

HOW TO HOST A FAMILY FOLK DANCE

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Folk Dancing provides a wonderful opportunity to build a bridge from the school to the home and connect to the community in a meaningful way. It provides the music educator with an opportunity to involve the parents in the joy of music making with their child. It provides the parents with an opportunity to share an evening with their child free of distractions and interruptions. It provides the child with an opportunity to play with their parent(s) and family members in a joyful, exuberant, competition-free setting. It is a win-win-win situation. At the same time, each family unit is sharing this joy with the school community, fostering a sense of belonging and caring. Music educators can make this happen. There are many opportunities throughout the school year to invite your community in to folk dance.

- An all grade level dance once a week (rotate through the grade levels)
- Get-together at the end of the school day (teachers and students)
- Presentations to celebrate cultures studied in the classroom
- Family Folk Dance (one or two evenings a year)
- Folk Dance Club (teens love it; they just don't want us to know)
- Teachers Folk Dance Club
- Parents Folk Dance Club (alternative to aerobics, exercise, yoga)
- Scouts
- Fund Raiser (perhaps in conjunction with dinners at school)
- Barn Dance/Hoedown/Strawberry Social
- Professional Caller and Musicians
- May Day Celebration
- Dance in your own home/driveway

Try to choose your date(s) before the school calendar is printed, then remind families three more times: three or four weeks before...the week before...the day of. My motto is *"Come when you can, leave when you must."*

Pick a day that is convenient for your school community, then decide on the length....an hour? Ninety minutes? Two hours? If this is your first Family Folk Dance, start with 90 minutes and see how that goes. Deciding on the length will also help you to determine a starting time; 6:30 works well in many cases.

You may want to do this in conjunction with a Pasta Supper, a Fall Festival, a Chili Cookout, or a Spring Fling.

Have several dances of various types and difficulties ready, because you won't know what you'll do until that evening when your guests arrive.

- Circle Dances; stationary and locomotor
- Longways Formation
- Partner Dances
- Play Parties
- Snowball Mixers (new partner each time)
- Sicilian Circles (double circle of partners)
- Creative/Expressive Dances
- Square Dances

A few thoughts to keep in mind:

***Be flexible:** The dances you choose to do will depend upon your guests that evening, according to their age and abilities. Remember most dances can be modified to accommodate your guests; have a Plan B for every dance. Try to get everyone involved from the beginning. Choose dances that are immediately engaging and accessible; the point is to have a wonderful time. Start on time.

***4 Dances:** If you know four dances, you can lead a Folk Dance for an hour. Anticipate taking about 15 minutes for each dance; you need to walk your guests through the movements before adding the music. This will NOT be boring for anyone there. The more the steps are repeated, the more familiar they become, the greater the ease and success with which your guests will participate. They will have a great time. These may be dances you have already taught but they should be simple enough that you could teach them to all on the spot. Keep it simple. The point is to create a warm inviting atmosphere for everyone to gather and share the dance. Make it successful for all.

***Teaching the Dances:** Play the music first to give a good feeling for the tempo, spirit, and mood. This will help them anticipate a joyful experience and remind you of the tempo. Decide how many sections the dance has and then teach section by section. Speak and walk through each section first. When your guests are comfortable, go on to the next section, making sure to connect the new to the old and connect the end back to the beginning. Anticipate difficulties and teach to them. Teach in a way that guarantees success and then build on that success. Phyllis Weikart advises us to "Separate, Simplify and Facilitate." Cue 1-2 beats prior to each new move. Sing/chant directions but become less evident as your guests become more capable. Sometimes using a small group to demonstrate works well.

***Organize a filing system:** Have information about the introduction and number of rotations in addition to the dance steps for quick reference. Make a note of relevant styling to make it an authentic experience (hands, gestures, posture, attitude). Many dances can be taught at various levels to accommodate differences in ability and still be a satisfying experience for all (Zemer Atik is an excellent example). Make a note about these levels so you can make an informed decision when your guests arrive.

***Try not to serve food:** It may detract from the dancing as guests may congregate around the food. It also has the potential to become messy. A great idea is to combine a Family Folk Dance with another school offering, such as a Pasta Supper, a Fall Gathering, a Spring Fling or a cultural celebration. For instance, my school hosts a Fall Festival.....rotating 30 minutes of Folk Dancing in the music room, 30 minutes of face and pumpkin painting in the art room, and 30 minutes sharing chili and cornbread with other families in the cafeteria. Families spend precious time together, enjoying dancing, painting, and having dinner, all in an hour and a half. Parents are very appreciative that they only need to come to school one evening to enjoy dancing, singing, painting, dinner, and camaraderie.

***Only teach dances that you love:** Your guests will catch the love and joy from you.

***Resources:** One or two very good resources are all you need to get started. You probably already have them in your library.

***Always end with a waltz.**

***Multiple Intelligence:** Folk Dancing helps strengthen all the intelligences: Verbal-Linguistic, Logical-Mathematical, Visual-Spatial, Bodily-Kinesthetic, Intrapersonal, Interpersonal, as well as Musical.

Folk Dancing provides one of the easiest and most enjoyable ways to connect to your community. Think of how many lives will be touched if each of us offers just one opportunity this year. The world just might be a kinder, more tolerant place if we all held hands and danced in a circle.

