Learning Resource Spotlight: Angie Martyn

“Movement never lies,” stated American modern dancer and choreographer Martha Graham. “It is a barometer telling the state of the soul’s weather to all who can read it.” One avid reader of the soul’s weather, and Stanley children, is K-5 Dance teacher Angie Martyn. She chose this quote. And she also developed a curriculum at Stanley that opens in the first half of the year with space and shape games, rhythm exercises, then ramps up to jazz and hip hop, and more instruction of technical steps and technique in the winter and spring months.

You may know Angie as the woman who conducts from the side with a few gentle reminders during the exuberance of the K-1-2 dances on Grand People’s day, or the skillful lead of the now-traditional staff dance at our Halloween Assembly, or even the line-dancing instructor at our 3-4-5 Hoedown or sock hop. She’s choreographer for the 8th-grade musical, dance for 6th-grade Shakespeare, 5th-grade musical, 2nd-grade show… not an exhaustive list, perhaps an exhausting one.

Angie, however, shows boundless, quiet energy for this role. She is lit by her work. “Similar to PE, I think dance is a good physical activity to alternate with academics,” says Angie. “It’s now well known that physical activity helps children’s brains, promotes better learning. And there’s also the creative aspect to encourage the creative part of minds grow – conceptualizing space and shape, and the dynamics of performance combines parts of the brain like nothing else can.”

Angie joined Stanley in 2001, recognizing the school’s early support and value for the arts – mostly through the inspiration of Carolyn Hambidge. Carolyn recognized Angie’s background and encouraged her to develop the K-5 movement and dance curriculum. “Creativity is what represents Stanley to me,” says Angie. “Creative ideas, spaces, teachers, administrators, students, families… We all make Stanley the special place it is.”

I like the part of Stanley that connects the artistic and creative with what’s going on the classroom,” says Angie. “Whenever the teachers are studying concrete concepts like architecture or birds or water, for example, we can always find ways to make up a movement game that coincides. A unit on bones or muscles especially connects to dance; we can point to our femurs and figure out how our femurs move … our classrooms are always helping me integrate dance with classroom learning.”

The special Grand People’s day performance is one of Angie’s favorite events to help the kids prepare for. Says Angie, “Student dances are very much based on what I teach them in class, but the children always add what they’ve collaborated on. It’s a very age-appropriate opportunity for them to learn and create, and very ‘Stanley.’”

Having started dancing as a child in her hometown of Toledo, Ohio, Angie went on to study movement and dance (with specific emphasis on dance technique and teaching) and graduate from Ohio University with a BFA in dance. After college, Angie taught dance in many cities in the States and overseas in Norway, London and a bit in Turkey. She’s had students of all ages at several dance studios in the Denver area and still teaches three to four ballet classes at week at Leap Dance at rec centers all over the city. For Angie, teaching and her own training are a joyful lifelong practice.

“I am extremely passionate about the power of movement, as a mover, as an observer, and as a creator,” says Angie. “Movement is good for the mind, body and soul. My students would probably say that they like the movement games we play in class. We enjoy some very popular, fun and silly games. I think they would also say that they like to dance!”

Angie enjoys cooking and of course music, and most of spending time with her family. Angie has a daughter, Vivienne, in third grade in Kate and Heidi’s class. A few days can be found encouraging Viv’s ballet practice
or hanging around in the parents’ waiting room during Viv’s gymnastics classes. “Vivienne is definitely the biggest part of my life right now,” says Angie, which is hard to remember when you know how very many hours Angie spends with Stanley students.