End-to-end iOS app design and research to help dancers track their growth

Company: Journeys Dance LLC

Project Summary

Designed, validated, and iterated a video dance journal platform app, improving based off of user feedback and business needs
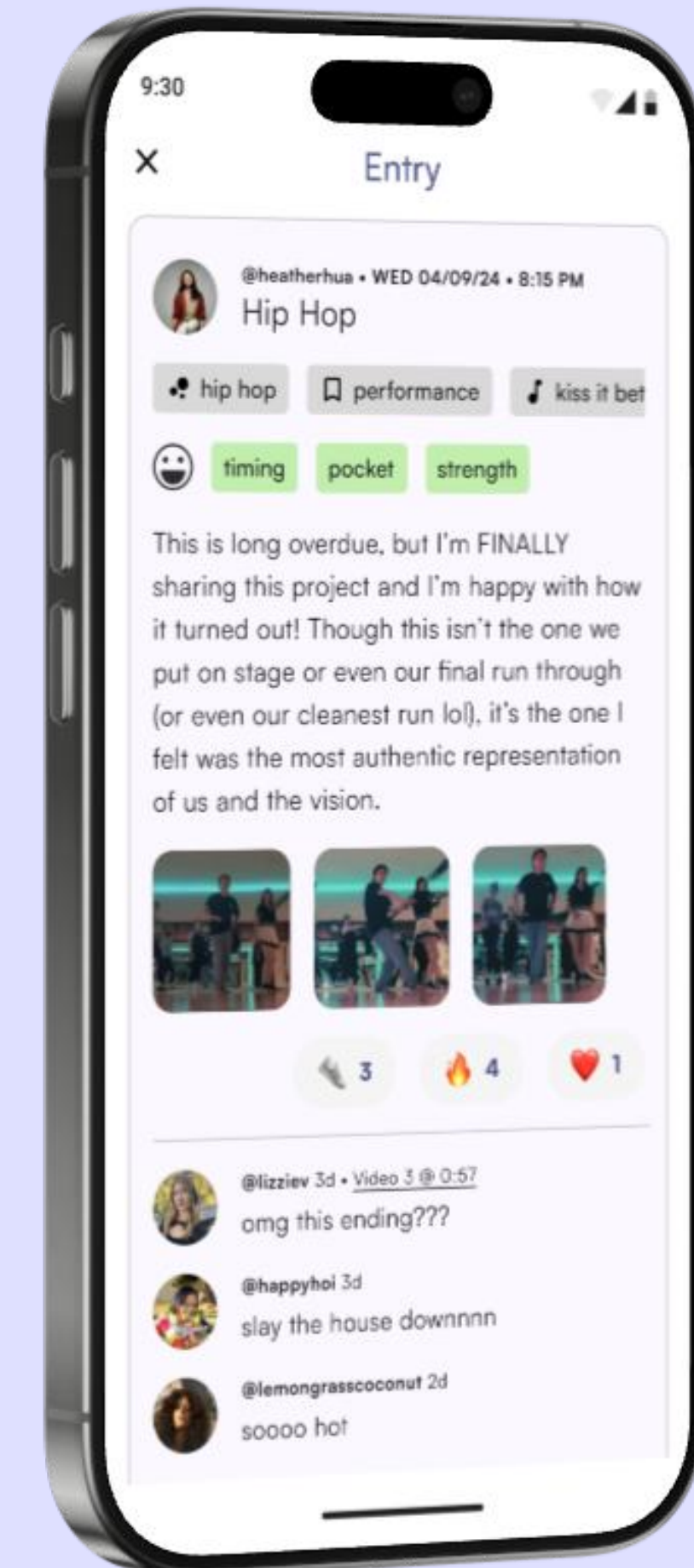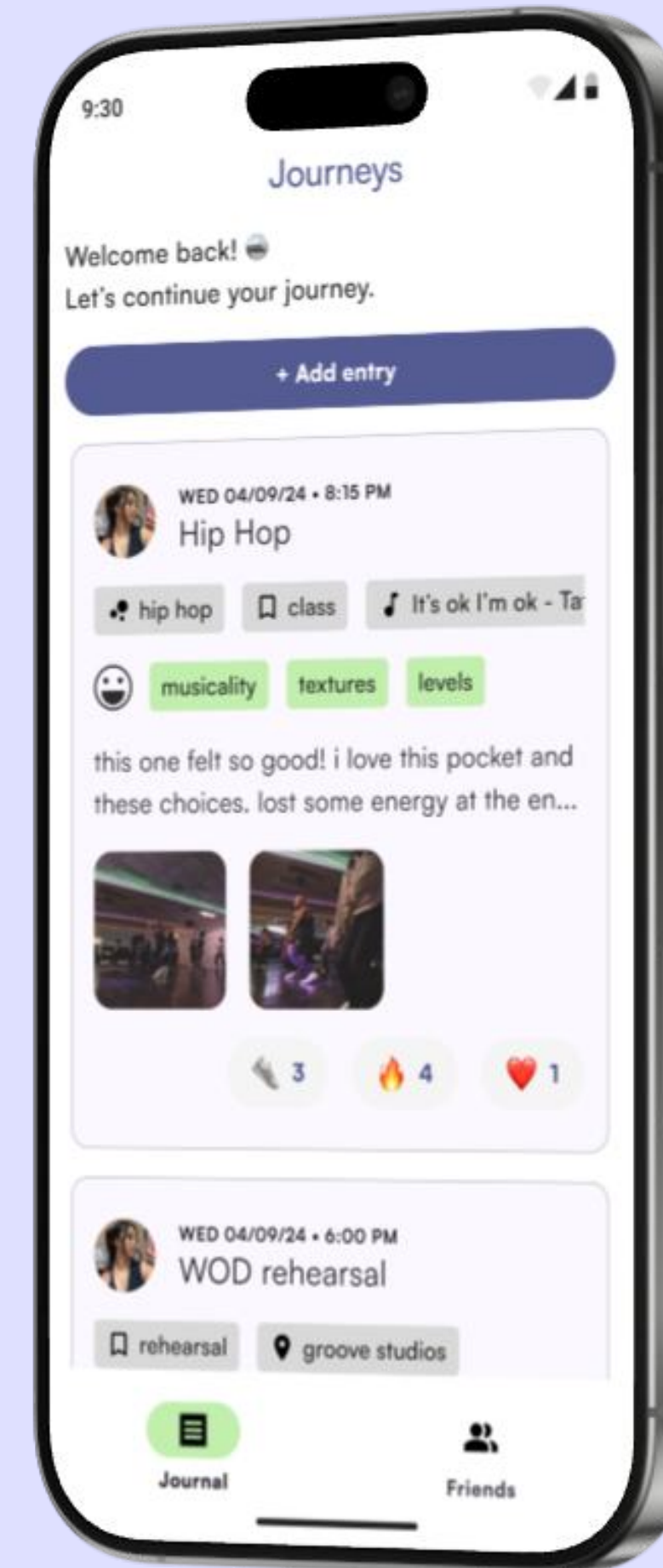
Responsibilities

- Experience Design
- Visual Design
- Clickable prototype
- Brand Design
- Rapid prototyping

Timeline

April — October 2024
(7 months)

Results

- App launched in Apple App Store, achieving over 100 downloads in 3 months

Journeys Dance hopes to use technology to improve dancers' lives.

As dancers ourselves we get to see and experience firsthand the problems dancers face.

Heather, Joy, and I got together to find solutions, with the goal of giving back to our community.

In this case, we created a platform that combines video storage, sharing, and journaling in one.

Dancers need video to visualize growth, but sharing and storing of videos can be tough.

Weightlifters

- weight
- body fat percentage
- pictures of posture

Runners

- pace
- distance
- heart rate

Dancers

???
- both art and athletic
- typically videos

Dancers need video to visualize growth, but sharing and storing of videos can be tough.

At the end of each dance class, there's typically a long line of people waiting to get the video recordings of themselves. The videos are recorded by one person — this could be a student, the instructor, or a representative of the studio — and then sent from their phone to everyone else.

This however takes time. If the class is small, say around 10 students, this can take around 20 minutes to complete. When classes get bigger however, say more than 30 people, **this process can take over an hour because the videos are being sent individually**.

Journeys Dance App aims to improve efficiency in this process: **allow easy propagation of videos, free up storage space on dancers' phones, and create a safe space for dancers to reflect on their dance journey**.

Dancers need video to visualize growth, but sharing and storing of videos can be tough.

Share videos

- Airdrop
- Drive
- Messaging apps

Give and get feedback

- Messaging apps
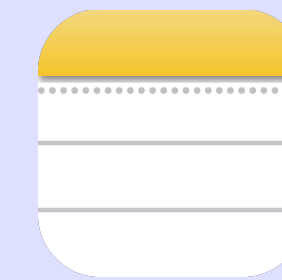
Track progress

- Notes apps
- Physical journals
- dedicated social media accounts

On top of data being spread out, looking for specific videos is challenging without metadata search, and notes and feedback are hard to articulate without using timestamps or describing the move itself. **Journeys combines all necessary tools into a single app, empowering students to reach their dance goals more efficiently.**

This project spanned 6 months, with multiple iterations between researching, designing, and building.

Prototyping

Coded prototype on Testflight

User testing

App maintenance and improvement

Research

This project spanned 6 months, with multiple iterations between researching, designing, and building.

