



Multi-cultural beats

Embrace the diversity of music and dance in your classroom with a little inspiration from an exciting project in the North East

Programmes like *Strictly Come Dancing* and *The X Factor*, films such as *Step Up* and *High School Musical* and music television channels have all beamed diverse music and dance routines into our living rooms, onto the big screen and on the internet. Their popularity has helped bring dance and music to the masses. Projects, like *Essentially Dance*, which aims to introduce ballroom and Latin dance into PE lessons, have sprung up all around the country for children to join in with thanks, in part, to the success of such films and TV programmes.

But, if you're not part of a scheme or initiative, how can you bring all the excitement of dance and music into the classroom? By being adventurous! Introducing your class to new experiences will also help form links in your local community and create exciting learning opportunities across the curriculum. For inspiration, read on to find out how a week-long, multi-cultural event in Sunderland, which involved more than 1000 children, taught them about the lives of people from cultures across the globe through music and dance.



From cheerleading to Samba

Sunderland's first Multi-Cultural Week ran from 22 to 26 June '09 and was part of the city's Extended Services programme. The children were introduced to a huge variety of musical genres and pastimes including cheerleading, Bollywood, Irish, Maori Haka and Chinese, as well as African-Caribbean music and dance, and Samba drumming. To highlight what the children had learned, a unique closing event was held at the Stadium of Light in which each school showcased their new-found talents.

Children and young people from Academy 360, Highfield Community Primary School, St Anne's RC Primary School and South Hylton Primary School all participated. In this article, South Hylton Primary and Highfield Community Primary share their experiences of the event. Plus, we provide activity ideas to create your own dance-themed topic that has links around the world, and across the curriculum.



South Hylton Primary School chose to focus on the music and dance of the Maori tribe



South Hylton's Maori Haka dancers

Children from South Hylton Primary School learned about the ancient Maori tribe of New Zealand. They began by learning about the culture of the Maori people and how they lived their everyday lives, after settling in New Zealand sometime between AD800 and AD1300.

The children then learned how to perform the Haka, the traditional war dance of the Maori people. The dance, which has since been adopted by the New Zealand rugby team, the All Blacks, used to be performed on the battlefields during times of war as a challenge to the enemy.

The children also prepared their own costumes and learned

how to use black face paints to replicate the traditional tribal face markings. They wore black T-shirts and grass skirts made from shredded coloured paper, and made their own traditional Maori necklaces by threading uncooked pasta onto string.

Headteacher, Julie Cort, summarises: 'Children from Years 5 and 6 in South Hylton Primary School had a fantastic time performing the Haka for their friends and family... Their energetic routine, along with fierce facial expressions and chanting of 'Ka Mate, Ka Mate, Kora' impressed everyone watching and was a resounding success.'

Try it yourself

To celebrate the history of the Maori in your classroom, you could encourage children to do their own research into the range of indigenous dance forms of the tribe. Talk about how the ancient dance has evolved and is now used across the world during public events. Can the children describe any other traditional dances from around the world or from their own culture? If possible, invite a dance teacher from a local community group into school to demonstrate and teach the children a few moves. You could incorporate their routine into an assembly.

Find out more

- There is a quick guide to the Maori at www.newzealand.com/travel/about-nz/culture/culture-maori-culture.cfm that includes some Maori greetings.
- Read more about the All Blacks and the Haka at www.manaia.co.uk/info
- Click on the video clips at www.allblacks.com/index.cfm?layout=haka to see the All Blacks in action.
- There is an excellent selection of videos of children performing different dances from around the world at www.bbc.co.uk/cbeebies/boogiebeebies/world



The children created their own Maori costumes and painted their faces with traditional tribal face markings



Highfield's African-Caribbean musicians and dancers

Year 6 children from Highfield Community Primary School spent their Multi-Cultural Week exploring the musical pastimes from the Caribbean. After a week of learning African-Caribbean dancing with dance teacher, Garner Harris, the children performed their own version of the dance – including a free-style dance-off! To further complement the traditional dance routine that the children had learned, they also studied African-Caribbean drumming.

Bruce Nicholson, Community Manager, sums up the school's involvement: 'It was fantastic to see so many children experiencing and enjoying music and dance from so many cultures. The effect this has had on the children cannot be underestimated – it really does go a long way to developing community cohesion.'

Try it yourself

African-Caribbean music and dance is typically joyful and free spirited and so

it offers children an excellent way to express themselves. Throughout the Caribbean, music and dance go hand-in-hand. Dances are often named for the music or song that they resulted from.

There is a huge variety of Caribbean dance styles. These vary from island to island, and each island has its own particular rhythms. Performers often wear brightly coloured clothing to create a kaleidoscope of colour.

To continue the African-Caribbean theme in other lessons, encourage the children to find out about and learn how to cook traditional Caribbean food, or use Caribbean ingredients such as Fairtrade bananas to create their own dishes. They could also research the history of famous African-Caribbean people, from history or the present day, and complete a project on the extreme weather conditions, such as the hurricanes that the region faces.

Find out more

- www.bbc.co.uk/schools/gcsebitesize/music/worldmusic/africanandcaribbeanrev1.shtml is full of information on African and Caribbean music. It also includes sound clips.
- <http://caribbean-guide.info/arts.and.entertainment/dance> provides an overview of Caribbean dance. Follow the links to find out about traditional music, too.
- There are dozens of Caribbean recipe websites available – try www.bbc.co.uk/food/news_and_events/events_caribbeancouisine.shtml

Highfield Community Primary School explored African-Caribbean music and dance

