

Students Compete in Annual Ballroom Dance Competition

By Erin Pant

Each year, Saint Peter's seventh and eighth grade students participate in a ballroom dance course, a tradition that started 19 years ago. The 11-week program begins in the fall, as part of the physical education curriculum, and concludes with a competition. The course is led by dance instructors Paul and Diane McRoberts, who have been teaching ballroom for more than 20 years.



“During the course, we introduce the students to three dances, the Tango, Waltz and Swing,” explained Paul McRoberts. “The students learn challenging footwork, how to lead, and correct posture. We emphasize the importance of staying with the music and working as a team.”

According to the McRobertses, ballroom dance provides many benefits including mental, physical and social skills. The class provides a non-threatening environment for the students to learn a new skill together. This allows them to gain confidence in themselves, and in communicating with the opposite sex. They also feel part of a group and learn how to work together toward a common goal.

The course culminates in a final dance competition. Students dress up for the event and family members are invited to attend. “The competition provides the students a goal to work toward throughout the course. When the competition nears, students begin focusing even more, they are competitive and want to win. We always remind them to do their best and have fun,” said Paul McRoberts. The competition is two heats. Three or four dance couples are selected from each heat to dance in the finals. In the finals, a top three per grade are selected for each dance type and receive medals.

“It’s fun for us to watch the students succeed and to see their interest in dance grow over the course of the program. They become more comfortable and confident,” said Diane McRoberts

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