Research → Prototyping → Coded prototype on Testflight

↓

User testing ← App maintenance and improvement ← Business strategy existential crisis
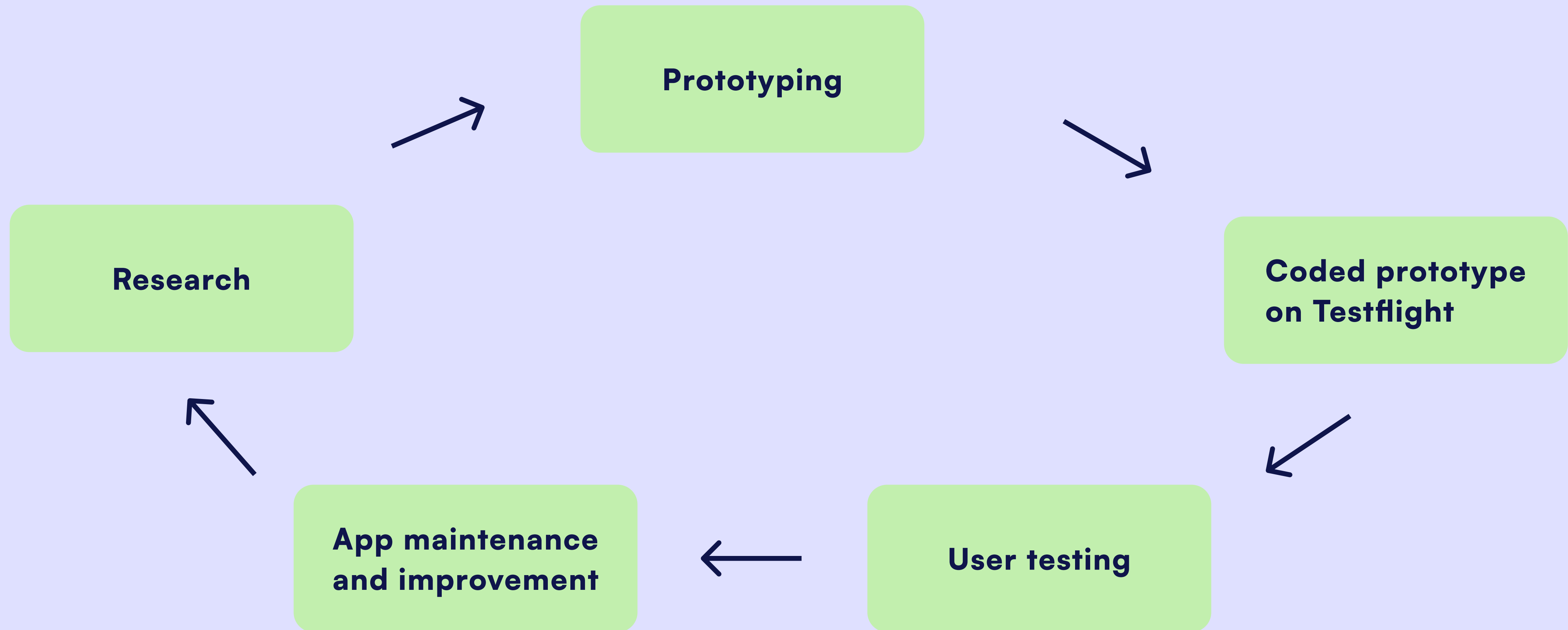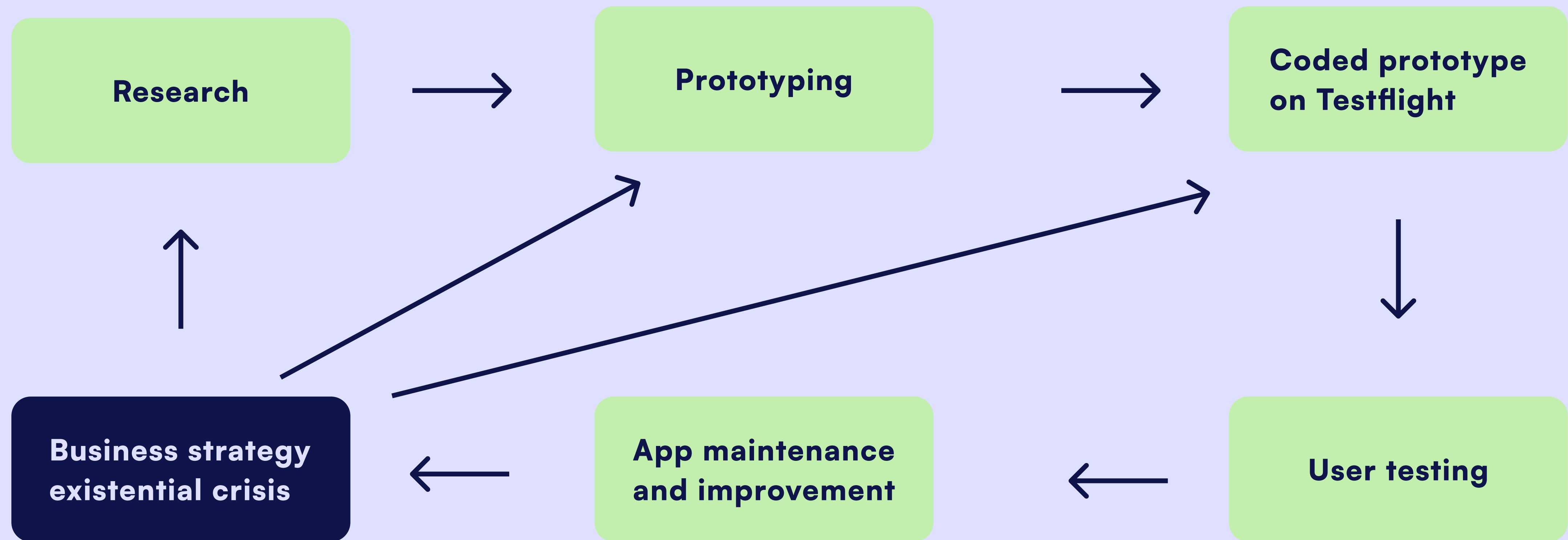
We sent a survey to our dance community to understand how they utilize videos to help with their growth.

Do you currently record videos of yourself and your peers dancing?

33 responses
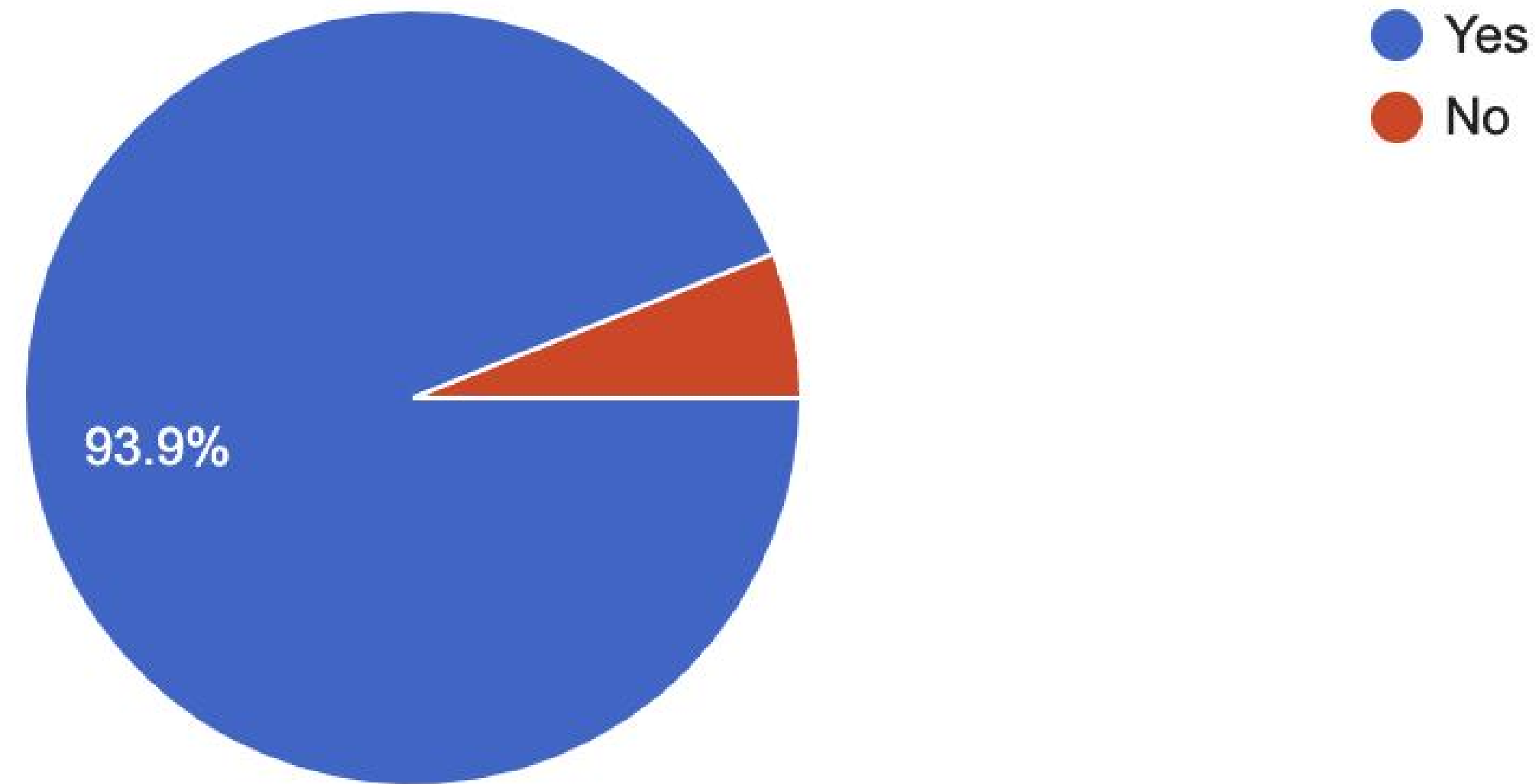
Yes
No

93.9%

We sent a survey to our dance community to understand how they utilize videos to help with their growth.

Do you currently track your dance progress?

33 responses

- Yes
- No
- Sometimes

39.4%

12.1%

48.5%

If yes or sometimes, how do you track your progress?

33 responses

Category	Value
Notes on my phone	7 (21.2%)
A dedicated app for journalin…	1 (3%)
Personal journal/notebook	3 (9.1%)
Social media account	21 (63.6%)
N/a	2 (6.1%)
A vibe	1 (3%)
Looking at past videos, stayi…	1 (3%)
N/A	1 (3%)
Mental notes, feedback from…	1 (3%)
NA	1 (3%)
Videos in a folder in photos…	1 (3%)
Observing my dancing in my…	1 (3%)
Mostly just my photos / vide…	1 (3%)
Reflection	1 (3%)

We sent a survey to our dance community to understand how they utilize videos to help with their growth.

Out of 33 responses, over 75% responded saying they were
interested in an app to help them track progress.

Choose up to 3 features that would be the most important to you in a dance
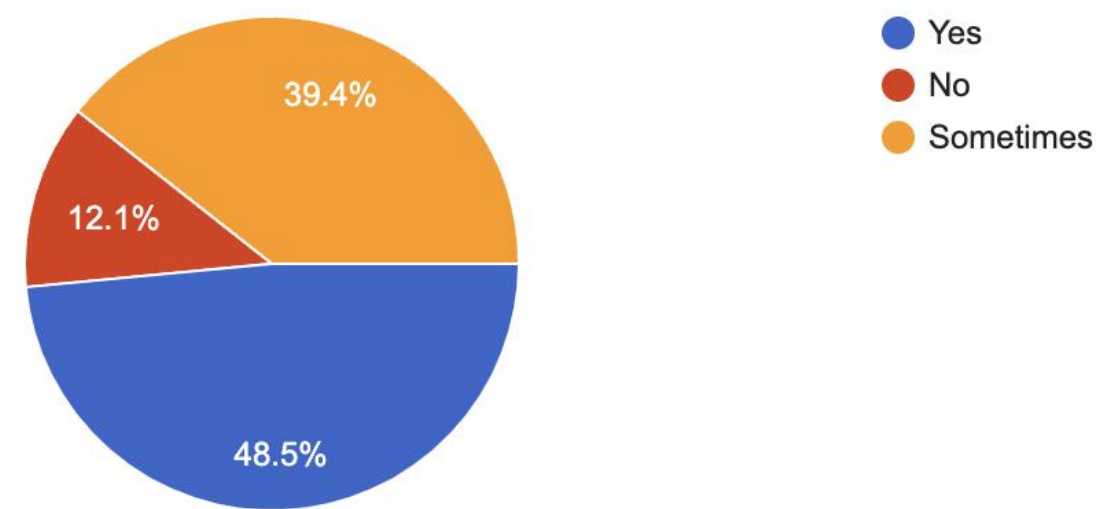video and progress-tracking app.

