

# Colors of Fun

By Sydney Schoeberle, Heart of Dance

Photos by C.J. Hurst



An empty ballroom can be a daunting place – a vast space, with room for hundreds of spectators to watch every move. But for students in Dancing Classrooms, it’s a space filled with anticipation, and pride for all they have learned over just one semester. Plus, dancing’s just plain fun!

At the Colors of the Rainbow Team Match on May 19, students shared the joy of partner dance with friends, family, and even strangers. Heart of Dance’s spring partner schools also had the opportunity to see that they are part of a larger dancing community. Dressed to the nines and adorned with their team colors, ladies and gentlemen showcased respect for their teammates, and competitors, throughout the day.

“Being here today is a big privilege,” said one student in anticipation of the Team Match. “I’ve been training a lot in my classroom, and just being here to dance and show what we’ve learned over the 10 weeks of Dancing Classrooms is just going to be really fun.”

Local nonprofit Heart of Dance brings the physical, mental, and emotional benefits of partner dance to fifth and eighth graders like this in schools across Minnesota through the global program, Dancing Classrooms. Dancing Classrooms is an in-school residency that teaches partner dance, and crucial life skills like confidence, cultural awareness, and conflict resolution. In classrooms of fifth and eighth graders, Dancing Classrooms engages students with these concepts at an age proven to make the greatest impact.

Purpose, a fifth grader from Meadowbrook Elementary School, was hesitant to start dancing at first. However, no one could tell that by her confidence on the dance floor during the Team Match. By the end of the residency, she could demo each dance perfectly – with a smile on her face of course. On the day of the Team Match, her parents excitedly danced together on the sidelines as they watched her perform.

“Thank you for this dance competition,” said one dancer’s parent. “It gives kids a chance to meet other kids and learn dances of other cultures.”

Hundreds came out to the InterContinental St. Paul Riverfront Hotel to cheer on their favorite fifth and eighth grade teams from 18 Twin Cities and Rochester schools. From teamwork in the Tango, to respect in the Rumba, it was easy to see how students



learned so much more than dance steps over just 10 short weeks.

Heart of Dance is so grateful to members of the USA Dance Minnesota Chapter who have offered their support and time for these students over the years, including Chapter President Joyce Thompson, who also serves as Chair of the Heart of Dance Volunteer Engagement Committee and as a Classroom Assistant.

Heart of Dance always needs energized Teaching Artists and volunteers! Professional ballroom dancers and high-level amateurs are welcome to visit our classrooms and demonstrate their skills as Classroom Dance Buddies. If you want to bring this experience to a child or school you love, Heart of Dance is recruiting classrooms for the 2019-2020 academic year. Visit [www.heartofdancemn.org](http://www.heartofdancemn.org) to learn more about these opportunities.



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