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Dance at East Side Middle

East Side Middle School's philosophy is strongly influenced by the British educator, Ken Robinson, author of *The Element* and other books about teaching creativity and the arts. In one of his lectures, Robinson argues, "Dance - and physical activity - should have the same status in schools as math, science and language." He was not arguing against math; rather, he was arguing for "equity in educating the whole child...about the equal importance of dance with the other arts, languages, mathematics, sciences and humanities in the general education of every child."

All of us at East Side Middle strongly believe in Ken Robinson. For about 10 years, our 8th graders have had a Ballroom Dance unit taught by Ms. Fure and Ms. Deneroff. Inspired by the transformative success of this program, and by the writing of Ken Robinson, we added a 6th grade component to our dance repertoire in the fall of 2017. Now, all of our sixth graders take dance 3 times a week with our dance teacher, Ms. Deneroff. The success of this program is evident in every lesson: in the smiles of our students while they go through their routines, in the reports of parents who tell us that their children are practicing their steps at home at night, and by the twice annual, choreographed dance performances by our sixth graders. We've also discovered that dance class is a great way for our incoming sixth graders to meet each other, collaborate and build a sense of community.

Robinson often laments that education has been entirely focused on the human head at the expense of the rest of the body. He jokes that University professors are the worst dancers at any party. East Side Middle believes that our students should understand the art of Gene Kelly, as well as the science of gene splicing and all that jazz.