33 responses

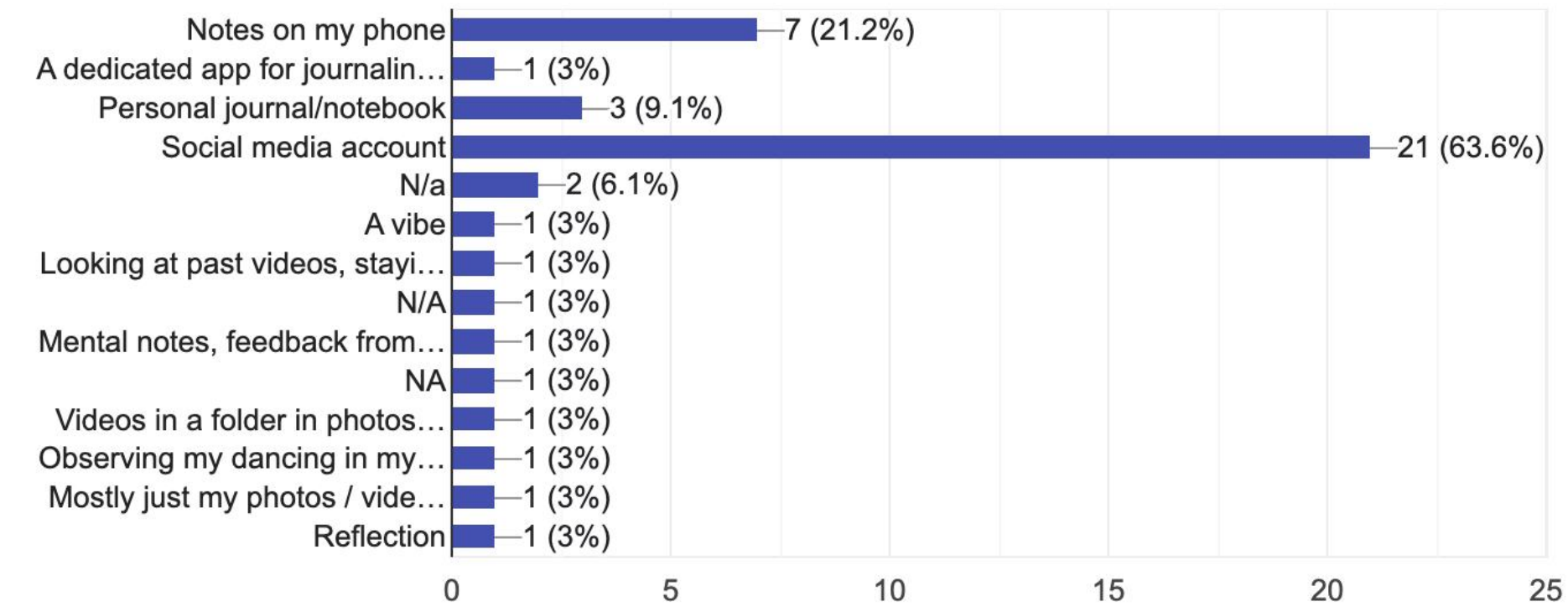# We sent a survey to our dance community to understand how they utilize videos to help with their growth.

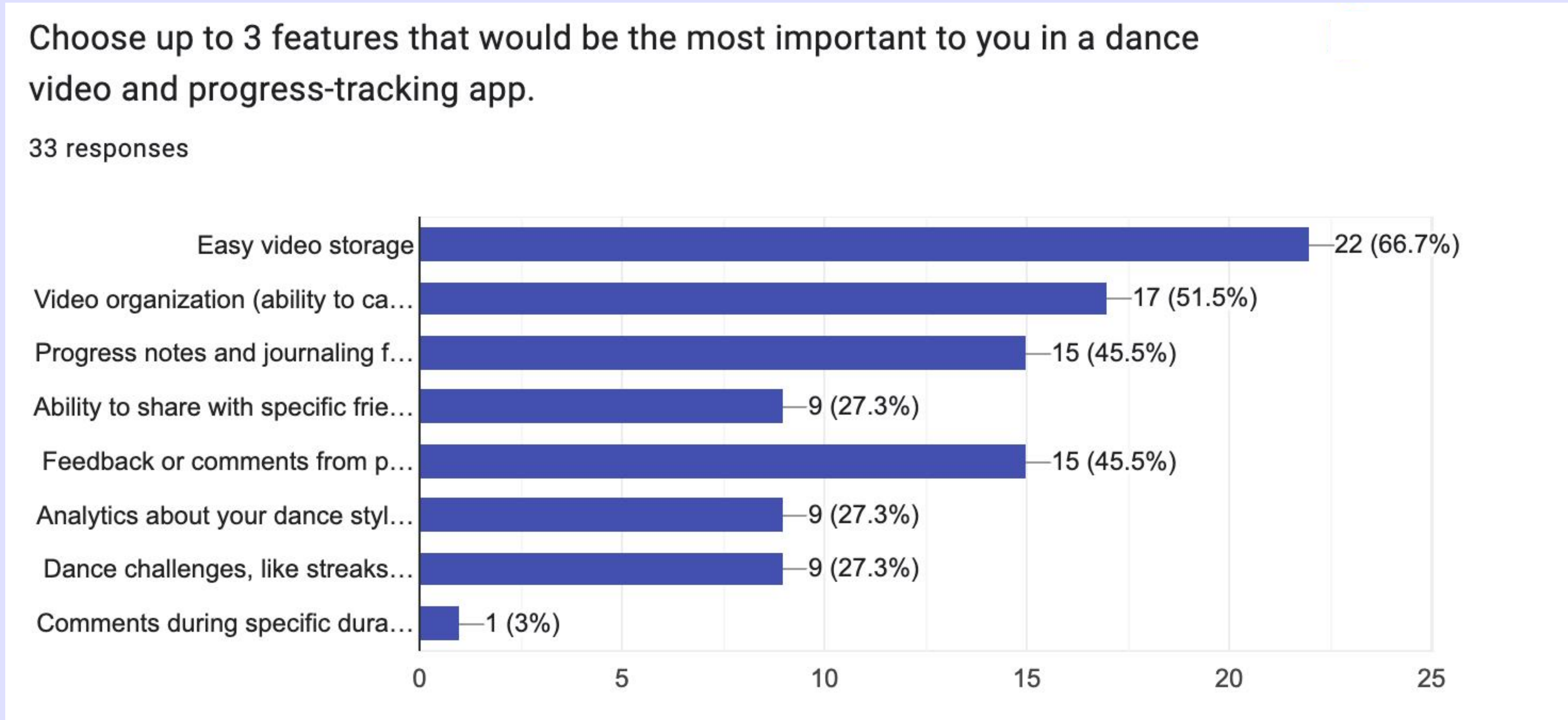## If no, why don't you track your progress?

33 responses

Holistically I think I track, but there's no way to visualize my dance over years of content.

i used to not really see the significance of my thoughts surrounding dance and i thought that it didn't mattered and i would rather care more abt just seeing my progression through videos. i am WRONG 😐

I've been dancing a long time and am super aware of myself so don't necessarily need to track lol

no convenient system

I get lazy, but never actually think of taking my progress

I don't but my clients do so can't answer

It's just for fun. I haven't found a need.

I need an easier system to track my progress

I would love to track my progress more concretely but haven't thought about it until now!

Passionate about the problem space, we decided to jump straight in.

Joy, Heather, and I were still just getting to know each other.

It was crucial to make sure all 3 of us are aligned before we move on.
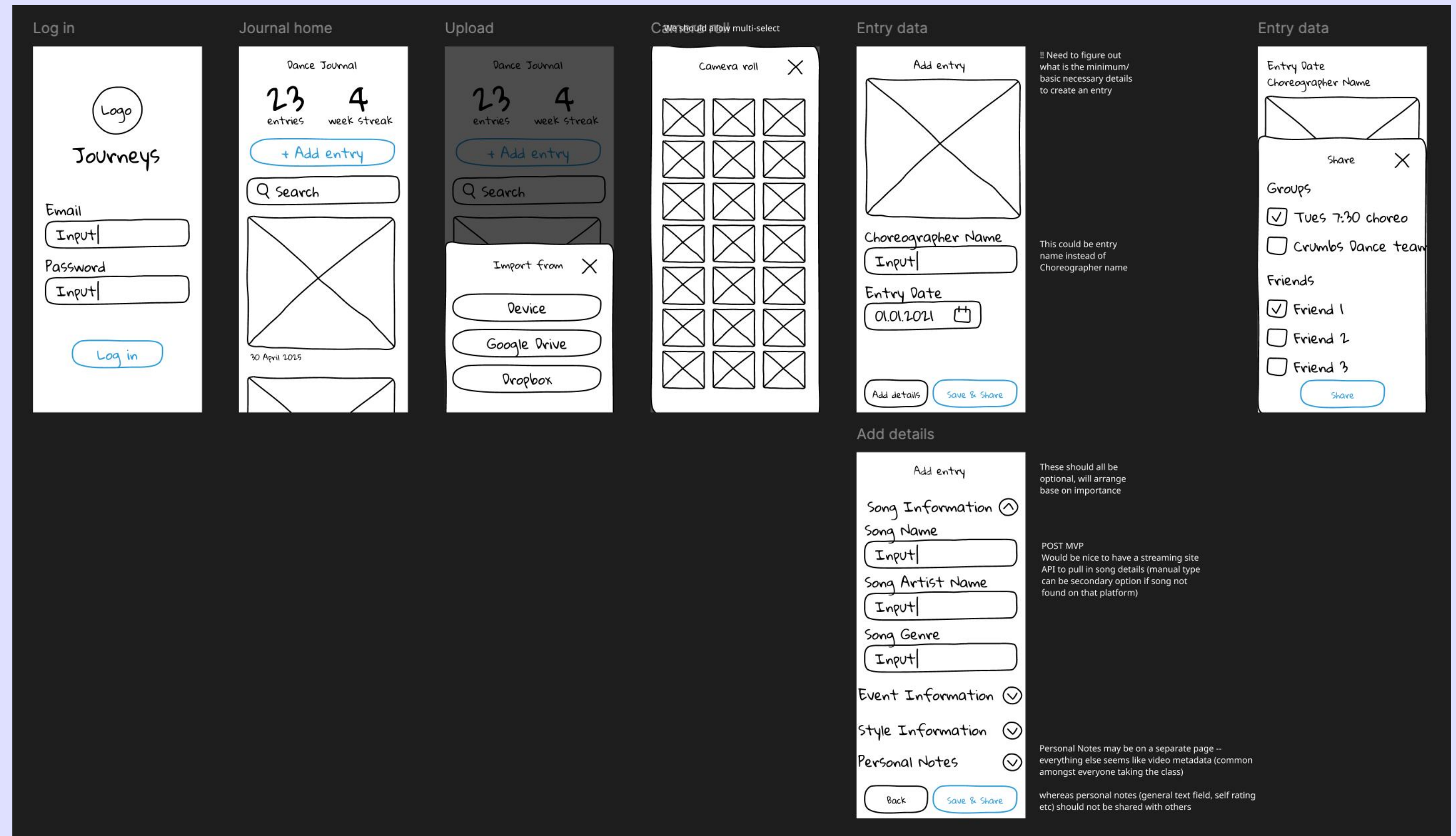
Small team meant we needed to keep our scope small, but we wanted to make sure the data architecture would also allow future growth.

