

“If it’s Tuesday, it Must be Group Work!”: Steps to Confident Collaborative Culture Creation

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Abstract

Rooted in the scholarly literature on the importance of joy, the value of play, and the benefits of deliberate practice in facilitating student learning, this report explores how elements of a school’s successful modern dance company’s program, including regular rehearsal and experiential group learning, were ported to a middle school Humanities classroom. The action research project reported here examines how the implementation of iterative discussion and collaborative work patterns shifted girls’ attitudes and approaches to group work in a Seventh Grade Ancient Civilizations class, transforming them from being grade-focused to centered on the quality of the group’s projects instead. Through an analysis of survey data, classroom observations, and student reflections, the study concludes that explicitly teaching discussion skills, coupled with regular collaborative practice, improves confidence in girls in group settings, reduces grade anxiety, and fosters the creation of community through hands-on learning in a supportive and enriching learning environment.

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At the heart of many an independent school, there is a signature program, one that sets it apart from the rest. At the Girls Preparatory School in Chattanooga, Tennessee, that program is called Terpsichord. Named for the ancient Greek muse who oversees lyric poetry and dance, Terpsichore, Terpsichord is the longest continually operating high school modern dance company in Tennessee, having been founded in 1954. At this point, generations of Chattanooga girls have been members of the company, and GPS’ Terpsichord alumnae are among the school’s most fervent boosters and supporters. Its contribution to the “girl magic” at work in the school clearly deserved further study to see if its special formula could be scaled up and applied to disciplines beyond dance.

As a choreography-based selective ensemble, collaboration is essential to the Terpsichord company’s proper functioning. Therein, the girls work together to perform pieces, not just by in-house faculty and visiting artists, but also ones which they choreograph and execute themselves. They perform at the school’s signature events like May Day, at concerts such as the annual Thanksgiving Concert which heralds the arrival of Fall Break, at all-school assemblies and grade-level events, as well as within the Chattanooga community, nationally, and occasionally even internationally. Participation in the program requires the highest commitment; there are three years of college-level specialist classes to take as well as a grueling rehearsal schedule (see Appendix A). However, the company’s girls rarely complain about the long hours that they put into their work in the dance studio. Instead, reflecting on their time in the company during their Senior Chapel Talks before the whole school, Terpsichord girls inevitably laud the special bond of sisterhood which is formed through their practice sessions and the pride they feel in their achievement as a collective.

What follows represents an attempt to “bottle” the success of the GPS Terpsichord program, for in that space beyond all others at the school the girls report that they experience the most joy in the *process* of learning rather than in the product. Can a similarly fixed schedule, repetition, and appropriate framing promote joy in the process in a Humanities classroom as well? This action research project examined how the insertion of iterative and regular discussion days and collaborative work into the class cadence of a Seventh Grade Ancient Civilizations class, in effect establishing a practice “routine” in emulation of Terpsichord’s, helped to shift girls’ attitudes and approaches to collaboration and group work as well as move their focus from the grades resulting from their collaborative projects to the quality of the projects themselves – while at the same time improving girls’ overall confidence in operating in group work situations.

Literature Review

In 2004, in an *Education Week* piece called “Feel-Bad Education: The Cult of Rigor and the Loss of Joy,” Kohn asked: “Why are our schools not places of joy?” In the twenty years that followed, many

independent schools like GPS have quietly dropped emphasis on rigor, compassionate or otherwise, and embraced more learner-centered instructional techniques, which attempt to find joy in the process of learning. The propaedeutic value of play to this end has been recognized since at least the fourth century before Christ. The philosopher Plato, in his *Republic*, records Socrates as saying: “don’t use force to train the children in these subjects; use play instead” (537a, trans. Grube). Centering play fosters creativity in the GPS Terpsichord experience, with the girls using rehearsal time to play with use of space, rhythm, movement, and direction – but it also comes from their playing in rehearsal together. Dance scholar Doug Risner (1995) found that “the rehearsal process is a social situation that is based on a shared faith and trust in the process itself; the rehearsal process allows for individual affirmation in diverse ways” (p. 76). Such spaces are vital for cultivating courage, connection, and self-care in gifted young women according to Fishman-Weaver (2018). The sense of camaraderie, sisterhood, and, ultimately, joy which is promoted within the group is the result of a planned series of interactions – what might be termed Deliberate Practice.

