the day of the event and extending the educational value to beyond the walls of the theatre. We provide activity and/or discussion ideas, and other resources that will help to prepare your students to better understand and enjoy what they are about to see, and to help them connect what they see on stage to their studies. We also encourage you to discuss with your students the important aspects of the artistic experience, including audience etiquette.

We hope your students find that their imagination comes alive as lights shine, curtains open, and applause rings through Lancaster Performing Arts Center. As importantly, we hope that this curriculum-based Guide helps you to bring the arts alive in your classroom! Thank you for helping us to make a difference in the lives of our Antelope Valley youth.

Arts for Youth Program
Lancaster Performing Arts Center
City of Lancaster
THEATRE ETIQUETTE

Thank you for coming to Lancaster Performing Arts Center! We are glad you are visiting.

Please…
Arrive on time: Plan for possible delays in travel and parking. Arrive 30 minutes prior to show time.

Students: Leave recording devices of any kind at home or in your backpack at school. Video or audio recording and photography, including camera phones, are often prohibited by law and may disrupt the performance. They are not permitted and are considered rude to the others around you.

Teachers: Turn off or silence all personal electronics. Beeps, clicks, tones and buzzes and light pollution emanated by personal electronics such as watches, blue-tooth devices, cell phones, etc. interrupt the performance and spoil the theatre experience.

Observe the instructions of ushers. The ushers are volunteers who are present to help, ensure rules are observed and provide guidance in the case of an emergency evacuation. They will also assist you with seating. Please show them kindness and consideration. You will be asked to exit to the right of the theatre at the end of the performance.

Be respectful. While entering and exiting the theatre: please fold your arms or put your hands in your pockets or behind your back. Talk very quietly. Once seated: Do not talk. Keep your feet on the ground. Put your hands in your lap or fold your arms.

Abstain from eating or drinking inside the theatre. Crackling wrappers and containers and food messes in the auditorium are unwelcome. Food, candy, gum and drinks should never be brought inside the theatre.

Avoid talking, waving and shouting during the performance. Laughing and applauding and expressing “ooh” and “ahh” sounds are encouraged at appropriate times. Shouting to actors/friends is disrespectful to others. Save personal conversation for after the show. If you must talk, whisper very quietly.

Do not exit the auditorium during the performance except in the case of emergency. If you must leave, wait for an appropriate break in the performance. Teachers- arrive early enough to escort students to the restroom prior to the start of the show.

Do not climb onto the stage or place items on the edge of the stage. To ensure the safety and security of performers and audiences, this behavior is strictly prohibited unless expressly permitted by a performer or staff member.

Dispose of garbage in proper receptacles. Help preserve a pleasant environment by depositing all debris in appropriate receptacles.

Extend common courtesy and respect to your fellow audience members. Civility creates a comfortable and welcoming theatre experience for all.

Bring very small children only to age-appropriate performances. Small children easily become restless at programs intended for older children and may cause distractions.
OVERVIEW OF THE CALIFORNIA CONTENT AND COMMON CORE STANDARDS

Our Arts for Youth program is aligned with the California Department of Education's content standards for the California Visual and Performing Arts (and more) for K-12 education, and the Common Core State Standards (CCSS).

Curriculum Connections: VPA; Reading & Language Arts (Literature, Creative Writing); Physical Education; Creativity and teamwork; Communication.

Applicable California Content Standards Samples easily applied in your classroom:

Visual and Performing Arts – Theatre:

Grade 5: Creative Expression - Development of Theatrical Skills: 2.1 Participate in improvisational activities to explore complex ideas and universal themes in literature and life

Grade 5: Connections, Relationships, Applications – Connections and Applications: 5.1 Use theatrical skills to dramatize events and concepts from other curriculum areas, such as reenacting the signing of the Declaration of Independence in history social science.

Grade 5: Connecting and Applying What Is Learned in Theatre and Subject Areas to Careers - Careers and Career-Related Skills: 5.2 identify the roles and responsibilities of performing and technical artists in theatre, film, television, and electronic media.

