

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Ballroom Dancing At St. Croix Elementary Schools

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From East, Middle to West, 5th graders at Juanita Gardine, Ricardo Richards and Claude O. Markoe Elementary Schools are learning how to ballroom dance. Through a partnership between the VI Department of Education, the Community Foundation of the Virgin Islands and Dancing Classrooms Virgin Islands, Inc., these three elementary schools are the first schools on St. Croix to take part in the Dancing Classrooms program.

As seen in the films “Mad Hot Ballroom” and “Take the Lead”, Dancing Classrooms was started in one school by Mr. Pierre Dulaine, a world champion ballroom dancer. Inspired by his own achievements and the impact dancing had on him as a child, Mr. Pierre felt that the most important work he could do was to teach ballroom dance to NYC public

school children. The program has expanded beyond New York and is now in 30 cities in the United States and 6 cities internationally.

The nonprofit Dancing Classrooms Virgin Islands, Inc. (DCVI) was established in 2011 to bring this amazing program to the young people of the Virgin Islands. The mission of Dancing Classrooms is to cultivate essential life skills in children through the art of social dance. Our vision is to help create schools and communities where every child is connected, respected, and provide a safe environment in which to thrive. Children are taught a syllabus of traditional ballroom dances in a learning environment which fosters respect, teamwork, confidence, and politeness. They emerge as “ladies and gentlemen” with a renewed sense of joy, accomplishment and elegance.

The ballroom dance classes are part of the school day and provided as a way to enrich the academic learning experience. Classes are conducted with individual classroom groups, twice a week, for ten weeks, and led by a Dancing Classrooms teaching artist in collaboration with the 5th grade classroom teacher. With their classmates, the journey of ballroom dance will take students through the history and cultures of the Merengue, Foxtrot, Rumba, Tango, Swing, and Waltz.

At Dancing Classrooms, we believe all students can learn and we expect all children to participate. The program began October 13, and will culminate the week of December 14. At that time, there will be a ballroom dance presentation at each of the schools where children will perform the dances and speak about their ballroom dance journey.

DCVI has brought Dancing Classrooms to more than 2,500 5th and 8th graders over the last 4 years, and is thrilled to be partnering with schools in St. Croix, and now serving all 3 US Virgin Islands.

Submitted by:

Katie Zaytoun, DCVI Executive Director

Image Credit: STL Dancing Classrooms.