Deliberate Practice is defined as being “the individualized training activities specially designed by a coach or teacher to improve specific aspects of an individual’s performance through repetition and successive refinement” (Ericsson & Lehmann, 1995, pp. 278-279). While Terpsichord girls may not recognize it as such, there is a deliberately programmed aspect to their rehearsals, performance cycles, and the overall cadence of their year. Things which seem to be just “play” in rehearsal are, in fact, a part of a wider effort to help them build skills and competencies with the ultimate goal of achieving mastery of the craft; the perceived safety of the dance studio and rehearsal room environments affords opportunities for failure outside of the public gaze.

Sharp and Macklin (2019) emphasize that iterative activity is key in the learning process, particularly with regard to learning from failure. Based on their experience as game designers, they note that there are many “false starts in finding a path to fun” (p. ix) and highlight that learning how to recognize and respond appropriately to failure takes practice and training. Players of their games, ideally, should take joy in the stumbles and growth; failure to promote this would result in games not being successful after all. In a 2011 article in *Harvard Business Review*, Edmondson expresses her belief that “Only leaders can create and reinforce a culture that counteracts the blame game and makes people feel both comfortable with and responsible for surfacing and learning from failures.” By extension, it becomes the job of the teacher *qua* classroom designer to create learning environments and activities which leverage play to strategically provide opportunities for those kinds of failures which will promote maximal learning, but to do so in a way that is collaborative and supportive, not judgmental.

At GPS, Terpsichord is an experience which is limited to girls in Tenth Grade and above by both tradition and design. Damour (2016) provides some insight as to why: “By tenth grade, most girls feel

secure enough in their friendship groups to ignore or isolate girls who continue to be nasty. Seventh graders, though, having just withdrawn from their home tribe, are particularly vulnerable” (p. 52). She also notes that in the Seventh Grade “[m]eanness generally seems to peak” (p. 52). The social landscape of the adolescent world of the Queen Bees and Wannabes (Wiseman, 2009) is not, of course, as straightforward as Lindsay Lohan’s *Mean Girls* would have us believe. Prinstein (2017) identifies four categories of children on the popularity landscape, the Accepted, or those whom most kids like, the Neglected, the ignored, the Rejected, those actively avoided, and the Controversial, those who are disliked but who maintain clout (p. 27-53). The Seventh Grade classroom, then, functions as a primary landscape for the acquisition and maintenance of popularity as well as a place where each girl’s status, perceived or otherwise, factors into all collaborative efforts in a more pronounced way. Indeed, the maintenance of such status and being liked by peers may matter more to them than meeting learning targets.

Girls’ desire to fit in and be popular at this stage coincides with dramatic periods of growth in their frontal lobes, prefrontal lobes, limbic systems, and hormonal systems. Gurian (2002) correlates these with increases in activities that schools value, such as questioning, improved argumentation, abstract thinking, and memory development, but also less-desirable attributes, such as taking things extremely personally and becoming increasingly judgmental. This creates an array of hazards to be considered in the creation of any classroom collaborative work. Matters are made more complex still by the age-group’s often new-found access to social media. Girls have a tendency to both ruminate and co-ruminate on failures both in person and online (Battaglini, et al., 2021); they do not just “switch off” like boys (Gurian). While co-rumination can at times feel as though it is supportive, there can be negative effects as well such as an increase in symptoms of anxiety (Ohannessian, et al., 2021).

Play and Deliberate Practice have been examined more generally and at length elsewhere with respect to collaboration (see Barron, 2003; Popov et al., 2012; Le, Janssen, & Wubbels, 2018) or the promotion of joy (see Shareski, 2017); however, there is a gap in the existing literature, not just where girls are concerned, but more specifically when it comes to girls at the point in their lives when they are, to use Damour’s (2016) phrase, “Blooming Reluctantly” (p. 27), and are facing not only the usual difficulties of finding their tribe and fitting in, but doing so in an environment where memory of missteps and failures can be compounded and amplified by social media.

