

DANCE MATTERS

Old Donation Dance Education Program
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Meeting Mrs. Spear-Jones

What do you like to do when you are not teaching dance at ODC. Special time for me is being able to have a leisurely cup of coffee and actually read most of the newspaper. I know this may sound boring, but I also like getting in my jammies with a big bowl of popcorn and watching old movies with my husband. When I have time I love to read. When I have a little extra money I love to travel, and the best is when I have time and money and can read and travel at the same time.

Tell "Dance Matters" about your family. I grew up in North Carolina where my mother and father were both teachers. I have a 21 year old son who is attending Radford University, majoring in Elementary Education (AH HAH the teaching DNA remains in the family) My husband is an Episcopal priest, with a church in Chesapeake, and my 22 year old stepdaughter is graduating in December from TCC with a degree in graphic design. My most interesting family member is our grey and orange torte cat named, Cleo. Some mornings I feel this light tapping of her paws on my nose or cheek, waking me up. Unfortunately this cat alarm clock and my electric alarm clock are not in sync. Cleo likes to wake me between 3:00 and 4:00 some mornings. So if some morning you see me looking a little grumpy and there are cat hairs on my face, you will know that the "Cleo" clock was alive and well on that morning!

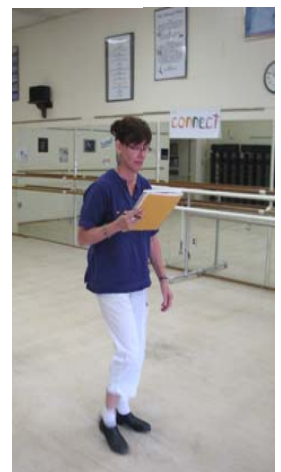
Describe your most memorable memory as a dance student. This memory is actually quite painful but helped to shape me both as a dancer and as a teacher. At 13, I auditioned and was accepted into the School of American Ballet's summer session. This was and still is a prestigious ballet school in New York founded by George Balanchine. To be accepted into this school was a dream of most young dancers at the time. I worked so hard during the six week session and even though there were many dancers much better, I felt like I held my own. At the end of the summer, students were evaluated to see if they would be eligible to stay in N.Y. and attend the ballet school for the whole year. During my evaluation I was told that I would not be eligible to be considered because I didn't have the right body type - my head was too big, my legs were too short and my rear was too low. Well talk about a blow! All that hard work and it came down to the fact that I didn't have the right body type - something that I couldn't change! I later found out that George Balanchine was very particular about the dancers and body types he accepted into the school, but to a 13 year old this was devastating. It wasn't how I danced, it was about what I looked like!?! Fortunately, when I got home my dance teacher was there to help pick up the pieces of my broken spirit. She helped me recognize and believe in the gifts I had - her wonderful act of compassion being something that I value to this day.

Why are you a teacher? To help students discover and celebrate the gifts they have - just like my teachers did for me. I always knew I was going to be a dancer, but I didn't always know I would become a teacher. For me, teaching is honoring those teachers who gave me so much. I feel like an elder of a "tribe" that is passing on what was given to me. To see students learning through and in dance is so incredible and rewarding.

I dance because I have to. I have and always will see and experience life through movement. What a joy to learn through movement, to pray in movement, to teach movement, (I actually make a living doing what I love and am so passionate about - how fantastic is that!!), to see lives transformed through movement. Movement/dance is powerful and I am fortunate to be a part of and able to share this incredible world.

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The Balancing Act between Two Schools

Balancing the work load between two schools can be quite a challenge for our dancers, however there are some things that we have found that could be helpful in trying to support your child. Here are some questions worth paying attention to early in the first grading period that will aid in keeping your child on track.



Is your child receiving missed work and homework from his/her home school?

An important way to help your child be successful in his/her home school is to make sure your child has a clear plan to get missed work and assignments from **all teachers** – and that the plan is working. Your child should know when and where to get their make-up work and homework assignments as well as when the work is due. If the plan to receive assignments from home school teachers is not working, we hope you can be an advocate for your child to help encourage teachers to develop a new, more workable plan

Is your child organizing time well in order to complete necessary work?

If your child is not following through on completing work, help him/her come up with a reasonable schedule to head towards success.

Is your child being marked absent from their classes?

Your child **is in school** on his/her dance education day and is **not** to be marked absent. Talk to the office staff or principal at the home school to clear up this issue if it should happen.

Is your child expected to stay at his/her home school for testing?

Yes, for standardized test like SAT 10 and SOL, other tests are usually scheduled for a non-ODC day.

Remember that there are many resources in place at the home school to support your child. There are the Gifted Resource Teachers (GRT's) in each school who have been very helpful to our dance students. There are counselors at all home schools and here at ODC, who can help devise strategies for success. In addition, we think you will find that the teachers will work closely with students who show consistent effort towards their own academic success.

Please contact us if your child is facing difficulties so we can help. We also love to hear success stories from our many students who find they are able to keep their grades the same or higher than the previous year.

This is one balancing act that will not teeter.

Definition: Home School/Neighborhood School =The school your child attends when not attending ODC for dance.

Dance Word of the Week

Unity—parts that come together to make something whole

Dance Calendar :

Oct. 20 –24 7th and 8th grade dance students go to VPAA

October 27-31 Parent Visitation Week

October 31 End of 1st Grading Period

November 3-4 Staff/Parent/Teacher Conference Days

Parent/Teacher Communication:

- 1) ODC phone number 473-5043
- 2) Faculty e-mail addresses
 - Elizabeth Albarado elizabeth.albarado@vbschools.com
 - Gwen Spear-Jones gwen.spear-jones@vbschools.com (parent volunteer coordinator)
 - Valerie Winborne - valerie.winborne@vbschools.com
 - Laura Wright laura.wright@vbschools.com
- 3) TeacherWeb (www.teacherweb.com/VA/OldDonationcenter/MrsWright/)



Thursday Dance Students

(left) Dancers enjoying lunch (right) Marquise Hitchcock –Jones helping new student, Shawn Reynard

“Dance Matters” has, of course, two meanings; items of information to help the year go well, and our commitment to your child and the pursuit of artistic excellence.