Chicken Soup and Fufu for the Student’s Soul
Social Studies and Dances of Ghana

A curriculum designed for grades K-5 by M. Bowden

Sankofa:
symbol of importance of learning from the past
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Introducing a social studies curriculum that incorporates instruction in traditional African dances is a natural marriage of artistic expression and the fundamentals of elementary social studies: culture, geography, history and government. By definition, traditional or authentic “ethnic” dances are “rooted in the movement habits” of a given community and act as a direct and honest expression of the people who gave it birth. African or African based traditional dances require a comprehensive investigation and analysis of the history and cultural relevance from which they are derived.

As members of a democratic republic that boast a multicultural acceptance of diverse ethnicities, creeds and lie-style choices students must learn the skills to navigate social organizations and diverse situations with empathy, tolerance and understanding. Best stated by Judith Hanna in her *Partnering Dance and Education Intelligent Moves for Changing Times*, “exposure to dances and movement from various cultures reduces prejudice, celebrates ethnic identity, and produces students that are skillful and more comfortable when interacting with individuals of different ethnic and cultural backgrounds”.

This curriculum acts as a “kinetic expression of unity” as it incorporates both aesthetic and curriculum based dance education into sub-units, requiring pre and post preparation for the dance classes by the teachers in the standard classroom. A detailed outline as well as sample lesson plans describe the students’ natural progression from an introduction to African cultures to solving the Ghanaian engineering problem, “How to revolutionize pounding the fufu?”.

The unit narrows its focus on one West African country, Ghana, but can be adapted to any other country or region of Africa (ex. Algeria-North, Ethiopia-East, Congo-Central, or Botswana-Southern). Students will explore Ghanaian dance aesthetic movement concepts of listening and responding to drum language, polyrhythm, repetition and a connection to the earth. Students will each develop their own evaluative oral histories by stepping into various roles of African and Ghanaian society, discovering that similar to their own physical reactions to their environments, traditional dances are indeed the sublimation of the lives of everyday people.
I. Chicken Soup or Fufu for the Student’s Soul (Introduction to African Societies and Cultures with an emphasis on Ghana)

Objectives:

- Understand multiple perspectives that derive from different cultural vantage points
- Explore concepts of likeness and differences in school subjects such as language arts, music and art

A. Africa → Ghana
   1. Symbols of the Country and Art: Flag, Kente, Adinkra
      a. Drawing Adinkra symbols, or creating “Adinkra” cloth from well-known stamps and assigning meaning (smiley face = Happiness or smiley face with black line over means Happy Home)
   2. Language Studies: Twi: Ago/Ame Call and Response, Over 50 languages spoken, with English as the official language of the state.
      a. Making Home-made Rattles
      a. Ex. Fried yam = French Fries, Guinea Fowl = Chicken, Fish and Chips = Burgers and Fries

B. Ghana’s People: Ashanti and Ewe

II. Kofi for Friday (Exploring African/Ghanaian Places, People and Environments)

Objectives:

- Draw from personal experiences as basis for exploring geographic concepts and skills
- Explore spatial views and geographic perspectives in relation to America

1. Continents, Countries and States
   a. Using visual aides to illustrate the relative size of Africa to North America, Ghana to America, and Ghana to Pennsylvania
   b. Learning about major plants and animas of Ghana/Africa.
• Roles in Society: Exploration, identification, and analysis of how individuals relate to each other
  1. Ashanti Naming Custom based on Day of the Week Born: names are given to students
  2. Exercises to compare and Contrast family and friend roles in Ghana/America
     a. Elders and Ancestors
  3. Listing common American life-cycle events in comparison to those of a young Ghanaian student
• Exploring economic decisions and consequences
  1. “A Day in the Life of…” Compare everyday activities with those of a Ghanaian student.
     a. Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner, clothes, school, homework, after school activities and hanging out
  2. What do your parents do?
  3. Water in Africa sponsored by the PeaceCorps: Explore the roles of water in the lives of African peoples and inquire "about the world in order to promote peace through understanding and friendship"
  4. Major exports from Ghana: Cocoa, Gold

