

CULTURAL DANCE- Cumbia

Objective: Students will be exploring global culture through dance, and will be able to demonstrate an expanding interest and knowledge of cultural art forms originating with indigenous traditions around the world.

Materials: Speaker or amplifier, musical selections appropriate for Cumbia:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ADpkpHWFUFA>

Background information: Use a Map or a Globe! Colombia, an Andean mountain nation found in northwestern South America, has endured many disasters, both natural and manmade. It remains fiercely independent and proud of its Spanish/African/Carib multiculturalism. Cumbia is an Afro-Colombian music and dance genre especially popular in the Andes and Mexico. Cumbia is a genre of music that originated on Colombia's Caribbean coast as a ritual courtship dance of African slaves. At first only drums and claves accompanied the dance, but as Spanish colonial influence seeped into the music, guitars began to appear.

Opening Activity: BUILD a Stretch Sequence- have students stand in a circle, and have each student demonstrate their favorite stretch. Notice if there are ANY parts of the body left out, and demonstrate 1 or two stretches that fill in for getting that body part ready for dance. Then, reorder students in the circle to create a sequence of stretches incorporating each student's favorite stretch, and have EVERYONE go through the sequence and repeat each stretch, in order, in time together as a group. Run through the sequence 2 times.

Core Activity: The basic Cumbia step, similar to Samba, is a step ball change, but the rhythm is slightly different. With Cumbia, the dance is much more like a two-step with a 4/4 rhythm, there are 4 beats to the step: 1. Step back with one foot, 2. Weight on the other front foot 3. Step together with back foot forward, 4. PAUSE for a beat. The leg stepping back will alternate. When you step back, you will pivot slightly on the front foot, toward the side of the front foot. This means when you step forward and rejoin back with front foot, you will pivot slightly back to face center. Arms will be bent at the elbows, and will be making small circles- the hands will rotate up and down, no high than shoulders, no lower than hips. Often times women dancing cumbia have beautiful dresses with multi-layers of skirts, they will hold the skirt in their hands and incorporate the skirt into the dance.

The second basic cumbia step is a step to the side, similar to a grapevine, except rather than crossing in BACK of the opposite foot, the beat is step side, step TOGETHER, step side, step light touch TOGETHER. It's a light touch at the end because the foot that does that last together step will be the first step out to the opposite side, when repeating this step.

Put on a little cumbia music and have students practice both basic steps throughout the room.

Reflection: How is this dance and rhythm similar to the dance and rhythm of Haiti and Brazil? How are they different? Did you notice different instruments in Cumbia music?