

DANCING CLASSROOMS

TEACHING CHILDREN TO TAKE A BOW



AMERICAN BALLROOM THEATER'S
DANCING CLASSROOMS
ARTS IN EDUCATION BALLROOM DANCE PROGRAM

For program information contact:
Pierre Dulaine, Director
Yvonne Marceau, Associate Director
(212) 244-9442
www.dancingclassrooms.com

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Dancing Classrooms program was launched in 1994 as a not-for-profit project of the American Ballroom Theater Company (ABrT). It is an arts-in-education program teaching ballroom dance to the upper elementary, junior high and high school students of participating schools. As seen in the documentary film *Mad Hot Ballroom*, *Dancing Classrooms* is an in-school residency for every child, regardless of background or experience.

While *Dancing Classrooms* has been hailed as an effective program for teaching social dance, the program provides many other benefits. *Dancing Classrooms* is about creating an atmosphere which allows students who are typically introverted and reserved, to step out and shine. It focuses physical energies and increases health through the joy of movement. It builds self-esteem and interactive social skills as it improves confidence and children's ability to relate to others.

"Dancing is about connections ... to our friends, to our families, to our neighbors. It is one of the most expressive ways we celebrate and communicate our cultures and communities. With Dancing Classrooms, we are able to reach children in existing classroom settings and address fundamental issues of mutual respect and self-esteem – issues that social dance puts into practice. We hope to inspire children through dance to do well, to respect one another, to be proud. This program is about more than dance, it is about teaching children to take a bow."

- Pierre Dulaine & Yvonne Marceau

Mission

Our mission is to build social awareness, confidence and self-esteem in children through the practice of social dance. Through standards based, in-school residencies, we use the vocabulary of ballroom dance to cultivate the positive feelings that are inherent in every child. The maturity necessary to dance together fosters respect, team work, confidence, a sense of joy and accomplishment, that we hope to bring to every child. Ballroom dance is the medium we use to nurture these qualities.

History

Dancing Classrooms was launched in 1994 by world-renowned ballroom dancers Pierre Dulaine and Yvonne Marceau. The program is a not-for-profit project of the American Ballroom Theater Company, designed to bring social awareness, confidence and self esteem to children. Since its inception, *Dancing Classrooms* has expanded from one 5th grade class of 30 students, to over 18,000 students in the New York City area. We now employ over 65 instructors, teach over 650 courses, and participate in approximately 200 New York City schools. The program is also currently active in several U.S. cities and is expanding nationwide. *Dancing Classrooms* is a trademarked entity. For further information about bringing the program to your community, please visit the "How To Get Involved" section of our website.



Dancing Classrooms Residency - Basic Skills Rubric

- Keeping rhythm
- Maintaining dance frame
- Posture
- Partner recognition
- Respect for yourself and others

Dancing Classrooms Teaching Artist Expectations

- Modeling appropriate behavior of professionalism, courtesy and consideration.
- Teaching artists are expected to attend all meetings, training sessions, special events, culminating events and competitions.
- Teaching artists will model elegant, professional appearance while in the Dancing Classrooms residency.
- Ladies wear a dress or a skirt and blouse.
- Men wear slacks and dress shirt with tie.

Managing the "Dancing" Classroom - Teaching Strategies & Wisdom

- Visualize a Perfect Class
- Start them with conviction
- Use vocal variety and energy
- Excite Participation
- Motivate
- Have Fun
- Eye contact
- Appropriate Voice
- Positive Atmosphere
- Enthusiasm
- Respect
- Use the pronoun 'We' to establish a team feeling.
- Face the children when speaking to them

Dancing Classrooms - Evaluation and Assessment

In 2005, American Ballroom Theater engaged Philliber Research Associates to conduct a one-year evaluation of the *Dancing Classrooms* program. The purpose of this evaluation was to measure and document changes in: student skills, attitudes, behavior, social skills, self confidence, cultural awareness, levels of physical activity, dance and coordination.

Overall, respondents (teachers, parents/guardians, Teaching Artists and students) agreed that the program helped students overcome social anxieties, including interacting with members of the opposite sex and overcoming shyness.

- Respondents also agreed that program participation helped increase etiquette (or good manners), respect for others, and social skills (like politeness, teamwork and cooperation).
- They agreed that *Dancing Classrooms* helped increase student confidence and self esteem.
- The majority of respondents agreed that *Dancing Classrooms* helped increase student awareness of other cultures and/or their pride in their own cultural heritage.



The following quotes help summarize the benefits of the *Dancing Classrooms* program.

From classroom teachers:

- *As a fifth grade teacher, one of my top priorities is to teach my students that respecting yourself comes first in order to respect others. From there, accomplishment is measured only in effort. The ballroom dance program has been like a springboard for my students to achieve that goal. It centers around self-respect, focus, discipline, commitment and, most importantly, an enthusiasm for achievement that is rarely seen in today's city schools with the fear and pressure on such young students to measure up for the next "high-stakes" test.*
- *For children who are not academically gifted, this program gave them a chance to shine.*
- *The quieter children seem more open and more verbal. The students, overall, seem to take more risk.*

From parents:

- *I was surprised how mature [my son acted during the performance] and how respectful he was with the female partners.*
- *I think my daughter now recognizes that if she wants to do something, she can.*
- *Dancing made [my son] feel accomplished and raised his self esteem.*

From Teaching Artists:

- *[Ballroom dancing] was a skill most students did not know they would be good at – especially those who did not excel academically.*
- *A few students who did not normally "stand out" in class became very confident and began to open up with their dancing. Some of them who rarely got noticed because they don't misbehave finally received well-deserved attention for their quiet, subtle rise to being skilled dancers; they began to "stick out" in class as some of the best dancers. I feel like their hard work finally got appreciated without them having to call attention to themselves.*
- *My biggest success was getting the special education kids to learn quickly enough to dance with the other classes. In another school, I saw a tough boy who was suspended for the first few weeks of my class for fighting, who I never thought would like to dance, come to the [American Ballroom Theater] scholarship program.*

And finally, from the students themselves:

- *I learned that to work in a team, I have to work with other people and I can't take the lead 100%.*
- *I learned not to be mean or put somebody down about how they dance.*
- *I feel more confident because I know that I can dance.*
- *It helped me feel more confident to dance and work with boys.*
- *I feel that I don't have to be so shy around other people.*
- *I felt like I can express my feelings in the dances.*
- *I felt that I didn't need to be afraid, just needed to be myself.*