Research Context

The Girls Preparatory School is a non-denominational independent school serving the full range of college-bound girls Grades 6 through 12 located in Chattanooga, Tennessee. There are just over 500 girls currently enrolled. GPS’ mission is to inspire each girl to lead a life of integrity and purpose by engaging her mind, cultivating her strengths, and nurturing her self-confidence and respect for others. Its

core values are Individuality, Respect, Curiosity, Relationships, and Honor. This is my 10th year working for GPS, my 3rd year as Lead Teacher of the Seventh Grade Ancient Civilizations course, and my 1st as Humanities Department Coordinator.

At GPS, the Sixth Grade year is foundational; deliberate efforts are made to bring all of the girls from their myriad feeder schools to roughly the same level in order that they might benefit from the rest of program. Skills development is prioritized over content acquisition. The Seventh Grade remains focused on skills-building and preparatory work; however, it more explicitly seeks to harness and maximize girls' collaborative power. To that end, for example, it is the locus for teaching and practicing those discussion skills which are explicitly taught through R.E.A.L. Discussion, a framework for discussion which teaches students to Relate, Excerpt, Ask, and Listen and do so equitably (see previous GARC action research project by Hammond, 2023). Discovering ways to capitalize on the gains that have been made via explicitly teaching and practicing discussion skills and utilizing them to improve girls' collaboration and group work was a logical extension.

I teach three sections of the same Seventh Grade Ancient Civilizations course. To ensure equity of experience for the girls themselves and to give them all a feeling of being a part of the action research project, general data were collected from 41 Seventh Grade girls across the three sections at various points; this action research project, however, focuses on just one section of 14 girls who met for class five times per eight-day rotation, for hour-long class periods.

The Action

One of the keys to the Terpsichord's success at our school has been its ability to forge lasting bonds between the girls in the company through their shared experience of the program. The girls do everything together, from their shared class time during the academic day through to the rehearsals after school and the performances. Their togetherness, shared experiences, and consistent practice sessions help them learn to emulate the attitudes, actions, and behaviors of peers who are successful and, obviously, to receive gentle instruction for amelioration in the areas where improvements are needed, all for the benefit of the company. It works for them and I wanted to see if it could work in a Humanities classroom as well.

Prior iterations of the Ancient Civilization course were heavily lecture-based and focused on developing the girls' abilities as listeners, note-takers, and as writers. The focus was on the individual rather than the collective. In the year preceding this study, it was decided that the R.E.A.L. Discussion system would be taught to the girls to help them learn to disagree agreeably and really lean into the Relationships dimension of our school's stated values (see Covino, 2023; Hammond, 2023; Piercy, 2024). The regular and iterative practice of the R.E.A.L. format over the course of a year cultivated a range of

improvements in the girls' discussion skills. This indicated that an extension into collaborative project work could be a natural progression.

This action research project sought to emulate the Terpsichord program's approach and build on the success of the R.E.A.L. Discussion implementation. It sought to turn each class of Seventh Grade Ancient Civilizations students into a supportive collective by adapting the course's structure to include a standard cadence for each module in the first semester, with each module having a signature activity for the girls to rehearse / practice as they worked with the material from the module. As the school had just adopted an eight-day rotating schedule (see Appendix B), wherein each class meets for one-hour blocks five times per rotation, I capitalized on the change by using the rotation schedule's specific days for collaborative skills-development and practice to promote deeper learning.

The Ancient Civilizations course cadence, then, was set down as follows for the duration of the inquiry. On the first day of a new rotation, girls would receive an introductory lecture which would set the scene for the rotation and ground it in terms of its era and location in the ancient world. Key vocabulary would be emphasized alongside any thematic elements from the unit. On the second day of the rotation, girls would work together on some manner of collaborative effort which would call upon them to practically apply something which had been introduced in the prior lecture class. On the third day of the rotation, girls would employ the R.E.A.L. Discussion system to discuss two aspects of the culture or civilization under scrutiny, rooted in the primary sources generated by the ancient culture or civilization itself. Day four of the rotation would be a day for open discussion, debriefing the project and discussion, and clarification of material prior to review. And the final day of the cycle would be the day during which the girls would have their learning for the module assessed. See Appendix C for the sequence of activities and discussions from the first semester undertaken during the course of the project.