Suggested Common Core State Standards easily applied in your classroom:

6.RP.A.3b: Solve unit rate problems including those involving unit pricing and constant speed. For example, if it took 7 hours to choreograph 4 songs, then at that rate, how many songs could be choreographed in 35 hours? At what rate were songs being choreographed?

6.SP.B.5c: Give quantitative measures of center (median and/or mean) and variability (interquartile range and/or mean absolute deviation), as well as describing any overall pattern and any striking deviations from the overall pattern with reference to the context in which the data were gathered.

LESSON PLAN IDEA #1: Students create unit rate problems prior to attending relating to acrobatic movements and tricks, balancing objects and people, and other tricks. After the performance, compile data and present to the class.

LESSON PLAN IDEA #2: Students analyze the acrobats’ “center” as it pertains to balancing and executing movements; variations in “center” when one or more acrobats combine to execute a balancing act (thereby, changing one acrobat’s “center” to a shared “center”); variations in “center” when traveling (speed, height of individuals, how artists are stacked), or executing stationary balancing acts.

LESSON PLAN IDEA #3: Students create a collage representing Hebei province, in the People's Republic of China demonstrating geography, climate, clothes, food, etc. to present to the class.
ABOUT CIRQUE MEI

From People's Republic of China, Hebei Province, Cirque Mei features traditional and contemporary Chinese circus acts in a colorful and lively celebration of the internationally renowned Chinese circus arts.

The performance, featuring a company of 40 elite circus artists and acrobats, will include many of the most popular Chinese circus routines including Hoops Diving, Lion Dance, Collective Bicycle Skills, Flying Meteors, Foot Juggling with Umbrellas, Female Contortion, and Ladder Balancing Act.

The troupe was founded in 1976 and supports a community of over 130 circus performers who tour throughout China and the world.

AFTER THE PERFORMANCE

ASK students to recall the performance by telling it in their own words.

- What did they observe about the performance?
- What were they doing?
- What items did they use?
- How were they dressed?
- How did it make you feel?
- Discuss the various acts performed.

SET a part of the classroom aside for the students to create their own story, drawing or painting based on what they noticed during the performance.

ENCourage your students to share their work with each other.
A HISTORY OF CHINESE ACROBATICS
For over 2,700 years, Chinese acrobats have been astonishing audiences with their grace, beauty and physical strength. Chinese acrobatics originated from the daily work, chores, battles, ceremonies, and sacrificial rites of life during the “warring states period” that lasted in China from 770-476 BC.
By 589 AD, many acrobatic feats had been perfected and routines expanded, such as the human pagoda, rope-walking, and the dancing horse. The best acrobats were registered as professional performers, many traveling far and wide with “Hundred Entertainments,” a huge cultural exchange program.
Following the collapse of the Tang Dynasty, Chinese society — the arts and the “Hundred Entertainments” included-- fell into a state of confusion. The exception was acrobatics, which despite the chaos of the time continued to thrive. During this era, spinning tops and juggling with both hands and feet were added to the acrobats’ ever-expanding repertoire.

Rulers of the Ming and Qing Dynasties considered acrobatics “unrefined entertainment.” Nevertheless, the ordinary people still loved and supported acrobats. Performances were held most often at open-air festivals and regional celebrations.

Centuries passed, and by 1949, this oldest of all folk art forms had evolved into a more formal, sophisticated performing art, one designed for better audience viewing and appreciation of the increasingly complex skills displayed by performers. The founding of the People’s Republic of China in 1950 provided for the Ministry of Culture of the Central People’s government to officially support the acrobatic arts. They formed a troupe, based in Beijing, consisting of the most outstanding acrobats from the major Chinese cities. Each acrobat performed his or her own specialty which had been developed after years of dedicated training. Out of this Beijing troupe evolved large professional troupes which today number more than 250. These companies continue to flourish, traveling worldwide to bring the art of Chinese acrobatics to an international audience, enrapuring and inspiring people of all ages, cultures and beliefs with their astonishing skills.

