



Dancing Classrooms Meets Language Immersion

By Sydney Schoeberle

“Shake your buttons!”

“To the racetrack!”

“Escort position!”

That’s what you’ll hear in any Dancing Classrooms lesson. But at Windom Dual Immersion School, you’ll hear “póngale onda!” and at L’Étoile du Nord French Immersion School, “changer de partenaire!”

Local nonprofit Heart of Dance brings the physical, mental, and emotional benefits of partner dance to fifth and eighth graders in schools across Minnesota through the global Dancing Classrooms residency. Cross-cultural competence is already engrained in Dancing Classrooms, as students learn the native country and culture of each dance. But this semester, for the first

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BALLROOM DANCE *Boutique* Day

SATURDAY, MAY 18
11:00AM-2:00PM
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Complimentary hors d'oeuvres and beverages sponsored by Cinema Ballroom

GENERAL ADMISSION IS FREE
BALLROOM ESTHETIC SEMINAR IS \$125

RSVP VIA FACEBOOK AT
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OR BY SENDING E-MAIL TO RSVP@BALLROOMDANCEFAIR.COM

MAKEUP SEMINAR IS FIRST COME FIRST SERVED.
RSVP NOW. LIMITED SPACE IS AVAILABLE!

PERFORMING IN
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COMPETITION
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11:30AM-12:30PM
CREATING YOUR
BALLROOM DANCE ESTHETIC
MEN'S SEMINAR

SUIT FITTING, MEN'S ATTIRE HEMMING AND BUTTON REPAIR
BASICS, MEN'S DANCE MAKE-UP APPLICATION.
COST INCLUDES SEMINAR, CUSTOM MEASUREMENT SHEET,
SEWING KIT AND MEN'S MAKEUP KIT.

WOMEN'S SEMINAR

BALLROOM HAIR AND MAKEUP BASICS.
LEARN A SIMPLE VERSATILE HAIR
STYLE AND MAKEUP
APPLICATION FOR YOUR NEXT
SHOW OR COMPETITION.
DRESS CONSULTATION.
COST INCLUDES SEMINAR,
WOMEN'S MAKEUP KIT WITH
MAKEUP BAG AND BRUSHES.

1:00PM-1:30PM
MEN'S AND WOMEN'S
DANCEWEAR FASHION SHOW

SPONSORED BY DANCE AMERICA,
DORE DESIGNS AND CINEMA BALLROOM

1:30PM-1:45PM
RAFFLE DRAWING

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time, this proven Social Emotional Learning curriculum is being taught in language immersion classrooms in French (at L'Étoile du Nord) and Spanish (at Windom).

According to the Center for Applied Linguistics, language immersion programs lead to high functional proficiency in a second language, enhanced knowledge of language in general, and a greater understanding and respect for other languages and cultures.

“Speaking two languages opens the world up for students,” says Windom Principal Jim Clark. “By doing Dancing Classrooms in Spanish, it just helps students to see once again how so many things are and can be done in Spanish.”

“We’re meeting the curriculum standards for any school and helping teach social and emotional skills in the context of dance,” says L'Étoile du Nord Teaching Artist Shannon Butler. “But these classes fill an even more specific role so that students can get the benefits of the program, without losing the benefit of an immersion school.”

This adapted residency poses a fun challenge for both students and teachers. For Teaching Artist Mariana Rocio Petersen, who was born and raised in Argentina, teaching Dancing Classrooms in Spanish makes learning Latin dances like the Tango and Merengue a more immersive experience for her students.

“I feel like I can connect on a different level with the kids by being bilingual and I think the class is more fun,” says Peterson. “I don’t think it’s that much different when it comes to the dancing, but I think the extra challenge of having to switch back and forth from one language to another while dancing is an extra mental challenge for them and me.”



Photos submitted by Heart of Dance

“Having the residency in French enhances our immersion program because students have the chance to use the target language in a different setting,” says Chrystel Klein, fifth grade teacher at L'Étoile du Nord. “Dancing Classrooms provides an enrichment of vocabulary that we don’t use on an everyday basis.”

Translating the Dancing Classrooms curriculum into Spanish and French has taken some extra lesson planning. Certain chants when translated add extra syllables, and Teaching Artists need to be mindful of maintaining the cadence of the dances. According to Butler, some standard Dancing Classrooms phrases simply lack a cultural equivalent when translated, which she realized when asking her students to stack their pancakes, or hands, on top of one another.

“Pancakes don’t exist in French. They say pancakes if they’re talking about American pancakes and of course the students

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know what they are, but to find a true French equivalent used in the same way is tricky. People have said, 'oh it's crêpes,' but you don't stack crêpes like you would stack pancakes. Crêpes are served folded or rolled, so to say stack your hands like crêpes makes no sense and forms a false analogy."

It is easy to see how basic phrases like these might pose some amusing challenges along the way.

Pancakes aside, in any setting Dancing Classrooms provides a platform for students of all backgrounds to come together and connect. By teaching Dancing Classrooms in Spanish at Windom, the language barrier is removed even further for students who are not native English speakers.

"We typically have a student or two who is new to the country," says Kathryn Morris, fifth grade teacher at Windom. "Teaching this program in Spanish has allowed them to not only participate, but to actually comprehend what is happening during each lesson and to interact with the instructor on several levels."

Like any Dancing Classrooms residency, the outcomes of this program have been transformative, as students achieve personal growth in confidence, kindness, and cross-cultural competence.

"Dancing Classrooms has always had a positive impact on my students, and I am thankful for that," says Morris. "This year, in general, I have seen a sense of calmness. Although there are some who are still not completely comfortable with dancing, they have become more comfortable with their classmates and that carries into areas beyond our dance lessons."

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