Data Collection

Quantitative and qualitative data were collected during this project. First, survey data generated in the normal course of the academic year were aggregated, including anonymized student rating of faculty instruction surveys, mid-year check-ins, and those data garnered as a part of the girls' participation in R.E.A.L. Discussion. To these, student responses to pre-project surveys were added. Written materials generated by the girls, such as reflection prompts from written assignments, were supplemented with feedback from colleagues who observed class collaborative activity and discussion sessions, my own class observation field notes, and feedback provided to the girls. Photographs and shorter video clips of girls working together were collected, along with whole class recordings of selected key collaborative sessions during the project's implementation phase. Lastly, in-class focus group discussion was conducted and, in select cases, follow-up interviews were necessary to ensure clarity and precision. The

mixed methods approach served to triangulate the data to ensure accuracy and reliability (Mertler, 2020).

Data Analysis

Tabulation and analysis of data garnered from previous surveys of the Seventh Grade class, both those created in-house and those collected via our partnership with R.E.A.L. Discussion, provided a baseline for understanding Seventh Grade year groups' attitudes and approaches to collaboration. Having considered these, I began to analyze the data from this year's Seventh Grade girls garnered through anonymous surveys and the recordings of class activities, follow-up reflection surveys, and written assignments. These materials along with observations and girls' written responses to reflection prompts were transcribed and coded as well for comparison with the planned end-of-study data set. Additional surveys and the follow-ups with girls in the sample class were conducted to drill-down further into both causes and consequences of collaborative trepidation as well as the effectiveness of ameliorative measures taken. Coding and subsequent semantic analysis formed the basis of the conclusions drawn.

Discussion of Findings

At the start of the academic year, an all-class survey asked students about their feelings about entering a class environment designed to have such a heavy collaborative component. The girls' responses overwhelmingly indicated feelings of excitement, particularly joy, at the prospect of working with friends; a few went a step further and expressed that they felt ready to do that sort of work because they were prepared. Very few girls directly expressed anything more negative than a general feeling of nervousness at the prospect of the unknown. As Damour (2016) reminds us, however, "Girls know what it means to be polite and impolite" (pp. 16-17), and a desire to please a new authority figure may have played a part in their apparent enthusiasm. A follow-up survey question asked them about the worst things about collaboration and group work. The girls' very clear responses identified an almost singular theme: the worst thing about working in groups is nearly always other girls. That was something which I deemed to need amelioration; I wanted them to come to recognize the positive, namely that, together, they could produce something better than any individual could on her own. During the first group activity of the year girls in three of the four sections of Ancient Civilizations taught in the school asked some version of "Do I get a grade for this?", "Did I do this right?", or "Are you checking this?" This indicated another area in need of improvement.

Having analyzed the surveys, assessment responses, reflections, and other data generated both for this project and through the normal ebb and flow of our data-collecting year, the following were identified as outcomes of the action research project:

Regularized and Repeated Practice of Discussion Skills via the R.E.A.L. Discussion System Translates to Improved Results in Communication Skills

The findings of Hammond (2023) on the utility of the R.E.A.L. Discussion system were confirmed by this study. R.E.A.L. was introduced to the girls in the study briefly in the 6th Grade; however, their first repeated exposure to it and its emphasis on Relating, Excerpting, Asking, and Listening, came during this study. While pre-R.E.A.L. survey data saw some students mentioning social anxiety and fear of public speaking, by the end of the first discussion cycle of three R.E.A.L. discussions, the girls' confidence in their ability to use the system was on the rise – although several did highlight that “staying on topic” would be an area of growth for the next cycle. From that point, the data suggest the girls' growing understanding of the value in hearing each girl's voice, consideration of others' ideas, and taking in multiple perspectives. By the end of the second cycle, most of the responses showed the girls recognizing their growth but also expressing a commitment to continuous improvement in communication and discussion skills – both on an individual level and as a class. Among the most frequent pieces of feedback on post-discussion written reflections was a redirection of an individual girl's focus from the collective back to herself and how she fared against her own goals. Discussion as group activity, then, clearly drove some reflective efforts to the group; however, later reflections showed developing self-awareness and focused on the girls as individuals growing in their skills.

