

# THEATRE PLANNING REPORT

PREPARED FOR

GLENBROOK NORTH HIGH SCHOOL  
AND  
GLENBROOK SOUTH HIGH SCHOOL

BY



Todd Hensley, ASTC

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**Glenbrook North High School  
Glenbrook South High School**

**Theatre Planning Report**

Schuler Shook visited Glenbrook North High School and South High School to investigate space demand and allocation for the performing arts. These visits built upon visits we had previously made to examine the theatre at Glenbrook North.

This report addresses our observations and provides recommendations for space planning and allocation. Our process was to interview school representatives regarding their arts programming, investigate the current and potential spaces in use for arts programming, and to develop these recommendations for adaptations or additions.

Our report includes a PowerPoint presentation illustrating many points. That presentation is included with this report for record. This report summarizes our findings and offers them in text format here.

The observations and this report are prepared by a qualified Theatre Consultant, and thus do not represent the review of an architect or engineer. Further observations by those professionals may be required to complete the observations and planning for improvements, particularly the improvements related to architectural renovations.

This report does not include review of all arts spaces in the schools. It instead is intended as a planning guide to consider adapted and/or new space to serve the needs expressed for the performing arts.

**Glenbrook South High School**

1. Our executive summary of Glenbrook South High School is:
  - a. Large-format performing arts needs are mostly satisfied
  - b. Medium-format needs can benefit from enhanced facilities
  - c. Facilities for dance use are the most in need
2. Large-format arts needs include:
  - a. Large-format stage musicals
  - b. Large-format music concerts
  - c. Variety Show
3. For large-format needs, the Mainstage Theatre is sufficient. Its audience capacity sets a reasonable ceiling on uses. This theatre is not used as extensively as the Mainstage Theatre at GBN – in fact, GBS's seating zone is used an estimated maximum of 20 times each year. Time may exist to add arts use on the stage itself, when the stage is not being used for scenery assembly.

4. Medium-format uses that exhibit need:
  - a. Music rehearsals. Space for Sectional rehearsals is very limited. In addition, pressure from other occupancies frustrates the use of these spaces. These uses include school banquets and basic room assignments for school workshops.
  - b. Theatre performances. The school reports a high demand from outside renters, which cannot be accommodated easily.
  - c. Dedicated space for specifically noted occupancies. For most of these uses, the existing Drama/Dance Room is too small:
    - i. Underclass plays and one-act performances.
    - ii. Comedy performances.
    - iii. “Black Box” style productions.
    - iv. Ad Hoc student groups presenting staged events.
  - d. The existing Lyceum space can sometimes be used for some of these events, but the demand on this space prevents occupancies of any duration or technical requirement,
5. Key uses that currently are not satisfied include:
  - a. Dance Groups. Curricular Dance is at capacity. In addition, GBS has a very large cohort of extracurricular dance. Dance uses include:
    - i. Variety Show “Singer-Dancers.”
    - ii. Cheerleading dance (one dedicated space currently).
    - iii. Orchesis.
    - iv. Poms.
    - v. Ethnic Dance of many forms:
      1. Latin.
      2. Hip-hop.
      3. Banger Beats.
      4. K-pop.
      5. Other *ad hoc* groups.
  - b. The shortfall of dance space is partially attributable to the scheduling of the existing Dance Studio, which is controlled by the Athletics Dept. Nevertheless, the large number of dance units and rehearsals create far more need than one dance studio.
  - c. Room 557, the Drama/Dance Room, is used for rehearsing the stage musicals. However, this room is too small for the purpose.
6. Other observations:
  - a. The existing Mainstage Theatre stage is a worthy size for dance rehearsals and is outfitted with a proper floor. If the space is scheduled with care, additional curricular and extracurricular work (particularly Dance) may be planned onstage. Note: this space may be available between theatre productions, but it becomes unavailable as stage productions are built on the stage.

