



THE WORLD IS A DANCE

"World is a dance. Mindfulness is witnessing that dance."

— Amit Ray

OVERVIEW

Students try dance steps from another culture, and compare similarities and differences with movement that is more familiar.

PLANNING FOR IT

WHEN YOU MIGHT USE THIS PRACTICE

- As an active strategy to integrate the arts into social studies
- During morning meetings to open the day with a celebration of diversity
- To highlight multiculturalism around various holidays
- To end the week with a dose of movement and fun

TIME REQUIRED

- ≤ 30 minutes

LEVEL

- PreK/Lower Elementary
- Upper Elementary
- Middle School
- High School

MATERIALS

- A short dance video that shows a cultural dance in a way that is simple enough for students to try just by watching and following along. EduMotion's free [Dance-of-the-Month lessons](#) work well. For a contrast

dance, consider a video of a dance that will feel familiar to students – perhaps a current fad dance or a local style of hip-hop.

LEARNING OBJECTIVE

Students will:

- Understand that the world is full of different cultures and that it's important to celebrate and respect the things that make us different and unique
- Identify similarities and differences in various styles of dance

SEL COMPETENCIES

- Social Awareness

HOW TO DO IT

REFLECTION BEFORE THE PRACTICE

What experiences have you had in traveling and learning about other places and cultures? How has that enriched your life? You may also take a moment to familiarize yourself with the dance steps in the video.

INSTRUCTIONS

OPENING PROMPT

- Tell students:
 - *Appreciating culture means learning about people from different places and times and celebrating the things that make each culture different and unique.*

FOR DISCUSSION

- Ask students:
 - *What is something new you have tried that seemed strange or uncomfortable at first? Why is it important to learn about other cultures and try new things?*

TIME TO MOVE

- Tell students:
 - *Today we're going to take a look at a video of a cultural dance from another part of the world. We'll see if we can figure out some of the steps and then compare that to other types of dance that you may be more familiar with.*
- Watch the selected cultural dance video and invite students to stand up in their own personal space and follow along.

- Once they get comfortable, have them work with a partner or in trios to think about some popular ways of dancing with which they are more familiar.

SEL IN PRACTICE

- Have each group come up with at least two similarities and two differences between the cultural dance and a dance style they are more familiar with.
- Ask each trio/pair to share their ideas with an active demonstration.

FINAL STUDENT REFLECTION

- Discuss with students:
 - *What cultural dance did you try today?*
 - *What are some words you would use to describe this?*
 - *How did you feel about the dance when you first saw it?*
 - *How did you feel about it after you learned more about it and compared it to something more familiar?*

REFLECTION AFTER THE PRACTICE

Were students able to recognize similarities and differences in different styles of dance? Has the climate in the classroom shifted, and how? What could you do to build upon this experience next time?

THE RESEARCH BEHIND THE PRACTICE

EVIDENCE THAT IT WORKS

In a study of a diverse Kindergarten class, researchers found that learning cultural dance provided a means for students to become aware of similarities and differences, e.g., skin color and housing, between cultures, including their own. They also discussed the feelings expressed by dancers from another culture, and grew in their cultural understanding and respect.

WHY DOES IT MATTER?

The world is growing smaller and divisions between humans are disappearing rapidly. As a result, our schools, workforce, and communities are becoming more diverse, encouraging us to reach out to one another in friendship and understanding.

Studying and practicing dance forms that originate in other parts of the world can serve as a fun and motivating way for students to gain an understanding of the history, identities, and values of others. In addition, the universality of dance helps them to cultivate a positive view of humans, creating a world in which both our similarities and differences are valued.

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