

# Dance-Off

Brings Students  
& Community Together

On Thursday, February 4, students from six elementary schools in **Chicago's Back of the Yards** neighborhood paired up and "Danced-Off", culminating a four-month, after-school program called "**Dancing with Class™**".

02.09.10

Since October, the Chicago social dance studio **May I Have This Dance®** has provided weekly lessons at all six elementary schools. Then the students came together for a final Dance-Off, in which they partnered with both their classmates AND with dancers from the other schools.

*"We have a fundamental belief in the power of social dance to build and strengthen communities, to bring people of all socio-economic backgrounds together, to do something that brings joy and strengthens respect for self and others,"* said Margot Toppen from **May I Have This Dance®**.

This is the fourth year that the studio has taught "Dancing with Class™", but this year, **the studio also added an apprenticeship program.** **May I Have This Dance®** trained 15 juniors and seniors from Lindblom High School to assist with the elementary school dance classes; and the classes are also having a positive impact on them.

"I initially participated in the program because it was a part of a grade for my class, but as time went on, **I realized that I was not just doing this for a grade,**" said Jahliel, a senior at Lindblom High School and one of the apprentices. **"I enjoy working with children and impacting their lives in a positive way.** These students are Latino, and I am African American. The cultural gap between our races is becoming extremely large. Not only do I use this opportunity to be a positive influence to the youth, but **I help bridge the gap, showing that we are all equal."**

The Dance-off took place at Chicago's Lindblom High School and involved the following elementary schools: **Chavez, Daley, Hedges, Lara, Namaste, and Seward.**

For more info on the program: visit [www.dancingwithclass.com](http://www.dancingwithclass.com)

