We Can Dance

**Introduction:** Students in Texas learn many interesting and historic facts about their state. However, one thing that may not be emphasized is the general love of dance that most Texans possess. This activity encourages the students to discover how Texans brought their love of dance to Texas. But most importantly, it provides opportunities for the students to try various well-known dances performed in Texas.

**Grade Level and Subject:** Fourth Grade Social Studies, English Language Arts, and P.E.

**TEKS:**  
Social Studies 20B  
ELA 8B, 10B, 13C, 13D, 13E, 13F, 15C, 17D, 19F  
21A, 21C  
P.E. 1H, 1I, 3A

**Materials:** The students will be conducting research during this activity, so computers are necessary.

**Resources:**

**Native American Dances:**  
http://www.ewebtribe.com/NACulture/dance.htm  
http://www.angelfire.com/co/MedicineWolf/dance.html  
http://www.inquiry.net/outdoor/native/dance  
http://www.nativespiritproduction.com/dancing.htm

**Spanish Dances:**  
http://www.streetswing.com/histmain/z3span1.htm  
http://learn.sdstate.edu/melissa_mork/Spanish.html

**German Dances:**  
http://www.angelfire.com/pa/vintagedance/19cdance.html  
http://www.ehow.com/how_4302_waltz.html  
http://dancetv.com/tutorial/waltz  
http://www.ehow.com/how_4279_polka.html  
http://www.geocities.com/goodolejoe/polka2.html

**English Dances:**  
http://www.streetswing.com/histmain/z3clog1.htm  
http://www.streetswing.com/histmain/z3reels.htm

**African American Dances:**  
http://www.streetswing.com/histmain/z3tap1.htm  
http://www.streetswing.com/histmain/z3juba.htm  
http://www.streetswing.com/histmain/z3ringshout.htm
Activity: This lesson combines research and physical activity. The students, during their study of Texas history, should be introduced to celebrations, customs, and traditions of various culture groups of Texas. Since Texas has a rich cultural diversity, the students will enjoy researching the backgrounds of different cultural dances found in Texas.

The teacher should introduce this activity by asking all students to find a partner and begin to clog, reel, or waltz. Since most students at this age have no idea how to do these dances, their activities should be interesting! The teacher should then explain that these three names were dances that Texas settlers brought with them when they came to Texas back in the 1800s. To further their interest, the teacher should ask if students know what type of settlers brought these dances to Texas and if they know any other dances brought to Texas by settlers long ago.

The teacher should then introduce these terms to the students: Indian dances, flamenco, waltz, polka, clog, reel, tap, ringshout, and juba. He or she should explain that these were all dances celebrated and brought to Texas by these different cultural groups: Indians, Germans, English, Spanish, and African Americans. The students will then be paired up to work with partners as they research each type of dance (see Resources). Each pair of students will research a type of dance and the culture group that brought the dance to Texas. They will also be asked to demonstrate their dance and be able to teach it to the rest of the students.

Once the students have completed their projects, the teacher can have a “dance” day. The students will teach their researched dance to the remaining students in the class. All students will then participate in the dance being learned. An optional culminating activity would be for the students to practice all dances and have some type of production for parents, other classes, etc.

Evaluation: The teacher can determine what type of grade he or she will give the research project. The teacher will also determine if a grade will be given for the dance and/or the teaching of the dance to the other students.