

**Evaluation  
Of The  
Broadway Junior – ArtsConnection Program  
In  
Three New York City Public Schools**

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**Appendix: Sample Observation Reports**

In this section, we present extended excerpts from observation reports written by our research team. They provide detailed descriptions of the rehearsal process. They were originally written quickly for our internal use only and so are not edited for public presentation. **The reader should note that these reports are “raw data.” They contain the opinions and perceptions of the researchers at the time and do not necessarily represent our final evaluation findings.** The findings we presented in this report were made after a complete analysis of all data.

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**Researcher: Susan Falls  
PS 176  
December 13, 2000**

Through ArtsConnection, the after-school program at PS 176 is incorporating a production of the Broadway show “Guys and Dolls” directed by Mary Ann Hay. After arriving at the school and checking through security and the principal’s office, I was directed to the school auditorium where the program takes place.

In talking with Amy and Roy (directors), I learned that this was only the second day of production – the first day was spent explaining the project and going through a few lines from the script – so the organizational process is just shaping up. The goal for that day was to hand out scripts to students (grades 4, 5, and 6) and begin auditions.

When Mary Ann arrived the children responded to her at once; she outlined the goals for the day, and had everyone sign in. The students were to audition in small groups, and Mary Ann explained that, “...you shouldn’t worry if you are a little nervous since you will be singing in groups and then later some people, if they want to, will be asked to sing a little on their own. Everyone has a special part so don’t worry about that.” Mary Ann emphasized the importance of every role, and that each “actor” was going to make an

important contribution to the show, no matter how “big” the part. I felt that this helped to allay any fears or worries the students had about getting a part since the students responded positively to this remark. There were many students raising their hands to make comments or ask questions, and my impression was that they were very interested and excited about the project. Amy, Roy and Mary Ann took time to answer all questions.

Patience, following directions and quiet were going to be important today, and the directors emphasized this when they explained in detail the things they would be looking for in auditions. These skills included voice projection, diction, stage presence, and concentration, and were explained by example. The students then participated in breathing exercises and singing exercises that helped to bring everyone together. I felt that Amy’s calling the students “actors”, as in “Actors, you need to keep your scripts in your lap”, was a good way to generate a sense of “groupness” as well as suggest to them a sense of talent. The children are being transformed from “students from different grades and different classes” to “a group actors working on a common project!”

The children practiced singing the scales accompanied by body movements, which they appeared to enjoy. As the exercise progressed, the coordination of the group improved and the students were calmer and a little better concentrated. The scale exercises were of a call and response type, with Amy calling the scales and then the students mimicking her efforts (a good listening and concentration exercise). Their efforts were met with compliments as well as instructions, such as how to improve enunciation.

Amy went over the clip from the song that was to be auditioned today:

*When you meet a gent  
Paying all kinds of rent  
For a flat that could flatten the Taj Mahal...  
Call it sad, call it funny  
But it's better than even money,  
That the guy is only doin' it for some doll!*

The group practiced pronouncing the words extra-clearly, and then they heard a recorded rendition of the song – ostensibly from the Broadway production (a rhetorical device serving to link the student show with the Broadway production in the minds of the “actors”). Mary Ann asked for volunteers for the first group and over half the group volunteered to go first. They were to go up on stage to sing alongside Roy, Mary Ann, and Amy in groups of three. Roy played a simple melody on the piano to help students get the tune, and gave them music to sing along with. Mary Ann again emphasized the importance of patience, respect, and that whistling was prohibited. The children, spread about in the first six or so of twenty rows in the auditorium, were talking excitedly, laughing and cracking jokes. I could see that that it was going to be difficult for them to sit still and quiet during the two-hour rehearsal, but Amy, Roy and Mary Ann had anticipated this problem. The solution was to do call and response clapping or snapping exercises (where Amy clapped out a rhythm and students respond in turn) in between

groups and to allow them to talk amongst themselves between turns. Those who had already finished were sent to another room with a parent assistant (where they could play or do homework or talk without distracting those who had yet to audition).

Besides reinforcing the importance of patience and respect for each other, the rehearsal was an opportunity for the students to learn about cooperation and support in a non-classroom environment. A large, multi-grade project such as a musical production require an especial set of dynamics and practices from more individualized or small group classroom exercises. This means that everyone, having various skill and maturity levels, must learn to work together smoothly as a group. When each audition was finished there was clapping and commenting, and during the singing on stage many of the children took the opportunity to practice singing the song.

About halfway through the rehearsal, one student made several mistakes in the song. Mary Ann made a deliberate point to explain to everyone that rehearsals were the time to make errors, "...now, don't worry if you make mistakes....you know this is the first time many of you have seen the script and been on stage, so its no big deal – if you make a mistake just keep going – we just want to her your voice so we can see what the best part is for you, because we want to give you the best role that fits with your voice!" The students are really very eager to get up on stage to audition and they continue practicing to themselves while the others sing on stage.

After each group finishes, the directors gave them some feedback such as "Good diction, K\_\_\_\_," or "I liked the way you looked up, M\_\_\_\_," or "Thank you all so much, there is a lot of talent up here," etc.

Of course, some of the students were shy than others, and a few students did not want to audition at all. This did not seem to be a problem, and while I could not hear exactly what was being said, I guessed that some non-singing parts might be available. After every student had a chance to sing, "When you meet a gent," the whole group reconvened and Mary Ann complemented them on their patience and good behavior (and it *was* difficult to be calm and still during the entire audition, and while there were a few moments of wildness the students were quite well-behaved). They again discussed some important things to keep in mind in order to have a successful show, such as patience, respect, support, and concentration. Mary Ann explained the plan for the next week or so, and then gave the students a chance to ask questions.

Mary Ann explained that everyone would have a special part...and it was important to get everyone his/her part. "If you are very nervous and it's your first time, it might not be good if you have the biggest part, right?" One student raised his hand and said, "Yea – like last year in Bundles?" Mary Ann asked him, "So how did you like your part last year – you did such a good job" and he responded, "Yeah, but this year I want a bigger part – it should have been bigger!!" "Well, now you're used to it, but remember in the beginning last year you wanted a small part, right?", she asked.

“Yeah,” he agreed, “but...I got used to it and now I’m ready for a VERY BIG part!” he said with a big smile.

I believe the rehearsal will be a good opportunity for students from various grades (4,5 and 6) to interact, to learn from each other and cooperate in a major project that will give them a real sense of accomplishment, engendering self-confidence and a sense of group pride. Practice for the show (to be unveiled late in the spring semester) will give students a chance to learn the importance of support and concentration. Some parents are participating in the program, and when other parents come to pick up their students from the program, there is a chance for them to watch the show evolve and to talk with each other, as well as communicate with Mary Ann, Roy and Amy about the show or any other matters that may be pertinent. I think it will be very gratifying for students and parents alike (not to mention the directors and parent helpers) to watch the show come together over time. I noticed that a number of parents had questions or comments that they wanted to express to Mary Ann, and she made it quite clear that she was available if parents had questions or concerns they needed to have addressed (both to the students and parents).

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**Researcher: Susan Falls**  
**PS 94**  
**January 24, 2001**

Victor Maog – Artistic Director  
Stephanie Farhood – Choreographer/Asst.  
Michael Eisenberg – Musical Director  
Madeline DiOrio - PS 94 Coordinator

The fifth grade after-school program at PS 94 is rehearsing for their production of *Annie*. The rehearsal has been going on since October and both the children and the instructors seemed well adjusted to the routine.

The atmosphere of this rehearsal was a little more serious than at other schools, there was less joking around and more critiques coming from instructors, but the students seem more focused and better at following directions. Victor and Stephanie remarked to me afterwards that they had been working with the students on discipline and following directions and that there had been a lot of improvement over the course of the sessions.

I arrived at the school at 3:00 and was shown to the auditorium. Michael Eisenberg was there and said that the class was meeting upstairs so we walked up together. He asked me which of the other productions I had seen, and he explained to me that this school was doing *Annie* with about 30 or fifth graders.

Upstairs I met Victor and Stephanie who were going over the plan for the rehearsal when I arrived. The children filed in very quietly and took their places – I had been unaware

that the children were gathering outside of the door under the direction of Ms. DiOrio (she gave them name tags and prepared them for the rehearsal), and I was astonished at the orderliness and “good behavior” of the students.

Ms. DiOrio mentioned that “...a few students are missing because of the Chinese New Year,” but there are still about 20 students present. Most students are Hispanic though not all. There were mostly girls (there were only 3 boys). When Victor asked the students to “make the room as still as possible” they immediately became silent and took their positions in three long rows, with each student standing on an “x” marked with masking tape. Victor led the students through several breathing exercises (8 breaths in, 8 breaths out, etc) and then worked on “articulation exercises”. The enunciatory exercises consisted of a call-and-response type of interaction in which Victor called out words such as “bright”, “Broadway”, “Annie”, “war”, “opera” in an exaggeratedly precise manner, and students then mimicked him. (He gave the students feedback and they then made adjustments, such as “make sure you hit the “t real hard on “bright”)

Victor also took the students through a series of shoulder-rolls to help them relax and also keep their attention focused. He then took them through several squatting movements. The students were intently focused on Victor and were not talking at all amongst themselves. They appeared to be concentrating during the exercises. I thought it was interesting that Ms. DiOrio participated in all of the exercises throughout the rehearsal and also helped facilitate the directions coming from the director/choreographer/music director when one or more students did not understand or needed a little extra prodding in following directions (which was not very often!). Victor then led the class through a noise making (i.e. trilling like a bird) call/response and then a “scat” type lesson that is a good listening and concentration exercise.

Stephanie took over at this point – students were asked to mirror her movements – a kinesthetic exercise, which required their focus. Students executed the exercise quite well and laughed during several of the movements. She taught then a short 8-step sequence. Stephanie demonstrated the steps and then went through them slowly and step-by-step. After three or four tries the students performed the “dance” (they got a little better each time).

Michael took over and began working on the singing sections. He also performed call and response type exercises and then took the students through the scales (a piano was in the room for him to use). He encouraged the students to make their voices smooth and beautiful “like a ghost” for one set of scales. “oohhh oohhhh oohhhh oohh oohh oohh oooohh” sang the students in various notes. Praising their performance, saying “oh beautiful.” “that sounds very good.” Michael also used the opportunity to suggest the importance of good posture and being relaxed but focused while singing. He showed the students how to feel the tension in the larynx and place a finger upon it to remind themselves to be relaxed and easy. The students responded very well to Michael and their rapt attention suggested that they both respected and endeavored to please. They sang one of the central pieces in *Annie*, “the sun’ll come out tomorrow.”

