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# Dancing at My Desk: Examining the Foundations of a Nonprofit Dance Education Organization

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**Dancing at My Desk:  
Examining the Foundations of a Nonprofit  
Dance Education Organization**

A thesis submitted in partial satisfaction  
of the requirements of the University Honors Program  
of Loyola Marymount University

by

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Thesis Advisor:  
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Dancing at My Desk: Examining the Foundations of a Nonprofit Dance Education Organization**Abstract**

With the implementation of the Common Core State Standards, the demand for further development in arts education has grown.<sup>1</sup> In California, the Visual and Performing Arts have been mandated components of education since 2001; yet, students often experience limited and inconsistent access to the arts due to budget cuts.<sup>2</sup> Thus, the need for a specialized approach to synthesizing the arts and education is imminent. Arts Integration, a pedagogical method that refers to the combination of a visual or performing art with a core content area to provide equal understanding of a topic from both selected fields, is sprinkled throughout primary and secondary educational institutions nationally. The specific integration of dance with core content areas exercises somatic and kinesthetic learning modalities. Dance in the classroom also can address aspects of other art forms, including music, visual art and theater. Yet, in the greater Los Angeles area there is only limited access to this form of education. This project analyzes the prevalence, efficacy and methods of implementation of dance-based Arts Integration in California for the purpose of investigating an approach to improve access to it. Through interviews and observations with five California-based dance education programs, in addition to a field study with one of the programs, I have gathered data on both their administrative operations and pedagogical practices. By analyzing these findings, I have built the foundations for Dancing at My Desk, a new, Los Angeles-based nonprofit organization that focuses

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<sup>1</sup> Alison E. Leonard, Leah Hellenbrand, and Karen McShane-Hellenbrand, "Leading by Design: A Collaborative and Creative Leadership Framework for Dance Integration in P-12 Schools," *Journal of Dance Education* 14 (2014): 89.

<sup>2</sup> "Status of Arts Education in California Public Schools," Research & Resources, California Alliance for Arts Education, accessed December 8, 2017, [http://www.artsed411.org/resources/status\\_of\\_arts\\_ed\\_in\\_public\\_schools](http://www.artsed411.org/resources/status_of_arts_ed_in_public_schools).

specifically on Arts Integration through dance. For the scope of this project, the development of the organization centered around the creation of programming and branding. Thus, the results of this project include the development of the mission, vision and values, example curriculum and a video demonstration of a select lesson, and the logo and website design for the organization. Further research into the development of administrative aspects such as an organizational budget, establishment of the board of directors and selection of facilities are necessary for the implementation of this organization. By continuing efforts in the development of Dancing at My Desk, the symbiotic relationship of education and the arts will strengthen and advance.

### **Preliminary Gatherings**

#### **Arts Integration**

Arts Integration curriculum synthesizes one or more visual and performing arts with a core content area to provide equal and balanced understanding of all disciplines.<sup>3</sup> The specific integration of dance as the selected art form integrated with the core content areas can enhance their experience with multiple art forms, as dance contains and develops understanding of music, theater and visual art. For instance, movement is often informed by accompanying music so much that it can be defined by musical elements. Dance also contains theatrical elements in its definition as a performing art. Furthermore, how movement is designed in space supports dance as a visual art. Though these are just cursory elements of each of the other art forms, their presence in dance allows for more possibilities for the development of dance curriculum in its combination with core content areas.

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<sup>3</sup> “Arts Integration,” Arts Integration, Los Angeles Unified School District, accessed November 4, 2017. <https://achieve.lausd.net/Page/4138>.

Moreover, Arts Integration experts comment on the benefits of Arts Integration for students' learning. Teaching professional, Kelly Mancini Becker, explains that students that lack skills in reading and writing struggle with their understanding of other core content instruction, yet by allowing them to learn kinesthetically through Arts Integration, they are able to communicate and express themselves as well as solve problems that they would not have been able to while sitting behind a desk.<sup>4</sup> Through Arts Integration, students have also demonstrated growth in their abilities to accept and solve challenges. A study by A. Helene Robinson reviewed the effects of Arts Integration on students such as second language learners, students with disabilities and economically disadvantaged students. In her discussion of the study she concluded:

Because students in an arts-integrated learning environment are being provided multiple means of representation, multiple means of action and expression, and multiple means of engagement...they can experience the feeling of being valuable from the perspective of their peers, which could increase their academic motivation...Hence, they may be more likely to select more challenging activities and work with increased effort and persistence.<sup>5</sup>

In learning material through a variety of lenses, students not only broaden their perspectives on the content but also experience a different value for their work. Since students are able to learn the material through different intelligences, those that struggle with learning aurally or visually can demonstrate their understandings through physical expression. This new sense of value contributes to students' self-esteem and stimulates

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<sup>4</sup> Kelly M. Becker, "Dancing through the School Day: How Dance Catapults Learning in Elementary Education," *Journal of Physical Education, Recreation & Dance* 84 (2013): 6-7.

<sup>5</sup> A. Helene Robinson, "Arts Integration and the Success of Disadvantaged Students: A Research Evaluation," *Arts Education Policy Review* 114, no. 4 (October 2013): 191. *MasterFILE Premier*, EBSCOhost (accessed December 10, 2017).

their desire to engage with new, and possibly difficult, experiences. Thus, the benefits of Arts Integration are shown in students' intellectual and emotional growth.

### **Access to Arts Integration & Participating Organizations**

Though substantial research exists on the benefits of Arts Integration, Los Angeles only provides opportunities for communities to engage in dance education through technical dance training or temporary Arts Integration exposure. LAUSD implements Arts Integration specialists in each region of the district. They also offer workshops three times a year to train K-12 classroom teachers in Arts Integration of all four visual and performing arts.<sup>6</sup> While innovative and necessary, the aforementioned programs lack consistent application of curriculum and provide only cursory understanding of each discipline. In training classroom teachers in all four art forms, though they are exposed to the methods of integration, they are only given introductory knowledge. Due to constant changes in standards and educational regulation, classroom teachers are often limited in their ability to consistently apply Arts Integration to their curriculum. Furthermore, not all students are given regular access to this form of education. The LAUSD Arts Integration specialists serve within localized districts, yet there is no specific indication as to how often students are exposed to the material.<sup>7</sup> In the local South district, an Arts Integration program entitled, The Creative Network, provides Arts Integration focused on theatre arts. Yet, this program only provides instruction at one school in the South district.<sup>8</sup>

Given the inconsistent access to arts education within public schools, external arts organizations often provide Arts Integration to young students throughout Southern California.

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<sup>6</sup> "Arts Integration," Arts Integration, Los Angeles Unified School District, accessed November 4, 2017. <https://achieve.lausd.net/Page/4138>.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> "The Creative Network," Arts Integration, Los Angeles Unified School District, accessed December 12, 2017. <https://achieve.lausd.net/Page/7325>.