III. The Oral Tradition and Ananse the Spider  *(Historical Knowledge, Skills and Values)*

Objectives:
• Perspectives from various aspects of history
  A. How do our personal stories reflect different points of view?
     1. Learning Ghanaian Folklore from a popular character, Ananse the troublesome spider
     2. Oral History: Griots, Proverbs and Legends
        a. Group Story-telling exercises, remembering of one word or one Phrase
        b. Recalling and describing personal or family achievements/events
  B. Ghana, An Ancient Mighty Empire
     1. Review history of African Empires
2. Review history of Ghana, Gold Coast and present day Ghana

IV. Queenmother and her Golden Stool (*Governance*)

Objectives:
- Study of dynamic relationships among individual rights and responsibilities, needs of social groups, concepts of a just society
- Develop comprehensive awareness of rights and responsibilities in specific contexts
  
  A. The Ghanaian traditional Governing Practices
     1. Chieftainship coupled with Matrilineal Inheritance
  
  B. Asafo Companies (Organization of Amateur and Professional Dance Groups)
     1. Explain the Roles of the Asafo Group: Leader, Secondary Leader, Treasurer, Women’s leader, Lead Cantor (Singer), Chief Drummer, Group Patron (Sponsor)
  
  C. Drum Ensemble
     1. Members of the Drum Ensemble: Master Drummer, Time Keeper (Holds bell), 1st and 2nd Supporting Drummers, Rattle

V. Learning to Pound the Fufu (*Technology and the Global Village*)

Objectives:
- Learn how technologies form systems and how their daily lives are intertwined with a host of technologies
- Analyzing patterns and relationships among world cultures
  
  A. Internet resources are available and interwoven into each branch of unit
  
  B. Studying ancient African technological practices
  
  C. Ghanaian technological practices still prevalent today:
     1. In teams, solve the problem: “How to make it easier to the pound the fufu”
  
  D. Adopt—a-Classroom, Ghanaian Sister School or Pen Pals
     1. Creating “Day in the Life of…” class video and post online for Ghanaian friends/pen pals
Resources

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*A contemporary male weaver from Ghana explains how his people maintain the tradition of weaving including an explanation of the strip weaving of Kente cloth and its importance in their Ewe culture.*


*A young Ashanti boy describes some of the wonders of his life in and around the West African village of Bonwire.*


*Anancy Spiderman trades various items with the people he encounters until he himself is distracted by a bird and ends up empty-handed.*


*Culture and people of Ghana*


*Ananse the Spider uses trickery to capture the four prizes demanded by the Sky God in payment for his stories.*


*In this retelling of a tale from Ghana a wondrous spider shows two Ashanti weavers how to make intricate colorful patterns in the cloth that they weave.*


*Presents over thirty-five easy-to-follow recipes from the kitchens of West Africa and Ghana and instructions on how to throw an African party.*

**Akan Goldweights and Proverbs**: Pictures of Ghanaian Goldweights, once used to measure gold as major currency. Interesting Ghanaian Proverbs. http://www.fa.indiana.edu/~conner/akan/proverb.html


**Cool Planet Virtual Journey of Ghana**: Interactive site with vivid pictures and personal stories that guide visitor through a journey of Ghana http://www.oxfam.org.uk/coolplanet/ontheline/explore/journey/ghana/ghandex.htm

**Downloadable Interactive Map Puzzle**: Wonderful Free downloadable puzzle of Africa and timer. Made available by Owl and Mouse educational Software. http://www.yourchildlearns.com/dirmpafr.htm

**GhanaWeb Homepage**: Comprehensive network of Ghanaian resources straight from the horse’s mouth with an impressive map resource. http://www.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/


**Masai and I**: Lesson Plans that link economics, geography and African storybooks http://www.mcps.k12.md.us/curriculum/socialstd/grade3/Masai_1.html

**Online Interactive Map of Africa**: Easily Scroll over the country to view name...
http://www.yourchildlearns.com/africa_map.htm

**Theodora.com/Maps:** Extensive map resource. Can be used freely with permission.
http://www.theodora.com/maps/

**Water in Africa:** “Peace, Rain, Prosperity! This national motto of Lesotho and greeting used by the Basotho is an appropriate way to welcome you to the *Water in Africa* website. It reflects the deep connection of water to all aspects of life in African countries, a concept Coverdell World Wise Schools has tried to capture in the resources and learning units featured on this site.”
http://www.peacecorps.gov/wws/water/africa/about/index.html