- b. We also examined the Theatre Scene Shop. This room is extremely small for its purpose. Consideration may be given to augmenting or repurposing of this space.
  - c. The multitude of dancers at GBS are largely lacking one amenity: mirrors. Dance work calls for mirrors in order to assess one's movements, posture, and matching with other dancers. A large component of mirrors is needed. Portable mirrors are available, and they can be procured in durable systems to allow relocation around the school. A set of mirrors may also be mounted in the theatre rigging system for occasional use.
7. We discussed the potential of an added performance facility for GBS. Past studies have addressed a Black Box-style theatre. Our recommendation is to consider an open-format Dance Studio. The public presence for this space may not be of high importance, as the audience sizes can be small. This space may be located near an expansion of the existing Scene Shop:
- a. Primary uses:
    - i. Dance rehearsal.
    - ii. Multi-purpose gathering space.
    - iii. Small performances: theatre, music and dance.
  - b. Recommended performance zone: minimum 45' x 60', approximate height of 22' interior.
  - c. Capacity for small audiences: 80-120.
  - d. Bank of telescopic seating.
  - e. Minimal stage equipment.
  - f. Simple pipe grid overhead with configurable lighting.
  - g. Opportunity to enhance the space with natural light.
  - h. See precedent images from PowerPoint illustration.
  - i. Note: with the addition of adequate storage, this space would offer value as a configurable multi-purpose space, with equal or higher value to the existing Lyceum space.
8. Further opportunities at GBS include:
- a. Revise the Lyceum to create a more dedicated dance and performance space.
  - b. Convert currently vacated Athletic Offices for dance use (size is modest and would offer limited value).
  - c. Relocate the existing lower level Spin Room to the Athletic Offices and convert Spin Room space to Dance use (location is still not optimal).
  - d. Convert Football Weight Room to Dance Studio.
  - e. Revise the Drama/Dance Room, converting its interior space and corridors to create more useful space.



9. Summary of Glenbrook South High School recommendations:
  - a. Create one large open Dance Studio, by building new or dedicating the Lyceum to Dance and adding support space.
  - b. Examine further spaces to support dance.
  - c. A total of 3-4 dance spaces with primary scheduling capability is recommended.

We welcome questions and further conversation to address these recommendations.

## Glenbrook North High School

10. Our executive summary of Glenbrook North High School is:
  - a. The thriving Theatre program is underserved by its facilities.
  - b. The Music program is suppressed by lack of storage.
  - c. Dance program is advancing and needs further support.
  - d. Multi-purpose scheduling frustrates daily operations.
11. The Center for the Performing Arts (CPA) Mainstage is extremely busy with heavy scheduling of:
  - a. Plays and musicals.
  - b. A wide array of music concerts.
  - c. Variety Show.
  - d. Onstage “Black Box” productions for audiences up to 250.
  - e. Outside groups, including the Northbrook Symphony.
12. The CPA’s public accommodations, storage, and equipment are lacking. See our observations from our report addressing the CPA.
13. The Music programs have good accommodation for many daily uses in the music addition. We note the following shortfalls:
  - a. Music equipment for use onstage in the CPA requires storage.
  - b. Movement of the stage equipment to the stage is adequate, but the corridor to the stage is used for storage.
  - c. The existing music rooms are not adequate to host smaller performances such as recitals and vocal music. Up to 48 vocal soloists require a performance space.
14. The existing Drama Room is overcommitted among four primary uses:
  - a. Drama class.
  - b. Music rehearsals.
  - c. “Black Box” style productions.
  - d. Auxiliary “Green Room” space for Mainstage events.

These multiple uses cause a great deal of schedule overlap. The resultant multiple furniture, storage, and activity needs tend to frustrate all the activities.

The most underserved use is Black Box theatre productions. GBN has a great deal of programming that requires an intimate theatre to succeed. The size, support, and detailing of the Drama Room all fail the use. The experience of intimate theatre in this room is poor for performers and audiences.