In their end-of-term reflections, discussions were the most highly valued class activity according to most girls. According to them, the discussions provided access to alternative perspectives as well as additional information, and that led to improving comprehension.

Time and Repeated, Regular Exposure to Groupwork Increased Comfort With Participation in Same With a Diminished Focus on Grades – For Most, But Not All

As noted, at the outset of the term, the girls were principally concerned with how the outcome of projects, such as the completion of designing of a Neolithic Village, would impact their grades. As time progressed and they experienced new ungraded activities each rotation, my own class notes, as well as recordings of class sessions, indicate that these questions had all but ceased by the second rotation of the study (Rotation 4) and were absent from subsequent rotations. When asked to reflect on this, Student 2 in the study responded, “The best thing I learned was to relax and enjoy because if I didn't relax then I wouldn't learn.” It is worth noting that the first activity of the second term had a grade attached to the work product for each group. When asked about whether they were anxious about the outcome of their work product, no girl expressed grade-based anxiety. The majority were anxious with the quality of the product instead.

Generally speaking, the activities that the girls undertook were received positively, but there were outliers who viewed them as more enjoyable than educational or, as Student 10 put it: “most help because

we learn about new topics, but some seem to be a waste of time.” Girls’ perceptions of what a classroom should look like and what she feels she should be doing in it figure significantly here. Girls whose standardized testing and GPAs demonstrated that they were “good at school” were the most resistant to groupwork and collaboration. They also did not register growth in their collaboration skills because of activities as frequently as, by way of comparison, those girls who expressed a preference for visual or hands-on learning. An interesting conflux of these girls and the daughters of alumnae of the school in the sample was identified in the data, indicating a possible area for future study about in-built attitudes and expectations of our school environment; any conclusions regarding those girls possessed of Learning Profiles and their attitudes to groupwork or collaboration would be speculative at best given the small sample size, but it certainly merits investigation.

Regular Combination of Activity and Discussion Within the Units Increased Confidence in Both Group Settings and on Assessments of Knowledge.

An accidental early groupwork failure during the Pyramid Building activity (identified by nearly half the girls as their favorite, outstripping the second favorite, Paleolithic Basket Weaving, three to one) led many girls to echo Student 6’s comment that, “We should all figure out who we want to lead us in making the projects. In Egypt they always had a leader that’s why you have to figure out who is the leader” and Student 10’s “[we all need to] concede the point every now and then.” Regular reflection on their own experience of failure helped many to identify areas of improvement or different avenues to approach to achieve success as a group. A future iteration of the course should likely include several specific opportunities for deliberate groupwork failure at planned intervals to coincide with lessons in leadership derived from the course content as well as for leadership development.

In their end of term reflections, several girls reported feeling more confident in group settings, particularly when presenting their ideas to the class or in leading group discussions as a specific result of the approach taken during the study. Others noted improvements in their ability to work in teams and divide tasks more efficiently and equitably. Nearly all mentioned improvements in their ability to communicate with their peers, both formally and informally, and many identified specific strategies to achieve groupwork success, such as group coordination, accepting all ideas, and assigning specific roles within a group. Unsolicited, one parent shared this feedback: “As we’ve listened to her (Student 1) share, it’s clear ... [she] finds the ‘routine’ helpful and is thankful for the clear expectation of how she should be engaging on any given day. Your intentionality with the girls is seen and appreciated, and as her Mom, I wanted you to hear from me that you’re making a difference.”

