

DANCING WITH CLASS™—LET'S MOVE IN SCHOOL!

Strengthen Your Community Through the Joy of Dance

By Margot Toppen

May I Have This Dance

In recent years, dance has made an exciting and profound impact in urban schools with programs that use dance as a medium to build teamwork and communication skills as well as personal character and self-esteem. Now, with First Lady Michelle Obama leading the "Let's Move in School" campaign with superstar help from Beyonce, there is even more reason to get your community excited about dance.

As the leading provider of school-based dance programs for Illinois community schools, the [Dancing with Class](#) division of May I Have This Dance serves more than 70 schools each year. The company's large and diverse staff of professional instructors has been trained to use the Dancing with Class curriculum to deliver programs of a consistently high quality.



The Dancing with Class Core Program uses dance steps from various styles of ballroom, Latin, and swing dance to engage students in a character-building program that culminates with an exciting team Dance-Off.

"At Chase Elementary, this program has helped to create a sense of unity. Our parent group has rallied around this program and enthusiastically helped with

costumes and other aspects, and our administration actively supports the program," said Elizabeth Lesinski, Community School Manager, Children's Home and Aid.

In addition, the organization's Dance Around the World curriculum encompasses dances from every continent, providing opportunities for students to build respect for other cultures while getting exercise and having fun. One component of this program is a hip-hop unit that explores hip-hop's regional styles and cultural significance within the United States.

"The Dance Around the World program was great for my students," said Chris Alexander, Family Focus-21st CCLC Program Coordinator at Melody Elementary. "This program taught my students discipline and about different cultures. The excitement my students showed on the days for this class was unbelievable."

All Dancing with Class curriculum and program models can be adapted to age levels spanning Grades K-12, and, when possible, the organization emphasizes community involvement through parent participation. Each Dancing with Class program is customized to the specific school site, with flexible scheduling options.

Children's Home and Aid Community School Manager Ronald Wells particularly appreciated the professionalism and flexibility provided, saying, "The May I Have This Dance teachers were cooperative and professional. In preparation for our showcase, they went above and beyond the call of duty."

"We realize that one-size-fits-all does not apply when it comes to school programming needs. We provide high-quality instructors, classroom-tested curriculum, and total flexibility to set up a program in a way that meets the distinct needs of each school we work with."

Margot Toppen
Director, Dancing with Class

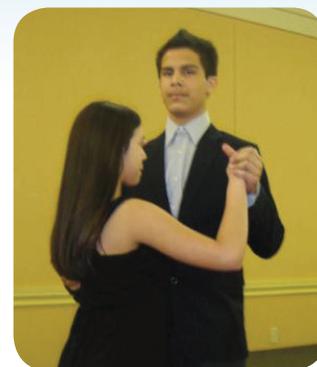
Programs are designed to help teachers achieve state learning goals in the areas of social science, physical development and health, fine arts, and foreign language as well as social emotional learning. As an ISBE-authorized professional development provider, May I Have This Dance also offers teacher training and team-building workshops for community schools and their partner organizations.

Teachers whose students are involved in the program often remark on how successfully special needs children are able to participate with peers and how the program improves overall classroom behavior for all students.

“The three autistic boys did a really good job in the dance class” said Tiffani Thomforde, a music teacher at Farnsworth Elementary. “One boy’s mom told me that he came home and showed her how to turn. For a boy who never talks about his day at school, this is a huge step!”

Children who take part in Dancing with Class programs, even if reluctant at first, are transformed by the time the program ends. After gaining exposure to a variety of dance styles, students are able to discover their own “favorite flavor”—and they often are surprised by just how good it tastes!

For more information about Dancing with Class programs, visit www.dancingwithclass.com or call 773-635-3000.



Overcoming Shyness: On the Dance Floor and Off

Last December, young Roberto was in tears the day before the Dancing with Class afterschool club was to give its debut performance at a school assembly. While he had been doing fine in the dance classes, he was just too shy to get up in front of the whole school and perform. He sat out that morning and watched while the rest of the school cheered for his clubmates as they performed their swing, tango, and merengue routines.

Four months later, the dance club was preparing for a Dancing with Class competition against a neighboring school. The dance instructor took Roberto aside and asked him if he would like to perform. Without hesitation, Roberto said yes. On the day of the event, Roberto showed up dressed to the nines and ready to go. On the dance floor, he smiled at his partner and nailed the swing dance routine with confidence. He and his partner made it into the final round and walked out that afternoon with awards in hand and grins on their faces. They hadn't finished in first place, but they most certainly had *won*.