15. The growing Dance programs need more support. Dance activities include:
  - a. Curricular programs – currently two units.
  - b. Orchesis Dance – now in two units and growing.
  - c. Poms – now in two units, with increasing demand.
  - d. Color Guard (tall space required).
  - e. Club Dance – a desire that has not been accommodated as it has at GBS.
16. The existing Dance Studio is of moderate size. This room is too small to accommodate the Orchesis or Poms groups. We note that some rehearsals are held on the gymnasium “shelf” space – a mezzanine within the gym itself.
17. We discussed the potential for adding a Black Box theatre at GBN. The benefits of a Black Box theatre include:
  - a. It is a dedicated space to support multiple uses.
  - b. It serves Theatre and smaller Music events optimally.
  - c. It can also serve Dance uses when cleared of seating.
  - d. The size of a Black Box is well-scaled to the young performer.
  - e. Work in a Black Box provides training in a very popular theatre form.
18. Desirable features of black box theatres include:
  - a. Completely flexible staging and seating.
  - b. Performer (and audience) circulation completely around the performance space.
  - c. Overhead lighting and audio systems.
  - d. Good personnel access to the overhead systems for setup.
  - e. Scenery that is typically rather simple and mostly ground-supported.
  - f. A control room on an upper level allows good views to the space.
  - g. Significant adjacent storage space to house the varied platforms, railings, and seats used to create the multiple seating arrangements.
19. A strong siting opportunity exists at GBN to locate a Black Box addition. Adding a Black Box to the south of the CPA would provide the following benefits:
  - a. Public lobby weaknesses in the CPA could be addressed.
  - b. The Black Box would make good use of the existing Front-of-House and Back-of-House adjacencies. Portions of the Dressing Rooms may be shared with the CPA.
  - c. It would be in a strong public view and access position.

20. In order to meet the needs expressed, a Black Box theatre would need the following minimum program elements:
- a. Active theatre working zone of minimum 45' x 55'.
  - b. Approximate theatre height of 30'.
  - c. Sound and light lock vestibules at each entry.
  - d. A means of access to overhead lighting (catwalks or tension-wire grid).
  - e. A second-story Control Room.
  - f. A lobby zone to connect to support the Black Box and to permit logical connection to the CPA.
  - g. Audience toilets to support performances.
  - h. Adequate storage for theatre equipment.
21. Further opportunities for performing arts use:
- a. Adapt the existing Little Theatre in the lower level to create a large dance studio or music rehearsal. This theatre is underused at present. Its shape and form are not optimal for theatre uses, but its size is appealing. This theatre is not extremely tall, but it would be suitable for more dance uses. The sloped floor must be leveled. The stage area could be retained, or it could be demolished to create more open flat floor.
  - b. Convert the existing Wrestling Gym to a rehearsal space. This would satisfy many dance uses.
  - c. Convert the existing Computer Science Room to a rehearsal space. This would satisfy many dance uses.
22. Summary of Glenbrook North High School recommendations:
- a. Create a Black Box theatre to serve Theatre and Music.
  - b. Explore every opportunity to create dedicated purposeful storage for performing arts activities.
  - c. Examine further spaces to support dance. A total of 2 dance spaces with primary scheduling capability is recommended.

We welcome questions and further conversation to address these recommendations.

**End of Report**



GLENBROOK HIGH SCHOOL DISTRICT 225

# PERFORMANCE SPACE STUDY FOR GLENBROOK HIGH SCHOOL DISTRICT 225

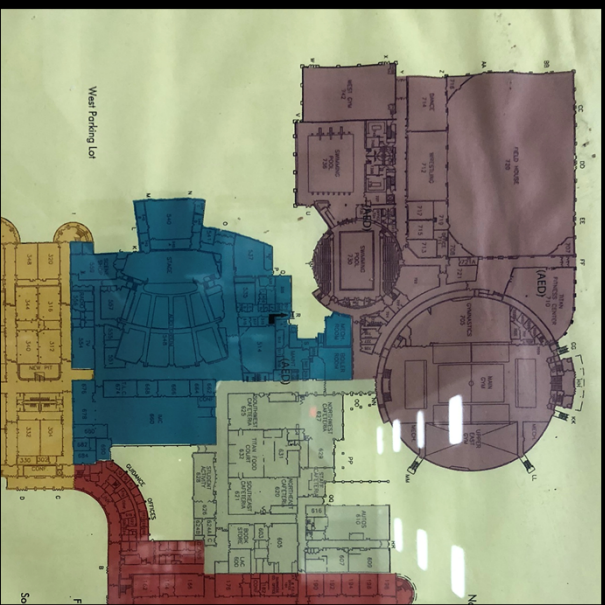
Part one:  
Glenbrook South HS

August 14, 2019

Revised following presentation



- ## The Study's Process
- Discuss uses and participants for performing arts spaces
  - Investigate existing space opportunities
  - Recommend adaptations or additions



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- ### Glenbrook South HS Executive Summary
- Large-format needs mostly satisfied
  - Medium-format needs are ready for enhanced facilities
  - Dance facilities most in need