**Search results and lesson plans from the PeaceCorps homepage of “water” and “Africa”:** http://www.peacecorp.gov/index.cfm?shell=search.searchresults
Ghana
Regions of Ghana
### Names by Day of the Week

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Day</th>
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Vocabulary:

1. **Ago**: Ghanaian call meaning “I’m knocking”, “Can you hear me” or “Please pay attention”
2. **Ame**: Ghanaian response meaning “Come in”, “I am listening” or “I am paying attention”
3. **Akan** (uh-con): Much of what we know about ancient Akan customs comes to us in the form of oral histories which have survived for several hundred years. The rise of the early Akan centralized states can be traced to the 13th century, and is likely related to the opening of trade routes established to move gold throughout the region. It was not until the end of the 17th century, however, that the grand Asante Kingdom emerged in the central forest region of Ghana, when several small states united under the Chief of Kumasi in a move to achieve political freedom from the Denkyira. (For descriptions of modern related cultures, see the entries for Anyi, Aowin, Akuapem, Baule, Asante.)
4. **Ancestors**: Elders of a community that lived in the past.
5. **Asafo**: Ghanaian dance group or club
6. **Asante** (eh-son-tay) or **Ashanti** (eh-shawn-tee): The rise of the early Akan centralized states can be traced to the 13th century and may be related to the opening of trade routes established to move gold throughout the region. It was not until the end of the 17th century, however, that the grand Asante Kingdom emerged in the central forest region of Ghana, when several small states united under the Chief of Kumasi. The Asante dominated Ghana for the next 200 years and are still a dominant political force today.
7. **Cantor**: Lead singer, dance group historian/philosopher
8. **Community**: A group of people that live in the same place or have similar interests, work, goals or culture.
9. **Culture**: The knowledge, skills, arts and customs of a group that are learned to live in their environment.
10. **Diaspora**: People with African ancestors who now live in North America, South America or the Caribbean.
11. **Ewe**: Peoples of the south eastern corner of Ghana in the volta region. Anlo-Ewe people settled at their present home around the later part of the 15th century (1474)
after a dramatic escape from Notsie, an ancestral federated region currently within the borders of the modern state of Togo

12. **Fufu**: Common Ghanaian dish made from pounded Cassava and served with soup

13. **Ghana**: A medieval African kingdom which covered that lands of eastern Senegal, southwest Mali, and southern Mauritania. It is now a country of Western Africa, formerly known as the Gold Coast.

14. **Golden Stool**: Descended from heaven to rest on the knees of Osei Tutu, the first Ashantehene (Asante chief); focal point of the creation of the Akan confederacy, most notably the Asante

15. **Griot**: Elder members of group that pass history and tradition to others.

16. **Kente** (kin-tay): A ceremonial cloth woven with both feet and hands by the Akan speaking Ashanti people of Ghana, made with bright colors and sewn together in strips.

17. **Nigeria**: A country in Western Africa with the largest population in Africa.

18. **Oral tradition**: Using spoken word by telling stories, legends, poetry and proverbs to describe history.

19. **Ritual**: Practicing an action, custom or habit repeatedly.

20. **Twi** (Tchwree): Most widely spoken language of the Akan in Ghana
Ghanaian Traditional Dances:

1. **Adowa** (ah-do-wah): The most popular dance of the Akan speaking people of Ghana. It came from the movements of an antelope that saved the life of Queenmother, Abrewa Tutuwa. Adowa is considered a women’s dance performed at ceremonies and festivals.

2. **Atsiagbekor** (aht-see-ah-beh-kore): One of the oldest traditional dances of the Ewe speaking people of Southern Ghana. It was originally a war dance played by warriors when returned from the battlefield to demonstrate strength and courage. It is now performed during special occasions and uses the oral tradition to tell the history of the Ewe in songs. It is distinct because of the strong relationship between the dancer’s movement and the rhythms of the Master Drummer.

3. **Bawa** (bah-wah): A recreational dance from the Dagaare speaking people of the Upper West region of Ghana. Bawaa is a ritual and ceremonial dance that celebrates the beginning and end of the rainy season, harvest time and the new year.