The class then practiced the song “New York City” and again Michael gave them clear instructions about the larynx, relaxing the shoulders and the subtle tightening of the abdomen and while I of course could not ascertain what was happening objectively, many of the students placed a hand lightly on the belly or on the larynx in an attempt to do a self-check regarding Michael’s instructions. “O.K., now be bright but not loud – make the words clear and string but don’t shout, OK? Make sure you don’t get sloppy at the end. OK, let’s go....”

Two of the points that were again emphasized when the students rehearsed “Hard Knock Life” were FOCUS and LISTENING. They were asked to pay special attention to energy and singing in tune... “Beautiful.” It seemed important to the music director to give the students a balance of praise and constructive criticism. When some of the students caught my gaze they smiled and turned coyly away. I gave O\_\_\_\_\_ back a big smile and he beamed, forgetting the words but clearly happy.

Next was a continuation of the read-through that had begun last week. Students sat in a large circle and some shared their book with another student. Casting had already been made, though there were a few changes made during the rehearsal. There were several students absent and others read their parts. The directors discussed with the students the importance of commitment in a production such as a play, and the importance of attending rehearsal whenever possible. The students were quiet and followed directions with regard to getting into their respective groups –i.e. “the orphans”. When C\_\_\_\_\_ was asked to read the part of Lilly, Victor’s directions were met with a smile and she nudged her neighbor.

“OK let’s take it from the top of page 95 – now read loud and clear.” This out-loud reading exercise is interesting in several respects. The student’s abilities to read aloud varied and some struggled with parts of the text. One student stumbled on the word “champagne” and another on “wonderful,” another on “Ms. Warbucks” and “Roosevelt.” When a student failed to pronounce a word correctly the others and Ms. DiOrio prompted them to help them get it right by saying the words. The prompting appeared to be done in a very good-natured way and judging from the body language of the students, they enjoyed helping out and being helped. The read-through was a group exercise, then, on a number of dimensions.

During the reading students consulted amongst themselves about how to give the lines a little emotion or tone (“Oh yeah, you say it like this (student demos), “Strip them sheets” in a demanding voice); “C\_\_\_\_\_, here look at my part – I have already memorized it – listen to this!!!” The students then listened to the CD versions – a recording of the Broadway version which gave them an idea as to the speed and tone of the lines. The end of the scene was “The Sun’ll Come Out” and everybody sang.

They finish reading and then do a run-through along with the CD, which is a good multi-dimensional lesson (they have done the number several ways – with the piano, with the read-through, along with the CD, listening to the CD, along with body movements). Again, the import of focus is emphasized and the director discusses working together as a

group. There is noted improvement after three run-throughs and some students are asked to sing solo which they do without hesitation!! Students are praised on their “patience” (and I thought they were being quite patient).

Putting the number all together there were lots of big smiles and one student remarked, “this is sure hard work” but they seem to enjoy the challenge. The director made a game out of getting the parts correct and students are laughing and spontaneously act out the lines such as pinching their noses and wafting the air when they say “rotten , smelly life” or pretending to yank a beard when saying “pulling whiskers out”.

The most apparent collateral benefits visible in the rehearsal were **cooperation, teamwork, patience** (especially when the directors were focusing on parts of the production that involved only one or two students and other were asked to be silent and attentive), **focus**, memory (script books had to be put away after a certain number of run-throughs), **kinesthetic/body coordination** (i.e. correctly following specific directions) and the idea that **practice makes perfect**.

At the end of the session students were praised for their hard work and then quietly got ready and filed out with Ms. DiOrio.

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**Researcher: Elsa Davidson**  
**PS 94 - Brooklyn, Sunset Park**  
**February 1, 2001**

**Introduction:** I traveled to PS 94 in Sunset Park to observe 40 fifth grade girls (participation is optional and the few boys who had originally been involved had dropped out) practice dances and songs and stage presence for an ArtsConnection-assisted production of Broadway musical, *Annie*. Present were the children, one teacher, and three artists -- a dance teacher, Stephanie, an artistic director, Victor, and Michael, the music director. The two-hour rehearsal began with a vocal and physical warm-up, and some groups practice involving all the girls, and then the division of the group into two; the orphans were taken to a classroom to practice a dance and lines, and the other girls stayed downstairs in a practice room to work on songs and solos and stage presence. It should be noted that the girls began rehearsing *Annie* in November, and are now in the process of polishing and learning new songs and dances for the show. At the end of the rehearsal, the “orphans” who had been upstairs learning a dance came downstairs and performed what they had learned for the other girls. Then, everyone worked more on singing and integrating the long section of the dance and stage direction they had learned with the rest of a longer song. The group also worked on one other song. At the end, there was a physical warm-down exercise, and the rehearsal was dismissed.

**Chronology:** At 3: 15, Stephanie, Michael, and Victor, one of the students’ teachers begin by lining up all of the students outside of the empty room where they will be rehearsing. The students are all wearing nametags on their shirts. Standing at the head of

the line, Victor asks the girls to be quiet, to stand up straight, to form an orderly single line in order to file quietly into the rehearsal room. Once assembled, Victor has them arrange themselves in two neat rows. Victor leads the students in a speaking warm-up drill, during which they shout and whisper in unison various words and work on clear enunciation of consonants. The girls are all looking at Victor and paying attention, involved in this call-and-response exercise. Victor circles the room, checking posture here and there. One girl has her hands in her pockets, and Victor motions to her to place her hands at her sides. When this exercise is completed, Michael sits at the piano, and begins a choral warm-up, accompanying the girls as they practice scales. The first song to be rehearsed is “Hey Hobo Man.” The words have already been committed to memory in previous rehearsals. The girls sing a few complete stanzas—accompanied by Michael, who, as he plays, comments on what he wants from the singers. “Staccato!” he shouts, and then “Legato!” He stops them. “I know you guys can do this. Don’t sing too aggressively.” They begin the stanzas again, following the direction to begin notes delicately, and then increase the volume of the sound. The girls run-through the stanzas again a few times, until Michael nods, and tells them they sound great. Victor sings along too, and walks around the room, making the girls stand up straight. Victor reminds the girls that they have to envision how they will look to the audience when they are on stage. Michael then moves onto the next few stanzas. The girls practice the next parts. Everyone is in tune, but Michael tells the students that they need to sing out more strongly. They practice the section again – accompanied. Michael nods excitedly as does Victor, who smiles at them often while they sing. They are all still standing their places, forming two rows.

On a few occasions, Michael has just the first row sing a section, while the back row listens to them, and then vice versa. Any time he hears a flat note or uneven tone, he sings or plays the notes on the piano, and then has them sing it again. In parts of the song, some girls have one-line solos, and Michael has the girls with solos practice their lines, repeating the line if diction isn’t good, or if they sing too softly, or not on cue. The solos are then integrated into the rest of the song. Running through the song, Michael spurs them on, shouting above his playing “That sounds beautiful!” and “Good!” Each time a soloist sings a line, Victor has them take a step forward in front of the row, and then step back afterward. Victor also chimes in, correcting the kids’ singing. “I didn’t hear ‘K’ at the end of “knock,” he says. And they try it over again. Victor smiles and nods at the second attempt.

Michael asks the singers to put a hand over one ear and really listen to how they sound individually as they sing. “Do me a favor. Listen to yourselves.”

At this point in the rehearsal, Stephanie takes eleven girls – all “orphans”— out of the classroom to go upstairs to Room 406 to practice dance. As the girls with orphan parts leave, the others get a little fidgety. “Actors! Freeze!” Victor shouts. “It’s your responsibility to make sure that you don’t stand next to someone that your tempted to talk to.”

It is now time for the group to learn a new song. Michael has the kids gather around him. Victor and Michael gather the kids around the piano to learn the words to a new song. He begins with the words and no music, saying first to the girls, “Commit this to memory.” He says the line: “It ain’t fair how we scrounge for three or four bucks...” One line at a time, they repeat after him. They repeat this process, sometimes saying two lines back-to-back, until approximately the first verse have been spoken numerous times. The girls look attentively at Michael, and some of them lean a bit on the piano. Then, he plunks out the tune for them on the piano, and then they sing the first two lines a few times. They sing another line, and then comes a line – “That little brat.” The girls sing it loudly. Michael stops them and tells them that they don’t sound as good as he knows they can sound. He explains to them that first they should sing the line “That little brat” as prettily and properly as they can, and then, and then add the “dramatic ugliness” later. He has many of them sing the new lines they have learned individually, praising each girl when she sings the line correctly. One little girl raises her hand, and then starts singing but doesn’t know all the words and looks down embarrassed. He has them all do the part that she missed together. As the group recites the words, the girl who had faltered with the words nods excitedly, reading the lyrics on the sheet music over Michael’s shoulder at the piano. They sing this section again, and Michael and Victor say that it sounds out of tune. They go back to singing the tune only on the vowels --- *doo , doo , doo* and *tu, tu, tu*. Michael asks them to sing the melody on these vowels more loudly.

The girls then learn another stanza’s worth of lyrics, and Michael shows the girls who will have certain lines as solos, according to their roles in the musical. Although the group has been very attentive, two girls who are standing next to each other are vying for space around the piano. One says “Stop it” to the other one and Victor instantly separates them and has one girl move to the other side of the piano next to him.

As they are practicing, Michael stops them and says: “You’ve got to be very, very picky. You can’t just let any old sound come out of you. Very picky, very discriminating. If you think you don’t know the note, then move next to someone who does.” They try the bars again, and Michael stops them again and says to them “I know you can do this.”

Michael now wants to work on range with the girls. Michael listens to a few girls individually try to hit a very low note, then a high note, and then a low note again over the course of a three-syllable lyrical phrase. One of the girls has difficulty and he stops her again, suggesting that she sing the high note gently and quietly and then broaden the volume of the sound once the note is hit securely.