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- ### Key Current Uses that are largely Satisfied
- Large-format musicals
  - Large-format music concerts
  - Variety Show
  - Mainstage Theatre is sufficient-  
its audience capacity sets the  
use



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## Key Current Uses that Exhibit Need

- Music rehearsal – pressure from collateral occupancies
  - Banquets
  - Basic room assignments for Workshops
  - Space for Sectional rehearsals is limited
  - Multiple events create pressure on shared space and equipment
- Theatre: High demand from outside renters



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## Key Current Uses that Exhibit Need

- Dedicated space for specific occupancies:
  - Underclass plays and one-acts
  - Comedy
  - “Black Box”-style productions (currently a small number)
  - *Ad hoc* student groups
  - (Drama/Dance room too small)
  - Lyceum is booked as multi-use space. More dance use is possible, but storage and room changeover work increases



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## Key Current Uses that are NOT Satisfied

- Dance Groups
  - V-show "singer-dancers"
  - Cheerleading dance (one dedicated space)
  - Orchestris
  - Poms
  - Ethnic dance (Latin, Hip-hop, Banger Beats, K-Pop, etc.)
- Curricular Dance is at capacity, and extracurricular is underserved
- Existing Dance Studio is controlled by athletics
- Room 557 is used for rehearsals for stage musicals and is too small



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## Other Considerations

- Theatre Scene Shop is very small
- Mirrors for dance are in very short supply
- Theatre stage may be an opportunity for added dance use, with careful scheduling



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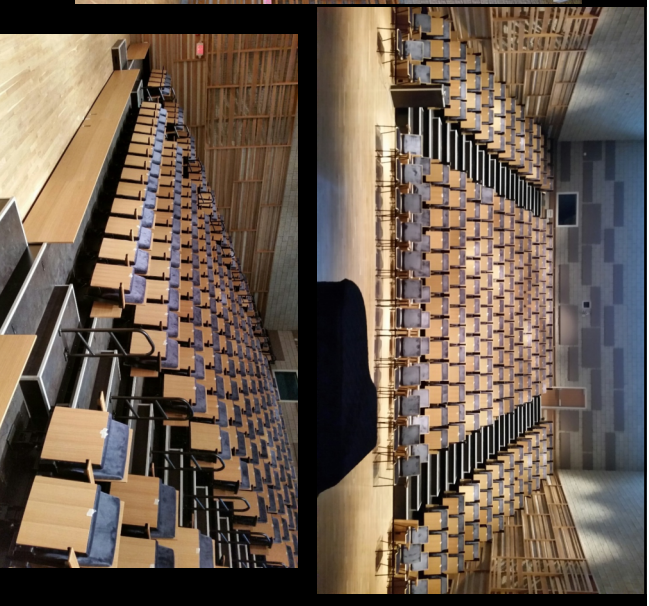
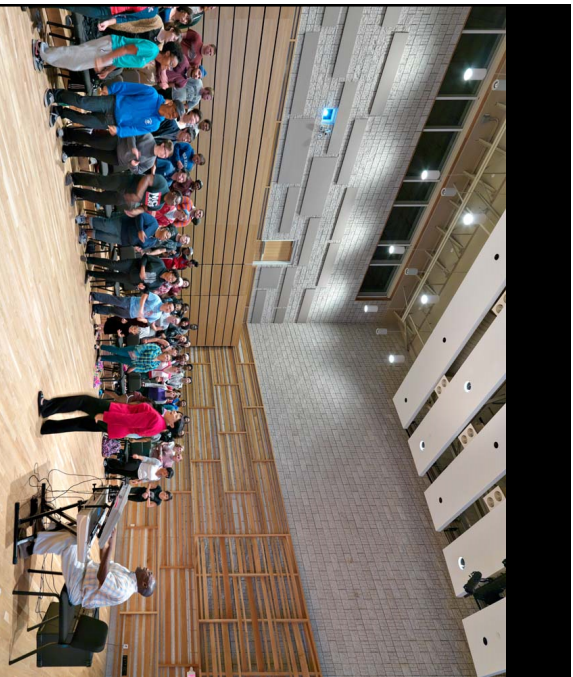
## RECOMMENDATIONS

- Dimensions of 60' x 45' best suited for dance
- Dance Studio with modest performance capability
  - Small Audiences
  - Minimal stage equipment
  - Telescopic seating bank
- Public presence not as important for an audience
- Consider combining with expansion of Scene Shop and use of Stage for dance