These organizations supplement in-school programs like those provided by LAUSD. These external programs are offered both during school hours (residencies provided by the school) and after school (chosen by families who are interested in providing more arts education to their children). For this study, five dance education organizations that operate outside of the school district were examined. Though the programs selected do not represent all California dance education programs, elements of each program provide a different approach to dance education and Arts Integration. The participating organizations are:

*The Gabriella Foundation:* The Gabriella Foundation is a nonprofit organization that provides two major dance education programs as well as several smaller programs in Los Angeles. The Gabriella Foundation is an operating foundation, meaning that it supports outside programs as well as provides its own programs. Their first major program, *everybody dance!*, offers residencies both during and after school at local charter schools. Their second major program is the Gabriella Charter School, a dance-based charter school where students take dance class every day. At Gabriella Charter School, students engage in Arts Integration lessons approximately once a week. This is the only program supported by The Gabriella Foundation that provides Arts Integration. An example of a smaller program is the foundation's summer camp, SummerDance. Students at SummerDance take dance technique classes alongside art and leadership classes.<sup>9</sup>

*Aman Dance Educators:* Originally a component of the Aman International Folk Ensemble (an internationally recognized dance company that performed folk dance and music from around the world), the Aman Dance Educators teach workshops in schools and community

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<sup>9</sup> Carol Zee (Former Artistic Director of The Gabriella Foundation) in discussion with the author, February 2017.

settings that focus on connecting social studies and folk dance with other core curriculum subjects. After the Aman International Folk Ensemble disbanded, a core group of teaching artists from Aman continued to teach dance residencies throughout greater Los Angeles under the new name, Aman Dance Educators. Arts Integration provided by Aman Dance Educators is done so temporarily and solely to schools with special funding for the residency.<sup>10</sup>

*E.S.C.A.P.E. (Equitable Science Curriculum for Integrating Arts in Public Education):*

E.S.C.A.P.E. is a research study, funded by the National Science Foundation, that aims to develop and implement STEM curriculum integrated with dance and visual arts in various high-need Southern California school districts. This study occurred in collaboration with UC Irvine, Segerstrom Center for the Arts, and the Orange County Department of Education. E.S.C.A.P.E. teaching artists developed the curriculum to target English Language Learners, grades 3-5, with the goal of each lesson to develop the academic language necessary to identify scientific concepts.<sup>11</sup>

*The Wooden Floor:* Founded in 1983, the Wooden Floor is a nonprofit organization that began as a summer dance program for at-risk youth. Now, it provides a level-based dance program and also offers test preparation classes, counseling and other family services to enrich the lives of its students. This organization solely provides dance technique classes and performance opportunities with professional choreographers, yet is unique in the additional education and family services it offers.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Dawn Dyson (Aman Educator, E.S.C.A.P.E Lead Teaching Artist) in discussion with the author, January 2017.

<sup>11</sup> “ESCAPE: Equitable Science Curriculum for Integrating Arts in Public Education,” Projects, MSPnet, accessed December 12, 2017. <http://escape.mspnet.org/>.

<sup>12</sup> Jennifer Bassage-Bonfil (Teaching Artist at The Wooden Floor) in discussion with the author, February 2017.

*Kern Dance Alliance:* The Kern Dance Alliance is a nonprofit organization that supports dancers and local dance programs through acquisition of grants, scholarships, and other dance-based opportunities, as well as increases the accessibility of dance for populations that have not had access. The services offered through Kern Dance Alliance all take place through partnerships with other preexisting programs. For example, in a partnership with SHINE for Girls, a chapter-based nonprofit organization that began in Massachusetts, Kern Dance Alliance brings the integration of STEM content and dance to its community.<sup>13</sup>

### **Stages of Research**

#### **Stage 1: Interviews and Site Visits**

By studying the five dance education programs listed above in both their administrative and pedagogical practices, a preliminary understanding of the implementation of dance revealed where the needs still are in the community. Through interviews with each of the organizations, I engaged with individuals that have held or currently hold positions as both teaching artists and administrators for the program. By focusing on individuals that had experience in both pedagogy and operations, their insights revealed how each side of the program informed the other. For example, multiple organizations commented on how the participation of parents and students in fulfilling certain maintenance needs of the organization created a degree of investment and discipline in the program that translated to students' dedication and engagement within their dance classes. In the case of The Wooden Floor, for example, students were required to participate in the maintenance of the studio space, which then gave them knowledge of how to

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<sup>13</sup> Andrea Hansen (President of Kern Dance Alliance) in discussion with the author, February 2017.

appropriately clean the floor and ready the studio for their classes, and in turn, lessened costs for the facility maintenance.<sup>14</sup>

Site visits to observe the classes at several of the programs revealed how the goals of the program manifested in their day-to-day services. Though each teaching artist within their respective organizations had a different teaching style and different class content, I observed that classroom management techniques remained consistent. For example, within one organization, all teaching artists were observed to utilize the same phrases or protocols for beginning and ending class. When asked about these techniques, teaching artists spoke to the benefit of consistency for students in that expectations are set in advance and students are aware of the standard in each of their classes regardless of the style or teacher. Furthermore, curriculum management within classes also played a significant role in keeping the pedagogical structure of the programming consistent. Again, though teaching artists differed in the specific content of their curriculum, a designated lesson plan structure that was determined by the program ensured that all aspects of their lesson were achieved. At the Gabriella Foundation, teaching artists are permitted to decide upon their own pacing, however, the organization specifies certain benchmarks that the teachers are required to meet.<sup>15</sup> This maintains uniformity across the programming that contributes to the high-quality dance education established in the organization's mission. Thus, day-to-day teaching practices that allow for a balance of flexibility and uniformity help to advance the organization's pedagogical impact. The complete list of

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<sup>14</sup> Jennifer Bassage-Bonfil (Teaching Artist at The Wooden Floor) in discussion with the author, February 2017.

<sup>15</sup> Carol Zee (Former Artistic Director of The Gabriella Foundation) in discussion with the author, February 2017.

findings from this stage of research are listed in Appendix A: Significant Pedagogical and Administrative Practices.

## **Stage 2: Internship with The Gabriella Foundation**

During the second stage of research, I engaged in a two-month long internship with The Gabriella Foundation on three different components within the organization: Annual Gala (administrative work), *everybody dance!* (residency program) and SummerDance (summer camp). Before I began assisting with these tasks, I interviewed each of the staff members about their experience with The Gabriella Foundation as well as within the nonprofit sector and the arts. The interviewees included: Julia Miele (Executive Director), Carol Zee (former Artistic Director), Staci Armao (Director of Operations), Lauren Deck (Program Manager), Stephanie Silberman (Development and Marketing Coordinator), Melissa Flores (Administrative and Operations Associate), and Lindsay Stewart (Program Associate). I immediately noticed how the staff members' diverse backgrounds connected to their role in the organization. Miele has extensive experience in the nonprofit sector, however, the organizations she worked with prior to The Gabriella Foundation focused on public health and women's empowerment.<sup>16</sup> Zee, on the other hand, began her career as a professional dancer.<sup>17</sup> Armao also had a background in dance, yet spent a long period of time working in a mentoring program that connects youth and law enforcement.<sup>18</sup> Prior to coming to The Gabriella Foundation, Deck worked at PS Arts, another

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<sup>16</sup> Julia Miele (Executive Director at The Gabriella Foundation) in discussion with the author, June 2017.

<sup>17</sup> Carol Zee (Former Artistic Director at The Gabriella Foundation) in discussion with the author, February 2017.

<sup>18</sup> Staci Armao (Director of Operations at The Gabriella Foundation) in discussion with the author, June 2017.

arts education organization based in Los Angeles.<sup>19</sup> Silberman's background is deeply involved with visual art and she has spent extensive time working with the Getty Museum.<sup>20</sup> Flores trained as a dancer throughout her youth, but spent some time working in the for-profit sector before coming to The Gabriella Foundation.<sup>21</sup> Stewart is also a dancer, but has spent extensive time in Spain, making her Spanish-speaking abilities essential to serving much of The Gabriella Foundation's demographic.<sup>22</sup> Though each staff member varies in their experience, it is their different skillsets that enrich the administration at The Gabriella Foundation.