Victor suggests to Michael that the girls move to the back corner of the room, and practice projecting as they sing. The girls are now on the other side of the room from the piano. Now, Michael and Victor begin rehearsing the girls on the entire song, integrating the solos with the verses, and emphasizing timing. Michael stops the singers, and tells them that they have to keep time and know when to come in, and that they have to project across the room. Some students are starting to shift from foot to foot, and it takes those with solos more than a few tries to get it right. B\_\_\_\_\_, one girl with an entire song to sing, is then called across the room to the piano. Michael turns to me and tells me that

B\_\_\_\_\_ has worked for a long time the night before, learning the song. He goes over the words with her and melody once quietly at the piano, and then Victor quiets the kids, who are now allowed to sit down and listen to B\_\_\_\_\_’s solo (the kids sigh a large collective groan of relief at this news). Victor says, “Guys, focus on B\_\_\_\_\_’s body language.” B\_\_\_\_\_ is standing in front of the piano. “B\_\_\_\_\_, you want to look older for the solo, you don’t want to look like an orphan. Plant your feet apart. See kids? It’s so easy to look older.” Accompanied on the piano by Michael, B\_\_\_\_\_ runs through the solo, and falters. She tries again. “That was excellent!” Michael says, and the other girls clap.

At this point, I left the room and went upstairs to watch Stephanie rehearse the dance movements with the kids. Stephanie’s group of eleven were supposed to have a large room adjacent to the music room that Michael and Victor’s group is using, however that room has become unavailable due to a banquet planned for the following day. The classroom teacher apologizes, and Stephanie explains the fact that they will be practicing in a carpeted corner of the fifth grade classroom means that they won’t be able to practice all the steps. In addition, the stereo that was to be used in order to accompany the dancers is broken. When I enter the room, they are speaking the song lines in tempo, and acting out the mime movements of the song. The song is about what the life of an orphan at the orphanage is like, and the meanness of the orphanage’s headmistress. The girls know the lyrics very well, and each new meaningful phrase is being associated with a new gesture or movement to make up the dance. In addition, the girls are arranged in certain groupings, such that characters who share a solo part – for example, in the middle of a song, one girl asks the “orphan” next to her “Santa Claus?” and the other girl says “What’s that, who’s he?” Stephanie explains to the girls that they are pushing to learn everything very quickly because they have so many more dances to learn. Stephanie stands facing the kids, miming the motions with them. Lyrics about “Bellies full” or “lonely life” are associated with movements expressing those meanings in rapid succession. The girls follow quickly, and the dance involves blocking out different positions, and pairings. There is no talking among the girls, outside of the lyrics. Everyone seems to be paying rapt attention to Stephanie. The classroom teacher says the lyrics along with them, and praises them after a run-through, as does Stephanie. Stephanie tells them that they are doing a great job. When the girls get through most of a song/dance number, the time is out, and it is time to file back downstairs to join the other group.

It’s now about 5: 05 –ten minutes left of rehearsal. When Stephanie and her group of eleven dancers enter, they perform for the downstairs group the dance, but with Michael accompanying them on the piano. Stephanie stands in front of the girls, who now have an audience, and warns them that with the piano accompaniment, everything could get a lot faster. She also tells them that they are great. The girls run-through what they know (not quite the whole song) while the other kids watch them. In the wider space, they are able to make clearer gestures. The observers clap at the finish of the dance. Michael and Stephanie confer.

“I just couldn’t hear you,” Michael says to the kids. Victor orders the kids to get into three lines, and when they don’t move very quickly and are chatting together, he says

loudly “5,4, 3, 2, 1, pin drop!” There is silence. The kids, once in three rows, are each asked to say an adjective out loud that represents how they feel about how the rehearsal went. “Good” says the first girl, and then down the line, “happy,” “joyful,” “focused,” “confused.”

“That’s great,” Victor says. “ I like that not everyone picked “happy” or “good.”

The rehearsal is over.

**Personal Observation:** This rehearsal had a lot of energy. The kids seemed very focused, and Michael, Stephanie, and Victor demanded a lot from the kids. The instructors’ attention to small details – the clarity of sung consonants, the position of their hands while singing, total quiet, and even filing into the rehearsal room in an orderly line set a tone of concentration and respect. The genuine enthusiasm that the teachers had for a job well done, their repeated statements of belief in the kids’ ability to do a better job and master something difficult, and their grown-up way of addressing the kids in my opinion worked very well. The kids took the work seriously. They wanted to impress themselves, their teachers, and each other. They seemed very engrossed in learning, and smiled in what appeared to be real enjoyment when they knew they had done well. In addition, I noticed that Michael and Victor were careful to contextualize what the kids were learning. In terms of leadership style, Michael and Victor both assumed a prominent role. Victor often jumped in to make a suggestion, or demand something –usually about dramatic presence, or praise someone while Michael directed the musical component.

The all-girl dynamic may be a factor in the ability of the kids to concentrate so well, and I wonder if the boys dropped out because *Annie* was perceived as too feminine, or for other reasons.

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**Researcher: Elsa Davidson  
East Side Middle School  
March 1, 2001**

When I arrived just after 2 p.m., seventeen girls were on stage practicing a song and dance number for the musical (*Guys and Dolls*).

One girl, M\_\_\_\_\_, is center stage, and the others form a line behind her. Mary Ann is in front of them, directing them. She begins rehearsing them on a song by going over the box step and other steps with the “chorus line.” Meanwhile, M\_\_\_\_\_ is miming the words to the song and practicing different dance steps to herself. Her cheeks are flushed and she looks as if she is really concentrating. The girls seem to be in sync with Mary Ann as she goes through the steps, saying the lyrics in time with her movements to demonstrate the synchronization of the song and the dance. Some of the girls on stage are putting more hip movements into their dance – dancing more coquettishly, and the steps come very naturally. There is a lot of smiling as the girls dance. M\_\_\_\_\_ is still in the center,

waiting for her solo part. She is shaking out her hands and feet, no smiling, looking impatient. Then her part comes up. She goes through her lines, making a kissing gesture where the lyrics intimate a kiss, smiling flirtatiously in keeping with her character in the musical. M\_\_\_\_\_ knows all the lyrics, and sways her head back and forth as she dances. Then everyone joins together for another section of the dance, where the girls sing “My heart is leapin’. I’m having trouble sleepin’!” They go through the miming dance for this a few times. M\_\_\_\_\_ has it down, making theatrical expressions of surprise and distress as she sings the lines of the song.

Ten more kids come on stage—boys and girls. These are the “guys” who are holding plastic hats that Mary Ann has passed out. The understudy for a male role in the production is called to the front by Mary Ann and Mr. Lyons, the classroom teacher. Mary Ann explains the role of an understudy in a production, and how the person with the role should help the understudy get accustomed to the role.

“All the “guys” should be looking for real hats – you have to provide your own hats—so go to thrift stores—these [plastic ones] are just for rehearsal.”

The group begins to rehearse a new dance (about a horse race) to the lyrics “Why it’s good ol’ reliable Nathan, Nathan, Nathan, Nathan Detroit.” The group seems confused about the steps. Kids are performing steps at different times, and seem timid in their movements, partially lifting an arm, turning neither left nor right. Many of them are not singing, and they are looking at each other, trying to figure out the steps. There is a fair amount of chattering. Mary Ann starts them again, trying to go over the steps, and many of the kids are talking. Some are concentrating, looking down at their feet to get the steps, mouthing the words of the song as they dance. The general impression is of disarray. The kids who are in the cast but not on the stage are socializing loudly in the auditorium in little groups. Mostly segregated by sex. Mr. Lyons is at the front of the auditorium, surveying the kids on stage and the kids in the audience who are waiting until they are in a scene. Suddenly Mr. Lyons moves to the center of the room, and motions to Mary Ann.

“You are NOT FOCUSED!” he says. “There is a legacy to live up to. Last year’s show was fantastic. Yes, you will be compared. Yes, people will say “oh, it wasn’t as good as the year before. You’ve got pay attention and try hard. There is TOO MUCH talking.”

Mary Ann begins quietly now that the kids are quiet. She demonstrates the hand gestures for the songs. One girl says eagerly “We should have fans!” They work on this dance for a while, Mary Ann breaking the dance learning down into segments. The kids look at their feet, learning the steps. Some are socializing quietly on stage, in between little segments of rehearsal. A lot of them giggle occasionally. Mary Ann splits them up into three groups. The Twos move to stage-left, the Threes to stage-right. Some kids have no idea what group they are in, and try to ask Mary Ann and Mr. Lyons. Mr. Lyons tells N\_\_\_\_\_, a boy in the class who is on stage to be quiet. He has been whispering and chatting with J\_\_\_\_\_, another boy in his group. The Ones are in the center. These three groups are going to sing and dance a number in the production. It requires that they harmonize and come in at different times. The “Guys” go over the dance and clearly

already know the song, which is about betting on a horse. Mary Ann goes over not only the song and dance, but also the affect of the dancers. There are soloists in this song, and she has them sing their parts. The soloists look solemn, paying careful attention to what's going on, keeping their gaze on Mary Ann for direction. The first boy goes. She sings his part and he has a lot of trouble hitting the high notes. In the audience, Mr. Lyons points upwards towards the ceiling to signal to the boy that he is flat. Mary Ann tells them that the solos should be like a conversation between the three soloists, so that after each solo, a soloist should physically react to the next soloist. One girl – part of the background groups – raises her hand and asks, “Do we look at the audience at that part or stay frozen?” (The groups in back are supposed to stay frozen in position until the chorus.) Meanwhile, the boy soloist taps his foot and moves his hands – going over his steps.

The next part of the song/play involves a troupe of seven girls from the back singing a missionary song, marching down the aisle of the auditorium up onto the stage as they sing. One girl leads them, a character who is supposed to seem unsure of being a missionary, it seems. The girl playing this role has a singing solo. When she marches onto the stage, she falters purposefully. She sounds depressed during her speech, and ends the speech sounding anxious, in keeping her character's predicament.

Generally, the boys seem to be relying on their scripts more than the girls in the production. Many of the boys read their lines from the provided script, whereas the girls have no need of the script.

Mary Ann wants to rehearse the “Nathan” song again from the top. The kids scramble quickly on the stage to find their appropriate spots to begin the dance/song.

One of the “couples” in the play, one of the male leading characters who plays a “sinner” (played by S\_\_\_\_\_) and “Adelaide” (played by M\_\_\_\_\_), now must act out a dialogue in which Adelaide has a psychosomatic cold because she is paranoid that Nathan never wants to set a date for their intended wedding. In this scene, M\_\_\_\_\_ parodies a kind of “dumb blonde” character with a heavy and nasal New York accent. M\_\_\_\_\_ sounds very squeaky and comic, screwing up her face as she talks, then smiling and looking wide-eyed and wistful. M\_\_\_\_\_’s lines then get a little strident. She projects well. She is sort of nagging the male character, Nathan. To demonstrate this, M\_\_\_\_\_ puts her hands on her hips, rolls her eyes, and purses her lips. S\_\_\_\_\_ (“Nathan”) is still using his script, but he modulates his voice while he reads to express the character's wish to comfort “Adelaide” and reassure her while still getting away to go bet on a horse race and hang out with the guys.