I kicked off the data architecture mapping, as I knew this would affect:

- What information do we need to get from users
- What data can we connect/pull at different screens

The complex data linking from this table also showed us that our scope was still too big for us to handle in a short amount of time.
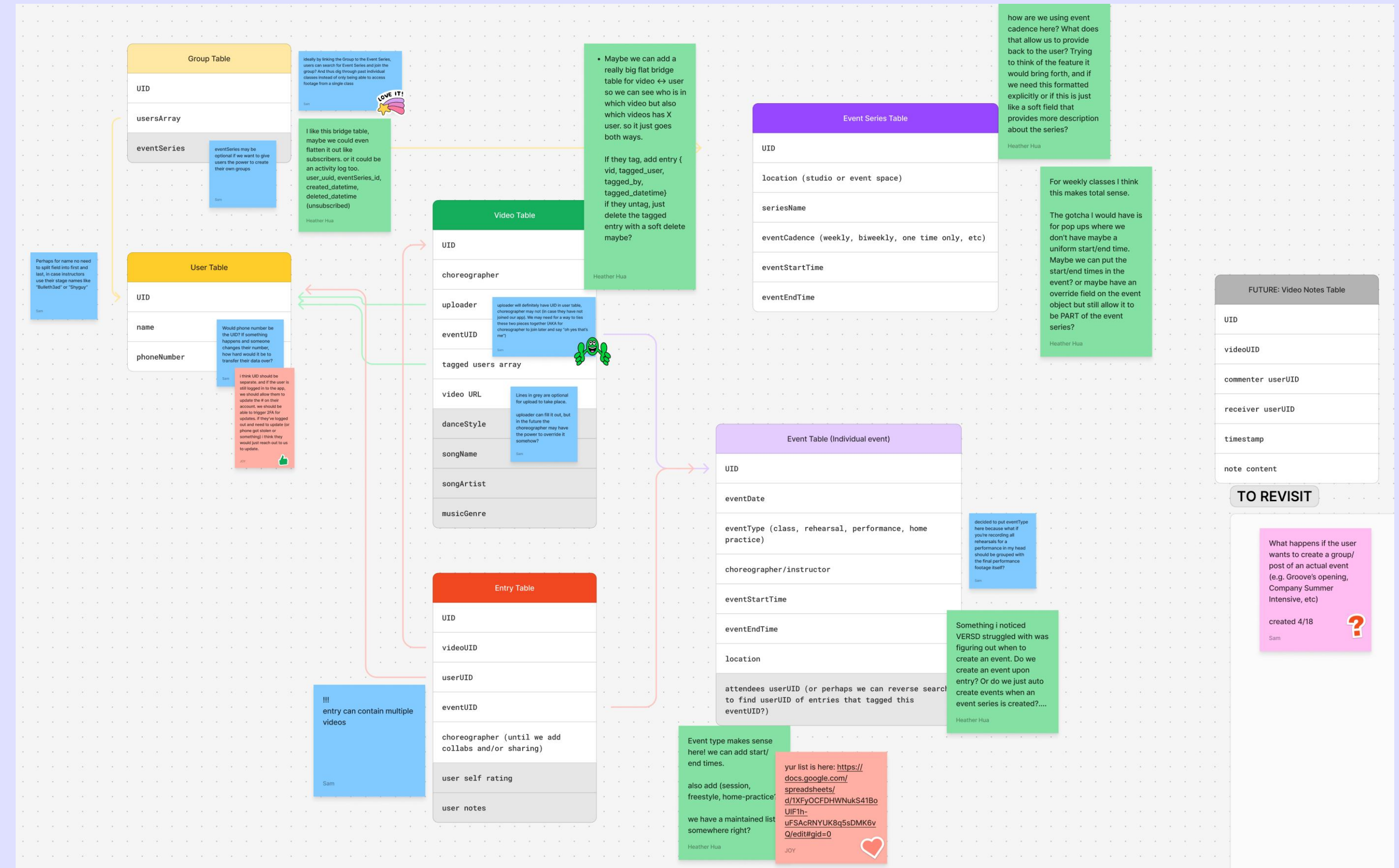
We needed a quick prototype for our Y-Combinator application.
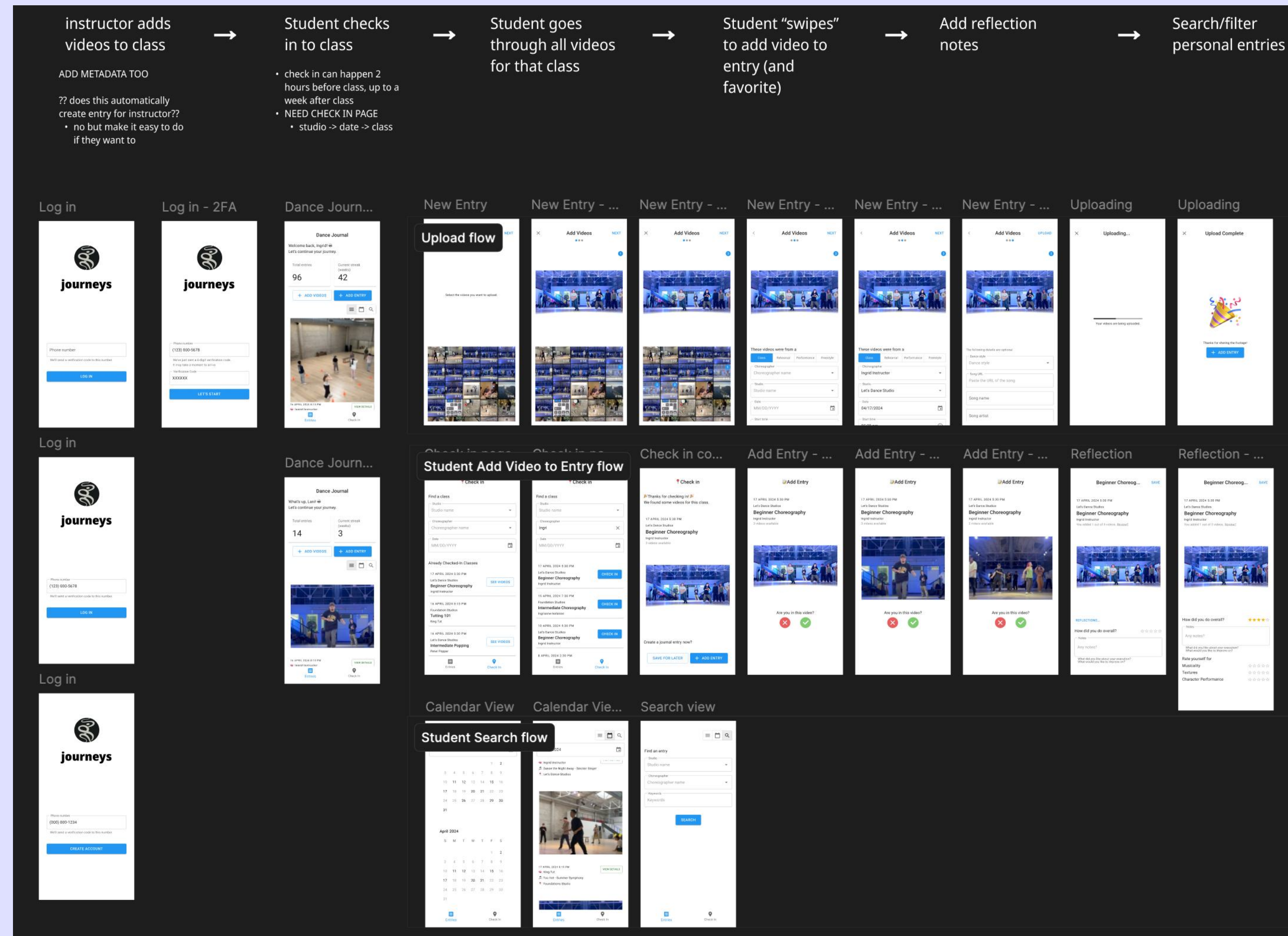
Link to prototype

🥁 **Drumroll…** 🥁

We didn't get approved for YC, but the application process was really helpful in forcing us to think through a lot of the business and product aspects, especially about how we want to monetize in the future.

Now that we have a vision, we tried to start getting the prototype into the hands of our users.

Heather decided on using React Native: ideal for support of iOS, Android, and web.