Their unity as a team was also reflected in their interview responses. When asked about what is most crucial to the sustainability of a nonprofit organization, all seven interview participants spoke to the importance of creating a supported, committed and open staff environment. Miele, Executive Director of The Gabriella Foundation, explained that a successful organization supports a cause that fulfills a specific need that an individual wants to "buy into."<sup>23</sup> This applies not just to donors, but to the staff. An invigorated staff keeps the organization from stagnating. These insights from The Gabriella Foundation staff provided a more cohesive understanding of the specificities of the administrative portion of nonprofit work that informed my approach to developing the program elements of Dancing at My Desk.

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<sup>19</sup> Lauren Deck (Program Manager at The Gabriella Foundation) in discussion with the author, June 2017.

<sup>20</sup> Stephanie Silberman (Development and Marketing Coordinator at The Gabriella Foundation) in discussion with the author, June 2017.

<sup>21</sup> Melissa Flores (Administrative and Operations Associate at The Gabriella Foundation) in discussion with the author, June 2017.

<sup>22</sup> Lindsay Stewart (Program Associate at The Gabriella Foundation) in discussion with the author, June 2017.

<sup>23</sup> Julia Miele (Executive Director at The Gabriella Foundation) in discussion with the author, June 2017.

After conducting the interviews with the staff, I shifted towards working more closely with Stephanie Silberman, the Development and Marketing Coordinator, on the annual gala. Much of the event had been planned long before my internship, yet I was able to contribute during the final three weeks before the event. During this time, I helped to prepare event registration materials, reviewed the guest list and donations received for possible errors, and contributed to the gala design and aesthetic. Through this experience, I was able to participate in the more detailed aspects of development and donor relations in a nonprofit, as well as work with tools and techniques to streamline the process. For this part of my internship, I was also able to work at the gala in which I organized and co-managed the registration and welcome table as well as communicated with guests about further opportunities to contribute. This provided me with the most experiential and tangible work in nonprofit administration. It proved the importance of utilizing general skills in organization and communication, but also the significance of being able to articulate one's passion for the cause in a way that inspires others to join in on the mission.

For the second half of the internship, I worked closely with the incoming Artistic Director, Tina Banchemo, and other teaching artists. My duties within this role allowed me to put into practice the pedagogical strategies that I had observed during the first stage of research. As a SummerDance intern, I was trained in the same classroom management and safety protocols that I had seen during my observations of *everybody dance!* classes. While teaching and assisting during SummerDance, I observed firsthand how students were much more responsive to the classroom management cues that were used by all teachers and were created at The Gabriella Foundation than other cues I had attempted to use. For example, the teaching artists at The Gabriella Foundation used specific call phrases to attain children's attention. While assisting in these classes, I experimented with using a different cue to regain the students' focus and the

students were much less responsive. Another aspect of SummerDance that mirrored what I had gathered from the administrative staff was the participation of teaching artists in aspects of the program beyond teaching. Teaching artists were the monitors at lunch and free play time as well as some of the managers of drop-off and pick-up. Thus, their duties were not simply limited to the classroom/studio space, which in turn supports the organization financially as well as produces behavioral benefits. In terms of the behavioral benefits, since students have already established a relationship to their teaching artists in the classroom, the same respect for their teachers then translates to more open spaces, like the playground. The children do not have to relearn how to interact with a new set of adults. Overall, my experience with The Gabriella Foundation reinforced the concepts I had gathered from the previous research stage, but emphasized the significance of having individuals in an organization that share in the same understanding and purpose.

### **Stage 3: Analyzing the Missions and Websites of Three of the Organizations**

After analyzing the information I gathered from my experiences during the observations, site visits and internship, the next step was to define what the organization I plan to create would look like. Based on my gatherings, I determined that it was essential to begin with creating the mission, vision, and values for the organization and a design for the website where these statements would appear. Since The Gabriella Foundation, The Wooden Floor and Kern Dance Alliance are each nonprofit organizations, I reviewed their statements and website format to analyze how each of their organizations were presented. All three organizations had mission statements, as is required of all nonprofits, however, they varied in if they had vision or values statements. Kern Dance Alliance is the only organization that had all three, whereas The

Gabriella Foundation presented their values statements as more of a program description and The Wooden Floor did not provide a specified vision statement on their website.

I decided to begin with the organizations that had provided vision statements to then analyze how these differed from their mission statement. Kern Dance Alliance's vision, though concise, seemed rather vague and extremely similar to their mission statement as much of the same vocabulary was used. The vision statement for The Gabriella Foundation provided much more specific goals that built upon their mission to address their larger goals. The vision of The Gabriella Foundation is for:

[it] to be nationally recognized as a model for transformative work in the artistic expression of dance and creative youth development, nurturing and sustaining communities where youth, regardless of economic or racial background, foster a lifelong appreciation of dance, are leaders engaging positively in their communities, serve as role models and mentors to new generations, and possess the self-discipline, confidence, and sheer drive to reach their full potential.<sup>24</sup>

After working with The Gabriella Foundation in the internship and examining their vision statement, it was clear that vision for the long-term growth of the organization manifests in their day to day operations. Some of the components of their program, *everybody dance!*, that directly relate to the foundation's vision are the parent volunteer program that helps defray the costs of dance class so that students from low-income families are able to participate and the mentorship program in which students with more experience serve as role models for the younger students. Thus, I decided to model my vision statement after their example.

In terms of the mission statement, I analyzed each of the three organizations' missions and found that each organization specified what they expect to see from the services they provide, though only The Gabriella Foundation provided geographical boundaries in their

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<sup>24</sup> "Our Mission & History," Who We Are, The Gabriella Foundation, accessed December 8, 2017, <http://www.everybodydance.org/who-we-are/>.

mission. According to Tony Poderis, a nonprofit fundraising expert, part of the mission statement relies on the specificity of the demographic that the organization intends to serve.<sup>25</sup> I noted then that the mission statement for Dancing at My Desk should follow the model of the three organizations in describing the identity of the organization based what results from the services we provide, but also be sure to include an outline of our services and where we serve.

The values statements from Kern Dance Alliance and The Wooden Floor outlined overarching statements the seemed to denote the standards and beliefs of the organizations. These were the tenets of the organizations. Both organizations gave what I would consider titles for their values, followed by a short description. The Wooden Floor used one word to denote each of their values, such as “Excellence” or “Respect,”<sup>26</sup> while Kern Dance Alliance had slightly longer titles that created specificity in their values that seemed to strengthen their impact and relevance to the organization. Some of the Kern Dance Alliance’s values are “Dance Community Alliance” and “Professional Development for Teachers.”<sup>27</sup> For Dancing at My Desk, I decided to follow the model of Kern Dance Alliance in giving more specific titles for the organization’s values, even if they are slightly longer. Since these values encompass the entirety of the organization, I determined that it was important to try and avoid too much generalization within an overarching statement. I also decided to create a separate values section for Dancing at My Desk that focused on the specific values within the curriculum. The curricular values were

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<sup>25</sup> Tony Poderis, “Don’t Make Your Organization’s Statement of Purpose a ‘Mission Impossible’,” *Fundraising Readiness* (blog).