S\_\_\_\_\_ reads his lines with a smile on his face, pausing expressively between phrases at points, as if mimicking an actual conversation.

Pretty soon thereafter there was a fifteen-minute break. The kids go out to get a snack. When they slowly filter in it is at least five minutes after the time they were supposed to return, and it takes another five minutes for them to quiet down and pay attention. Mary Ann has to shout for their attention many times. Kids ignore her. She finally screams and

they slowly pay attention and turn around, put their things down. Some come up to rehearse the next scene.

*During the next scene, I began by focusing more on S\_\_\_\_\_, whose role involves him pretending to be a “sinner” so he can ask out the lead missionary society girl, (whose real name is A\_\_\_\_\_).*

S\_\_\_\_\_ moves toward his female counterpart, A\_\_\_\_\_. There are now props on the stage. Mary Ann has brought a small desk on stage – which serves as the missionary’s desk – and some pretend pamphlets for her to give out. He moves unsteadily toward her with a smile on his face, saying his lines. During this scene he tries unsuccessfully to ask out the missionary girl, and suggest that they fly to Havana for a night of gambling (the play is set in the forties). He’s supposed to mime writing the names down of his friends as he says the line, “I guarantee I can fill a meeting with one dozen genuine sinners.” Mary Ann wants him to mime the writing motion more clearly, and he tries again, but does it quickly and it isn’t clear. He crinkles the paper in his hand nervously as he looks at Mary Ann. At the end of this scene, he is supposed to kiss A\_\_\_\_\_. Mary Ann coaches him through this. He does it very hesitantly. A\_\_\_\_\_ stands calmly in front of him. Everyone is standing around watching him practice. He folds his arms tightly in front of his chest, smiles, and blushes. They rehearse this scene a bit more, and then Mary Ann moves them onto S\_\_\_\_\_’s solo, during which he raises his eyebrows trying to hit the high notes. Mary Ann asks him to incline his body toward his partner, which he does immediately upon being given the direction.

S\_\_\_\_\_ comes off the stage and when he comes to sit down, two kids snicker at him. “Don’t you know how to kiss a girl?” a girl says. “I mean, haven’t you watched TV at least?” She smirks and S\_\_\_\_\_ says “Shut up!” loudly and stomps to his seat, ignoring them.

Another run-through. Mary Ann plays the CD version of the music to accompany the kids. S\_\_\_\_\_ and A\_\_\_\_\_ are still working on their scene. Mary Ann wants them to speed up their dialogue, but they continue to perform it at the same pace.

In the next scene the group rehearses, there is a dance with many people on stage. M\_\_\_\_\_ is in the front again with these other kids forming a chorus line. During this scene, I focused on a girl in striped tights without a main part. She stands in the back of the stage. She knows all the lines to the song, dances excitedly, smiling and looking at Mary Ann. Her feet anticipate the next steps. Occasionally she whispers to her friends standing in a cluster next to her, also dancing. At times she giggles in excitement as she performs. They stop. A girl nearby raises her hand. In an irritated voice she tells Mary Ann that she can’t hear M\_\_\_\_\_ when M\_\_\_\_\_ comes in, so she doesn’t know herself when to come in. This information seems to irritate M\_\_\_\_\_, who frowns and then rolls her eyes. M\_\_\_\_\_ then complains that the instrumental version Mary Ann uses is a little off. Mary Ann doesn’t think so, but M\_\_\_\_\_ insists. “Seriously, I listen to this song like everyday.” she says.

Four girls suddenly appear in the auditorium, one of whom is crying. They had apparently never come back after the break. Mr. Lyons addresses the group angrily: “I’m not teaching middle school to babysit!” he says. “Some people don’t think they have a responsibility to come back after break. You don’t understand commitment yet, and you have a commitment to this show...”

Everyone goes back to rehearsing. A girl without a main part has a line – “Has anyone seen my earrings?” She runs out on stage to deliver the line, and Mary Ann asks her to do it again and project, while tilting her face toward the audience. The girl (C\_\_\_\_) giggles and does it again. Mary Ann asks her to repeat it. C\_\_\_\_ breaks into hysterics but then finally says the line again, and then runs to join her friends at the side of the stage. A lot of the kids are talking, their gaze fixed on one another and not Mary Ann. A few try out dance steps on the side.

It is time now for a solo that M\_\_\_\_ performs. It’s a song and dance about having a cold. Everyone else is either at the side of the stage, or sitting in the auditorium chairs watching her. M\_\_\_\_ wings the song, dancing and singing in time, and acting at turns sick and lonely and then proud and scheming. She demonstrates these feelings by raising her eyebrows and widening her eyes to look innocent. The whole group is watching M\_\_\_\_. Two or three girls sitting in the audience watching M\_\_\_\_ rehearse are mouthing the words to the song she’s singing. Boys and girls alike seem transfixed by M\_\_\_\_. She finishes, and everyone applauds.

The rehearsal is nearing a close, with two more quick scenes to practice. J\_\_\_\_ is on stage, reading his script carefully, and then going over to Mary Ann to ask for help with a line. He continues reading the script. He has many lines in the play and is not “off-book.”

Mary Ann reviews another dance with them. There are fourteen on stage. One of the girls raises her hand to correct Mary Ann, pointing out that they should be beginning with the left foot and not the right foot. Mary Ann consults her script guide with the girl, and agrees.

They run through the dance, and the kids look forward out at the audience. A few have their lefts and rights mixed up. The kids in the audience are talking and laughing amongst themselves. At 5: 25 the rehearsal wraps up, and everyone rushes to get their backpacks.

Mr. Lyons addresses everyone, and tells them that they need to start thinking about how they want their character to be when they perform. He passes out an assignment. Before next week’s rehearsal, the kids are to write a bio of their character (including the “Guys” and “Dolls” without main parts).

Personal observation: My sense was that the kids are getting a lot out of this, enjoying immensely the self-expression of the dances and the songs. Four hours is just too long, though. They are unable to concentrate for that long a period, and they begin to fidget and gossip and talk out of turn. It was clear, especially from the facial expressions, and the attempts to get steps down correctly, the mouthing of song lyrics, and the studying of

scripts that the kids are engrossed in the process of getting ready for the performance. One important thing to note is that this group has 6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup>, and 8<sup>th</sup> graders in it, and the older kids are more prone to not do as they are told.

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**Researcher: Elsa Davidson**

**PS 94**

**March 11, 2001**

Victor, Stephanie, and Michael were the ArtsConnection staff working with the kids during my visit. A classroom teacher was also present, dancing and singing along with the kids. There were 22 kids present – 21 girls and one boy. All of the children are fifth graders, and many come from non-English speaking homes. Some are learning English themselves, so when kids don't sing, or seem to sing only about half of the words in a verse, this may be a reason.

The goal for the day is to learn a new song and new dance (part of the same number) with Stephanie. When I arrive, they are doing this. They form three rows, with the first row consisting of three main characters in the musical (*Annie*): “Annie,” “Grace,” and “Warbucks.” The kids are learning to synchronize their movements, raising their hands above their heads at the same time, singing “The city is bright as a penny arcade/ To think I’ve lived here all my life.” The dance then requires the kids to move quickly in a marching circle, and Stephanie asks them to practice this many times. Periodically, Michael jumps in to give instructions on the singing. He is accompanying them on the piano. Victor stands in row 2, modeling for the kids how the dance and singing should be. Occasionally, he signals non-verbally for someone to stop talking.

Meanwhile, I began to follow a little girl in the middle row with glasses on, K\_\_\_\_. K\_\_\_\_ keeps her eyes on Stephanie, who is facing the kids at the front of the room. Half the time she is singing the lyrics of the song, but following the dance steps consistently and closely. In between practices, she giggles and tries out a few steps, raising her arms in the air quickly, and then getting back into position for the next attempt. She whispers to the girl next to her in her row. As she dances during the rehearsal, her movements are bouncy, but she gets confused about the steps a number of times. Frequently she exchanges looks with the girl next to her.

The rehearsal goes on, and Michael asks the kids to sing louder. The kids singing is in tune, and they all seem to be earnestly paying attention to Stephanie, trying to keep up with the dance and put the right foot forward.

I next turned my attention to “Annie,” the main character (whose real name is S\_\_\_\_). S\_\_\_\_ has a serious expression on her face. She is standing the closest to Stephanie, and rarely turns to the side to look at the two other people in her row, “Grace” and “Warbucks.” The characters of Annie, Grace, and Warbucks all have solos in the particular song the group is working on, and they have to come in at different times from

the other kids, each separately. As the other kids begin a voice that S\_\_\_\_\_ will later have to come in on, she taps her foot and sways slightly, waiting to begin her center-stage singing and dancing. On cue, she puts her hand up immediately and begins dancing. Then, she steps forward somberly, smiles a little, and begins her solo. She knows all of the words, and sings her part with careful concentration and ease (i.e. she never falters and makes it look easy). In general, S\_\_\_\_\_ rarely talks to anyone in the room, and just pays attention to Stephanie. She looks at times a little placid, and doesn't alter her facial expression much. Nonetheless, she follows everything on cue.

Stephanie and Michael begin teaching two new verses and the accompanying movements. Michael goes over the music first, and then they work on the movements with Stephanie and Victor. The section of the song they are working on requires them to mime the motion of writing a letter with a great flourish. The song lyrics refer to things such as "Gershwin," and "California."

After watching S\_\_\_\_\_ for a while, I decided to follow one of the "orphans" in the chorus. She is standing toward the end of the third row in the back of the room. While Stephanie is talking, this little girl seems to be going over the movements of the dance in her head. Her eyes look far away and she performs mini-versions of the movements she will soon be practicing again. Stephanie begins a run-through, and this girl looks closely at her the entire time, but doesn't sing. Then she turns to a friend next to her and corrects something she is doing. It looks like they are disagreeing about what the step should look like. They go through it again, and the girl does the steps but doesn't sing. She seems to be having a good time, smiling a lot. The second time around she pays more attention to what her neighbors are going, and whispers a little.

The rehearsal breaks for a moment while Stephanie confers with Michael at the piano. I notice that S\_\_\_\_\_ ("Annie") is going over her part, and rehearsing with the other two soloists on her own during this time. They go on singing: "Tomorrow, a penthouse," looking up towards the sky as they sing this line. A lot of the kids are smiling as they dance and sing, and Michael and Victor smile a lot at the kids too. There is little disciplining going on, but much instruction. After a run-through, Michael points to two girls in the second row and says "I caught both of you not singing!" The kids smile sheepishly at him.