This was a new tech stack, so we also wanted to work out any kinks early on.
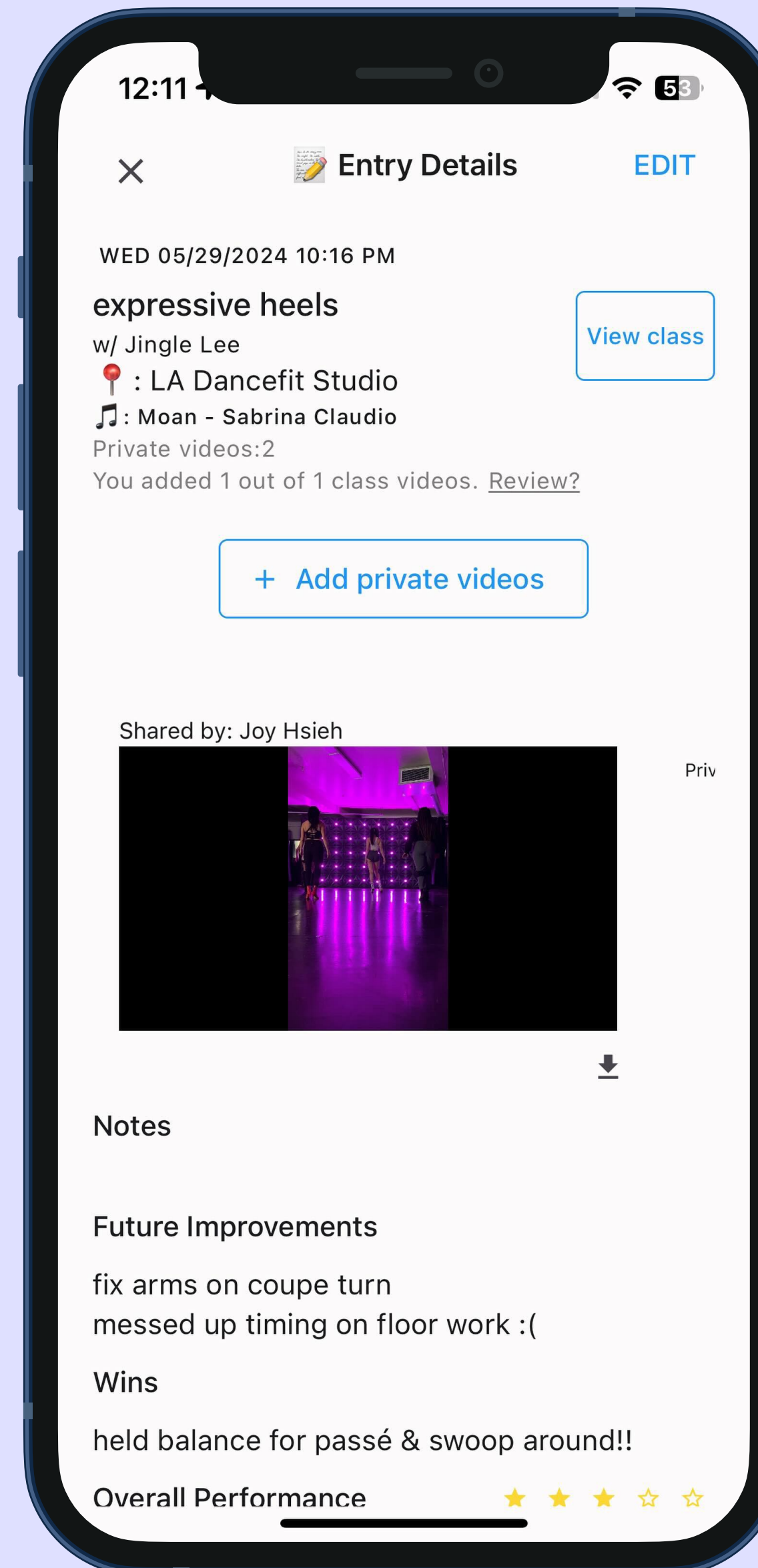
Our goal was to build as quick as possible. React Paper provided ready to use components, so we needed to adapt to it on the design side.
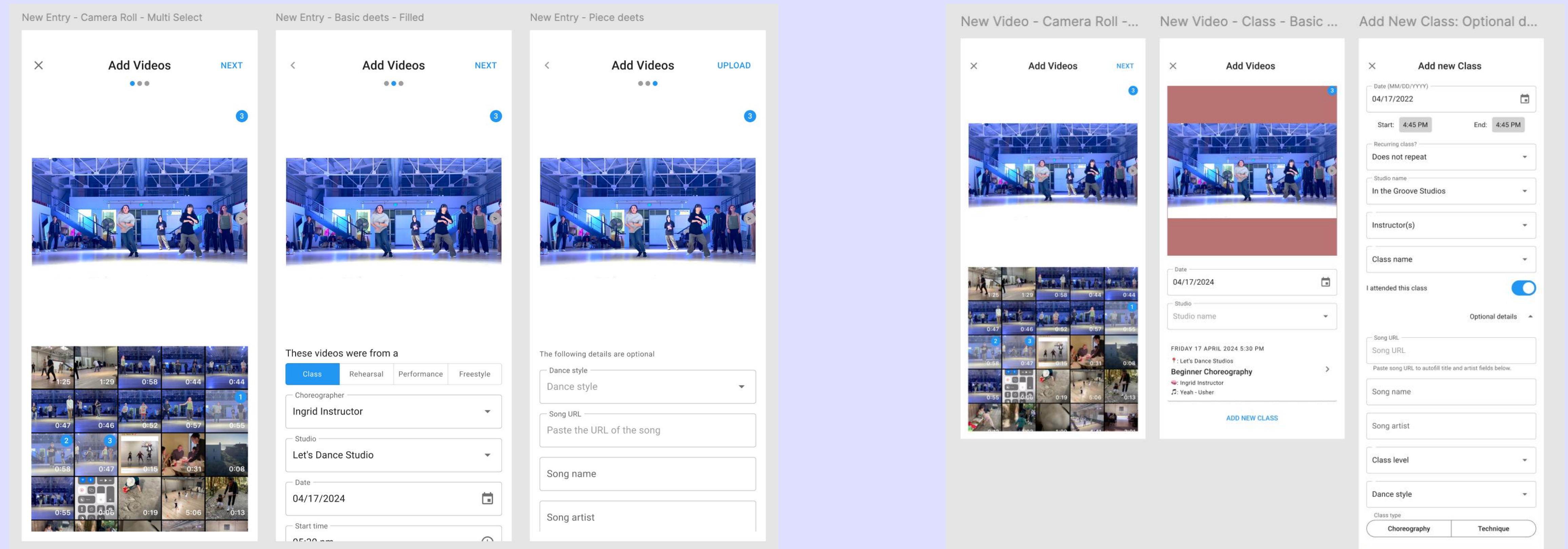
For example, the React Paper library didn't have a stepper component that I originally designed, so we adapted to a long form with optional fields hidden behind an accordion instead.

We hit many bumps on the way:

Distribution on Android:

We were familiar with distributing test apps on Apple (Testflight), but didn't know how to do it on Android (Do we just send APK files out?)
→ for the sake of time, we decided to ignore Android for now

Tech savviness of our target audience:

A lot of hand holding was needed to get users set up on Testflight as well (download Testflight, find Apple ID, etc)
→ we started with a smaller group of people to make sure we have time to guide them through the process

Learnings

" "Add entry" seemed the same as "Add an event," like I would have to do the flow from the beginning again. "

" I thought I already uploaded the videos to the class, why isn't showing up on my entry? "

" I was waiting for an official class to show up and I can just click on it with all the details filled in. "

- There was a lot of confusion between what was public vs private
- Heather's students really liked it, but others not so much - the concept of video distribution wasn't being understood because there wasn't a community of people taking the same classes
- But people were still excited!

With preparation for the actual Apple App Store launch, we started building a more comprehensive style guide.

Keywords:

- BRIGHT
- FUN
- EXCITING
- INSPIRING
- ENGAGING
- EARTHY

WHY "JOURNEYS"

- the word that dancers use to refer to their path
- "it's not about the destination, it's about journey"
- wanted to differentiate between "stay in your lane"

We played with a few different color schemes.

We liked all 3 iterations, but ended up going with the first one since the contrast levels were a little lower and more comfortable to the eye. It also felt the most "earthy" of the three.

As well as different fonts.

TYPE BRAINSTORM

WHY "JOURNEYS"
- the word that dancers use to refer to their path
- "it's not about the destination, it's about journey"
- wanted to differentiate between "stay in your lane"

Satoshi medium
- friendly and a little quirky
- easy to read
- not too rounded
- may be a little bolded, but light is too light?
- ask Sam for font file
- **Satoshi in bold** vs medium

WHY "JOURNEYS"
- the word that dancers use to refer to their path
- "it's not about the destination, it's about journey"
- wanted to differentiate between "stay in your lane"

Nunito
- rounded while clean and crisp
- not very exciting

WHY "JOURNEYS"
- the word that dancers use to refer to their path
- "it's not about the destination, it's about journey"
- wanted to differentiate between "stay in your lane"

Inter
- less rounded than Nunito, but still friendly
- feels a little techie from the spacing
- spacing also helps with legibility

Inter: The quick brown fox jumped over the lazy dog.
Satoshi: The quick brown fox jumped over the lazy dog.

Why "journeys"?
- the word that dancers use to refer to their path
- "it's not about the destination, it's about journey"
- wanted to differentiate between "stay in your lane"

DM Serif Display
- a little classy/elegant but still cute and feminine
- something about the thickness of it
- definitely good for website, will need to check for app

Why "journeys"?
- the word that dancers use to refer to their path
- "it's not about the destination, it's about journey"
- wanted to differentiate between "stay in your lane"

Noticia Text (bold)
- a little more typewriter-y, so slightly less friendly
- but less of a jarring difference to body text (Satoshi)
- feels a little too thick on bold

Why "journeys"?
- the word that dancers use to refer to their path
- "it's not about the destination, it's about journey"
- wanted to differentiate between "stay in your lane"

Bitter (semibold)
- still typewriter-y
- more font weights to play with: this is semibold, but even bold feels lighter than Noticia Text
- feels a little tech-y

Why "journeys"?
- the word that dancers use to refer to their path
- "it's not about the destination, it's about journey"
- wanted to differentiate between "stay in your lane"

Noto Sans (display black)
- current logo option
- very bold, a little too much? may not be very friendly
- can be a little hard to read because it's so thick