Over the course of the study, the girls’ responses to prompts shifted from strict utilitarian views, such as Student 3’s from the third rotation “[The activity and discussion] helped a lot. They helped me learn more about Hammurabi’s code which came in handy on the test”, and came to demonstrate a

growing awareness of the import of process versus product. End of term reflections showed an increased desire for more interactive elements and fewer straight lectures, owing mostly to a desire to “learn by doing” as Student 2 wrote. Student 12 noted, “I love doing activities because it's easier to think back to the activities than the lecture.” Girls demonstrated in such a way a growing awareness of how they learn best and, by extension, steps they can take to maximize their own learning in preparation for assessments.

Conclusion

Damour (2016) states that girls “who are planning ahead sometimes feel that their futures ride on every quiz and every test they take” (p. 180). As such, it is understandable that girls, and perhaps Seventh Grade girls in particular, can view group projects as minefields. For the high achievers, the danger is ever present that they may be the ones having to shoulder an unfair share of the burden – and they know that. Regardless of ability, though, collaboration brings with it many potential moments when a girl might lose face or social standing, have her existing relationships’ bonds stretched or ruptured, or otherwise end up with reduced social capital. In sum, for middle school girls, a project can easily become much more about her standing among her peers than meeting targets or learning outcomes. I began this project hoping to silence the groans that I often hear when the prospect of collaboration or group work is mentioned. Indeed, it is my hope to shift our entire culture surrounding collaboration here at GPS. This action research project was just one step in that direction.

Drawing inspiration from GPS’ Terpsichord dance program, as well as contemporary thinking gleaned from the scholarship of teaching and learning, this study examined how the implementation of routine discussion and collaboration days habituated my girls to a more agreeable disposition vis-à-vis group work. I was amazed by the girls’ consistent expression of their desire for improvement in terms of their skills, as well as their willingness to lean into the project and its seemingly endless stream of questions and reflections about the process and learning goals. The shift in approach to the course’s delivery, with its set routines and patterns, coupled with framing all but the assessments as “practice,” did end up producing a shift in attitudes, as noted, and the girls were noticeably less anxious and more confident and comfortable with collaborative work as a result. Prioritizing joy, student agency, and collaboration over content impacted my classroom for the better.

At the end of the day, we do not just teach our subjects, we teach girls. Leaning into how girls learn best will help them engage more deeply and meaningfully academically with course content, naturally. However, especially in the years where the COVID-19 effect still looms large, paying equal, if not greater, attention to the development of the so-called soft-skills may prove to be what really makes girls’ schools remain competitive in the educational marketplace.

Reflection

My entire adult life has been spent, in one capacity or another, as a researcher. Five years, three months, and two days of it were spent at the University of St Andrews in Fife, Scotland, during which I explored the social and cultural landscape of the island of Sicily between the years 132 and 70 B.C. through an interrogation of Cicero's *Verrine Orations*, c. 450 pages of Oxford Classical Text. Wrestling with issues of Roman historical memory, problematic identification of magistrates, and abstruse points of Roman agricultural law for my dissertation was comparatively straightforward as an exercise compared with researching my Seventh Grade charges while simultaneously attempting to teach them Ancient Civilizations as well as another AP-level prep to girls in the Upper School. Doing so while juggling new duties as Humanities Coordinator? Not advisable for those desperate to keep off their research advisor's naughty list; Núria Tapias Nadales is, thankfully, a font of seemingly unending grace.

At the outset of the project, I had a reasonably fixed idea as to what was to be done and how the project was to be executed; I had my suspicions based on years of experience as to how the girls would take to the shift from their expected norm. Prussian Field Marshal von Moltke the Elder's oft (erroneously) quoted maxim that 'no plan survives contact with the enemy' applies in this case. I assumed, wrongly, that girls on their initial survey would express dissatisfaction with the idea of collaborative project work and that, via the project, those attitudes could be changed with a few technical switches in delivery. Instead, they said they loved that sort of work - while at the same time acknowledging the inherent difficulties of working with peers and sometimes having to carry the weight of group-work alone. Shocked by the maturity displayed across all my classes, I took pause and had to reframe the research question. With refinement it came to focus not so much on the shifts made in the project portion of my class' cadence and their impact on attitudes, but how the collaboration components functioned within the wider cadence and how the girls reacted to them in that sense. Of course, this change meant that I had to, at times, slavishly obey the schedule and the cadence; there could be no hesitations or deviations. Blissfully, there were no surprise weather events or other major disruptions and, as such, the whole of the first semester proceeded exactly as it had been laid out at the start. My thanks are due to my colleague, Callie Hamilton, who also taught a section of Ancient Civilizations (which, in my heart, I really wish we could have used as a control group), for being a good sport about keeping my pace even during those weeks when, for her class anyway, it was a challenge.