<sup>26</sup> “Mission & Values,” Who We Are, The Wooden Floor, accessed December 9, 2017, [http://www.thewoodenfloor.org/mission\\_values/](http://www.thewoodenfloor.org/mission_values/).

<sup>27</sup> “4 Pillars,” About, Kern Dance Alliance, accessed December 9, 2017, <http://kerndance.org/about/>.

not given their own titles due to their direct connection to curriculum whereas the administrative values act as pillars for the entirety of the organization.

For the website creation, I referenced The Gabriella Foundation, The Wooden Floor, and Kern Dance Alliance's sites for their stylistic qualities and the phrasing they used to denote and explain each of their tabs. I noticed that the color schemes for each of the website's mirrored the color scheme of the photos that were on the website, such as how the costumes from a performance photo complemented the website background or how the students' uniforms were the same color as the website font. In terms of phrasing for the website, I was most interested in how each organization phrased their "Donation/Support" pages. The language from each organization was clear in what they were asking for and created a tone in which the organization was thankful for support, but not to the extent in which they seemed desperate. The "Contributions" page for The Wooden Floor, seemed most effective not only in its language, but in that individuals navigating the site and looking to donate did not have to move to a different page.<sup>28</sup> The fill-in information for giving a donation was easily accessible. This demonstrates organization's conscientiousness in making the donation process simple. The results from the analysis of these three organizations then informed the creation of the mission, vision, values, and website for Dancing at My Desk.

## **Results**

The culmination of the project consisted of two components: the creation of and practical test of Dancing at My Desk programming and the application of nonprofit building techniques to establish the mission, vision, values and branding of Dancing at My Desk, though not necessarily

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<sup>28</sup> "Make a Gift," Ways to Give, The Wooden Floor, accessed December 9, 2017, [https://secure3.convio.net/wooden/site/Donation2?idb=1729962304&1400.donation=form1&df\\_id=1400&mfc\\_pref=T&idb=0](https://secure3.convio.net/wooden/site/Donation2?idb=1729962304&1400.donation=form1&df_id=1400&mfc_pref=T&idb=0)

in that order. First the mission, vision and values were created, then programming and finally, branding. I began with the vision of the program to distinguish how the organization's long-term goals would address the greatest needs in the community. First, that the need for Arts Integration curriculum in California is not only imminent but requires a different approach to increase accessibility. Secondly, the greater Los Angeles Area is arguably a major epicenter for promotion of and advocacy for the arts, and therefore lends itself well to the implementation of a sustainable Arts Integration program. Thus, my long-term vision for Dancing at My Desk centered around these very principles. From the vision, I then honed the mission statement, which represents the core of my vision and is traceable throughout all of the organization's daily operations. It was also essential to be selective in the verbiage for the statement as the mission "Declares 'why' the organization exists," it is "The blueprint for carrying out the organizations' business."<sup>29</sup> Thus, the mission must be carefully constructed to refrain from outlining 'what' the organization does, when it should focus on 'how'. The mission for Dancing at My Desk was created based on what is expected to happen for the students through the experience of a dance integration curriculum and what is the underlying purpose of the organization's services. Finally, the values of the mission were created based on what needs to occur within the organization's administration and programming to support the mission. These are the resulting mission, vision, and values of Dancing at My Desk:

**Mission:**

The mission of *Dancing at My Desk* is to cultivate the critical minds and broaden the perspectives of youth in greater Los Angeles through dance-based, Arts Integration education.

**Vision:**

The initial objective of *Dancing at My Desk* is to provide underserved students, grades K-12, with an Arts Integration education that focuses on dance to support their academic, social and

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<sup>29</sup> Tony Poderis, "Don't Make Your Organization's Statement" (blog).

emotional growth. The ultimate goal is to provide this education to youth throughout the greater Los Angeles area.

The vision of the organization is to be acknowledged throughout California as a leading model for Arts Integration education focused on dance, cultivating the critical minds and curiosity of youth in an environment where they feel safe and are encouraged to inquire about the world around them while instilling a deep appreciation for all fields of study.

**Values:**

*Curricular*

1. Dancing at My Desk creates a space where students are encouraged to explore their curiosities within, but not limited to, the many disciplines addressed in the curriculum.
2. Dancing at My Desk students and teaching artists work together to draw from what is learned and experienced in the classroom and become advocates for arts education.
3. Dancing at My Desk curriculum is designed to instill students with a deep sense of their own agency, to ensure all students believe in their ability to succeed.

*Administrative*

1. *Balance:* Program growth and development will draw from the tenet of Arts Integration curriculum regarding balanced understanding of content areas. All existing programs and any future endeavors at Dancing at My Desk shall then be built through the intent to provide equal and balanced access to all disciplines.
2. *Need and Desire:* Participation in the program is prioritized for schools and communities that have demonstrated need and desire for the program.
3. *Community Involvement:* Classroom teachers or parents will be encouraged to participate in the sustainment of our programs. By incorporating this support system from the community, the curriculum and program and experience will be enriched.
4. *Equality:* All staff, faculty, participants and volunteers will be welcomed and valued within the organization regardless of race, sexual orientation, gender, and socioeconomic background.

Based on the intent of this project, the first stages of the program were formed to provide the foundations for later program development. Thus, my first task was to establish the structure of the classes. Since students already learn about the core content areas in their schools, I predict that they will have encountered the concepts we will cover from those areas at some point in their education. On the other hand, I cannot assume that all of the students that will participate in the program will have had experience with dance outside of social movement or in a structured dance class. Thus, to support their learning, students in the program will take Western dance technique classes (Ballet, modern, jazz) alongside their dance integration classes. In my interview with Carol Zee, former Artistic Director of The Gabriella Foundation, she explained that the structuring of ballet, modern and jazz technique lends itself well to creating a leveling

system based on students' abilities to reach benchmarks within the technique.<sup>30</sup> Other dance forms such as social dance or non-Western cultural dances also possess skill level benchmarks, however, similarities in exercises across ballet, modern, and jazz technique create more of a cohesive leveling structure. For example, exercises such as tendus appear in various forms within each of the techniques. According to Patricia T. Alpert, "The exercise benefits of dance include increased flexibility, increase in muscle strength and tone, increased endurance, balance and special awareness, and a general feeling of well-being."<sup>31</sup> Furthermore, Malkogeorgos, Zaggelidou, Manolopoulos, and Zaggelidis, also explain that, "Every dance movement is the result of a range of useful decisions on how the dance movement uses space, time, energy and partnership of pupils."<sup>32</sup> For both of these studies, these results on the benefits of dance applied to specified technique classes. Though the study by Malkogeorgos et al. included non-Western dance technique classes, the data from this study supports the claim that the benefits of technique class can be translated to assist in understanding within integration classes. Students will also be exposed to dance terminology that may be used in integration courses and be aware of behavioral procedures that are specific to dance classes. The vocabulary surrounding concepts from Creative Dance (energy, space, time) utilized by instructors in dance technique classes will mirror the vocabulary that is present in the integration classes. Creative Dance is an essential component of the integration courses and will be used to support students' understanding of

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<sup>30</sup> Carol Zee (Former Artistic Director at The Gabriella Foundation) in discussion with the author, February 2017.

<sup>31</sup> Patricia T. Alpert, "The Health Benefits of Dance," *Sage Journals* 23, no. 2 (April 2011): 155, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1084822310384689>.