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GLENBROOK HIGH SCHOOL DISTRICT 225 – PRECEDENT PROJECT – EARLHAM COLLEGE

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# COLLATERAL USES – IF STORAGE IS INCREASED



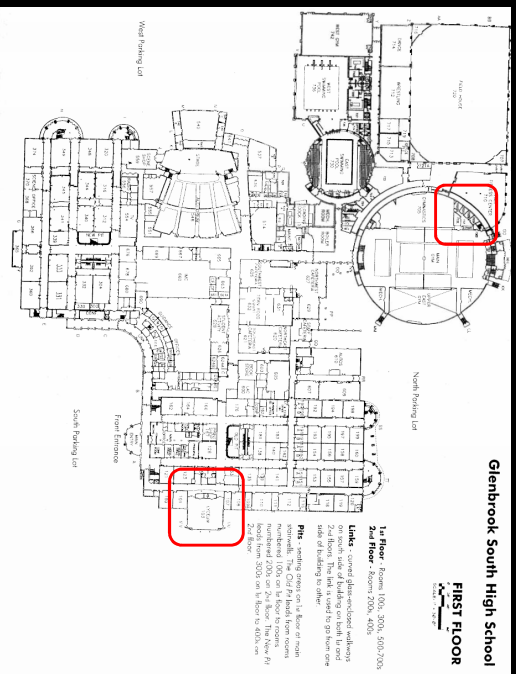
GLENBROOK HIGH SCHOOL DISTRICT 225 – PRECEDENT PROJECT – FOX VALLEY PAC, APPL ETON, WI



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## OTHER OPPORTUNITIES

- Revise the Lyceum for more dedicated dance and performance uses (60' x 42' dimension)
- Convert vacated Athletic Offices for dance use (modest size)
- Option: relocate Spin Room to Athletic Offices, convert existing Spin Room to Dance use (inconvenient location)
- Option: conversion of Football Weight Room as Dance Studio
- Optimize Drama/Dance Room and its corridors to create more useful space



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## Glenbrook South HS Summary

- Create large open dance space with collateral capability:
- Build new, with Scene Shop augmentation, or
- Dedicate the Lyceum and add support space
- Explore other space for smaller dance rehearsals

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## PERFORMANCE SPACE STUDY FOR

GLENBROOK HIGH SCHOOL  
DISTRICT 225

Part two:

Glenbrook North HS

August 14, 2019

Revised following presentation

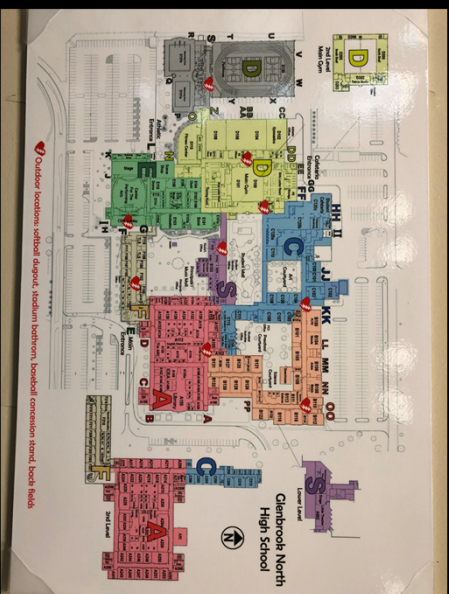
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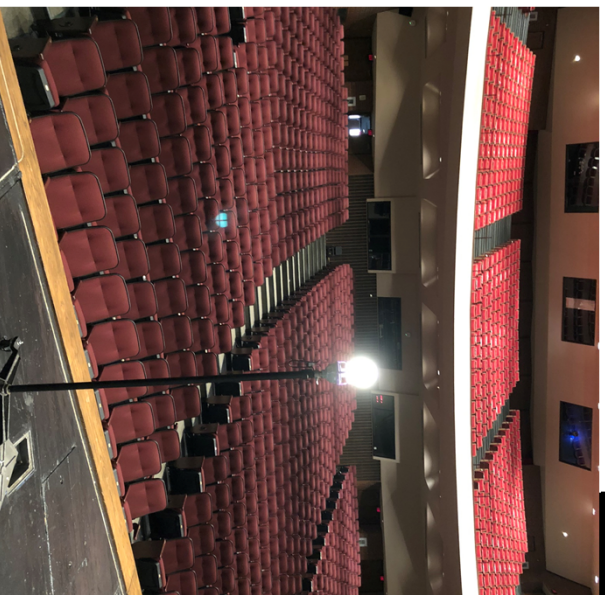
- ## The Study's Process
- Discuss uses and participants for performing arts spaces
  - Investigate existing space opportunities
  - Recommend adaptations or additions



