



Academy Prep

Center of St. Petersburg

February 18, 2026

To Whom It May Concern,

It is my distinct honor to write this letter of recommendation on behalf of the **Dynasty Stars Foundation** and the extraordinary work of Melanie Carson and Sarah Lototskyy.

My name is Gina Tanase Burkett, and I serve as Head of School of the Academy Prep Center of St. Petersburg. As an educator in the Pinellas County area for over 30 years, I have had the opportunity to evaluate countless educational and enrichment programs that serve our youth. I can say with complete confidence that the impact of the Dynasty Youth St. Pete Ballroom Dance Program — and its affiliate, the Dynasty Stars Foundation — is truly life-changing for the students they serve.

Academy Prep's mission is *to inspire and empower students qualifying for need-based scholarships to become future community leaders through a rigorous middle school program*. Identifying partners who help us develop the whole child — academically, socially, and emotionally — is essential to fulfilling that mission. The Dynasty Youth St. Pete Ballroom Dance Program fits this vision beautifully.

Through the leadership of Melanie Carson and Sarah Lototskyy, ballroom dancing becomes far more than an artistic outlet; it becomes a vehicle for critical life-skills development. Many of our students — particularly those from low-income backgrounds or special populations — would not otherwise have access to opportunities like this. Yet within this program, they are not only included — they are empowered.

Students develop essential interpersonal skills such as maintaining eye contact, understanding appropriate social touch, demonstrating mutual respect, and learning how to interact respectfully with the opposite gender. These are foundational life skills that will serve them in academic settings, professional environments, and their future roles as community leaders.

Equally significant are the executive functioning and cognitive benefits. Ballroom dance requires students to memorize step patterns, execute them in sequence, coordinate movement with a partner, and synchronize everything to music. This level of multitasking strengthens memory, focus, discipline, and applied learning — all of which directly support our students' academic growth.



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The program also fosters adaptability and social flexibility. Students must work and dance with a variety of partners, including peers they may not naturally gravitate toward. Learning to collaborate, adjust, and communicate with different personalities prepares them for real-world workplace dynamics and community engagement.

I would be remiss if I did not also highlight the extraordinary level of dedication that Melanie Carson and Sarah Lototsky bring to their work. Their “above and beyond” commitment, combined with their creative approaches to engaging students, makes all the difference in the success of this program. They meet each child where they are, finding innovative ways to motivate, connect, and inspire them. Anyone who becomes involved with this organization quickly recognizes that their children are cared for deeply — not only as students, but as individuals with limitless potential.

There are many skills in life tied to the ability to multitask, apply oneself with discipline, and communicate effectively with others. Ballroom dancing teaches these competencies in a joyful, structured, and confidence-building way that resonates deeply with young people.

The work of the Dynasty Stars Foundation is transformational. Melanie Carson and Sarah Lototsky have created a program that not only teaches dance, but shapes more confident, capable, and socially prepared young individuals — aligning seamlessly with Academy Prep’s mission of developing future community leaders.

I offer my strongest recommendation and wholehearted support for the Dynasty Stars Foundation and their continued impact on the students and families they serve.

Sincerely,

Gina Tanase Burkett

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