Stephanie turns to pay some attention to the rather big girl playing "Daddy Warbucks." She sings her part loudly and does all of the steps. Stephanie seems satisfied and goes back to the group.

Stephanie starts the kids on practicing the final verse and finale of the dance, which involves the kids eventually piling into a group pose with some kneeling in the front, and others standing right behind the kneeling ones. Stephanie cheers them up, telling them they have learned a lot and are almost done, just the finale to go. She tells them that she really thinks they can do this part, but that it's going to take hard work. The kids are starting to fidget more, and talk louder in between segments of practice. When they start practicing the finale, some kids complain that other kids are pushing them and that there

isn't enough room. Stephanie warns them that they'll have to pick a different ending if they can't behave, somehow implying by tone that the different ending would be boring and less fun.

Eventually, Stephanie says, "Let's try it with the CD now." Michael laughs. The kids clap and jump up and down. As they run-through the tail end of the song again, many are tapping their feet before starting steps, and making expressions that go with the lyrics – sad, happy, awestruck.

At the end of the rehearsal, Victor does a relaxation exercise with them, having them relax their bodies, stand in parallel position, and take deep breaths with their eyes closed. He tells them to practice their songs and dances at home as much as possible.

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**Researcher: Elsa Davidson**  
**East Side Middle School**  
**March 28, 2001**

I arrived at about 3:35 to the afternoon rehearsal for *Guys and Dolls*. The adults present were Michael the Music Director, Mary Ann Hay, and a classroom teacher, Jay Lyons. At the moment I arrived, M\_\_\_\_\_, one of the girls in a leading role, was rehearsing the song in which she sings about having a cold. As on other occasions, the other kids (sitting in the auditorium chairs facing the stage) are involved in M\_\_\_\_\_’s performance, laughing at her gestures, and generally looking at the stage despite occasional whisperings. This is notable, as at other times it can be quite loud in the audience while kids (not required on stage) socialize.

M\_\_\_\_\_ is batting her eyes, and maintaining an evenly high-pitched, nasal, and comical singing demeanor as she works her way through the song, using her arms to pantomime her condition. She is supposed to be reading out of a book the symptoms of psychosomatic colds, and she pauses as she sings, to humorously show the character’s slow mental process in relating the meaning of the scientific prose to her own lovelorn condition. The performance seems quite polished.

Mary Anne is moving the rehearsal chronologically through every scene. M\_\_\_\_\_’s current scene is Scene 4.

Scene 5: M\_\_\_\_\_ finishes her song, and the kids clap. M\_\_\_\_\_ smiles and quickly moves off stage Mary Ann says “Great!” and then says, “We need the curtain opened now!” She reappears this three times with no response from A\_\_\_\_\_, the curtain girl. She is trying to get the kids to get onto the pace of staging the show, with kids ready at the end of the scene to begin the next phase of the show (in retrospect, a lot of her time was spent stressing the importance of being organized in staging the show, and the importance of being ready. The kids generally were not).

Again, Mary Ann calls “A\_\_\_\_\_!” (the curtain girl) and A\_\_\_\_\_ is still nowhere to be found. Finally she emerges from the back of the audience where she has been chatting with her friends. Mary Ann calls kids for scene 5 onto the stage. A girl comes on stage and asks Mary Ann what’s happening. She asks whether in this scene her job is to both move the chairs onto the stage and then sing a solo. A boy who is going to be in scene 5 is studying his script busily on stage, not looking up at the surrounding commotion. Scene 5 includes a song, “Mission Man” which is begun by a troupe of girls called the “Mission Band.” The girls start singing and Michael, the Music Director, interrupts them: “You all need to be leaders here,” he says, wanting them to sing more strongly.

A boy on stage has a solo, and he frowns in concentration, snapping to the music and looking at Mary Ann as he sings. Stage left a few characters enter and he looks expectantly in their direction. He knows all the words and is doing all of the hand motions. After his solo finishes, he continues watching Mary Ann direct, sitting quietly in his chair. Mary Ann is giving instruction to someone else now, and he watches, not talking with the others on stage (some of whom are whispering to each other).

Another song is begun and Michael asks the kids for more sound and diction. At this point the boy I’m following mouths the words of the song being sung even though he isn’t the one singing.

Four girls are practicing now on stage (we are still in Scene 5) and all of them are looking at Mary Ann as they say their lines. One girl, who is speaking says lines quietly but modulates her voice to express emotion. When others have a turn at their lines, she looks at them. The mission band girls form the bulk of this scene, and they stand behind the speaking girl. One smiles and gently bangs a tambourine against her hips as she watches.

Now the “Nathan” character has to speak and act his lines. He seems confused, studying the script and confused about what body language to employ to get the scene across at first. He says his lines hesitantly without his script, but reads well and with expression. The scene is about Nathan being pushed into a wedding with M\_\_\_\_\_’s character. Now more in control of the scene after a few more practices, he looks hesitant, stutters (appropriate to the scene) and seems relaxed but just not off-book. Other kids have lines at this point, one girl has lines cajoling Nathan to bite the bullet and get married. Her bold pressuring and cajoling is enhanced by the fact that she knows her lines, and pushes him physically, gently pushing him towards M\_\_\_\_\_, his betrothed. His attention is strained by the fact that he has to read a lot of lines from his script.

A lot of girls around him (one is playing a boy) touch him and focus on him when he is standing on stage. He seems un-self-conscious when he doesn’t know his lines when Mary Ann calls on him. She has to cue him as he isn’t quite focused and seems involved now in the girls who are paying attention to him. Mary Ann prompts him again and he says “But I thought I was supposed to wait to come in until the Mission Band comes in.”

The Mission Band comes through across the stage and he taps his feet to the song they are singing. He smiles at the girls in the “band” who are also on stage. Suddenly his

attention is drawn to a group of girls in the audience and not on stage. As the scene goes on with Mary Ann directing, he is looking off stage at the girls, winking at them.

Mary Ann calls another kid whose character's name is Skye but whose real name is J\_\_\_\_, onto the stage. She says, "J\_\_\_\_, can you come up here for your last lines?" He responds "I don't have the last line," and then smiles to himself. It seems he is privately enjoying having corrected the teacher. The scene (seven) involves a trip to Havana – for some reason the scene is not included. Now scene 8 will begin, and none of the kids in scene 8 appear on stage. Mary Ann has to call them onto the stage by name. A girl moves onto the stage and Mary Ann asks her to say her lines that open the scene. They work for a while on saying the lines with expression. The girl says the line, and then Mary Ann repeats the line adding emphasis and has the girl try it again. She also prompts the girl on the actual line. They go through it many times. The girl seems embarrassed, as she looks down a lot, giggles at Mary Ann's suggestions, and doesn't seem to try very hard to modulate her voice or facial expression. They go through it again and at one point when Mary Ann looks down the girl turns around to whisper something to her friends on stage (the other Mission band girls). The girls behind her are standing with their instruments in hand. A girl with a drumstick and a pretend drum taps her drumstick against her hip as she watches the scene progress. Mary Ann finishes rehearsing this particular line with this Mission Band girl, and then turns her attention to a girl with a bandana on who is entering stage left. The girl with the bandana laughs with her friends at the side of the stage and smiles. Meanwhile, the audience is getting kind of loud.

Mary Ann signals to Mr. Lyons and she motions for all the kids to sit in their seats facing the stage and come off stage. She begins a speech to them, with Mr. Lyons by her side:

"Let's take that great stuff and make it deeper," she says. "even if your character is a light kind of character, you can still be the most like that that you can..."

She suggests they re-energize and continue rehearsing by starting at the beginning of the musical with a run-through of scene one. Neither Michael nor Mr. Lyons adds anything to her comments, and the kids jump up, and head toward the stage.

Mary Ann plays an accompaniment version of the music— the CD with background instrumental and no music. The kids then bunch into their groups and the music starts. They are pretending to be betting on the street. The first scene is this ambience-setting scene, in which three groups of kids mime betting, and then freeze in a betting pose. The three clusters of kids on stage then form three harmonizing choruses and in each group there is one soloist with a few lines to sing on their own at various points in the song. The kids spring into action, each of them miming throwing dice, laughing, commenting to a neighbor, wiping a brow, etc. Then they freeze, The song is "Paul Revere," (the name of a horse). Mary Ann runs it through with them, and they review a few sections where Michael thinks the two of the three groups have been too quiet in their singing. One kid raises her hand to ask whether she's supposed to come in at a certain point. The kids' actions are confident, and no one looks like they don't know the words or the notes. This is one of the first songs that they learned.

After this initial song is sung, two girls on stage argue about where they are supposed to be standing on stage. They seem engaged with creating the show judging by their desire to get the stage placement right. In the next scene, the action focuses on the organization of a crap game by Nathan, one of the lead boys. He has some lines and Mary Ann corrects not the lines but his stage mannerisms. Afterwards, he stands at the side of the stage busily studying his script. A girl next to him looks at the script over his shoulder, and points something out (that I cannot hear).

For the rest of the scene, I focus on a girl who is in the back of the stage, not in this scene. She watches the action at the center of the stage, and then listens to a friend who is saying something quietly to her. She makes a face at her friend, and then turns back to watch the boy working with Mary Ann say his lines. The group of girls she is with fidget a bit – the rehearsal is nearing its close, and people are slouching a bit, looking like they want to sit down. She continues watching the center stage, relatively expressionlessly—it is hard to tell if she is engaged or just spacing out. But when the scene is over, she quickly moves off further to the side.

It's time for another song. This song is about the gambling game that has been organized. Its resounding chorus is "It's the oldest established permanent crap game in New York!" Everyone sings this chorus and the rest of the song heartily, and in harmonized parts. The songs seem well rehearsed—the tone, diction, and enthusiasm are there. Also, the "Guys" in the audience are holding hats in their hands, and they hold them up in the air at the end of the song. Some kids smile when the song is finished.

M\_\_\_\_\_ and N\_\_\_\_\_ have their first scene together, a flirtatious scene in which the subject of the dialogue is the length of their engagement and whether or not they are going to set a date for the wedding. N\_\_\_\_\_ reads his lines off of the book, and M\_\_\_\_\_ knows hers by heart. They both run-through the scene with feeling. N\_\_\_\_\_’s modest but many gestures of half-smiles, hands in pockets, light swaggering step, and slightly nervous voice as if pressured gets across his character’s predicament. M\_\_\_\_\_’s whininess and pleading smile make her character’s objective clear. M\_\_\_\_\_ is coquettish in her bodily movements- more bold than the boy playing her lead.