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- ## Glenbrook North HS Executive Summary
- Thriving Theatre program is underserved by facilities
  - Music program is suppressed by lack of storage
  - Dance program is advancing and needs further support
  - Multi-purpose scheduling frustrates daily operations



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## CPA Theatre is Extremely Busy

- Plays and musicals
- Wide array of music concerts
- Variety Show
- Onstage "Black Box" productions for 250
- Outside groups, including the Northbrook Symphony
- Public accommodations are lacking
- See observations from prior study for the CPA

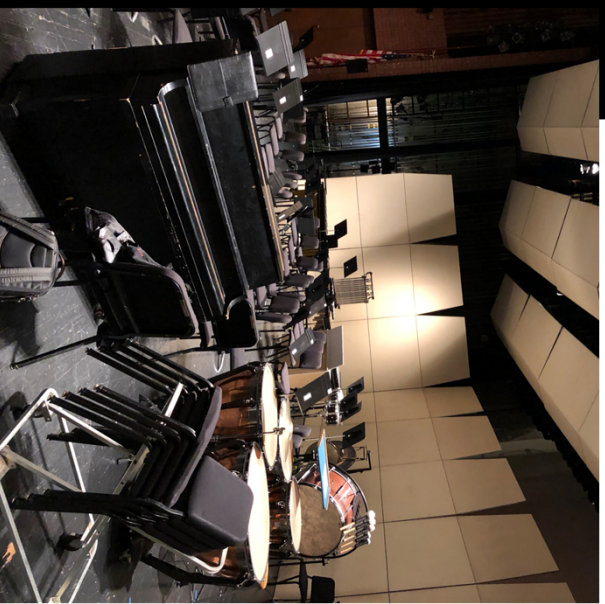


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## Music Spaces are at Maximum

- Onstage equipment requires storage
- Movement to the stage is adequate, but the corridor to the stage is used as storage
- Lacking a smaller space for vocal recitals – up to 48 soloists
- Existing music rooms not adequate for smaller performances



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## Drama Room is Overcommitted

- Used for four purposes
  - Drama class
  - Music rehearsals
  - “Black Box” style productions
  - Auxiliary space to Mainstage
- Multiple uses frustrates all the uses
- “Black Box” style productions are most ill-served by this room. Experience is poor for performers and audiences.



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## Dance Programs need More Support

- Curricular Programs
- Dance Groups
  - Orchestras – increasing number of participants (two units)
  - Poms – increasing demand for more participants (two units)
  - Color Guard (all space required)
  - Curricular dance is also growing – two sections are being developed
  - Club Dance: a desire that has not been accommodated as it has at GBS
- One Dance Studio of moderate size. This room is too small to accommodate Orchestras or Poms groups.
- Rehearsals also on the Gym “Shelf” space



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## Features of Black Box Theatres

- Completely flexible staging and seating
- Circulation 360 degrees around the performance space
- Overhead lighting and audio
- Good access to overhead elements for setup
- Scenery often simple and ground-mounted
- Control Room on an upper level
- Significant storage space to serve the multiple arrangements



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## Benefits of a Black Box Theatre

- Dedicated space for the multiple uses
- Serves Theatre and smaller Music performances optimally
- Well-scaled for young performers
- Trains students in a very popular theatre form



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## Area Recommended

- Black Box working zone of minimum 45' x 55'
- Sound and light locks to active areas
- Increased Storage areas to accommodate this theatre
- Create second-level Control Room
- Create Lobby space with potential connection to the CPA



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## FURTHER OPPORTUNITIES

- Convert Little Theatre to Dance or Music rehearsal space (challenges in access, floor level, and finishes)
- Convert Wrestling Gym
- Convert Computer Science room



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## Glenbrook North HS Summary

- Build Black Box theatre to serve Theatre and Music
- Revise space for storage at every opportunity
- Develop other Dance rehearsal spaces



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## DISCUSSION



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