<sup>32</sup> Alexandros Malkogeorgos, Eleni Zaggelidou, Evangelos Manolopoulos and George Zaggelidis, "The Social-Psychological Outcomes of Dance Practice: A Review," *The Journal of National Institute for Sport Research* 20, no. 5-6 (Dec 2011): 114. <https://doi.org/10.2478/v10237-011-0067-y>.

technique.<sup>33</sup> By incorporating this language and method of teaching dance technique, students at Dancing at My Desk will continue to be asked to approach both dance and learning in a new way through autonomous choices within what is normally, an extremely structured class.<sup>34</sup>

The Dancing at My Desk program structure is based upon age/grade level but also will include a degree of fluidity should a student's skill levels in dance and the core content areas require some adjustment. It will be set as follows:

<b>Level 1-3 (Ages 8-10)</b>	1 Technique Class (Ballet) + 1 Integration Class (Alternating Math and ELA)
<b>Level 4-6 (Ages 11-13)</b>	2 Technique Classes (Ballet and Modern) + 2 Integration Classes (Alternating Math/ELA, and Science/Social Science)
<b>Level 7-10 (Ages 14-18)</b>	3 Technique Classes (Ballet, Modern, and Jazz) + 3 Integration Classes (Alternating Math/ELA, Science/Social Science, Studio Arts/Music)

With the program structure in place, the next step was to create an example of dance integration curriculum for each levelling group. Since the purpose of this project is to explore creating access to Arts Integration, the stage of project development focused on integration curriculum formation.<sup>35</sup> The first lesson is for Level 1 students (Age 8, Grade 3) and integrates Dance and Mathematics. The concepts that are addressed are shapes and levels in space. The objective is for students to focus on identifying the ways in which they can create different-sided shapes in space individually, and in partnerships. The next lesson is for Level 5 (Age 12, Grade 7), which integrates Dance and Social Science. The concepts in this lesson are trade routes in

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<sup>33</sup> Alison E. Leonard, Leah Hellenbrand, and Karen McShane-Hellenbrand, "Leading by Design: A Collaborative and Creative Leadership Framework for Dance Integration in P-12 Schools," *Journal of Dance Education* 14 (2014).

<sup>34</sup> See Appendix B: Dancing at My Desk Ballet Technique Excerpts for a sample of ballet technique exercises.

<sup>35</sup> Refer to "Conclusion: Expanding the Program" for further explanation on moving forward with the formulation of the technical dance curriculum.

Asia, Africa and Europe and the various pathways in dance. The objective is for students to translate gestural choreography to a designated pathway based on historical Arab trade routes. The third lesson is for Level 8 (Age 15, Grade 10) as an integration of Dance and English Language Arts. The concepts for this lesson are symbolism and gestures in dance. The objective of this lesson is for students to understand the use of gesture in dance to embody the meaning of selected symbols from The Great Gatsby. Each of these lessons act not only as curriculum content examples but as examples of the streamlined process of curriculum formation and structure.<sup>36</sup>

Next, I selected the Level 1 lesson plan to demonstrate the implementation of this curriculum on a beginning level class. The selection of this lesson for the demonstration was due to both availability of students in this age group and willingness of the Mar Vista Family Center to permit the demonstration.<sup>37</sup> The purpose of this demonstration was to evaluate the students' understanding of the material through its presentation in a new way and their engagement throughout the lesson. Student understanding was assessed through a pre-test and a post-test that were similar in format. The pre-test was administered the week prior to the lesson and the post-test was given at the culmination of the lesson. Due to the changes in student attendance between the weeks, the results of the test were limited. For the students that did participate in both tests, the majority demonstrated greater clarity in differentiating between the various sided shapes. This comparison was done through a side by side evaluation of both assessments. To assess student engagement, teaching assistants were asked to compare student behavior in this class in

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<sup>36</sup> See Appendix C-E for full lesson plans.

<sup>37</sup> During Fall 2017, I was a children's dance instructor at the Mar Vista Family Center. With the center's permission, I demonstrated a Dancing at My Desk lesson plan on my class there to examine how the children responded to the lesson.

comparison to previous non-integration classes. Teaching assistant and LMU Dance major, Celine Chai, commented that “The students were definitely engaged and intrigued by how dance shared a relationship with geometry...they exuded more interest and enthusiasm in the lesson.” For further research, these lessons will be evaluated using various internal (teaching assistants) and external (unaffiliated teaching professional) sources to observe over an extended period of time.

Once the core intentions and programming of Dancing at My Desk were finalized, the next step was to create the way in which all of these foundational elements of the organization would be accessed. Therefore, the next step was to design a website. In order to fully establish the aesthetic of the website from the styling guide to the site structure, the website was created within graphic design software and is not yet a functioning site as the website design tools

available for the budget of this project limited the freedom to manipulate the aesthetic. In collaboration with multimedia artist, Darren Maser-Katter, I created

a logo for the organization. This logo will appear on all marketing materials, students’ uniforms, and on the website. Maser-Katter and I agreed that the logo should convey dance in some way as well as a clear depiction of the organization’s branding. The logo depicts a



Dancing at My Desk Logo

figure that represents a dancer and forms part of the acronym

“DMD,” which is how Dancing at My Desk will be abbreviated. Thus, the logo conveys the

heart of the organization, which is dance, in a form that is unique to the organization. After

deciding upon a color palette that embodies the tone of the organization, I focused upon the

creation of the text for the site, while Maser-Katter applied this text to the design. The results of

this collaboration can be viewed in Appendix F: Webpage Designs.

Each aspect of this stage drew from prior elements of research to guide the formulation of the website. Yet, this stage also constituted extensive analysis of the process in which the foundations of an organization take shape. In this research, the application of nonprofit building techniques in conjunction with pedagogical practices drawn from the first two stages of research informed how the elements of the organization come into existence and encompass the many strategies that the interviewees described as essential to program sustainability.

### **Conclusion: Expanding the Program**

With the creation of the mission, vision, and values of Dancing at My Desk alongside the formation of Dancing at My Desk curriculum and branding, the initial foundations of the organization have taken root. As this organization continues to develop, both the administration and pedagogy will grow in scope based on the model that was put forth by this project. The next step in the administrative aspect of the organization is to build a Board of Directors. To create holistic leadership within the nonprofit organization, the Board of Directors should be composed of individuals with a diverse set of skills. When assembling the board of Dancing at My Desk, I will look for individuals that are not only passionate about our cause but can support the organization through different skillsets in fields such as law, educational policy, and arts administration. Once the board is established, the next step is to set the operational and programming budget for the organization. With the support of the board, I will be able to itemize the programming costs as well as other projected overhead expenditures such as staff and facility expenses. When the budget is created I will then be able to begin staffing the organization both in terms of administration as well as for additional teaching artists. After the organization's first year, I plan to work with the board to create a strategic plan for the next five years. Though each

of these administrative steps are currently wide in scope, as this project progresses each component will develop more clarity.