Following is a list of sure-fire, tried-and-true, never-fail dances, along with notes that may prove useful. Have fun! Numbers after each title refer to the respective resources listed on page 4.

CIRCLE DANCES

QUICK NOTES

Stationary

Australia	How do you dootee? (1)	Standing circle mixer
Norway	Barnereinlender (1)	Helps children work with both sides of their body

Locomotor

Israel	Zemer Atik (2: CD4)	Single circle or line dance
Denmark	Seven Jumps (2: CD2)	Sequenced motions with increasingly longer fermatas
Quebec	Les Saluts (2: CD1) and (3)	A bow is held for increasingly longer fermatas
Yugoslavia	Savila Se Bela Loza (2: CD 6)	Spiral
Ireland	Gaelic Waltz (2: CD 1)	Spiral; traditional ending dance: Alternate tune: Franconia Waltz (3)
England	Family Waltz (6)	Everyone waltzes in one large circle

LONGWAYS FORMATION

England	Chimes of Dunkirk (4)	Great first time longways dance
England	Galopede (4)	
England	Bridge of Athlone (3) and (5)	Beautiful dance with everyone making a bridge
England	Sweets of May (4)	
England	Durham Reel (4) and (5)	
England	Weaver's Galopede (6)	
Mexico	Los Machetes (1)	Lends itself to many formations, independently, with a partner, in two lines, a circle, a double circle.....

PARTNER DANCES

Sweden	Fjaskern (2: CD2)	Single/double circle; accelerates; many layered
England	Lucky Seven (4) and (5)	Features the Grand Right and Left
Basque	Baztango Esku-Dantza (1)	Hand clapping dance; accelerates
Czechoslovakia	Heel and Toe Polka (4)	Easy mixer for all ages
Russia	Troika (2: CD2) and (1)	Dance for groups of three
Mexico	La Raspa (2: CD3)	Traditional
French Canada	La Bastringue (4)	
Germany	Ach Ja (6)	Delightful dramatization possibilities; accessible even for the youngest children

PLAY PARTIES

I's The B'y (9)	
Skating Away (8)	
A Sailor Went to Sea (9)	
Long-Legged Sailor (9)	
Weevily Wheat (9)	
Four White Horses (9)	

Partner mixer

Silly clapping game

Another silly clapping game

Features the multiplication tables

Clapping game for partners or a quartet

SNOWBALL MIXERS (New partner each time)

England	Rig-a-Jig-Jig (9)	
Ukraine	Sasha (1, 6)	(also Amidon's <i>Sashay the Donut, Alabama Gal</i>)

SICILIAN CIRCLES (Double circle of partners)

Black Joke (4)	
Haste to the Wedding (4)	
Mariposa (3)	

CREATIVE/EXPRESSIVE

Concerto in E major (Allegro assai), BWV 1042 by Johann Sebastian Bach (10)	
Bagatelle "Fur Elise" WoO59 by Ludwig Van Beethoven (10)	
Soldier's Joy, Traditional American Fiddle Tune (10)	

FAMILY FOLK DANCE RESOURCES

FOLK DANCE

1. SANNA LONGDEN
www.sannafolkstyle.com
(incredible website)
2. PHYLLIS WEIKART
High/Scope Ed. Research

Teaching Folk Dance; Successful Steps (Book)
Rhythmically Moving (9 corresponding CDs)
A movement curriculum based on a sequence of developmentally appropriate beat keeping activities. Moving to the beat is the foundation of all movement.
3. THE AMIDONS
Peter and Mary Alice
www.amidonmusic.com
4. THE AMIDONS

Chimes of Dunkirk (Great Dances for Children) CD/Book
5. MARTHA CHRISMAN RILEY

English Country Dances for Children
A charming collection of 19 graded dances.
Book/CD/Cassette/Video
6. MARION ROSE

Step Lively

SINGING GAMES/DANCES

7. THE AMIDONS

Rise Sally Rise (Great Singing Games for Children) CD/Book
8. Rohrbough (1940)/Riddell (1982) *Handy Play Party*, An oldie and still one of the best.
9. LOIS CHOKSY and
David Brummitt

120 Singing Games and Dances (out of print, but important to mention)
ISBN 0-13-635038-0 01
Wonderful resource. Worth every penny if you can find it.

EXPRESSIVE

10. JOHN FEIERABEND
and PEGGY LYMAN
www.giamusic.com/feierabend

Move It! and Move It! 2 Book/CD/DVD
Expressive movements with classical music is an innovative approach to teaching the joy of moving with music.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

HumanKinetics

Multicultural Folk Dance I/II (Instructional Booklet/Video/CD)
Each dance is presented by an artist from the country of origin and then shown with a group of children. Good for styling/costumes.

SANNA LONGDEN

More Folk Dance Music for Kids and Teachers (CD 2)
Even More Folk Dance Music for Kids and Teachers (CD 1 ½)

SANNA LONGDEN
and PHYLLIS WEIKART

Cultures and Styling in Folk Dance

JOHN FEIERABEND and JANE KAHAN *Book of Movement Exploration*

For additional information, be sure to go to the FAME website (www.feierabendmusic.org) for *Articles* and *Feier-side Chats*.