

Salsa Dance Club attracts students who love the beat at Whittier Vo-Tech

HAVERHILL – A saucy Caribbean beat pulsates from the science wing after school at Whittier Regional Vocational Technical High School. Students are animated as they pour into the room, tossing their coats into a pile and adjusting their “dancing shoes” before they take the floor.



Emily Buynevich is a science teacher by day and dance instructor in the afternoon. She has pushed her lab tables to one side and smiles widely at her latest recruits to the Salsa Dance Club, Whittier’s newest after-school activity. It’s the club’s third meeting, and there have been new faces each time.

“They really seem to enjoy it,” she said. “A lot of teachers tell me students are talking about it. It’s a great form of exercise and it gets students to interact in a positive, respectful way.”

Some students were already familiar with the dance and wanted to learn more. Others know it will make them look good once they are old enough for the dance clubs.

“There’s a lot of Spanish music in the clubs and the older women love salsa,” said Michael Rosa, a senior. “So, I’m here to learn how to dance.”

Senior Jacob Kruschwitz said he showed up after it was recommended by a friend. “I’m having fun,” he said, counting his steps as he spoke. “The boy to girl ratio is pretty cool, too.” There were five boys and 12 girls at the hour-long session.

At the front of the room, Ms. Buynevich shows how to perfect a turn as the students practice in two lines in front of her. “Left foot forward, 1, 2, 3, 4, turn, bring both feet together like that.” She then visited students individually so they could demonstrate.

“I like this,” said Patrick Wallace, a senior. “It’s an extra hour to hang with your friends and it’s fun. Even if you don’t have rhythm you can join and learn the steps. It’s different than what the school normally has.”

As the melody swells with trumpets and bass guitar, students’ smiles widen and their feet pick up the tempo.

“It’s fun,” said Sasha Santiago, a junior. “You get to dance with different people and it’s not judgmental like sports can be. You find the rhythm.”