



William Hampton Jr. and Leila Orellana, Campus International fifth-graders, are set to waltz.

## Dancing Classrooms Northeast Ohio "Celebration Gala"

In dapper ties and sequined mint-green dresses, the waltzers whirled around the Orchid Ballroom at The Westin with confidence and style, welcoming patrons to the 2017 Celebration Gala. For anyone thinking the waltz is for stuffy old-timers, though, the performers respectfully suggest you reconsider.

"I'm 10" said Claire Brazalovics. "But I'm going to be 11 soon!" "I am, too," chimed in Xavier Peterson, her partner at the check-in desk. In fact, the entire dance team was comprised of fifth-graders at Campus International School, one of 47 schools in four counties with fifth and eighth graders participating in the Dancing Classrooms Northeast Ohio program.

After dining on seared salmon, braised short ribs or mushroom risotto, the 200 patrons watched the smooth dance moves of the students. They also witnessed the respect and finesse learned as part of the 10-week, in-school course. Turns out Dancing Classrooms isn't just a dance class.

"Dancing Classrooms Northeast Ohio is working to create positive behavior changes in those we serve that will ultimately improve students' academic performance – school attendance, classroom behavior, class and school culture, family engagement, and their health and wellness," said Jo Jo Carcioppolo, executive director who founded DCNEO nine years ago. She's seen how the maturity needed to dance together fosters teamwork and a sense of joy and accomplishment in the students.

The ballroom crowd applauded the young dancers by raising \$22,000 in live bidding. Funds raised by the gala will support the organization's 2017 goal of increasing by 15 percent the annual number of Northeast Ohio students served by Dancing Classrooms. STORY AND PHOTOGRAPHS BY PEGGY TURBETT



Jo Jo Carcioppolo, founding executive director, center, with Campus International student dancers Claire Brazalovics and Xavier Peterson.



Campus International fifth-graders perform at the Celebration Gala dinner dance.



Nia Lugo twirls with Nathan Cox



Chad Michener, Margaret McKenzie and Vicki Reed



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