



DANCING CLASSROOMS ST. LOUIS



2023 Annual Report

Building Community

Our mission is to cultivate essential life skills in children through the joyful art and practice of social dance.

Our vision is schools and communities throughout St. Louis and beyond, where every child is connected, respected and given an environment in which to thrive.

The goal of each of our performance and competition events is to provide a safe and fun environment for children and families from all regions of our larger community to come together, to perform ballroom/ social dances and to celebrate the impact that art and culture can have on humanity.

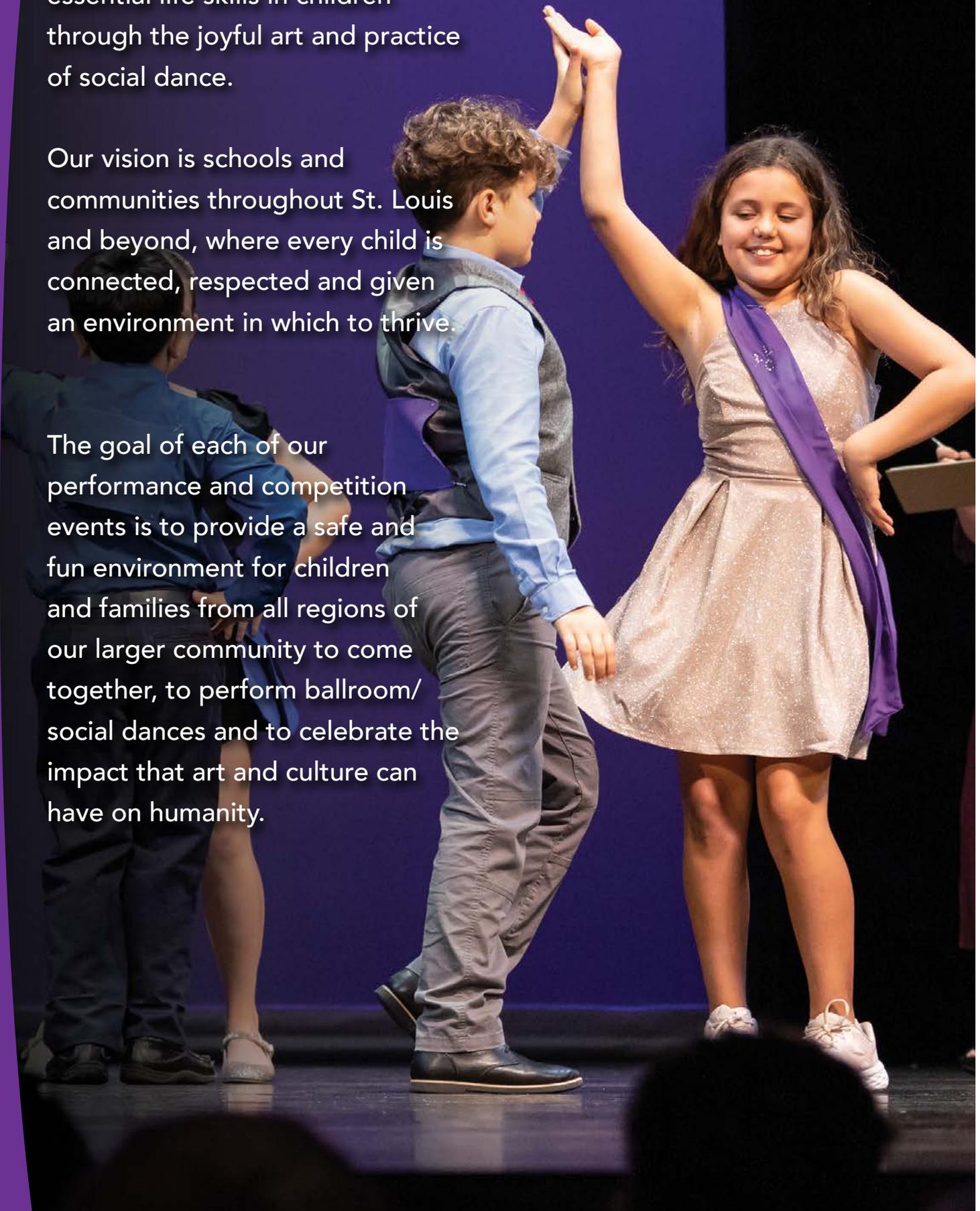


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A Message to Our Community

Dear Friends and Supporters,

As I reflect on 2023, I am reminded of the extraordinary resilience and adaptability of our community, staff, and students...and why it's important to NEVER STOP DANCING! During the worst days of the pandemic, right through to the challenging return of in-person schooling, up to this very moment — one thing has become increasingly more apparent to us at Dancing Classrooms St. Louis (DCSTL) —that connecting through dance is more important now than ever.



Executive Director Angie Brooks

When schools shuttered and students took to virtual learning, we continued dancing from our zoom screens in our living rooms, backyards, and home offices. Our 'Homeschool Edition' programming provided much needed support to our school partners, and ensured that our students could stay connected and still experience the joy that comes with practicing social dance. You, too, knew that it was important to keep dancing through the challenging times and kept us afloat with your donations and community support. Together, we were able to keep all of the wonderful staff of DCSTL employed, and our school partners engaged through our FREE online curriculum.

When the 2022/2023 academic year approached, having never taken a pause, DCSTL found itself positioned strongly to fully return to in-person programming. While many organizations shared stories of struggle and a slow return to being fully operational, DCSTL was able to push forward and even grow. Why were we so fortunate? We like to believe it is because we never stopped dancing TOGETHER. That is the power of dance. Dance is an outlet, an expression, a way to connect, a way to celebrate and to process.