The establishment of the administrative factors will allow for the organization to further hone the curriculum. Before the program is implemented, both the technique and Arts Integration teaching artists will participate in professional development training. The teaching artists will create unit plans and benchmarks for each of their respective classes. The teaching artists should collaborate holistically as well as within their own disciplines. For example, the Arts Integration teaching artists will work independently to create their unit plans for each level, however, they will maintain communication with the technique teaching artists to ensure that the Arts Integration and technique unit plans support each other. The inclusion of Creative Dance is essential to the curriculum at Dancing at My Desk. Thus, technique teaching artists will ensure that either their units or individual lesson plans include Creative Dance elements. The dance integration teaching artists will draw from the elements of Creative Dance taught in the technique classes to build their lessons and demonstrate the connections between the classes. For the development of benchmarks, teaching artists will work together in their separate disciplines. Additionally, the entire teaching artist team will agree upon a set of classroom policies as well as which management techniques such as call phrases or clapping cues that will be used in all of the classes.

Each of these further stages of development add to the expansion of Dancing at My Desk. Though it is most likely that the program will be implemented in the form of residencies at participating schools, the ultimate goal of the organization is to have a series of facilities throughout greater Los Angeles. During this continuous process of growth, the cohesive mission and vision of the organization will keep the work centered. With the implementation of Dancing

at My Desk, we inspire our students as well as the surrounding community to explore their curiosities and enhance their self-efficacy through a holistic dance education.

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## Appendix

### **Appendix A: Significant Pedagogical & Administrative Practices**

#### *Pedagogical Practices:*

- For symbiotic integration, dance instructors should participate in students' classroom setting and classroom teachers should participate in the dance classes (The Gabriella Foundation, Aman Educators, E.S.C.A.P.E.)
- During residencies, formulate classroom management around school site policies (The Gabriella Foundation, Aman Educators, E.S.C.A.P.E.)
- Utilize posters and other visuals for classroom expectations and daily/ongoing learning objectives and vocabulary ((The Gabriella Foundation, Aman Educators, E.S.C.A.P.E., The Wooden Floor)
- Teaching artists can utilize music from the classroom to structure dances (Aman Educators, E.S.C.A.P.E.)
- Attendance is crucial (The Gabriella Foundation, Aman Educators, E.S.C.A.P.E., The Wooden Floor, Kern Dance Alliance)

#### *Administrative Practices:*

- Build strong administrative support and a curriculum team from the start (The Gabriella Foundation, The Wooden Floor, Kern Dance Alliance)
- Establish a clear mission statement (The Gabriella Foundation, The Wooden Floor, Kern Dance Alliance)
- Develop strong by-laws, legal protocol, and acquire to establish specific and concrete policies from the start (The Gabriella Foundation, Kern Dance Alliance)
- Maintain communication and collaboration between administration, staff, teaching artists and parents (The Gabriella Foundation, Aman Educators, E.S.C.A.P.E., The Wooden Floor, Kern Dance Alliance)
- Funding comes from grant writing, private donors, NEA, fundraisers (The Gabriella Foundation, The Wooden Floor, Kern Dance Alliance)
- Funding is crucial; to maintain funding, the programs should include final performances and assessments to demonstrate progression of learning (The Gabriella Foundation, The Wooden Floor, Kern Dance Alliance)
- Collaboration during residencies can involve the participation of the PTA (Aman Educators)
- Invest in marketing and branding, such as formulating an image that represents the organization or creating a promotional film to gather students or schools for residencies (Kern Dance Alliance)
- Form connections with experts from various fields to account for the pedagogical and administrative needs of the organization (The Gabriella Foundation, Kern Dance Alliance)
- If facility or program has a limit on students, either a lottery or an audition should be held (The Gabriella Foundation, The Wooden Floor)
- Students, based on income, are not asked to pay tuition (The Wooden Floor)

## **Appendix B: Dancing at My Desk Ballet Technique Excerpts**

### Excerpts from Ballet Technique (Level 5)

#### **Barre Exercise: Tendu**

Students will be given a simple tendu combination that is repeated using different energy based on Laban Efforts. The students will dance to the same musical track; however, they will be instructed to allow the music to inform their energy quality even if it seems to be contrasting.

The instructor will use language in describing the exercises that includes specific vocabulary regarding energy (i.e. “This set of tendus en croix will be executed with bound flow, allowing the tension in your body to support the articulation of your foot”). This vocabulary will be the same vocabulary that appears in the dance integration lessons.

*First Tendu Set: Bound Flow*

*Second Tendu Set: Light weight*

*Third Tendu Set: Sudden Time*

#### **Across the Floor Exercise: Chasse Releve**

Students will be asked to perform chasse arabesque on releve as an adagio across the floor. This exercise will first be done as in a conventional ballet class (from corner to corner). Next, students will be instructed to perform the same exercise but select any pathway to travel their chasse releves other than a straight line (curved, c-shape, spiral, zig zag).

The instructor will utilize the same pathway terminology that is used in the dance integration classes. (i.e. “When selecting which type of pathway to travel your arabesques, you may use a curved, c-shape, spiral, or zig zag pathway. Keep in mind that regardless of the pathway you select, the technique required of this exercise must be as consistent as when we dance on a straight pathway”).

## Appendix C: Dancing at My Desk Sample Lesson (Level 1)

### Dancing at My Desk:

#### Shapes in Space (Level 1)

*“I think the universe is pure geometry – basically, a beautiful shape twisting around and dancing over space-time.” –Antony Garrett Lisi*

**Enduring Understanding/Big Idea:** Our bodies are tools to create shapes in space.

**Grade Level:** Third Grade

### California VAPA Content Standards

#### *Creative Expression*

- 2.3 Create a sequence that has a beginning, a middle, and an end. Name and refine the parts of the sequence.
- 2.8 Create, memorize, and perform original movement sequences with a partner.

#### *Aesthetic Valuing*

- 4.2 Explain and demonstrate what it means to be a good audience member.

#### *Connections, Relationships, Applications*

- 5.1 Explain relationships between dance elements and other subjects

### California Curriculum Content Standards:

#### 3.G.A.1

- 1 Understand that shapes in different categories (e.g., rhombuses, rectangles, and others) may share attributes (e.g., having four sides), and that the shared attributes can define a larger category (e.g., quadrilaterals). Recognize rhombuses, rectangles, and squares as examples of quadrilaterals, and draw examples of quadrilaterals that do not belong to any of these subcategories.

**Objective:** Students will focus on identifying the ways in which they can create different-sided shapes in space individually, and in partnerships.

### Student Learning Outcomes

*As a result of this lesson, students will:*

- 1 Identify the mathematical names for designated no-sided, three-sided and four-sided two-dimensional shapes.
- 2 Differentiate between the designated shapes through embodiment of the shapes.
- 3 Experiment with the embodiment of these shapes in high-level, low-level, and partnerships.
- 4 Construct an original dance sequence that includes the three variations of shape, levels in space, and partner work.

**Vocabulary:** Shape, No-sided, Three-sided, Four-sided, Circle, Oval, Triangle, Rectangle, Square, Parallelogram, Pose, Point of Contact, High-level, Low-level

**Materials:** Music is optional, shape papers, assessment charts

### **Anticipatory Set**

Students will enter the classroom to find shape papers spread out across the floor, each with a different sided shape on it. Each student will select one paper and will then find the other people that could fit into their group. Students will then discuss with their group to describe why they think they are similar which they will report to the class.