After this scene, two of the three lead boys have a scene alone, during which they discuss going to Havana and the ease with which they can acquire dates. The scene calls for a macho attitude on both of their parts. In real life, as I have watched these two boys in many rehearsals, I have observed that one is extremely shy and not very confident, and that the other one is the most confident and popular with the girls in the group. And yet on stage, their roles are reversed and it seems completely the other way around. The shy boy says his lines loudly and with a lot of bravado. His body language is very forward, he moves his arms, and laughs confidently, saying his lines from memory, about how he could take any girl he wanted to Havana – "I'd have my pick of any girl." The other boy questions him and his demeanor is funny but a little calmer—his voice isn't as loud, and he doesn't know his lines by heart—he looks often at the script. The boys face each other in profile (from the audience vantage point) and they seem totally absorbed in this

exchange. Mary Ann has them say a few things over and work on emphasis, and then the rehearsal is over.

Other comments: Although the kids aren't always following directions, and often seem to only do so when it cannot be avoided, they also simultaneously exhibit signs of being quite engaged with the production. This is true during one-on-one character scenes, the miming, and the singing. Everyone clearly looks to M\_\_\_\_\_ as the "professional" of the group, impressed with this talent that she has. The last scene between the two boys I found indicative of the fact that these boys are able through their acting to transcend the reality of their socially assigned roles within their everyday milieu. It could be that the experience of acting together in the show will make them re-evaluate one another in real life.

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**Researcher: Susan Falls**  
**East Side Middle School**  
**April 4, 2001**

I got to the school at 2:00 and checked in with the security desk on the first floor – then I walked up to the auditorium – a large room on the second floor – filled with wooden chairs and a linoleum floor – much like any school auditorium – and is painted pink with dark blue curtains. The stage is fairly big and has a nice rounded front and there is a piano off the left side of the stage in front of the rows of chairs. The back wall of the auditorium is decorated with posters from old musicals such as *Gypsy*, *The Sound of Music* and *My Fair Lady*.

Michael is practicing some of the songs on the piano and Mary Ann comes in at 2:00. Then the students came in with the teacher coordinator – he plays a very active role in the rehearsal – making suggestions and comments (see below) to students and to the artists as well as helping to keep the group organized and focused. Mary Ann discusses with Michael the fact that one of the main actors is absent and he does not know his part...she is "not very happy" about this. The teacher offers to spend some time working with the student later in the week.

The group is sitting in the wooden chairs in groups, talking amongst themselves while the artists and teacher coordinator are planning out the rehearsal. Mary Ann asks for the group's attention and asks who has turned in the personal bio sheets that the students were supposed to develop for their characters. One student raises her hand and asks for an extra form...then a bunch of other students follow in kind. Michael asks how many others need the form and about half the students raise their hands. He says, "I will Xerox it but you guys need to connect with the project here – it is not just about you, it is about the community – we are working out butts off.

Mary Ann then thanks those who HAVE turned in the assignment, and then explains what scenes they are planning to go over during the rehearsal. "We will start with scene 9

and mission band - you are going to bring your instruments with you on stage every time from now on – and let me know if some of you still need instruments so I can put it on my list....” The Mission Band actors agree to this and then one student asks about the props “do we bring them in after they change the props” – which tells me that they’re beginning to get the details in their mind about the actual sequence of events that will take place on the stage. Mary Ann then explains to the prop changers (6<sup>th</sup> graders) and then explains in lengthy detail about how the scenery is going to look and where it will be.

Next was the voice warmup led by Michael....all of the students stand up and direct their attention towards the piano – the exercise is of a call and response type at first....Michael calls out a particular scale and the students repeat it in kind...”ma me mi mo mu...” sometimes all of the students and as the scales go higher and higher some of the lower voices drop out (most of the actors are girls so many stay in for the majority of the time). The students are engaged and the ease with which each knows when to drop out indicates that they have practiced this exercise many times. As Michael gives the students instruction such as “staccato now.....” or “allegro” and the students alter the sound of the scales in following the instructions. They are very clear on what kind of sounds each of these musical terms is supposed to elicit.

C\_\_\_\_, one of the few male students, is called to the front since they are going to practice the song “sit down you are rocking the boat” and in the actual performance he will be on center stage singing alone. C\_\_\_\_ walks stridently up to the stage and then sings in a bright clear voice along with the CD and the rest of the students come in on cue....his demeanor suggests one of confidence – during the song he stands straight upright with his hands clasped behind his back and looks around – he seems quite relaxed, there is no problem in his singing alone in front of the group. He leans a little against the pole here and there and taps his feet to the rhythm of the song...Michael meanwhile directs members of the group chorus. The members of the chorus are looking at Michael and respond directly to his suggestions, for example when he says, “clear and bright now” the students tighten up their diction and delivery! When the song is over he kind of skips over to his seat and plops down with a satisfied grin. Mary Ann compliments him on his performance and also tells the group that they had done a good job of coming in on time and maintaining high energy...Michael seconds her compliments and then reminds the group to keep the same crispness and high energy throughout the rehearsal, reminding them that what they practice is what they will perform.....

The entire group is asked to the stage to get it ready for rehearsal – all of the chorus cooperates in arranging the props. Mary Ann asks the performers to go and wait offstage. At that point I observe one student (M\_\_\_\_) go out onto the stage to pick up little bits of trash that have been left on the stage, put them in her pocket and then join the others offstage. This same student came down the stairs when Mary Ann asked them to go down and get their hat props for the scene while the Scene 9 actors remain. M\_\_\_\_ discusses the best way to wear the hat. “Do you think we should wear it over to the side like this? Or like this? (putting it straight up and down)”. They talk about what looks

better and then get the script book out and go over their lines while the main group goes over the choreography for the scene. There is so much distraction from a number of other classes shuffling loudly into the auditorium with teachers talking very boisterously to one another that I am surprised how focused M\_\_\_\_\_ and her friend remain. They kept going over the script book regardless – I could not hear what they were saying but they were obviously practicing the lines from the next scene. Meanwhile in the confusion Mary Ann is calling forth several of the actors and asks the actors to remain quiet and focused which they surprisingly do. I noticed that the attention/focus/concentration level was much higher during this first hour – after the first hour the students begin to get a little more testy and restless – talking more and paying attention less.

The curtain closes and C\_\_\_\_\_ comes out with another boy who is playing “Skye.” This second boy that I remember from a previous rehearsal surprises me because although he is still gangly and shy I can see that he has really worked through a lot of this...he has really found a voice and has MUCH more of a stage presence. His demeanor is more confident and he speaks in a loud and clear voice, he is not mumbling or looking towards the ground during his speaking parts. I saw him closing a little into himself when he came off the stage later but even still, I noticed that he was interacting with the other students on and off stage. Later in talking with Mary Ann, I mentioned to her that I had noticed this boy was working through some of his shyness and that I was really impressed by the changes – I suggested that since I hadn’t been there in a while the change was really apparent – did she see same thing? Mary Ann responded that she was always amazed at how much these kids come out and develop and that it “is very hard to really explain to anyone how this works and you know every kid – well almost every kid – no, really all of them really change and you know by the time of the performance they have really found themselves!” I can plainly see the changes in this boy playing Skye.

The run-through is going very smoothly – Skye and C\_\_\_\_\_ know their lines and sing without hesitation in a loud articulate voice. Not only do they know the songs but have added personal touches and style to the songs. For example, Skye makes large circular arm movements and shifts his weight from hip to hip to give his song a big sweeping feeling that works quite well.

Meanwhile the group/audience off stage is getting restless and the teacher scolds them, “Be quiet, do your homework or watch – just be quiet – show some respect to your fellow actors. I don’t want to have to say this again!!” (but he does...many times). Most of the students are sitting in groups and many are talking and cutting up but some are sitting quietly reading and doing homework or going over the script and working on the “bios.” Several of the students read along with the script as C\_\_\_\_\_ and Skye speak the parts. One student speaks the parts quietly to himself while listening to the play unfold, and even singing along when the song starts.

“D\_\_\_\_\_!!!! That’s your part.....D\_\_\_\_\_!! Where are you?” Mary Ann calls out to D\_\_\_\_\_, who is nowhere to be found. The rehearsal is held up and there is lots of grumbling, eye rolling and harumphing by those on stage and off. Time is a’wasting so Mary Ann decides to give the group some instruction about an upcoming scene.

Finally “Sister Sarah” volunteers to do D\_\_\_\_\_’s role. She does the role very well. She knows D\_\_\_\_\_’s lines – “the mission was full of your kind last night” – and delivers them without flaw. She was even able to add some flair to the role by moving her body in an appropriately exaggerated and comical way. Then she stood demurely by and the rest of the scene was acted out.

There is lots of walking around and waiting between scenes – very much like on the scene of a movie production where 80% of the time is spent getting ready for each scene and 15% of the time is spent talking about the scene and breaking the scene down. I have been on many such sets and given this I think that the rehearsals run by Mary Ann are extremely efficient.

“OK Scene 11 Folks!! Gamblers! Get up on stage!” A big group of students run up to the stage and there is chaos but order emerges. One student is playing Big Julie. She sidles up the stairs and takes her place. She says her lines and gets them wrong the first time...she giggles and tries again....and then growls and laughs as they are wrong once again. Mary Ann encourages her – “OK Big Julie....try it again!!! a big loud voice now!!” Big Julie composes herself, takes a big breath and then says the lines getting it right this time...she says the lines slowly but with a clear and loud voice. She fusses with her hair and clothes between lines and during the lines “Ha, I win!! Now gimme the prize.” Big Julie smiles broadly and does the lines in a few different ways ....she is giggly and then chooses what she believes to be the best delivery style – “Ok how about this one?” Mary Ann likes it and says “Take it from ‘Say who is this guy.’ ” She forgets the line but pulls out the script and looks at it – and then they go on with the scene. I was glad to see that Big Julie was not feeling too bad about forgetting the line and in fact everyone responded to line forgetting throughout in a very light-hearted way, especially since Mary Ann took the cue and said that they have time, and always praised what they remembered and executed well, reminding the actor “you have time to get it all straight and I really like what you did with x.....” The overall feelings were camaraderie and hard work. “Hey you – you’re scaring off all the action,” shouts Big Julie....she looks down at the script for the next line....and then focusing on details, asks Mary Ann “Should I look over to the right or move over to the left here?” She cracks a big smile and her part is over – I noticed a few scenes later at the “Midnight Prayer Meeting” scene that Big Julie acting in a group was much less engaged, looking all around and saying her lines a little more loosely, with less energy, but, of course, then the scene goes on....