No work (after a Ph.D., and even there) is achieved in splendid isolation. Beyond those already thanked, profound gratitude is also due and most gratefully offered to those who have encouraged me in this endeavor. Now Head of the Baldwin School and GPS' former Associate Head of School, Lynne Macziewski was behind me from the beginning and offered ample support and encouragement. Such was mirrored by my Head of School, Megan Cover, GPS' new Head of Middle School, Katie Outlaw, and

Middle School Counselor, Casey Santos. Team Núria, spread as we are across Canada, the USA, South Africa, and Australia were a consistent pleasure to work with both in-person and via the Zooms which I will miss – the WhatsApp, which was new to me as of Cleveland, perhaps, not so much.

Lastly and undoubtedly most significantly, I wish to thank dance educators Cathie Kasch and Laurel Zahrobsky; over the years, they have each answered my many, many questions about dance, dance education, and the history of dance at our school. I am supremely grateful to them not just for nurturing and sustaining Peggy Thomas' incredibly special creation, Terpsichord, as its directors, but for also serving as inspirations for all of us who work both with and for the girls of the GPS.

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Appendix A

Terpsichord's Course Sequence & Sample Weekly Schedule

10th Grade Dance Technique Lab

Course Description: Students are admitted to this course through the Terpsichord audition process and must stay in good standing as company members. This course introduces the student to creating, producing, and performing in major concerts with an emphasis on technique, correct alignment, and a complex class structure as well as developing choreographic structure and presentation skills and learning to handle pressures of public performances. Students learn how to hear and apply corrections in a group atmosphere and will assess their own growth through personal reflection, both formal and informal. Instructor feedback to each student is individualized and used to help them understand the goals they have accomplished and those they should set for their future in dance.

11th Grade Dance Choreography Lab

Course Description: Students are admitted to this course through the Terpsichord audition process and must stay in good standing as company members. This course has a choreographic structure emphasis, which is assessed through dance works created throughout the year. Dancers are expected to master more complex technical skills in order to successfully perform in works by various choreographers using different approaches. Dancers continue exploring movement in order to gain a more individual movement style and vocabulary. Leadership skills are developed as dancers provide peers with critical feedback that is respectful and insightful. Overall, each girl is expected to choreograph and perform productively in a group setting by being an active listener, creative mover, and diplomatic leader. Dancers assume more production responsibility at this level.

12th Grade Dance Performance Lab

Course Description: Students are admitted to this course through the Terpsichord audition process and must stay in good standing as company members. This course is designed to assess the dancer as a whole through her performance capability and knowledge. At the advanced level, students are expected to master complex combinations with a positive and energetic attitude. They are able to identify and correct individual challenges without continuous prompting. Leadership is expected at the highest level as students must be able to lead a group of dancers through the choreographic process as well as serve as positive role models who demonstrate a respectful and caring approach to group work while maintaining artistic integrity.

Terpsichord Overview from the Weeks of 10/10 and 10/16

10/10

8:45-9:45 - Student Choreography Rehearsal

3:45-5:15 - Technique Class

10/12

1:00-2:00 - Master Class with visiting artist

3:45-6:00 - Guest Artist Rehearsal

3:45-5:00 - Technique Class

10/13

3:45-8:00 - Guest Artist Rehearsal

10/14

9:00-5:00 - Guest Artist Rehearsal

5:30-7:30 - Fellowship Project Performance

10/15

1:00-5:00 - Guest Artist Rehearsal

10/16

9:50-10:50 - Master Class with visiting artist

3:45-4:45 - Tech for local performance

5:00-7:00- Guest Choreographer Rehearsal

10/17

2:05-3:05 - Thanksgiving Show Rehearsal

3:45-5:15 - Student Choreography Rehearsal

10/18

3:45-5:15 - Thanksgiving Show Rehearsal

5:15-6:00 - Guest Artist Rehearsal

10/19

10:55-11:55 - Technique Class

3:45-5:15 - OFF!