### **Lesson Progression**

- 1 Students will sit in a circle to identify the names of the shapes that were on the shape papers (i.e. Circle, Oval, Triangle, Rectangle, Square, Parallelogram) as well as how many sides each shape has. Three students will be designated to be the keeper of the shapes with no sides, three sides, and four sides. Students will then bring their shape paper to the keeper that matches the amount of sides on their shape.
- 2 Students will then spread out in the space. They will first create a shape that has no sides by selecting a pose (non-locomotor) that embodies a no-sided shape. Students will then be asked to create a no-sided shape on high-level and low-level. They will be encouraged to think about how to create these shape poses beyond the use of their arms. This activity will be repeated for three-sided and four-sided shapes.
- 3 Students will then be placed in pairs to practice creating the shape poses by connecting to a partner. The term, point of contact, will be introduced here. Students will create no-sided, three-sided and four-sided shape poses with their partners in high-level and low-level.
- 4 In their partners, students will create a dance sequence that incorporates three-sided, four-sided and no-sided shapes. Students must do at least one type of shape individually and one in a partnership. The dances must have a clear beginning and end. As a bonus, students may add transitions and pathways to their dance.

**Performance-Based Assessment:** Students will perform their dance sequences (2 groups at a time). Students in the audience will be reminded of the qualities of a good audience member.

**Lesson Culmination:** Students will fill out shape charts by drawing which shapes are no-sided, three-sided, and four-sided.

## Appendix D: Dancing at My Desk Sample Lesson (Level 5)

### Dancing at My Desk:

#### A Caravan of Choreography (Level 5)

*The imagination is the golden pathway to everywhere. – Terence McKenna*

**Enduring Understanding/Big Idea:** Dance moves you through all of the spaces you encounter.

**Grade Level:** Seventh Grade

### California VAPA Content Standards

#### *Creative Expression*

2.7 Demonstrate increased originality in using partner or group relationships to define spatial floor patterns, shape designs, and entrances and exits.

### California Curriculum Content Standards

#### 7.2

5 Describe the growth of cities and the establishment of trade routes among Asia, Africa, and Europe, the products and inventions that traveled along these routes (e.g., spices, textiles, paper, steel, new crops), and the role of merchants in Arab society.

**Objective:** Students will translate gestural choreography to a designated pathway based on historical Arab trade routes.

### Student Learning Outcomes

*As a result of this lesson, students will:*

- 1 Identify the various pathways in dance
- 2 Interpret designated trade goods to formulate a gesture.
- 3 Experiment with creating dance formations while executing different choreography.
- 4 Assemble a travel movement phrase that utilizes a set pathway.

**Vocabulary:** pathways (straight, curved, swirl, c-shaped, zig zag, dotted), goods, caravan

**Materials:** White board, poster paper, markers, music is optional

### Anticipatory Set

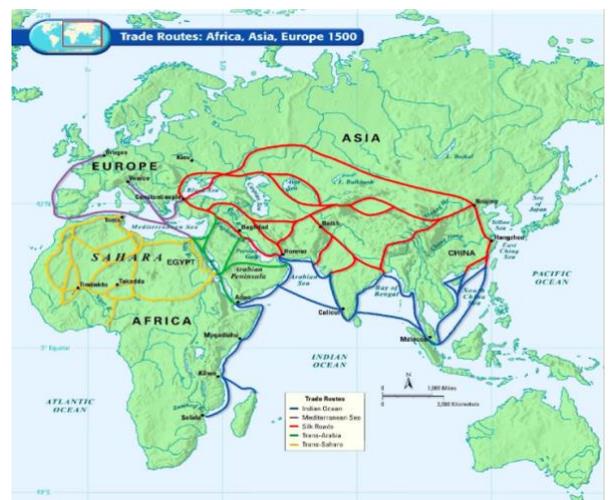
Students will write a short story about their journey to school. First, they will draw out simplified directions of their route; then, they explain the medium through which they travel to school (car, walking, bus, metro) and what you carry with you to school (backpack, lunch, musical instrument, sports bag). Students will then be asked to briefly share about their journeys. Students will be asked to identify if their route has a completely straight pathway, if there are turns, or stops, etc. Students will then share their thoughts on the types of routes that merchants traveled on in Arab Society.

### Lesson Progression

- 1 Students, as a class, will then recall the types of pathways in dance (straight, curved, swirl, c-shaped, zig zag, dotted). One student will be asked to draw these pathways on the board. Students will then be asked to think about where they might see these types of pathways in the outside world. Another student will be asked to write a list.
- 2 As a warm-up, students will then spread out in the space. Students will first be asked to walk through the space freely. Next, they will continue walking using only straight pathways (including zig zags), and then curved pathways (including swirls and c-shaped). Students will then choose the pathways they would like to work through.
- 3 Students will then be split up into groups of 3 or 4. These will become their “goods group”. The groups will be categorized as spices, textiles, steel, foodstuffs. Within these groups, students will use prior knowledge of gestural choreography to create a movement that represents their group. Students must also keep in mind that the movement they choose should be able to travel.
- 4 The students will then be placed in a “caravan group”. These groups will consist of one to two students from each goods group. First, students will organize their caravan into a dance formation that coincides with how the goods would be organized in an actual caravan (most expensive goods towards the middle to avoid robbers). Students will then combine their gestures from their good group within the formation they created where each student performs their individual goods gesture in the dance, rather than creating one unified phrase (students will be performing only their own gesture). Using poster paper, students will select a route from the trade route map provided to draw out the pathway for their trade route dance. Students will then stage their dance along this route. They will also be asked to take into account stops along their route (dotted pathway).
- 5 Students will then be asked to perform their dance for the class. After their performance, they will explain their goods formation choice to the class.

**Performance-Based Assessment:** Students will perform their caravan choreography for the class.

**Lesson Culmination:** In their caravan groups, each group will be asked to draw obstacles on their trade route for their dance. This could include weather conditions, geographic boundaries or land forms that might affect how they move. Students will then be asked to analyze how these changes would affect the energy of their movement and report back to the class.



## Appendix E: Dancing at My Desk Sample Lesson (Level 8)

### Dancing at My Desk:

#### Somatic Symbols (Level 8)

*“If personality is an unbroken series of successful gestures, then there was something gorgeous about him” –F. Scott Fitzgerald, The Great Gatsby*

**Enduring Understanding/Big Idea:** A single movement can be used to convey a broader meaning.

**Grade Level:** Tenth Grade

### California VAPA Content Standards

#### *Creative Expression*

- 2.4 Perform original works that employ personal artistic intent and communicate effectively.
- 2.6 Collaborate with peers in the development of choreography in groups (e.g., duets, trios, small ensembles).

### California Curriculum Content Standards:

#### *RL.9-10.4*

- 1 Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in the text, including figurative and connotative meanings; analyze the cumulative impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone (e.g., how the language evokes a sense of time and place; how it sets a formal or informal tone).

**Objective:** Students will understand the use of gesture in dance to embody the meaning of selected symbols from The Great Gatsby.

Note: Students will have read the entirety of The Great Gatsby prior to this lesson

### Student Learning Outcomes

*As a result of this lesson, students will:*

- 1 Define the different forms of gesture in dance (abstract v. pantomime).
- 2 Interpret commonly used gestures and translate them to locomotor and non-locomotor movement.
- 3 Select symbols from The Great Gatsby and define their meanings.
- 4 Develop gestural choreography based on the symbols from The Great Gatsby to create an original phrase.

**Vocabulary:** Gesture, pantomime, abstract, non-locomotor, locomotor, symbol/symbolism

**Materials:** YouTube videos, journals, white board, music is optional

### Anticipatory Set

Students will watch excerpts from Bill T. Jones's *Continuous Replay* and the party scene from *The Nutcracker*. After both excerpts are shown, students will be asked to share what they saw in each video, specifically, what kinds of movements. The instructor will then set the pieces in context, such as how the accumulation of gestures takes place in *Continuous Replay* and how gestures or pantomime in the party scene relate to the story.

