



STEPPING UP FAMILY ENGAGEMENT THROUGH DANCE

"Life is short and there will always be dirty dishes, so let's dance."

— James Howe, *Totally Joe*

OVERVIEW

A list of ideas for promoting family involvement through the joy of dance.

PLANNING FOR IT

WHEN YOU MIGHT USE THIS PRACTICE

- During a family-engagement event, especially those with multicultural themes
- During a parent visitation day (host an in-class demonstration or dance-along)
- As part of an after-school/OST program

TIME REQUIRED

- ≤ 30 minutes

LEVEL

- PreK/Lower Elementary
- Upper Elementary

MATERIALS

- Identify dance styles and resources that excite your students and resonate with your community. EduMotion's free [Dance-of-the-Month lessons](#) can be a great starting place. Alternately, hip-hop, line dancing, and many styles of social dance all work well. You'll need a good playlist and a sound system that's ample for the size of the room and the number of people you plan to engage.

LEARNING OBJECTIVE

Participants will:

- Create an inter-generational bond through a shared movement activity
- Celebrate diversity and deepen connections

SEL COMPETENCIES

- Relationship Skills

HOW TO DO IT

REFLECTION BEFORE THE PRACTICE

How do you feel about dance? What do you think holds people back from dancing and what encourages them to dance?

INSTRUCTIONS

With the right approach, dance can contribute to a positive school culture both during the school day as well as during out-of-school time and family engagement events. Your school's parent organization can be an ideal catalyst to introduce a dance program that benefits the entire community.

One of the best ways to engage parents/caregivers through dance is to have students first become familiar with some favorite dances during school.

SHARE THE EXPERIENCE

Once you cultivate a love of dance among students, engaging parents and caregivers provides an immediate boost of joy to your overall school culture. Here are a few ideas of how to extend dance/movement activities enjoyed at school into family engagement activities:

- 1. Host a Family Dance-Along:** Students can invite their parents to a special dance night or host a dance activity station during a family engagement event such as a Multicultural/International Night, Health Fair, etc.
- 2. Schedule a Special Assembly program:** Classrooms can practice and present different dances in an assembly program. Most parents won't pass up an opportunity to see their child perform!
- 3. During a Parent Visitation Day:** Students can demonstrate a dance they have learned in class and then invite their parents to dance as their partners.
- 4. Start a Club:** Schools can host an after-school club or incorporate dance into an existing after-school program. Working with a community partner who specializes in dance is one common solution. Alternately, a program like

[EduMotion: SEL Journeys](#) offers online content that a parent volunteer or OST program leader can facilitate easily — no dance experience required!

With a little imagination, you can connect dance to all kinds of themed events you may host throughout the year.

REFLECTION AFTER THE PRACTICE

Who was most engaged in this activity? What made it more engaging for some than others? What could you do to build upon this experience next time?

THE RESEARCH BEHIND THE PRACTICE

EVIDENCE THAT IT WORKS

Numerous studies have found that students do better in school when their families are involved in their education. Indeed, students whose families participate in their education have higher levels of attendance, homework completion, [academic outcomes](#), [graduation rates](#), improved [attitudes toward school](#), higher self-esteem, and better behavior.

WHY DOES IT MATTER?

When it comes to promoting family and community engagement through culturally enriching experiences, dance is an under-utilized solution with the power to simultaneously engage students, parents/caregivers, and school staff in an activity that creates joy and unity.

And even though some parents/caregivers may be reluctant to participate in school activities, you'll be hard-pressed to find a parent or caregiver whose heart doesn't melt the day their own child invites them to dance as their partner.

SOURCE

[EduMotion: SEL Journeys](#) is a digital learning platform that integrates lessons on diversity, empathy and kindness with movement activities inspired by dances from around the world. EduMotion's evidence-based curriculum has been used for more than a decade as a strategy to help students develop peer relationships and explore what it means to be a global citizen. Educators can get started by signing up for free dance-of-the-month content and SEL resources on edumotion.com