I quickly mocked up screens help us compare the different options and choose a direction.
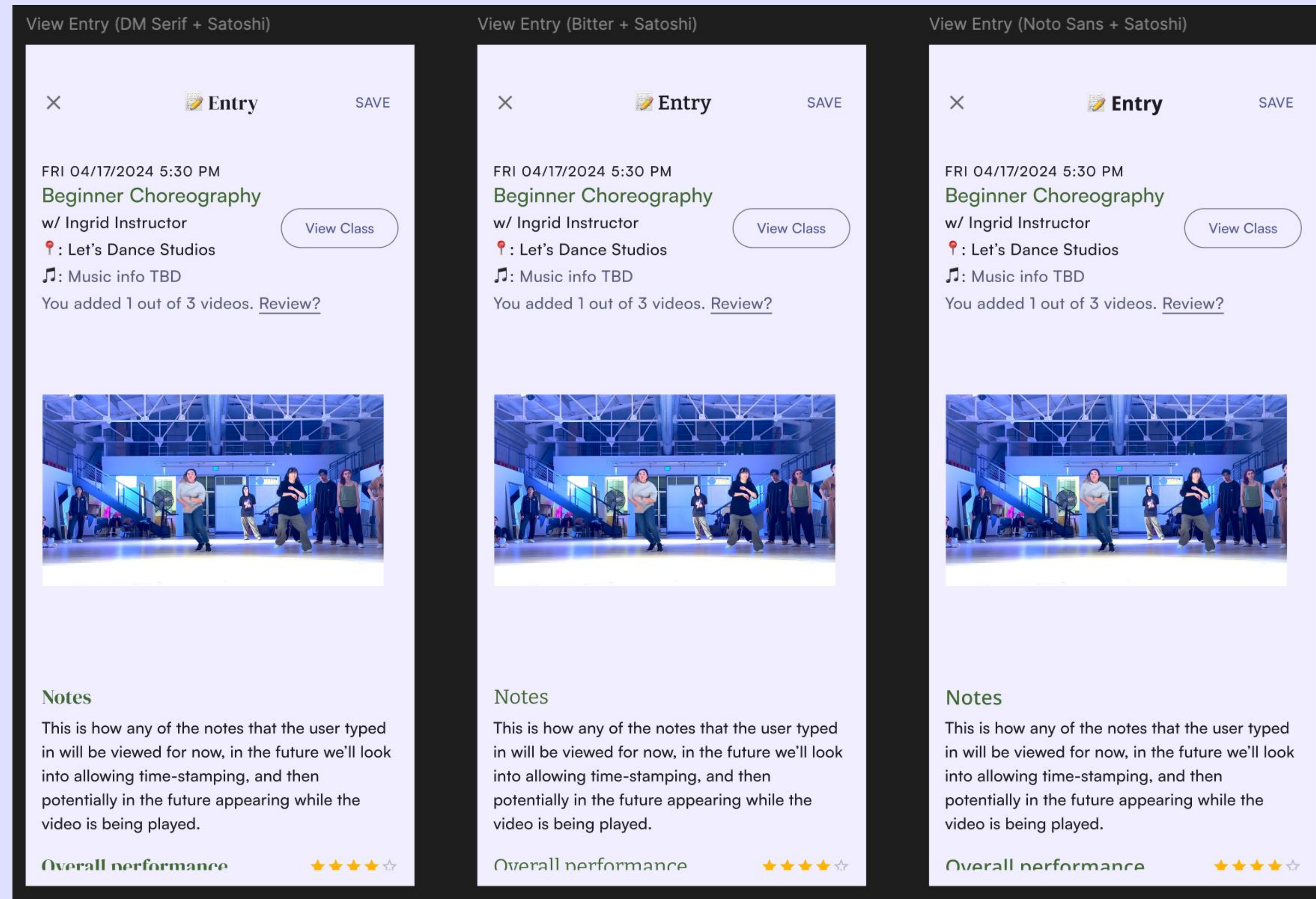
After mocking this up, we felt like there was too much going on with the colors and fonts. We liked DM Serif Display, but decided to only use it on our website and branding, keeping the app's font to using only Satoshi.

We officially launched on Apple's App Store!
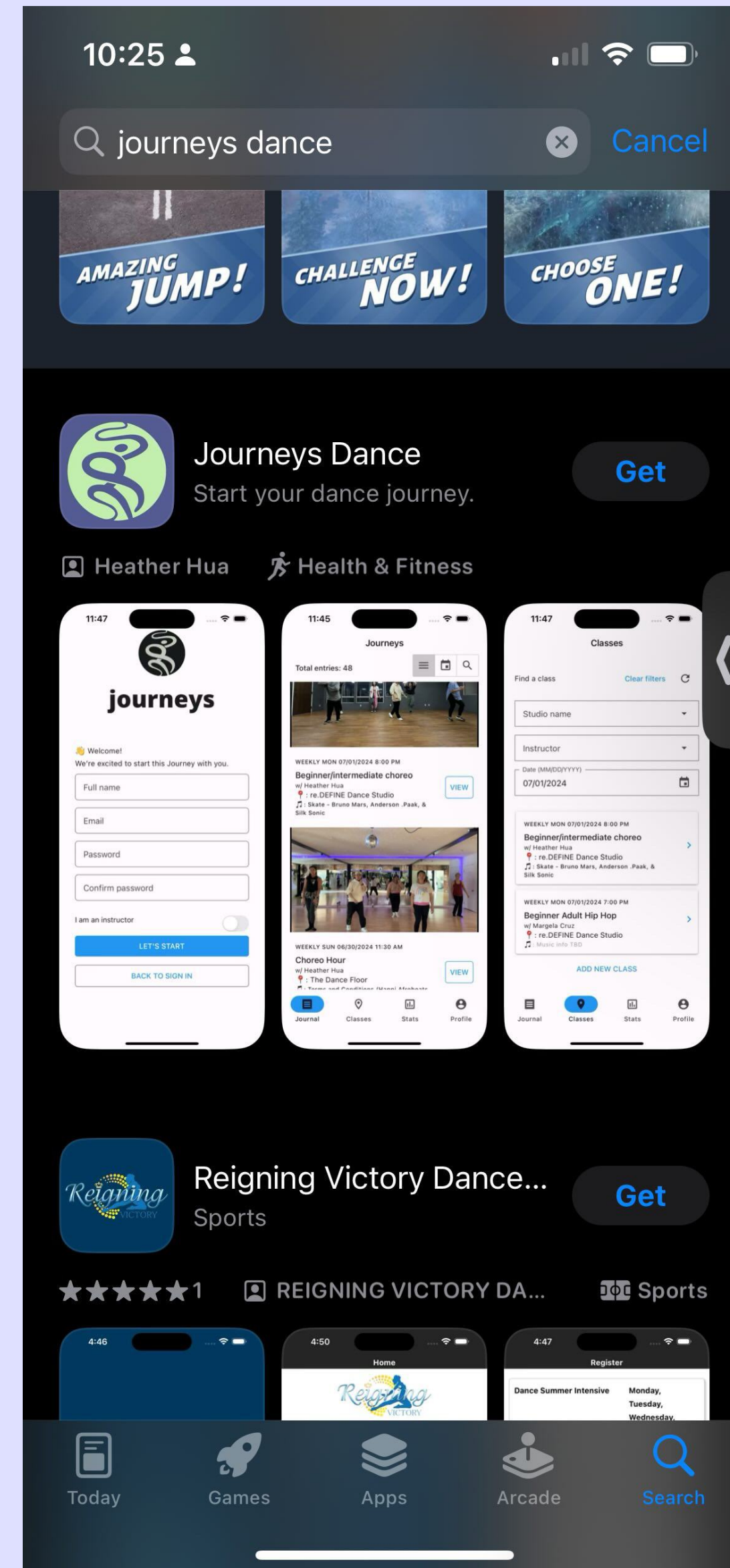
Within the next 3 months, we saw more dancers joining us on the platform.
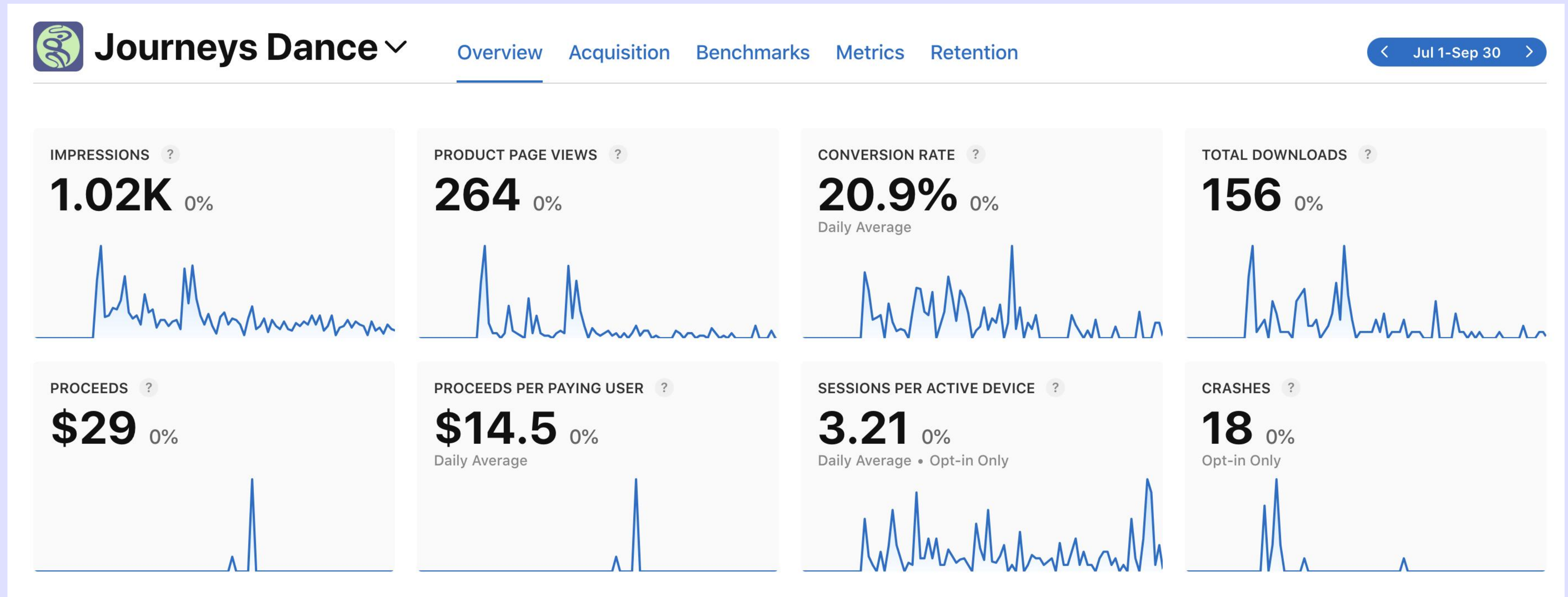
At this point, the user can:

Video sharing
✅ **Create a class event**
✅ **Upload videos to a class event**
✅ **Download videos from a class event**

Note taking
✅ **Create a personal journal entry from a class event**

Data from our first month was not positive.

53% (249/465) of entries have no videos, notes, future improvements, or wins.

41/205 (20%) of entries with videos have no notes.

154/341 (45%) of class videos exist only on the class, haven't been added to any entries.

We came up with a few hypotheses as to why we're seeing this data.