We probably can all attest that when we feel better...strong, confident, cared for, respected...we do better. This is demonstrably true of our students and is a leading motivator for the work that we do. It also rings true for us as an organization. As our organization grows we become more confident in our abilities, determined in our purpose, and focused on our mission to transform the lives of young people. For over 14 years, Dancing Classrooms St. Louis has been lifting up young people by promoting teamwork, inclusion, acceptance, kindness, respect and JOY in schools. Through the best of times and the roughest of times, we know that our work transforms lives—ours, yours, and theirs.

As we move into the future, we are excited about the possibilities that lie ahead. We remain committed to our mission of empowering young people through dance, and we are dedicated to expanding our reach, enhancing our programs, and making a lasting impact in the lives of our students.

In closing, I want to express my heartfelt gratitude for your continued support. Thank you for believing in the transformative power of dance and for standing by us. Together, we are creating a brighter, more inclusive, and more vibrant future for the youth of St. Louis.

Letter from the Dancing Classrooms St. Louis Board Chair

Dear Partners, Supporters, Staff and Friends,

I am so delighted to be writing today as Chair of the Dancing Classrooms St. Louis Board! I love dance, and I love fifth graders, so I am thrilled to be a part of what's coming for this amazing organization. I invite you to get in on the excitement because right now we can really make a difference.



Together, this past year, we made significant strides in setting up Dancing Classrooms St. Louis for growth and a solid future. We successfully weathered the Covid challenge, and we are ready to take on more schools, train more Teaching Artists, and reach more fifth graders! Our Board of Directors has expanded with the addition of several talented and skilled individuals who are working to put us on the map. We held our first Dance Party Friend-Raiser, and our first Fundraiser! Schools are settling down and opening back up to welcome more partnerships, and when they try our program, they love it. They report amazing differences in how the students relate to one another and work together, moving past differences and barriers so that they may see the positive in one another.