4. **Gahu** (gah-hoo): A dance of recreation and love, that came from the Yoruba people of Nigeria and is now practiced by the Ewe of southern Ghana. (*Ga* means money or very important. *Hu* means drum or music. *Gahu* literally means musical expression of a very important or rich person)

5. **Gota** (go-tah): A court dance that came from the Kabre tribe of Benin and is now performed by the Ewe of Southern Ghana.
Ghanaian Musical Terms:

1. **Bell**: A time keeping instrument that determines the tempo of the master drum and dance.
2. **Break**: A musical cue played by the drummer that signals the dancers to enter, exit, change movements, repeat the step, or move on to the next step.
3. **Master Drummer**: The lead drummer that delivers musical cues to dancers on the break.
4. **Polyrhythm**: More than one rhythm in music or dance performed at the same time.
5. **Rattle**: An instrument that makes short and quick percussive sounds, and functions similar to the musical accompaniment of a tambourine; a tau or beaded gourd shaker played by striking it with the hand and against the thigh.
6. **Ngongon Bell**: Metal bell played with a wooden stick and by muting it on the thigh; used to keep timing.
7. **Supporting Drums**: Drums that play under the master drum, keep time and maintain one rhythm. Two supporting drums: adowantsre, also played with two straight sticks (right), and pretia, played with long wooden sticks with heads having a bent appearance.
Lesson 1: Ago…Ame

Unit Title: Introduction to Ghanaian Traditional Dances

Objectives:
The students will demonstrate behavior etiquette and behavior acceptable in the Ghanaian dance class.
The students will establish a simple rhythm and explore polyrhythm through drum ensemble participation.
The students will develop listening skills as connection to musical timing.
The students will identify movement qualities of daily activities and re-enact in repetition.
The students will anticipate choreographic patterns and phrasing.
The students will develop respect for acceptable behavioral patterns in Ghana.

Materials:
Lead Drum and Drummer
Home-Made Rattle
Cow Bell and Time Keeper
Drum sticks (usually provided by drummer or time keeper)

Activities:
• Introduction to structure of the Ghanaian dance class.
  a. How to enter and exit, greet the instructor and drum ensemble, show respect to peers and musicians
  b. Putting Ago/Ame call and response into practice
• Practice Gota timing by clapping rhythm
• Warm up: prompting students to perform daily activities by highlighting determining event (ex. When you wake up, before breakfast, when you get home from school).
  a. Decide one three-five movements for entire class to perform.
  b. Repeat at different levels and tempos.
• Practice identifying and responding to the break (musical cue) to enter, exit, change movement by repeating daily activity repetitions until the break.
Coaching/Corrections:
1. Use Ago/Ame at discretion and remind students of meaning.
2. Allow drummer and time keeper to briefly introduce the drums.
3. Encourage respect and appreciation for peers and drum ensemble.

Assessment:
1. Use repetition to observe how students adjust to new movement and familiar movement set in a foreign context.
2. Use structured pauses to afford students moments of self-assessment and correction, guided by participation related questions.

Cool-Down:
Adinkra Stretch: Using simple, or easily deconstructed Adinkra symbols, perform a short series of stretches attempting to imitate the shape of the symbol. Remind of its meaning.
Lesson 2: Ms. Meghan = Ms. Akosua

**Unit Title:** Introduction to Ghanaian Traditional Dances

**Objectives:**
The students will explore spatial levels (low, middle, high) focusing on connection of feet through the knees and into the earth.
The students will learn the simple travel step of Gota (Heel, ball-change).
The students will identify the musical break and use repetition to portray changes in choreographic patterns.
The students will play and listen to drum rhythms and practice "layering" rhythmic meter.
The students will appreciate Ashanti ceremonial practices (Festivals and naming).
The students will explore aspects of the Ghanaian community as a circle dance.

**Materials:**
Lead Drum and Drummer
Home-Made Rattle
Cow Bell and Time Keeper
Drum sticks (usually provided by drummer or time keeper)

**Activities:**
- Students will sit in a circle and re-introduce themselves using an Ashanti name
  a. Names are determined by day of the week

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- Practice Gota timing by clapping rhythm
• Warm up: prompting students to perform daily activities by highlighting determining event (ex. When you wake up, before breakfast, when you get home from school).
  c. Decide one three-five movements for entire class to perform.
  d. Repeat at different levels and tempos.
• Practice identifying and responding to the break (musical cue) to enter, exit, change movement by repeating daily activity repetitions until the break.
• Gota traveling step: Heel, ball-change using the R. Leg as the working leg.
• Add Gota traveling step to daily activity repetitions, changing at the break.
  a. Students with the same day or name must enter the circle on the break to dance as a group, while students in outside circle clap.
• Rotate groups of students to drum with the drum ensemble.