1. It's not obvious what our app does — many people think it's a tool for class signup and users aren't sure what they're supposed to do in the app.
2. People just want to log classes to have history
3. Adding a video to entry is not intuitive
4. There wasn't any motivation to add notes, so users did not bother filling them out
5. Writing takes too much time
6. The metrics we listed were not the metrics that people wanted to track
7. Our current demographic was too casual, doing it "for fun" and not actively seeking growth

We interviewed 5 professional dancers to figure out their goals, metrics if any, and pain points.

Dancer Interviews

how often do you currently dance
- transitioning into taking more classes, in between jobs rn so not dancing as much & figuring out her schedule with the life change
- works (strips) every week, mostly does independent practice, has a mentor she takes privates with
- dancing is mostly for work (gogo gigs) rn (2x a month) classes 1x month really varies
- she used to practice gogo daily most of her practice is independent classes are expensive so she doesn't go often these days
- classes 3-4x a week salsa social 1-2x week tries to dance everyday, even if independently

What are your current dance goals?
- get an agent & get booked
- get on another NBA team
- get booked for more commercial/public/gogo/ industry work (non-stripper work)
- get booked more (gogo)
- expand her "library" of go to movements for gogo
- perform in the show she's producing as a last hurrah for her dance career
- feel confident enough to put a dance video on her ig grid, not just stories
- do well on her "team" (performance workshop style)
- get more comfortable with salsa for her bday for a bday social in December
- take more intermediate hip hop classes
- generally feel more confident as a dancer

how do you know if you're getting better?
- made it further in the miami heat audition
- other ppl tell her that she's getting better more frequently
- dancing with ppl better than her & getting closer to their level
- for gogo, improvement in endurance (more endurance + look better.
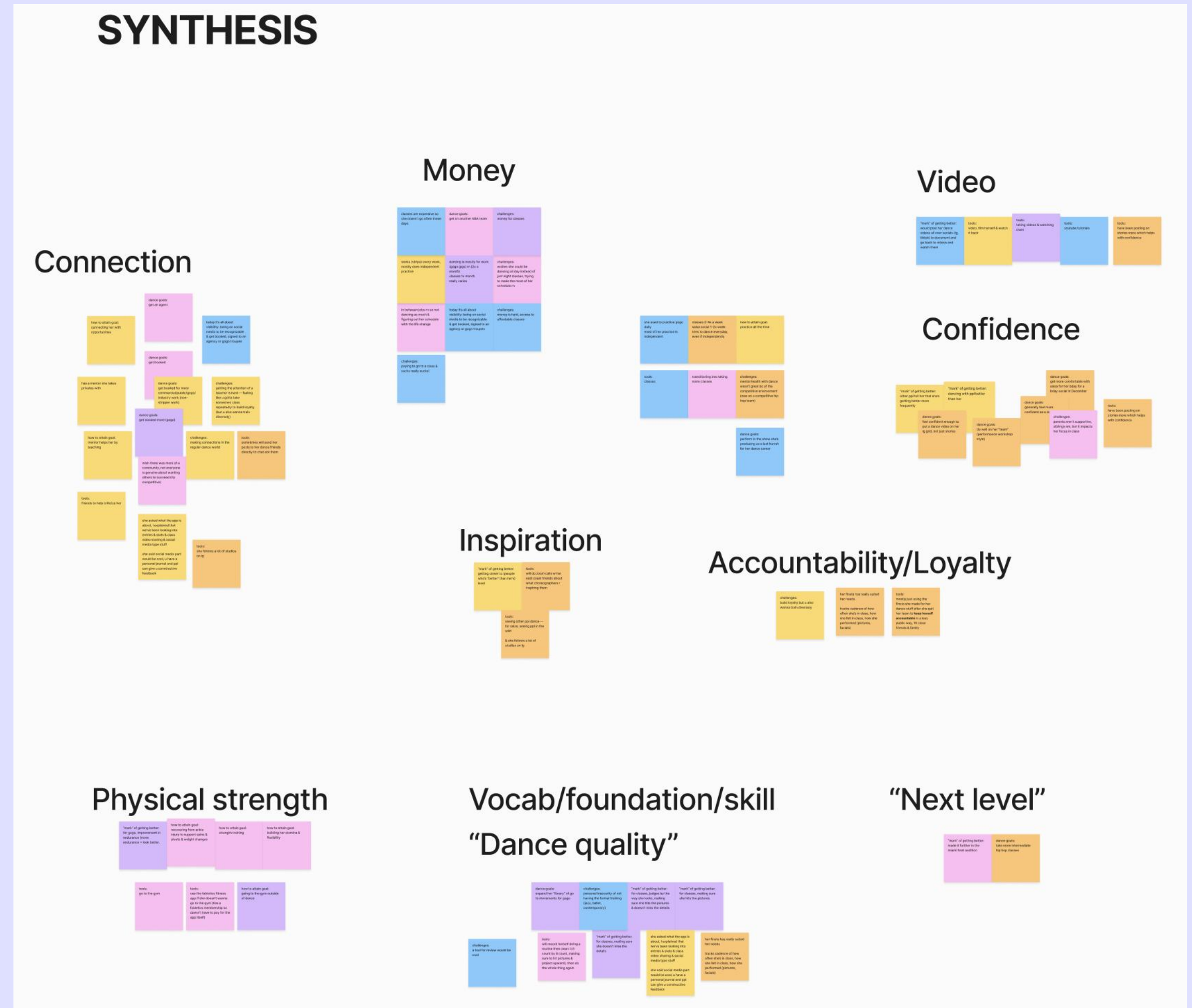- for classes, judges by the way she looks, making sure she hits the pictures & doesn't miss the details
- would post her dance videos all over socials (ig, tiktok) to document and go back to videos and watch them

how are you working towards your goals?
- strength training, recovering from ankle injury to support spins & pivots & weight changes
- building her stamina & flexibility
- mentor helps her by teaching + connecting her with opportunities
- practice all the time
- going to the gym outside of dance

what tools & resources do you use to support your practice & goals?
- use the fabletics fitness app if she doesn't wanna go to the gym (has a fabletics membership so doesn't have to pay for the app itself)
- will record herself doing a routine then clean it 8 count by 8 count, making sure to hit pictures & project upward), then do the whole thing again
- video, film herself & watch it back
- friends to help criticize her
- taking videos & watching them
- youtube tutorials & classes
- have been posting on stories more which helps with confidence
- mostly just using the firsta she made for her dance stuff after she quit her team to keep herself accountable in a less public way, 10 close friends & family
- sometimes she will send her posts to her dance friends directly to chat abt them
- will do zoom calls w her east coast friends about what choreographers / inspiring them
- seeing other ppl dance -- for salsa, seeing ppl in the wild & she follows a lot of studios on ig

challenges faced in your dance career?
- wishes she could be dancing all day instead of just right classes, trying to make the most of her schedule rn
- parents aren't supportive, siblings are, but it impacts her focus in class
- making connections in the regular dance world
- getting the attention of a teacher is hard -- feeling like u gotta take someones class repeatedly to build loyalty (but u also wanna train diversely)
- money for classes
- personal insecurity of not having the formal training
- money is hard, access to affordable classes paying to go to a class & sucks really sucks! a tool for review would be cool
- mental health with dance wasn't great bc of the competitive environment (was on a competitive hip hop team)

other thoughts?
- wish there was more of a community, not everyone is genuine about wanting others to succeed (rly competitive)
- she asked what the app is about, i explained that we've been looking into entries & stats & class video sharing & social media type stuff
- she said social media part would be cool, u have a personal journal and ppl can give u constructive feedback
- today it's all about visibility: being on social media to be recognizable & get booked, signed to an agency or gogo troupes
- her firsta has really suited her needs
- tracks cadence of how often she's in class, how she felt in class, how she performed (pictures, facials)

We interviewed 5 professional dancers to figure out their goals, metrics if any, and pain points.

Learnings:

1. Money was a very big pain point
2. There was a big want for genuine connection

Do we pivot? Or do we build not for profitability?

We debated on some other business ideas:
- Studio management app would help with populating the classes page
- Financial app would help dancers be more sustainable
- Expand out of dance community to include other hobbies like yoga, pilates, or martial arts

After interviewing 2 studios who use different management systems, we realized that we would need to create custom solutions for each studio, and we would need a very strong selling point to convince studios to convert from their current systems.

While this isn't impossible, our team wanted to build more B2C products than B2B for now, so we eventually decided to focus on building for the community instead of forcing profitability. This took a huge burden off of our shoulders, and we restarted the project with a new focus: ease of use.

We decided to start afresh. With more knowledge about our users and their wants, we restarted the project with a design sprint.