Many thanks to all of you who have shown your support in so many ways for Dancing Classrooms St. Louis. Everyone we reach can play a part in its success. We can tell teachers and principals about the program and suggest that they consider participating at their school. We can tell our friends, those with a passion for the arts and a love for working with young people, about being a DCSTL Teaching Artist or residency volunteer. We can participate in fundraising initiatives, and, of course, we can support Dancing Classrooms St. Louis with monetary donations. We have made progress in all of these areas this year, and anticipate that, with your help, and your enthusiasm, we will make so much more progress next year.

So, LETS DANCE! Dancing Classrooms St. Louis is one impactful program, and it is a whole lot of fun, too! Hope to see you on the dance floor soon!

Vicki Sheehan-Piontek

DCSTL Team

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Vicki Sheehan-Piontek, Board Chair

Andrea Luebbert, Vice-Chair

Alexandr Borodko, Treasurer

Laura Maier-Schuepfer, Secretary

Ken Lederle

Robbye Toft

Tyler Johnson



ADMINISTRATIVE TEAM

Angie Brooks, Executive Director

Laura Maier-Schuepfer, Program Manager

Jim Kimker, Program Outreach



TEACHING ARTISTS

Carmen Gynn

Carrie Fernandez

Elise Kulik

Jenny Battenberg

Joyce Jones

Lauren Cram

Laurie Clark

Lawrence Haliburton

Mauricio Villanueva



From the Program Manager

This last year has been a great success for Dancing Classrooms St. Louis (DCSTL). We brought back most of our previous schools and were able to add several new ones to our roster. During orientation meetings, there was noticeable excitement from our returning partner schools. Teachers and Principals alike were sharing stories of students eager to try Dancing Classrooms, just like their siblings and friends from previous grades had before them.



This year, we were able to hire four additional Teaching Artists. It has been a pleasure getting to know our new TAs, and to discover the special talents that each brings to our program. Each of them brings knowledge, skills, and life experiences that add value and diverse perspectives to the work that we do. It makes me proud to watch all of our team persevere, grow more confident, and become more dedicated to DCSTL.

Perhaps most rewarding is the time I spend in the schools assisting the Teaching Artists. During these visits, I have the opportunity to witness when the students first begin experiencing the joy of social dancing and realize that it can actually be fun. Believe me, many 5th graders do not think they will have any enjoyment when they first hear of the program. Yet, year after year the students transform and begin to flourish as they develop essential life skills through partner dance.

My work as Program Manager for DCSTL has been and continues to be such a rewarding experience. Watching this program expand, grow stronger, and make a difference in the lives of more and more students is heartening and makes me so proud. I look forward to seeing how the next year unfolds!

Laura Maier-Schuepfer, Program Manager

Dancing Classrooms from a Teaching Artist's Perspective

What will always pull at my heartstrings, that always chokes me up a little, is when the shy ones, the ones that have struggled, or the ones that are seen as outcasts, raise their hands to demonstrate in the middle of our circle. As a former shy violet myself, those moments hang with me. Last spring, a student who was ostracized, who was very clearly feeling vulnerable about having to dance with his peers, was trying desperately to get out of participating in the program. His parents were concerned that he was going to face further bullying. I asked the student to give me three weeks. If at that point he still hated it, we could reassess. Three weeks passed. Four weeks passed. There was never a need to reassess. As time went on, small changes could be seen from this particular student. He was raising his hand to demonstrate, he was talking more to his classmates. By the day of their culmination, several of his classmates were so excited for him. Lo and behold, there he was. In a nice blazer with his blonde locks pulled up, smiling ear to ear. This was not the same kid from ten weeks ago.



