



Students from Benjamin E. Mays IB World School swinging at recess:  
<http://www.heartofdancemn.org/BenjaminEMaysstudents>



Students from Four Season A+ Elementary School and Friendship Academy of the Arts performing for the first time.

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**DANCING CLASSROOMS 5<sup>TH</sup> GRADERS READY FOR INAUGURAL ALL-SCHOOL TEAM MATCH!**

**--Students compete before professional ballroom judges December 13 3-5 p.m., St. Paul**

About 110 fifth-graders representing eleven classrooms in four Twin Cities elementary schools are polishing their tango, waltz, merengue, swing (video above!) and other dances as they prepare for the first-of-its-kind Dancing Classrooms "Colors of the Rainbow Team Match" in Minnesota, the same as featured in the award-winning documentary *Mad Hot Ballroom*.

Last week, over 250 fifth graders demonstrated their new partner dance skills and their related curriculum projects to their families and school community at four Twin Cities school Culminating Events, to the delight of parents and educators. "More confident. More respectful. Excited and positive," wrote parents on their evaluations describing their child's behavior during Dancing Classrooms. "I had tears in my eyes," said one principal.

It all leads to the exciting all-school inaugural **Colors of the Rainbow Team Match December 13 at 3:00 p.m. at Dancers Studio, 415 Pascal Street North, St. Paul** where couples from each classroom will compete in at least six dances. Five professional ballroom dance judges will judge the event, sponsored by University of Minnesota Ballroom Dance Club and U Partner Dance. Winning teams will receive trophies, and every participating student will receive a medal. The event is free to the public.

Participating schools include Friendship Academy of the Arts, Minneapolis; Athlos Leadership Academy, Brooklyn Park; Four Seasons A+ Elementary and Benjamin E. Mays IB World School, St. Paul.

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Heart of Dance, the Minnesota nonprofit co-founded by former state senator Ember Reichgott Junge and dance professional Andrea Mirenda, launched Dancing Classrooms in Minnesota this fall as the 30<sup>th</sup> global program site with specially-trained Teaching Artists and curriculum that integrates with other class subjects. Dancing Classrooms has a twenty-year history of helping students overcome social anxieties, develop gender respect, and increase social skills, self-confidence, and awareness of other cultures, all while engaging in physical activity.

Due to demand, Heart of Dance will expand Dancing Classrooms to 6-8 schools for spring semester, and expects to double the number of classrooms for school year 2016-17. There is still room for a few classrooms for spring.

“We are bringing partner dance to young people who may never have the opportunity to experience it,” said Reichgott Junge, Heart of Dance Co-founder. “All children are included in each classroom. They learn so much more than dance. These young people learn how to respect others—and themselves.”

“When we start, these 10-11 year olds step completely outside their comfort zone, do something unknown and scary, and are asked to....ewww, touch each other!” laughs Co-founder and Teaching Artist Mirenda. “It gets easier with each lesson, as the students are generally eager to learn. In just ten weeks, we’ve seen enormous growth in these youth as they gain confidence and pride and experience the joy of dance.”

There is no cost to students for the program. Costs are split evenly between schools and Heart of Dance. Dancing Classrooms is a proven Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) program which has served over 500,000 students in 24 states and five countries in its 20-year history. It is the first program launched by Heart of Dance, a 501c3 Minnesota nonprofit dedicated to transforming the social and self-perception of individuals by personally experiencing the physical, mental, and emotional benefits of social dance. Find recent Minnesota press coverage [here](#), and watch an [information video](#) and the “[Dancing Principals](#)” video from [Dancing Classrooms Global](#).

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Helpful Links:

Heart of Dance: <http://www.heartofdancemn.org/>

Heart of Dance News: <http://www.heartofdancemn.org/IntheNews>

Heart of Dance Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/Heart-of-Dance-Minnesota-782867128494925/>