Solution sketch prompt: How can users give and get feedback, and visualize growth and progress?
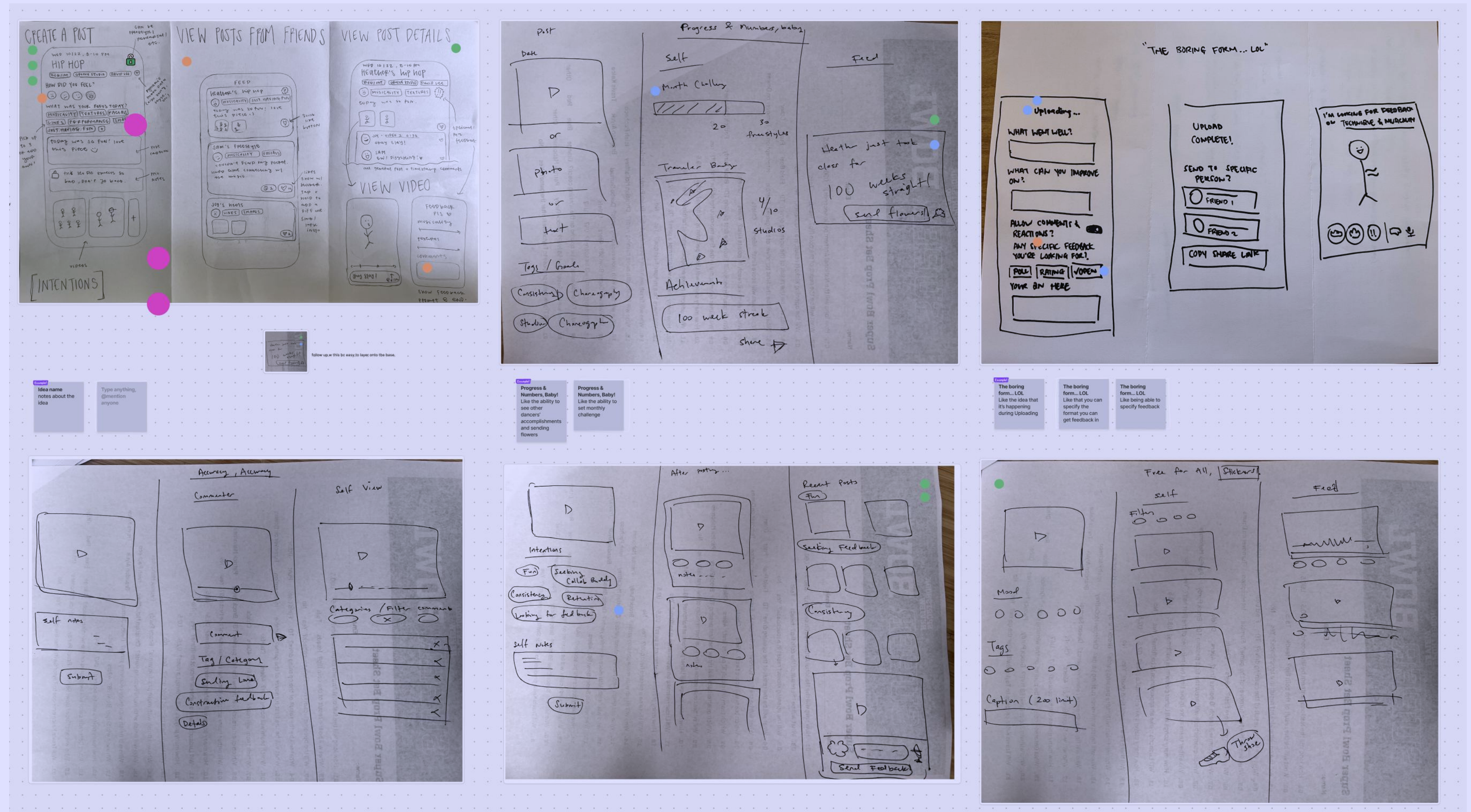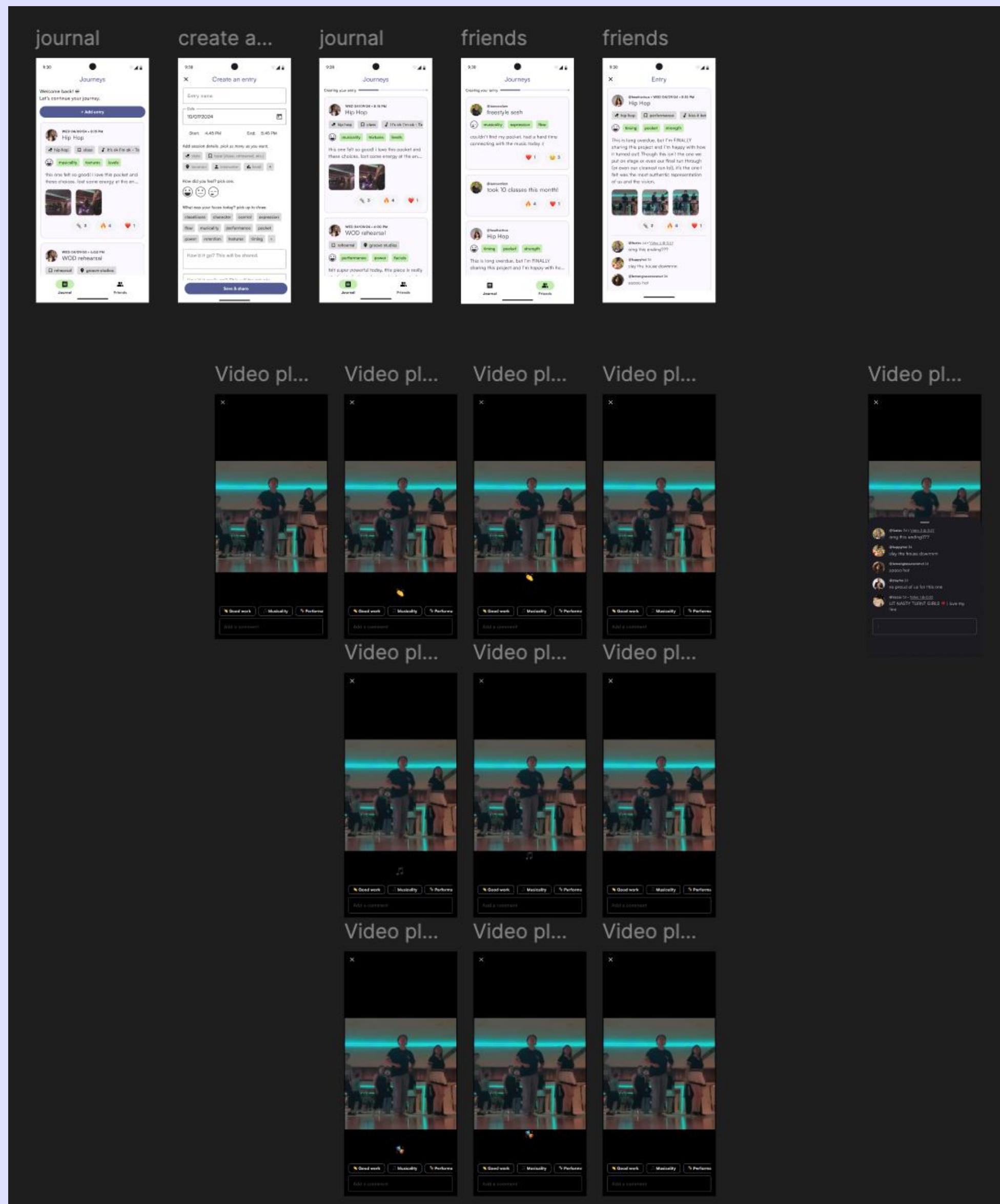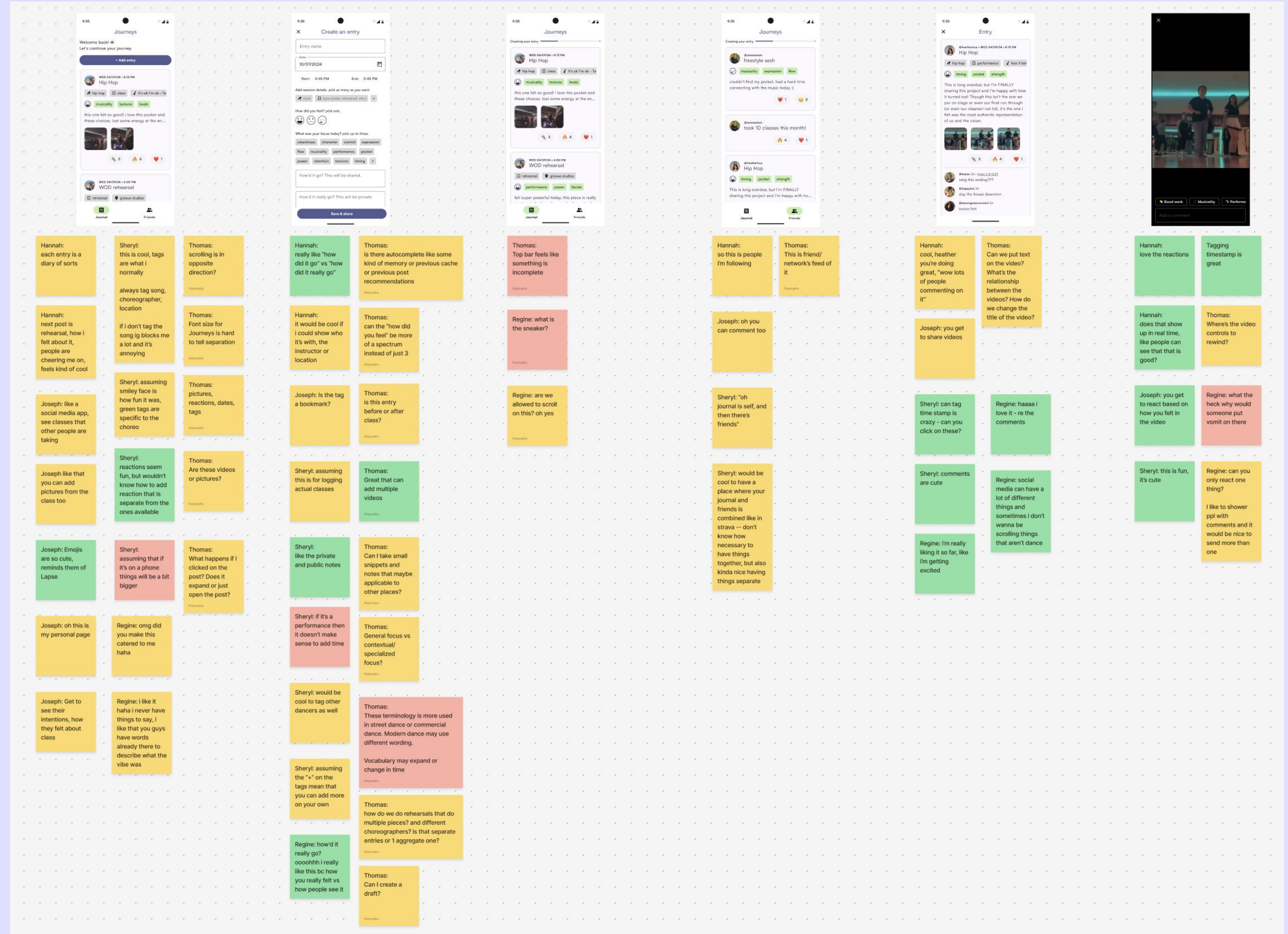
We built a high fidelity prototype on Figma to bring to 5 dancers that we've never talked to before.

Link to prototype

Our interviewees quickly grasp what the app was about, and went through the prototype with minimal issues.

By removing the complex concept of "class events," the user flow is now a lot more familiar to users and requires less steps.

Original flow:
1. Find or create a class event
2. Upload a video
3. Check in to event
4. Review videos to add to entry
5. Add notes and reflections

New flow:
1. Create an entry
2. Add notes and reflections
3. Add videos

Users won't be able to propagate videos through the app, but they will be able to give and get feedback more easily, and from there feel more connected to their community.

We are currently rebuilding the app, hoping to relaunch on Apple App Store in time for New Year Resolutions.

Key Outcomes

- Shipped a productivity app on Apple's App Store within 4 months
- Dancers now have an app for them to track growth however that means to them

What I learned

- Sometimes it is necessary to take a few steps back to reassess before moving forward.
- Active communication is key to building a healthy team, create boundaries when necessary.
- Don't reinvent the wheel, follow interaction patterns of what users already use in their daily lives.

Things I wish I did differently

- Being more proactive to have people in the community try the app out, even if it's just on my device
- Finding and communicating the balance between "good enough" and "production ready"
- Advocating for more research being done earlier