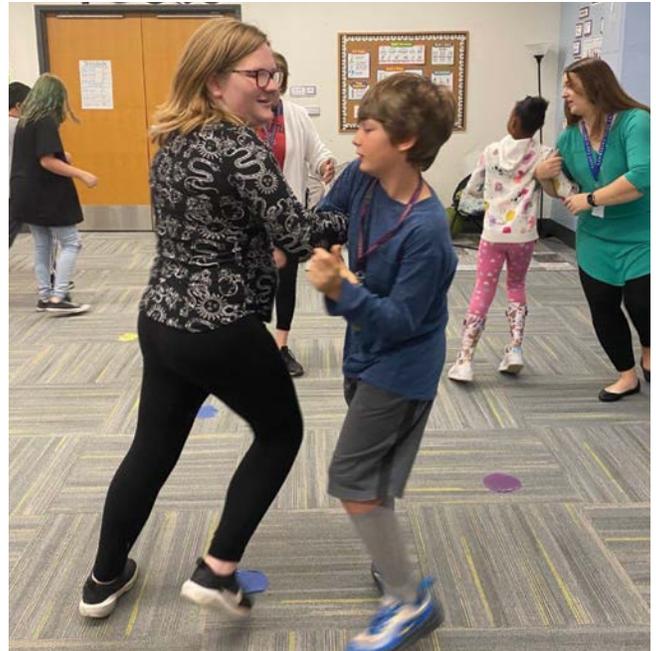
Lauren Cram, Teaching Artist

Program Highlights 2022/2023

With this Annual Report we celebrate an exciting year. We are pleased to report that the number of schools and students served was back up to (almost) pre-pandemic numbers! In the 2022/2023 academic year, we added two new schools to our residency roster and saw the return of several of our long term partners, serving a total of 19 schools and over 900 students with 36 residencies.

2022/2023 PARTNER SCHOOLS

All Saints Academy - St. Ferdinand
Ascension Catholic School
Blessed Teresa of Calcutta Catholic School
Christ the King Catholic School
Fairview Elementary
Gotsch Intermediate
Hickey Elementary
Mason Elementary
Our Lady of Guadalupe Catholic School
St. Ann Catholic School
St. Cecilia Catholic School
St. Frances Cabrini Catholic School
St. Gabriel the Archangel Catholic School
St. Gerard Majella Catholic School
St. Justin Martyr Catholic School
St. Margaret of Scotland Catholic School
St. Stephen Protomartyr Catholic School
South City Catholic Academy
Walbridge Elementary School



"Through the program, students grew in their working relationships with each other and were able to collaborate more effectively and efficiently. Their confidence grew in their abilities, and they developed the courage to dance both in front of and with others."

- Dr. Stacy Franklin, Principal, Mason Elementary

The 2022/2023 academic year saw the return of the Dancing Classrooms St. Louis program as it is intended—face to face, arm in arm, and hand to hand! Dance Frame was back and, so too, were our community and competition events. The 2022/2023 program year included three Qualifying Event competitions, an elevated Colors of the Rainbow Team Match Championship, and a successful DCSTL Summer Ballroom Dance Camp.

The 2022/2023 Qualifying Event Competitions were hosted by St. Gabriel the Archangel School, St. Stephen Protomartyr School, and South City Catholic Academy. Each Qualifying Event yielded two “Gold Level” winning schools. Six schools received the opportunity to move on to the coveted 2022/2023 Colors of the Rainbow Team Match Championship.



“Saint Gabriel the Archangel was so excited to be able to participate in Dancing Classrooms’ in-person events this past year. It is such a community builder to be able to invite parents and relatives to see the students perform. It also gives students a chance to meet students from other schools. The students learn social skills and practice respectful interactions with others. It makes a person’s heart smile to see how proud the students are of their performance, too. Sometimes it is a shy student that blossoms in the dance and has all her/his classmates cheering for them. The look on the student’s face is priceless. I highly recommend Dancing Classrooms for any school.”



- Deborah DaLay, Coordinator of Religious Education, St. Gabriel the Archangel School



Program Outreach

A PROGRAM FOR ALL

We are an organization that celebrates diversity and is committed to being equitable and inclusive in our practices. It is of utmost importance to DCSTL that students from every facet of our community be given the opportunity to experience the joys and success that accompany participation in a Dancing Classrooms residency. To ensure that our program reaches as many young people across our community as possible, DCSTL works hard to remove all barriers to participation.