HISTORY OF THE CIRCUS
The word circus comes from the Roman word meaning a ring or circle. In Roman times the ‘circus’ meant a large public entertainment. Originally designed as a sporting event for Roman Soldiers to match their skills against each other, the Roman circus became a very dangerous, sometimes bloody event. Words like circus, arena, and coliseum are Roman terms still used today.

With the decline of the Roman Empire, communications broke down and left small communities isolated - a period in European history known as the Dark Ages. Groups of traveling entertainers went from village to village bringing news, singing songs, and telling stories. For many people, these travelers were the only source
of information and became very popular. In England these performers were called “gleemen” or minstrels. Later juggler or jongleurs joined these traveling bands.

By the time of Queen Elizabeth I the country settled down to a more secure and prosperous life. Traveling entertainers were considered dangerous and were subject to punishment, but performers quickly adapted. Instead of performing on street corners and village greens, they began working in new more permanent locations designed specifically for such events.

In the seventeenth century country fairs were very popular in England. Country fairs were noisy and riotous and were full of acrobats, jugglers, rope dancers, and bear trainers. Also, riding exhibitions became a regular feature.

In the 18th century, a former soldier named Philip Astley put all of the elements of country fair into place in what we call the modern circus. Astley stood over 6 feet tall with a huge frame, a booming voice and a daredevil reputation that made him a celebrity. In 1768 he moved to the south side of the Thames and started charging a 6 pence admission for his riding exhibitions. Originally it was an open field. Later he covered the whole area with a roof. Astley’s greatest contribution to the modern circus was to create the ring itself. Before Astley, most riding exhibitions were presented in a linear fashion - the performer riding past his audience as he performed a trick, then turning around, or riding back around the other side, before presenting the next trick. When Astley decided that a covered grandstand was needed he realized it would be more advantageous to both performer and audience if the rider worked in a circle. The rider could move from trick to trick without interruption and the people could see everything going on and a larger audience could attend as they sat all around the performance arena. Also, as Astley discovered, by riding in a circle he could use the centrifugal force to aid his performance. With experimentation he discovered the optimum size of the ring to be 42 feet.

Astley was responsible for introducing the circus into many European countries, and several cities established permanent circus buildings. The first circus in Russia was presented in 1793 at the royal palace in Saint Petersburg. This new form of entertainment finally crossed the Atlantic when, on April 3rd, 1793, the first complete circus program was presented in a building on the southwest corner of 12th and Market streets, Philadelphia, by John Bill Ricketts. Ricketts, a British equestrian, went on to present circuses in New York and Boston, and the show continued, under many names, through the first decade of the 19th century. George Washington saw a Ricketts show in 1797 and sold them a horse.

While other acts were added to the show, the riding act was still the main attraction and this led to another standard feature of the modern circus - the ringmaster. Today the ringmaster is the announcer who plays with the clowns and generally keeps the show flowing. Originally his job was to keep the horses running correctly around the ring as the rider did his tricks – that’s why he wears the traditional riding costume.

By the end of the century, the circus was an established form of family entertainment. Many entrepreneurs appeared, such as P.T. Barnum. In 1871 he teamed up with circus producer W.C. Coup and produced a huge show in Brooklyn, N.Y., advertised as “The Greatest Show On Earth”. Ten years later he went into partnership with the best organizer in the business, James Bailey. Their show was so huge it needed three rings. Barnum cashed in on the popularity of circus animals and exhibited unusual and unique creatures such as the world’s largest elephant, Jumbo, for which he reputedly paid $30,000.

Many acts are important to a modern circus but the one that is synonymous with the word circus is the flying trapeze. The first man to perform on the flying trapeze was Jules Leotard on November 12th, 1859, in the Cirque Napoleon in Paris. The original act consisted of the performer swinging on one trapeze bar then releasing it and “flying” to a second bar. In the 1870’s a second performer was added and the “flyer” flew to the hands of the “catcher”. After each trick the flyer would have to drop into a net and climb back to the platform, retrieve the bar, then perform the next trick. Then a third performer was added to the routine to remain on the platform, catch the empty bar, then swing it over to the flyer who caught it and returned to the platform without having to drop to the net.