

Danceworks Mad Hot

is an established arts & physical education program that teaches tap and ballroom dance skills to 4th-6th graders throughout Southeastern Wisconsin.

The 15th year of the Mad Hot program brought with it many challenges. In usual form, Danceworks staff came together to bring its newly named Mad Hot Rhythm program to 12 MPS classrooms. While some classrooms were able to meet in-person, many opted for the virtual platform. Students met with teaching artists twice a week for 15 weeks, totalling 30 lessons. They learned three styles of solo (non-partnered dances): hip-hop, latin fusion and swing jazz. Teaching artists also incorporated Social Emotional Learning and dance history into their lessons, filling gaps left by virtual learning platforms.

Based on students' self-assessment, Mad Hot participants showed a 47% improvement in each area. Danceworks teaching artists also noticed improved stamina over the program. Additionally, students that were too shy to turn on their cameras at the beginning were excited to turn them on and show off in preparation for the virtual competition.

This year's program would not have been successful without the help of our amazing classroom teachers. They worked tirelessly to make sure the program ran smoothly despite any technology challenges.

One of our longtime teaching partners commented that students started coming to the virtual classroom more often as a result of Mad Hot; it provided an opportunity for students to showcase their unique talents and made them feel special.



The primary goals of Mad Hot Rhythm are:

- Improve students' self confidence
- Improve students' respect for self and others
- Improve students' attitudes towards physical activity

We were lucky enough to have some classrooms attend in person. These students expressed that dancing helped them "get their feelings out" and gave them, "something to be good at." Many also shared that they enjoyed simply being able to get up and move around with their friends.

The culminating event, the virtual competition – involved teaching artists filming their classrooms dancing each of the three styles. Teachers also selected representatives from each class to compete in an individual competition. Video submissions from each classroom were then organized for judging and edited together in our three round competition format for live streaming. Students, teachers, and their family and friends were then able to view the competition on May 14 at 6:30pm via Danceworks' Facebook page. The live stream video is now available and able to be viewed via our website and YouTube channel

indefinitely. To date, this one of a kind virtual event has over two thousand views (and climbing). This is the first complete record of a Danceworks Mad Hot Rhythm competition— and it will remain a document that is a true testimony of the great challenges and success of the 2020-21 school year.

Although the program served only about 250 students, our aim was to have a deeper impact on those students to whom we could connect. Our goals were absolutely achieved, students danced in their classrooms, bedrooms, basements and school parking lots and loved seeing themselves shine.

Looking ahead to the 2021-22 school year, Danceworks plans to continue offering virtual programming when needed but is taking the necessary steps to be back in the classroom as MPS has announced plans for schools to meet in-person.