In a DCSTL residency, all students are welcome. Program adaptations are made to accommodate students with religious mandates and/or physical and/or cognitive limitations. Additionally, our curriculum has removed all gender-identifying labels and does not separate children based upon perceived gender. Children in our program learn and perform ballroom dance in a variety of roles, not limited to the traditional male/female pairing.



Since 2017, DCSTL has been committed to raising a minimum of \$30,000 annually to fund its program for some 10+ classrooms in under-resourced schools.

Each year, DCSTL fundraises specifically to support its School Scholarship Fund. Through the School Scholarship Fund, under-resourced schools situated in low-income areas can receive full or partial funding support toward the cost of programming. **In FY 23, 9 participating schools (totaling 17 residencies) received the DCSTL program for free or at reduced cost, resulting in 300+ students gaining access to our program.**

"In the 4 years that we've been partnering with Dancing Classrooms St. Louis, it has been an overwhelmingly positive experience for our students...providing them with lessons and opportunities that they might not otherwise ever have."

- Brad Kern, PE Teacher, Fairview Elementary



COSTUME CLOSET

In addition to subsidizing program costs for nearly half of our school partners, DCSTL supplies performance attire for students in need through its Costume Closet. Supported through in-kind and monetary donations, the DCSTL Costume Closet provides clothing, shoes, belts, and accessories to participating students free of charge. Every child deserves to look and feel their best when performing before an audience! Students utilizing the Costume Closet have the option to keep all items or return them for future use. **During the 2022/2023 academic year, DCSTL provided some 50 students with performance wear.**

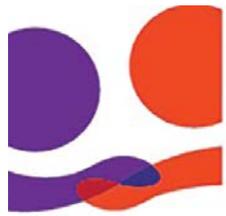


"It was inspiring to see our scholars overcome anxiety and fear around their perceptions of dance. When they performed in front of our school you could see their hard work had paid off. They were confident in demonstrating what they'd learned. All while creating lasting memories with their classmates."

- Zach Smelcer, PE Teacher, Hickey Elementary



2022/2023
School Year by the Numbers



**DANCING
CLASSROOMS
ST. LOUIS**

900 Students
served across
16 zip codes.



7 Different dance styles
explored from around
the world.

720 Hours of
Instruction

36 In-Person Residencies
facilitated in **19** schools.



9 Teaching Artists including
4 new hires; all completely
trained in the Dulaine Method.

17 residencies received
full or partial funding (47%).



450+ people attended the
2023 Colors of the Rainbow
Team Match event at the Touhill
Performing Arts Center.

Thank you for your support!

2 new school partnerships formed;
4 former school partnerships restored;
14 school partnerships of 5+ years;
7 school partnerships of 10+ years.

4 Community Events
held in 2022/2023.



8 Students awarded full scholarships to DCSTL Summer Ballroom Dance Camp

"Through the Dancing Classrooms St. Louis program I got to understand a little more about dancing. I feel like I got to know more people in my class. Dancing connects people more than you would think!"

- Sylas P, 5th Grader



Partnered
with **60+**
educators

50 students received clothing, shoes, and accessories from the Costume Closet.



"Dancing Classrooms was way more fun than I expected. I actually found myself brightening up when we had dance class. I became more comfortable and confident as the classes went on and got to know more of my peers. I even made some new friends!"

- Maya A, 5th Grader



Events

COLORS OF THE RAINBOW TEAM MATCH CHAMPIONSHIP

To celebrate and commemorate the importance of being able to once again dance together, DCSTL relocated its Colors of the Rainbow Team Match Championship to the elegant Touhill Performing Arts Center. Centrally located, beautifully designed, and with state of the art production equipment, the Touhill added a touch of grandeur to our biggest event of the year.