The happening on stage is a fake punch – Skye and the others really have to work on getting the choreography right for this and so they go over it many, many times while the others watch on. It is engaging to watch and the students practice doing fake punches amongst themselves for fun while the actual actors practice it for real. The one who gets “hit” finally pretends to be crumpled in the corner and breaks out in genuine laughter which gets the others laughing. At this point Skye breaks out into the song *Luck Be a Lady*. The groups offstage are talking while Skye and the others concentrate on stage. Skye is required to do a dance with the song that he executes quite well, I think! And I can really see him working through his shyness here! Afterwards the students on stage (a

very large group) clap and smile and shout “alright!” and I can see that Skye is pleased. Mary Ann goes over in slow-motion the choreography of the dance to get it a little more clear and as she does so the group breaks out into the song spontaneously the words that go along with each movement...and again there is clapping and whooping!

Now several more classes come into the auditorium and it is very disruptive...they are apparently waiting for the bus. There are younger students who seem rather interested in observing the older students rehearsal and watch what happened on the stage....Mary Ann calls for another run-through and this time Skye goes through the role, still a little tentatively but clearly working through it...he is really adorable and then comes the big voice from the chorus to back him up...”Much better!” Mary Ann shouts....one student (J\_\_\_\_) still practices her role as Mary Ann goes over to Skye to help him fine tune the finale of the scene.

“OK – Let’s run-through it one more time!” Skye again is improving and looks more relaxed. J\_\_\_\_ looks over at the others to evaluate her movements, looking for a comparison but she seems to know most of them. They are really cooking now and J\_\_\_\_ is loosening up – looking around less and doing her own movements from within. There are quite a few steps that she does very well with lots of style and confidence but more actorly (less pure dance-like) moves she struggles with. As the class exits the stage by walking down the front stairs, J\_\_\_\_ does a diva wave towards the second graders. Yet another class is coming in and out of the auditorium and amazingly the rehearsal goes on and I am impressed by the lack of distraction manifest in the rehearsal. Offstage J\_\_\_\_ and her friend work on the bio sheets – writing and comparing each others assignments and then going over their respective characters by comparing and contrasting.

“We need teamwork and lots of effort to get this done, people,” says the teacher coordinator – he is really working hard to keep everyone focused. “I think now might be a good time to take a break” he mentions to Mary Ann – “I think they need a break and it seems like a good place in the rehearsal to do it...OK?” Most of the students file out to go the restroom or get water or a Coke but a few stay behind. J\_\_\_\_ walks over to Mary Ann and explains the outfit she is thinking about wearing for one of the numbers: “...here are the clothes for the Hot Box Girls scene, but I am not sure what...well maybe a white shirt over these pants....” Mary Ann assures her that this is a good idea “Yeah, that would work and then maybe something black.” So the students are obviously involved in designing various elements of the production, in this case, the costumes. “OK I will try this combination for the first one and then the red one for the second...but then what about Hot Box? How about a red plaid shirt... or a blue plaid but with short sleeves? With white tennis shoes....”

Once J\_\_\_\_ and the friend get the outfits approved by Mary Ann, they walk out. Several students are doing homework or reading. Skye and another girl, whose character is Adelaide, volunteer to stay behind and practice their solos with Michael who plays the songs at the piano. Michael tries to get them paced and achieve the correct volume and pitch.

The students begin to filter back in and are talking and running about – Mary Ann goes over the mechanics of the next scene with the relevant actors. They are paying attention and asking very specific questions such as the precise location of a prop set-up or the exact line that they should use as a cue. The production is really tightening up and the students are picturing what will happen in their minds “When do we move ‘Havana’ to the other side?” “Will the curtain be closed then?” “How do we get the bench in?” They are doing much more than just taking in what Mary Ann is saying, but actively participating in the negotiation of timing and placement of props and scenery. L\_\_\_\_\_ raises her hand, “We will have moved the ‘mission’ by then, right?” Meanwhile the others are looking over the script.

“OK, scene 12/13 – Let’s go”, Mary Ann calls out to the group. N\_\_\_\_\_ asks, “Should we wear gloves like they did in the 40’s?” The students are very much keyed into the fact that this is a period piece of sorts. “Oh, sure, that would work,” answers Mary Ann. Several students crowd around Mary Ann to ask specific questions and one student calls out from the stage, “Ms. Hay, a lot of students are missing...” I noticed the students do police each other but on a very low level sayings things like “You guys be quiet so we can get going...” etc.

Adelaide and Nathan are out on the stage – Boy, this Adelaide is really good!!!! I think to myself. Nathan’s role is played by a stand-in who reads the lines in a very lame, monotone vice – Mary Ann steps in and tells the stand-in to do it with a little personality and do it over – they start over and Nathan speaks with a little more charisma. They go over the scene about 6 times and by the end of 6 times it is looking much fuller, with some style and oomph built into the voice and the bodily presentation.

The group sets up for “Sit Down, You’re Rocking the Boat” by bringing up lots of chairs. The students are talking and not really paying attention – it is a long, intense rehearsal and I am not surprised that attentions are waning. But as soon as the actual rehearsal of the scene gets under way they snap to attention and stop talking amongst themselves. They are present and focused. Mary Ann gives lots of encouragement and reminds the groups that the “sloppy people” need to get crisp!!!! The choreography is extremely complex for this scene but they seem to know what they are supposed to do – whether it is actually perfectly executed every time is a different story. “I know when I am supposed to stand up, but when it comes time, it’s hard...” exclaims one student. “Do groups 3 and 4 stand up at the same time in the beginning?” one asks. Then they do several run-throughs (Mary Ann asks for energy and focus) of this long number and the quality varies....but Mary Ann at the end says, “999% better!!!! Very good.”

“Any questions?”...L\_\_\_\_\_ volunteers that “when we are on stage you are more conscious, more self-conscious so it’s a lot harder – I mean I know what I am supposed to do or what I want to do but up here – well, its hard to just be here!” Another student complains about J\_\_\_\_\_, who is absent, saying, “He really gets into it – it’s embarrassing.” Mary Ann explains that this is supposed to be a comedy and that its funny

to exaggerate and then snap back to ‘reality’ on the next scene ...so he is doing the right thing...eventually the student concedes.

A debate ensues as to who should stand in “In the Fold”. The Mission Band argues that they should stand up while everyone else sits – they want to be seen...”Pleeeeee Ms. Hay...we want to stand up by ourselves...”. The others shout, “No!! Everyone stands!!” Mary Ann has the last word – “Everyone stands!!”

Next is a run-through with Adelaide and Sarah. They discuss the particular choreography on stage. Everything is becoming very specific, such as “How high should we raise our arms at the end?” Sarah and Adelaide are asking questions and telling Michael and Mary Ann how they envision this scene. There is lots of negotiation between the actors and directors!! They then go over this scene about 10 times and the others are getting quite restless (and so was I, incidentally). After the last run-through one student in the audience says “I have a veil...should I bring it for Adelaide to wear?” And then another says, “And I have a big white hat...I think that would look good.” The fact that the students are actively participatory in the details of the production allows for a dimension of creativity that may be absent in lesson plans that don’t allow for true collaboration. I think that this collaboration helps the students to have a sense of ownership and responsibility,

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**Researcher: Susan Falls**  
**East Side Middle School**  
**April 25, 2001**

The students were late coming to the auditorium but the atmosphere of the rehearsal is one of pervasive excitement and camaraderie. This is a dress rehearsal and so Mary Ann is spending a lot of time talking with the students about the importance of having completed costumes and cooperating and helping one another. “It’s real important that you all have your costumes – you need to really cooperate with each other here...check with each other...O.K. whose shopping bag is this up here? Whose bag is this?” One student calls out that it is hers and many of the actors begin going through their props and showing one another what they will be wearing for each scene. Students who have brought bags of props share their extras with those who have forgotten or who need specific outfits.

The students are getting settled and continue working on making sure everyone is outfitted, while some are engaged in stapling black paper over the stage murals – the stage is beginning to look finished and with black paper, the setting appears much more “professional.” As usual, there is a lot of commotion in the auditorium. there are classes continuously coming in and out during the first hour or so and students in the play keep filtering in throughout the first 30 minutes or so of the practice. Because of this Mary Ann continuously repeats instructions, or other students fill the latecomers in on what they are supposed to be doing.

Students try on various outfits and help each other to decide what looks most appropriate: “Oh yes – you need a white shirt...I have one in my bag,” or “This is what I’m wearing for the Hot Box girls...do you like it?, or “Hey, that looks good – is that for the mission band scene?” The boys are especially engaged in helping the girls to tie their ties since many are acting as “guys” and don’t know how to tie one. They seem happy and proud to help the girls, “See, it’s easy...” one boy mentions and then drapes the tied tie around the girl’s neck, “and you just pull this here (motioning to the inside end) to make it tighter.” There is lots of sharing and cooperative efforts, “Does anyone have an extra tie?” one girl calls out to everyone, and one is brought to her quickly.

“Beautiful! You look smashing...do you have a hat...that would really look great!” exclaims one girl. Many of the girls are happily taking on the role of divas!

Mary Ann now goes around and individually asks each student to show her what they are going to wear for each scene they are in – she makes suggestions and comments accordingly. For example, the costuming takes away some of the overt sexuality out of the Hot Box girls number which could easily have been construed as rather precocious, but the costumes really tone it down...I don’t have the impression that these students are reading the scene as overtly sexual but rather think that it is “cute.” Mary Ann asks some students to acquire different outfits, i.e. “Does anybody have a long black skirt for Sister Sarah?” Some of the students go over to the piano and practice singing with Michael during the bedlam and they sound very good, very put together...Michael works with them on pronunciation and the voicing of, i.e. of “marry a man today”...he demonstrates the pitch and they imitate the sound...Michael does this with several other students as well.

Many of the students begin to sit down in groups and talk animatedly in anticipation for the actual rehearsal to begin. Then Mary Ann calls the group to attention and gives them directions regarding where the props and stage scene lists will be. She discusses with them the importance of being quiet offstage – the group had discussed many of these issues before. The students seem to understand the directions. Then Mary Ann goes over the plan for the day – the students are paying attention and shushing the ones who are talking. As the time for rehearsal gets nearer they begin focusing and paying attention to one another.