### Lesson Progression

- 1 In groups of 2 to 3, students will create a list of at least five symbols from The Great Gatsby including what they interpret as the meaning of the symbol. Each group will then select a reporter to share their findings with the class. One student will act as the class scribe to list the symbols shared by the groups, accounting for which symbols are repeated amongst the groups. The 3 symbols that were cited the most will become the basis for the rest of the lesson.
- 2 Students will then be introduced to the term, gesture. Students will be asked to provide a definition of gesture (Gesture =movement of the hand, head, body, arm or face that expresses an idea, emotion or opinion). Students will then be asked to identify common gestures that they see day to day (Hello, Stop, Good Job). We will then discuss how gestures in dance can be either abstract (*Continuous Replay*) or convey a meaning (*Nutcracker Party Scene*). For our class, we will focus on gestures that convey a meaning but are not necessarily tied directly to the storyline. The gestures we will create will have meaning based on the concepts they represent, yet are abstract in that the concepts will not trace together to form a plot. We will then discuss how gestures do not necessarily look like literal embodiments (i.e. making a heart with your hands).
- 3 Students will then spread out in the space. They will have 6 minutes to create 2 different gestures that convey the day to day concepts we had discussed before (Hello, Stop, Good Job). One of their gestures must be non-locomotor and the other must be locomotor. We will then split the class in half to perform the gestures.
- 4 Students will then return to their groups from earlier. In these groups, students will create two gestures for each of the three class symbols from The Great Gatsby (one non-locomotor, one locomotor).
- 5 Once each group has created their 6 gestures, the group will then stage their piece by selecting one of the two gestures for each symbol (they will have 3 set gestures in total for their dance). Groups will be asked to use both non-locomotor and locomotor gestures, include transitions, create a clear beginning and end, and utilize timing to support the meaning of their gesture/symbol.
- 6 Each group will perform their dance for the class. Audience members will take notes on which of the 3 symbols was conveyed most clearly by the group and why.

**Performance-Based Assessment:** Students will perform both their pedestrian gestures from warm-up and their group dances for the class.

**Lesson Culmination:** Students will journal about the activity in relation to the questions: When forming your gestures, how did you select what parts of your body would best convey the

symbol? If you were to redo your choreography, what other parts of your body would you use to enhance the gestures?

## Appendix F: Webpage Designs

**Dancing at My Desk**

About Us  
Who We Are  
Our Program  
Get Involved

Donate  
Contact Us

Dance has the power to inspire the body, mind and spirit of all human beings. Through dance, we celebrate individuality and unite under the universal language of movement. Our program expands the minds of young dance scholars as they explore their curiosities and find answers through movement.

**Dancing at My Desk**

About Us  
Who We Are  
Our Program  
Get Involved

### About Us

#### Mission

The mission of Dancing at My Desk is to cultivate the critical minds and broaden the perspectives of youth in greater Los Angeles through dance-based, Arts Integration education.

#### Vision

The initial objective of Dancing at My Desk is to provide underserved students, grades K-12, that are struggling in school with an Arts Integration education that focuses on dance to support their academic, social and emotional growth. The ultimate goal is to provide this education to youth throughout the greater Los Angeles area.

The vision of the organization is to be acknowledged throughout California as a leading model for Arts Integration education focused on dance, cultivating the critical minds and curiosity of youth in an environment where they feel safe and are encouraged to inquire about the world around them while instilling a deep appreciation for all fields of study.

#### Values

The goals listed below are applicable across the board for Dancing at My Desk curriculum and administration.

*Curricular*

1. Dancing at My Desk creates a space where students are encouraged to explore their curiosities within, but not limited to, the many disciplines addressed in the curriculum.
2. Dancing at My Desk students and teaching artists work together to draw from what is learned and experienced in the classroom and become advocates for arts education.
3. Dancing at My Desk curriculum is designed to instill students with a deep sense of their own agency, to ensure all students believe in their ability to succeed.

*Administrative*

1. *Balance:* Program growth and development will draw from the tenet of Arts Integration curriculum regarding balanced understanding of content areas. All existing programs and any future endeavors at Dancing at My Desk shall then be built through the intent to provide equal and balanced access to all disciplines.
2. *Need and Desire:* Participation in the program is prioritized for schools that have demonstrated need and desire for the program.
3. *Community Involvement:* Classroom teachers or parents will be encouraged to participate in the sustainment of our programs. By incorporating this support system from the community, the curriculum and program and experience will be enriched.
4. *Equality:* All staff, faculty, participants and volunteers will be welcomed and valued within the organization regardless of race, sexual orientation, gender, and socioeconomic background.

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### Who We Are

#### Board of Directors

Dancing at My Desk will have a Board of Directors made up of 10 members of the community that bring a diverse set of skills and unite under the mission of Dancing at My Desk.

#### Staff

The Dancing at My Desk staff are a team of extraordinary dance education advocates from a variety of fields. Their commitment to the mission of Dancing at My Desk continues to inspire the communities we serve.

#### Faculty

Dancing at My Desk teaching artists are a group of talented and well-rounded experts in the spheres of dance and education. Their backgrounds as artists and educators support the development of Dancing at My Desk curriculum and student experience.



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## Our Program

### What is Arts Integration?

Arts Integration refers to the combination of a visual or performing art with a core content area to provide equal understanding of a topic from both selected fields. At Dancing at My Desk, we focus on the integration of dance and core content area to provide a deeper understanding of this arts discipline and encourage kinesthetic learning.

*Class Structure:*

Level 1-3 (Ages 8-10)	1 Technique Class (Ballet) + 1 Integration Class (Alternating Math and ELA)
Level 4-6 (Ages 11-13)	2 Technique Classes (Ballet and Modern) + 2 Integration Classes (Alternating Math/ELA, and Science/Social Science)
Level 7-10 (Ages 14-18)	3 Technique Classes (Ballet, Modern, and Jazz) + 3 Integration Classes (Alternating Math/ELA, Science/Social Science, Studio Arts/Music)

*Curriculum Examples:*

[Level 1 Lesson Plan: Shapes in Space](#)

[Level 5 Lesson Plan: A Caravan of Choreography](#)

[Level 8 Lesson Plan: Somatic Symbols](#)



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## Get Involved

### Volunteer

Thanks to our wonderful volunteers, Dancing at My Desk programs continue to thrive and serve the Los Angeles community. By sharing your time and expertise in our various volunteer opportunities, you can help make a difference in the lives of our students. To become a volunteer, please fill out the application below:

First Name:

Last Name:

Email:

Describe your area(s) of interest/experience:

How did you hear about Dancing at My Desk?:

Tell us about your interest in volunteering at Dancing at My Desk and how often you envision yourself volunteering:

### Contribute

It is through the generous support of individuals like you that our program continues to bring dance-based Arts Integration curriculum to youth from low-income communities as they expand their minds and bodies through dance exploration. Thank you!

To make a donation, use this link: [www.dancingatmydesk.org/donate](http://www.dancingatmydesk.org/donate)

### Join Our Mailing List

Join our mailing list to learn more about and stay updated on Dancing at My Desk! By joining, you will receive news on upcoming events, program updates, and our annual newsletter.

First Name:

Last Name:

Email:

How did you hear about us: