

Confessions of a Dance Instructor: My Experience preparing for the Talent Show at Reach

When we'd first heard that we'd all be getting a chance to put up a performance over the course of the REACH Cambridge program, most of my schoolmates had grimaced, a definite look of resignation on their faces. Some had blanched outright. Just another chore to get over and done with – no different from a routine assignment. I could appreciate the sentiment, but for me, I'd been absolutely delighted.

For a long time I'd been interested in dance, having watched countless dance performances on Youtube. I was innately fascinated by how the moves looked so smooth and synchronized. No, it wasn't just fascination. I was *moved* by it, stunned by how damn cool it looked. And here was my chance to organize a dance together with my classmates, to represent the school on an international platform, to look just as cool in front of a large group of people! Granted, it wasn't as glamorous as all that. But still, I leaped at the chance to organize and teach a short dance to all my schoolmates. (To those not in the know, we'd decided on "Timber" by Kesha and Pitbull to use as dance music.)

It was only later that I'd realized what I'd gotten myself into. A two-minute long dance might not have seemed like much of a task, but then again we had to work on hitting the beat, moving in sync, having smooth motions and simply not stumbling over ourselves. And alright, we weren't exactly prodigies to begin with. Evidently, I had my work cut out for me. It hadn't helped that initial interest in the dance had been low, if not completely absent. While completely understandable, this did mean that I had even more to do.

So imagine my shock when people had turned up for an hour-long practice fifteen minutes late. Despite my best efforts, they were horribly slow to get into position and performing the moves improperly time and time again. Didn't they understand how important this was, how vital that we put on a good show? We had a reputation at stake! And here they were treating it like a joke! We were finished. Completely and utterly doomed to fail.

Of course, it wasn't as bad as all that. In hindsight, I'd been worrying too much about it. The practice went on fine despite, or maybe even because of, our jovial attitudes. Certainly, it spiced up what would otherwise have been hours of drilling. And even if we didn't get everything exactly right, we sure had fun doing it.

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Somewhere along the way, I realized that we didn't need to be perfect. Dancing had never been about perfection, not about the moves per se. No, dance had always been an outward expression of an inward feeling. We needed to enjoy ourselves. Because everyone was so much more enthused when it came from the heart.

When the actual performance came around, we'd never been in higher spirits. We might not have been the best, but we certainly enjoyed ourselves.

Our teacher had the prescience to film our performance in all its two minutes and twelve seconds of glory. We slipped. We stumbled. We forgot our moves. And our passion shone through it all, making the dance so much more energetic than it'd been before. It was glorious. It was beautiful. It was absolutely fantastic. It was a night to remember for the rest of our lives. And I know I'll always remain inordinately proud of what we accomplished, not individually, but together as a group.

It's going down, everybody. And we'll be yelling timber the whole flight back.

Written by Daniel, student

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