Over 450 people attended the event on Monday, May 8th, 2023. The cheers were nonstop for the six teams of finalists: Ascension School (Team Red); Gotsch (Team Orange); Fairview Elementary (Team Yellow); Mason Elementary (Team Green); St. Gabriel the Archangel School (Team Blue); St. Margaret of Scotland School (Team Purple). The excitement in the auditorium was unlike anything experienced at the Touhill before! Top honors and the title of 2023 Colors of the Rainbow Team Match Champion went to Mason School of Academic and Cultural Literacy (Team Green)! Longtime sustaining supporters of DCSTL, Edward and Margot Monser were honored at the event and presented the Champion award.





Many thanks to all of those who shared the evening with us. An extra special thanks to all of the volunteers, adjudicators, and behind-the-scenes staff that made the event happen. The elegance, camaraderie, confidence, and JOY were in full form making the evening a delightful success! We couldn't have been more proud!

Events

ROCK THE NIGHT AWAY: A SWINGING SUCCESS



DCSTL closed out 2022 doing what it does best...DANCING! Over 40 guests attended our 'Rock The Night Away' event hosted at the beautiful Majestic Dance Studio. Attendees sipped, noshed, mingled, danced, and generously supported DCSTL to the sum of \$42,000! A majority of the proceeds from the evening went toward DCSTL's School Scholarship Fund, providing funding assistance for our 10 week/ 20 lesson residency program for some 10+ classrooms (300+ students) in under-resourced schools. Additional support went toward covering the costs of the 2023 Colors of the Rainbow Team Match Championship at the Touhill Performing Arts Center, and replenishing the DCSTL Costume Closet that provides clothing, shoes, and accessories for students in need of performance attire. Thank you to hometown favorites, Sugarfire Smoke House and 4 Hands Brewing for providing the food and drink. To all that volunteered, lent a hand, shook a tail feather, and donated—we are so grateful! Special thanks to Majestic Dance Studio, Rob Ketterer and members of the event committee: Andrea Luebbert, Nancy Nyikes, Vicki Sheehan and Robbye Toft.



DCSTL SUMMER BALLROOM DANCE CAMP 2023

Programming for 2022/2023 was in full swing, including the return of DCSTL's Summer Ballroom Dance Camp. Held June 26-30th at Majestic Dance Studio and open to ALL dancers ages 9-12, campers spent the week dancing together, creating connections, and making memories! Facilitated by DCSTL Teaching Artists, participants learned two choreographed routines (Swing & Cha Cha Cha) and polished their moves from the DCSTL Residency repertoire. In addition to dancing, each day centered on a character-building theme and included team building exercises, games, conversations, and reflections.



One of our favorite moments from the week came when camp participants performed for residents at The Grande at Creve Coeur Assisted Living and Memory Care Facility. It was a sheer delight to witness the residents tapping their toes, dancing in their seats, and with smiles aglow as they took in the performance. Many thanks to all of the parents that helped to make our camp field trip and performance happen through coordinating carpools and providing transportation.

On the last day of camp, friends and family members were treated to a VIP performance and even got to join in on the dancing! Special thanks to DCSTL Teaching Artists, Joyce, Carrie, and Lawrence who served up cool choreography and kept the fun-factor high. To the campers that attended, we wish to commend you for your kindness, cooperation, enthusiasm and positivity—camp was an awesome experience because of YOU!



Program Impact

We asked the Teachers and Principals that we partnered with during the 2022/2023 academic year to tell us how we did. Surveys measuring changes in students' attitudes, relationship skills, knowledge, physical coordination/agility, cultural knowledge/awareness and general enjoyment were distributed to all school partners. Results from these surveys demonstrate the profound positive impact that the DCSTL Core Residency Program has on students.

Of the teachers and principals surveyed from the 2022/2023 academic year:

- **93%** Agreed/Strongly Agreed that the DCSTL program **improved** students' **cooperation and teamwork skills**.
- **92%** Agreed/Strongly Agreed that the DCSTL program **improved** students' ability to **recognize musical time changes and rhythms**.
- **77%** Agreed/Strongly Agreed that the DCSTL program **helped** students' to **overcome anxieties**.
- **77%** Agreed/Strongly Agreed that the DCSTL program **improved** students' **etiquette and social skills**.
- **77%** Agreed/Strongly Agreed that the DCSTL program **increased** students' **physical coordination, bodily awareness, and agility**.
- **69%** Agreed/Strongly Agreed that the DCSTL program **increased** students' **confidence and self esteem**.
- **61%** Agreed/Strongly Agreed that the DCSTL program **increased** students' **cultural awareness**.
- Our favorite finding, **92%** of our school partners reported that their **students' liked the DCSTL program a lot!**



"I think they learned that trust goes both ways. In order to feel comfortable with your partner, you need to know they will respect you. On the other side, your partner is also looking for respect from you. The students found that, when conflict was high among their peers, dancing was not fun. Resolving conflict, showing mutual respect, and trust-building were all essential parts of our dancing experience. Because the teamwork in Dancing Classrooms is student-directed, the skills have translated into the classroom with students being more comfortable taking suggestions from their peers. It has allowed me as the teacher to trust the students to self-regulate better, and to remind their peers of correct procedures or behaviors."

*- Ingrid Herrenbruck, 5th grade teacher,
Our Lady of Guadalupe School*

"Jenny and Lawrence were assigned to SCCA. They both were phenomenal - incredibly patient, they worked together well, had great enthusiasm and put in great effort to get the program up and running."

*- Lizzy Ruzicka, 5th grade teacher,
South City Catholic Academy*

"Ms. Carrie was exceptional. She related well to the children, was consistent with methodology, and was well-respected by the children. We LOVE Ms. Carrie."

*- Katie Komos, 5th grade teacher,
St. Margaret of Scotland School*

"We have several students that struggled to interact/touch other students, and others that struggle with general anxiety. As the sessions progressed, these students did begin to work through some of their struggles. It was hard at times, however, they all participated well and showed progress. Shortly after the culminating event and competition, students participated in camp - they worked together in this setting better than we expected, and several students were more respectful and cooperative for the last few months."

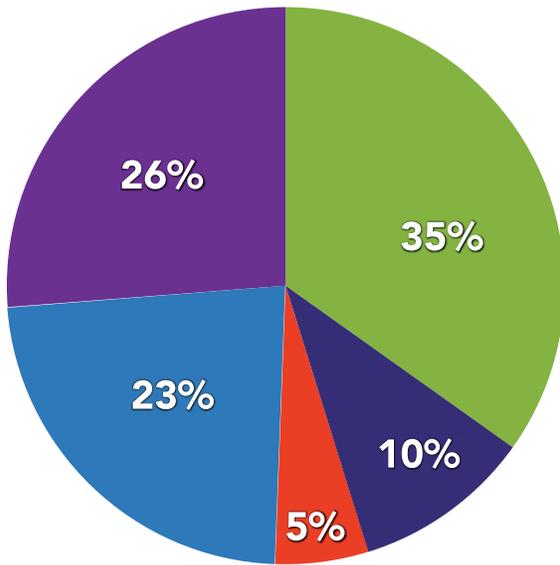
*- Anna Davis, Principal,
All Saints Academy - St. Ferdinand*

"We LOVE Lauren!!!! Every year we cross our fingers hoping Lauren is assigned to us. She is easy to work with, always happy, has a great relationship with the kiddos, and truly enjoys what she does."

- Lucy Gintz, Principal, St. Gerard Majella School



Financials

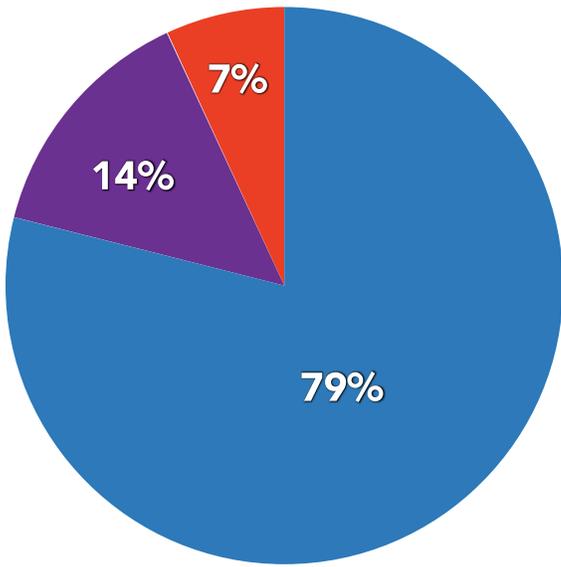


Percent of Total Revenue FY 2023

- Individual Support
- Corporate Contributions
- Foundations/Grants
- Fundraising Event (Rock the Night Away)
- Program Income

Individual Support	\$66,262.56
Corporate Contributions	\$19,669.00
Foundations/Grants	\$10,000.00
Fundraising Event (Rock the Night Away) ..	\$44,178.47
Program Income	\$50,300.00
 Total Revenue	 \$190,410.03





Percent of Total Expenses FY 2023

- Programming Expenses
- Management & General
- Fundraising Expenses

Programming Expenses	\$140,777.14
Management & General	\$25,374.65
Fundraising Expenses	\$12,214.55
Total Expenses	\$178,366.34



Recognition and Support

DCSTL SUPPORTERS

COMPETITION EVENT HOSTS



St. Gabriel the Archangel
CATHOLIC SCHOOL



IN KIND DONORS

Nancy & Mike Nyikes
Robbye Toft & Rob Ketterer
Andrea & Steve Luebbert



UMSL Community Agency Partnership Volunteers:

Alanna Hopson-Morris, Kyla Duke, Meredith Stroud, Rebecca Jaegers, Sarah Wirthlin, Yeni Moya

Rock The Night Away Event Committee:

Andrea Luebbert, Nancy Nyikes, Robbye Toft, Vicki Sheehan

Colors of the Rainbow Volunteers:

Felix Fernandez, Grace Fischer, Rob Ketterer, Sandy Lato, Meredith Lederle, William Lederle, Nancy Nyikes, Lucas Schuepfer, Logan Schuepfer

SPECIAL THANKS

A special thanks to the E Des Lee Fine Arts Collaborative, Missouri Arts Council, Network for Strong Communities, and Regional Arts Commission.

CORPORATE & FOUNDATION SUPPORTERS

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INDIVIDUAL SUPPORT

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Therese Fairchild

Andrea & Steve Luebbert

Minogue Family Foundation

Michael & Lynne Owens

Vicki Sheehan-Piontek & Jerry Piontek

John & Mary Lynne Wilson

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Gloria Bahn

Matt & Mary Ann Bauer

Alex & Sara Borodko

Anne & Rick Bresnahan

Susan & Glenn Davis

Don & Tracy Downing

Lisa & Rob Forsyth

Debbie & Paul Gardner

Don & Debbie Gerhardt

James & Laure Hulverson

Tyler Johnson

Kathy & John Maupin

John Milonas

Jerry & Jenny O'Neil

Eleesa Perez

Mark & Judy Schnoebelen

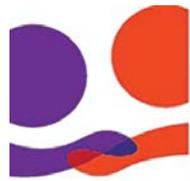
Kathleen Schumacker

Keith Steinhoff

Robbye Toft & Rob Ketterer

Beth Vaccaro

Scott & Cristin Viebranz



DANCING CLASSROOMS ST. LOUIS



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