As Mary Ann explains the scene changes, the girls who are in charge of changing the “scenery” begin asking very detailed and specific questions “How far out should Havana be?” “When Skye starts singing should we already be ready?” etc. The students are able to clearly and in detailed fashion imagine the scenes in their mind and are playing out the possibilities. As Mary Ann narrows down the field of possibilities, the students run up on stage to pantomime the way they will be changing the sets. They are taking the job seriously, judging by the earnest listening to instructions and the making sure among themselves about how exactly they will (jointly) execute these maneuvers. While the set changers work out the sequences, Mary Ann calls out who exactly will be on the stage. Evidently, they can all visualize the play as of now and are familiar enough with each

scene to imagine and check their notion without actually having to be up on stage going through the motions physically. These mental visualization skills are enhanced by having to be competent in “seeing” the entire play and making minor adjustments, (i.e. “I want Sarah to come in AFTER instead of before...”). When Mary Ann calls out for the Mission Band Scene to get onstage, practically the whole class hurriedly and excitedly rush up the stairs to their places.

During the speaking parts, Mary Ann and Michael constantly give directions regarding pacing and tone, “Louder here!” “Use a big voice!” “Now – don’t look at the audience...” and their directions are carried out immediately. Skye (the shy boy I had identified in earlier reports) has improved tremendously. He holds his head higher and moves with more confidence. He is really sweet and has begun to give his lines personal flair and suggestive movements instead of the rather flat delivery he started with. When he does confuse his lines he just laughs. It’s no big deal and he seems to feel comfortable with making little errors in practice – knowing that the night of the performance he will have to perform. “Oh gosh, sorry, let’s do it again,” he says with a broad grin. “Alright,” Mary Ann answers, “It’s no big deal – lets just start at.....” Nobody seems too uptight – everyone appears relaxed and happy, but still serious about the rehearsal. the students on stage do not whisper among themselves, but are in character and paying attention to the scene changes.

At this point I notice how much tighter things have gotten since last time. I overhear Mary Ann and Michael commenting on the improvement of the scene. By now several parents have wandered in and are watching practice. Some of the students sitting on stage are quiet (some are whispering to one another) but they are all on the edge of their seats and it is more than obvious that they are really hyped up.

Mary Ann calls to do the same scene again. Throughout the rehearsal, the sequence of activities is the same: Mary Ann calls out the prop changes and helps them set the scene, she checks to see if all actors are where they are supposed to be and then there are lots of little do-overs within the scene – lines or movements that need to be perfected. The students are happy to do these, never complaining but rather looking to Mary Ann for guidance and approval of the relatively tiny changes they make.

The children who are waiting in the auditorium for their buses are watching the rehearsal...they are especially engaged during the singing numbers and I overhear a few girls discussing the costumes and props that are on the stage.

The girls who are in the performance waiting by the stage are looking at their gloves for the church scene, moving their hands in a variety of ways for effect – I think they enjoy trying out the gestures of the 1940s as they see them. Skye is onstage and has really moved beyond the shyness that characterized every move he made in the beginning. His dialogue is now big, bold and confident.

One student’s mother and sister have entered and are sitting near me. The student comes back frequently to discuss what is happening in the rehearsal with her mother, who seems

to be coaching her delivery. The mother and sister are singing along audibly with the singing onstage. They actually know the songs – evidently the student-actor has been sharing the rehearsal experience with the family!

In Scene 10 the lines are a little jumbled but Mary Ann gives them the cues and they practice the lines again and again until they are relatively smooth.....once the students have memorized the line sequence they must work on delivery.... “Let’s get the level of projection back up” and I remark to myself that Mary Ann is really very good at making criticisms that are directed at those onstage but also speak to everyone. She really has a handle on how to approach these rehearsals; the students really respond to her and respect her.

There is really very little activity going on outside the actual rehearsal. The students who are not on stage have settled down and are watching. I search for things to observe but all of the activity is on the stage and actors are in character. The students are really focusing on the performance and on Mary Ann’s instructions. A few are practicing their lines while sitting in the audience chairs, but in very low voices. There is one kid that does not really seem to know what he is doing and keeps going up to the stage during the wrong scene.

Mary Ann gives out the “money” for the gambling scene and gives some specific directions about how to deal with the “money.” Many students ask questions: “Can we ball it up?” “Should we fold it?” “When we throw it down , shouldn’t it be in a pile?” “Should I stand here...or here (6 inches away)?” These are very specific questions and it is crystal clear that the actors understand and have a clear vision of what the scene is supposed to be like – very well developed compared to the last time I was here! This is a long song and dance number. “BIG VOICES PLEASE,” Mary Ann pleads. The execution of this direction is uneven. The mother behind me says to her daughter, “weight off the knees!” when she does the slide and the daughter mouths back, “OK.” She does as her mother has suggested on the next go-round. They repeat this scene five times, with focus on specific moments, really working on small series of notes. For example, the line “coming out, coming, out, coming out, coming out!” is a tricky tune and Michael demonstrates for the students, who then try to imitate the sequence. They go over this many times until it sounds correct.

After this scene is over there are lots of little conferences with Mary Ann. The students have concerns and questions and need individual attention. “How far out should I be?” “How high do we lift the benches?” “When should I start walking out?” This tells me that the performance is really in the fine-tuning stage. After these discussions, the group practices “Sit down, you’re rockin’ the boat” about five times. Mary Ann then ends practice by telling everyone what to bring for the last practices, and be in costume by 3:15. Everyone seems elated.

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**Researcher: Amy Kleiman**  
**PS 94**  
**May 17, 2001**

I attended a reflection meeting at PS 94 after the second performance of *Annie*. Before the meeting began, the cast and Ms. DiOrio, the liaison teacher, were waiting in the auditorium for Victor, the director, who would be conducting the meeting. She asked the students to close their eyes and, “reflect on the experience from eight months earlier. “Examine your feelings, thoughts, and think about what we learned—and still need to learn.” The students obliged. Soon after, Brenda Malloy from ArtsConnection entered the auditorium and began the meeting.

Brenda asked the students to, “relax, take a deep breath, and let your thoughts settle.” Then she asked, “What did you think it was going to be like (to be in the production)?”

Children’s comments:

*I thought it might be a little boring.*  
*I thought it would be difficult. When I practiced sliding or saying lines I thought I might fall off the stage—but doing it over and over again, I got calm.*  
*I thought it would be like a regular class play.*  
*I thought it was gonna be fun.*

Another student commented that she thought they would have a real dog. Brenda then asked what it had been like for them.

*It would be better if there was more space to dance (on stage).*  
*It was difficult singing and dancing—every time I sang I was embarrassed.*

“What was the hardest thing about it?” asked Brenda.

*The hardest for me was singing my solo.*  
*The hardest was the dancing because if you make a mistake you fall on your face.*  
*Remembering my lines was hard.*  
*I found it hard to stop talking.*  
*It was hard going on stage.*  
*Dancing on the stairs. I was afraid I would trip.*

Ms. DiOrio mentioned how if they missed a step they had learned enough to move on. A girl named R\_\_\_\_\_ said she had been afraid of tripping on the covers. Another girl, A\_\_\_\_\_, stated, “When I was dancing, I didn’t know if I was going to do it right.” A third girl chimed in, “When I was walking on the stairs I was afraid I might bump my head.” Lastly, a student commented, “I had trouble singing my solo and controlling myself on stage (from laughing).

At this point, Victor and Stephanie entered the auditorium. Stephanie told the children she had to leave to catch a flight. “You did a great job—I loved working with you,” she exclaimed. The students looked crestfallen and a large group of them got up and surrounded her, hugging her and telling her they would miss her. Many said, “I love you,” to her and the girl who played Annie had trouble letting her go. Stephanie was doing the same and had tears in her eyes. A tremendous attachment had been formed.

After the commotion about Stephanie’s departure, they resumed their discussion about what they found to be the most difficult thing for them.

*I found it difficult being in front of a crowd.*

*Right now, saying goodbye.*

*Trying not to bump into each other on stage (when we were dancing).*

*When something funny happened on the stage it was hard not to laugh.*

At this point, Victor took over the reflection. He asked the students to go up to the stage and sit on the steps. Then he had them take deep breaths to the count of three. He asked them, “What did you learn from the experience? What worked? What didn’t? Think about how far you’ve gone. You’ve come a long, long way.” Then instead of having the students answer the questions verbally he asked them to show him with their bodies and facial expressions, one by one, “what it was like for you at the very beginning in October or November. Take a pose here—show physically what you were feeling at the beginning. Let your body tell the story.”

Each student came forth in turn and struck a pose that they thought reflected their experience. Naturally, some were more comfortable expressing themselves in this domain than others. As each student assumed a position they formed a human sculpture.

When they all were in position Victor told them he would tap each child on the shoulder and then they were to, “say one word to express your feelings.” Here are some examples:

*Tired*

*Bored*

*Confused*

*Shy*

*Thoughtful*

“Now go to the middle of the year,” exclaimed Victor. This time the student’s body language changed completely. Most students used their bodies to express openness and confidence. “What made you feel great about yourselves now?” asked Victor.

*I got used to it and learned how to focus.*

*I felt good because I was Flannigan.*

This comment led Victor to ask, “Why did you stay even if you had wanted to leave when you didn’t get a part you wanted? Some students had left the production for various reasons.

*Because we would have let the team down.  
My mom made me—then I started getting used to the show—then my mom wanted to take me out! But I wanted to be part of something important.  
If we changed parts it would ruin the performance.*

Victor asked them to pose to represent the current week. They did. “What will you take with you?” One girl responded, “I was sad to see Stephanie go.” She started to cry and others grouped around her to comfort her. “We got to know you and Michael and Stephanie so much,” she continued.

“What do you think the school got out of it?” Victor asked them.

*They got to have a play.  
The others got to experience it and then they can think if they want to be in it.  
Inspiration.*

In conclusion Victor asked, “What advice would you give to future fifth graders that want to do Broadway Junior?”

*That they need to project their voices.  
I would tell them they need to focus.  
They need to articulate.  
They need to be serious and then have fun.  
They will learn how a performance feels so exciting.  
If they are looking to do a show they need to work together and pay attention—the show will be better.  
I would tell them to join a lot of plays. In middle school they could have a good resume if they do a lot of things.  
I would say it was hard—and if something bad happened I had to keep on smiling.*