Coaching/Corrections:
  1. Re-enforce class structure and etiquette.
  2. Use Ago/Ame at discretion and remind students of meaning.
  4. Pause often to re-enforce rhythm, timing and break response.
  5. During repetitions of daily activities, remind of desired low level and connection to earth.
  6. Encourage respect and appreciation for peers and drum ensemble.

Assessment:
  1. Use repetition to observe how students adjust to new movement and familiar movement set in a foreign context.
  2. Use structured pauses to afford students moments of self-assessment and correction, guided by participation related questions.
  3. When timing or rhythm is lost, use pauses to assess and correct.

Cool-Down: Adinkra Stretch: Using simple, or easily deconstructed Adinkra symbols, perform a short series of stretches attempting to imitate the shape of the symbol. Remind of its meaning.
Lesson 3: The Asafo Stories

**Unit Title:** Introduction to Ghanaian Traditional Dances

**Objectives:**
The students will learn and play the roles of dance participants in an Asafo performing company.
The students will learn the meaning of and perform an Ewe song.
The students will recall and develop their own histories and oral tradition.
The students will identify strengths and weaknesses of recently learned dance skills.
The students will explore call and response roles of leader and follower.
The students will explore the roles and function of Gota in Ghanaian culture.
The students will incorporate personal expression and or experiences to the role of Gota, and compare those experiences of Ghanaians.

**Materials:**
Lead Drum and Drummer
Home-Made Rattle
Cow Bell and Time Keeper
Drum sticks (usually provided by drummer or time keeper)

**Activities:**
- Practice Gota timing by clapping rhythm
- Warm up: prompting students to perform daily activities by highlighting determining event (ex. When you wake up, before breakfast, when you get home from school).
  - Decide one three-five movements for entire class to perform.
  - Repeat at different levels and tempos.
- Appoint Asafo roles of Cantor and Chorus, to learn and perform excerpts from song originally sung with Gahu dance:
  - Meiya kpona: You look beautiful
  - Gotaviwo meinyakapona: Dancers of Gota, you look beautiful

- Explain that before the song, the cantors must tell their tales of trials and triumph
a. The student must tell of two achievements from the previous class and one aspect they would like to work on.

- Perform Gota as a group.

**Coaching/Corrections:**

1. Use Ago/Ame at discretion and remind students of meaning.
2. Students should play role as cantor as if their grandparent was speaking.
3. Encourage respect and appreciation for peers and drum ensemble.

**Assessment:**

1. Use repetition to observe how students adjust to new movement and familiar movement set in a foreign context.
2. Use structured pauses to afford students moments of self-assessment and correction, guided by participation related questions.
3. Students employ cantor (Asafo historian and philosopher) interpretation of strengths, weaknesses and areas of improvement.

**Cool-Down:**

Adinkra Stretch: Using simple, or easily deconstructed Adinkra symbols, perform a short series of stretches attempting to imitate the shape of the symbol. Remind of its meaning.
Exploring the cultural roles and societal functions of Ghanaian traditional dances involves delving into the everyday lives of the Ghanaian people. Because dance is so deeply integrated into the day-to-day workings of Ghanaians, the dance class focuses on self-evaluation, adaptations based on instructor observations and process assessment through role play. Four specific tools are used repeatedly:

**Structured Pauses**: The use of stillness and timed pauses allows the student to observe his and his peers spatial relationships (direction and levels) and adherence to musical timing (Did the student stop on the break?)

**Repeated Activity**: Repetition of an assignment, exercise or activity give the student multiple opportunities to self assess movement quality, sequences or patterns, timing and rhythm, also affording continuous opportunities to master these concepts.

**Self-Assessment**: Throughout the class, the student must personally identify bodily awareness and successful completion of exercises, movements or musical patterns.

**Role Play**: Playing the roles of Cantor, Chorus, Griot, Master Drummer, and Time-Keeper offer the student the opportunity to master concepts necessary for each role. Of special note is that of Cantor/Griot, in which the student must verbalize strengths and weaknesses amongst the group.
Bibliography