6:00-8:00 - Dress Rehearsal

10/20

5:30 - Warm-Up

7:00 - Chattanooga Dances Show

Appendix B The GPS Schedule Matrix

The Eight-Day Rotation

Class Rotation

Day 1 A Day	Day 2 F Day	Day 3 C day	Day 4 H Day	Day 5 E Day	Day 6 B Day	Day 7 G Day	Day 8 D Day
A	F	C	H	E	B	G	D
B	G	D	A	F	C	H	E
C	H	E	B	G	D	A	F
D	A	F	C	H	E	B	G
E	B	G	D	A	F	C	H

Middle School Weekly Schedule

Middle School Weekly Schedule

	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY
7:50-8:25	Help Class	Help Class		Help Class	Help Class
8:30-8:40	Advisory Check-In	Advisory Check-In		Advisory Check-In	Advisory Check-In
8:45-9:45	Class	Class	Class (9:30-10:25)	Class	Class
9:50-10:50	Class	Class	Class (10:30-11:25)	Class	Class
10:55-11:55	Class	Class	Class (11:30-12:25)	Class	Class
11:55-12:25	Lunch	Lunch	Lunch (12:30-1:00)	Lunch	Lunch
12:25-12:55	Help Class / Recess	Help Class / Recess	Advisory (1:00-1:30)	Help Class / Recess	Help Class / Recess
1:00-2:00	Class	Class	Class (1:35-2:30)	Class	Class
2:05-3:05	Class	Class	Class (2:35-3:30)	Class	Class
3:10-3:30	Advisory	Chapel		Chapel	Chapel
3:35+	After-School Activities	After-School Activities	After-School Activities	After-School Activities	After-School Activities

Appendix C
Ancient Civilizations' Rotation Schedule, August-November

Rotation 1

- 1 Prehistory vs. History
- 2 The 5 Sources of Evidence
- 3 Paleolithic Art & Archaeology Discovery Day
- 4 Paleolithic Vocabulary & Recap
- 5 Short Low-Stakes Paleolithic Quiz

Rotation 2

- 1 Intro to the Neolithic
- 2 The Pre-Urban Game Activity
- 3 The Discovery of Bronze
- 4 The Discovery of Writing
- 5 First Full-Strength Quiz

Rotation 3

- 1 Intro to Mesopotamia Lecture
- 2 Code of Hammurabi Activity
- 3 Mesopotamia gets R.E.A.L.
- 4 Debrief Day
- 5 Mesopotamia Quiz

Rotation 4

- 1 Intro to Egypt Lecture
- 2 Pyramid Building Activity
- 3 Egypt gets R.E.A.L.
- 4 Rate that Pharaoh! Experience
- 5 Egypt Quiz 1

Rotation 5

- 1 Hieroglyphics & Egypt's Literary Record Lecture
- 2 Decoding Activity
- 3 Egypt gets R.E.A.L. 2: Hatshepsut
- 4 Where are the women? Day
- 5 Egypt Quiz 2

Rotation 6

- 1 Harappan India Lecture
- 2 Remnants of Harappa Activity
- 3 Harappa gets R.E.A.L.
- 4 Harappa Review / Aryan Preview
- 5 Harappa Quiz

Rotation 7

- 1 The First Chinese Dynasties Lecture
- 2 Lady Fu Hao's Tomb Activity
- 3 Confucianism R.E.A.L.
- 4 China, the Zhou, and Philosophy Recap
- 5 Earliest China Assessment

Rotation 8

- 1 Intro to the Ancient Americas
- 2 Chac the Mayan Rain God Activity
- 3 Meso-America gets R.E.A.L.
- 4 Americas Debrief Day
- 5 Americas Quiz

Mid-Term Exam

Mid-Term R.E.A.L. Discussion & Reflection Activities