

Ballet Folklórico: Baile de la Cultura

By SAISD Foundation



Mission: To mobilize the community to invest in student and teacher success.

Critical Need in our Community and Population to Be Served by the Project:

One of the SAISD Foundation's strategic goals is to enhance and expand art programs that honor the Mexican culture and heritage of our largest student population demographic. These programs, including Mariachi and Ballet Folklórico, are both valuable and vibrant. Student interest in these programs is among the highest of all elective classes in SAISD.

Due to the lack of increases in public school funding from the State of Texas since 2019, districts including SAISD have been forced to make excruciating budget cuts. One such cut was made for previously district-funded contract teaching artists that run Ballet Folklórico programs at the middle and high school levels. We have secured some bridge funding, but funding from Impact San Antonio would ensure that these programs flourish and grant us time to identify sustainable funding in the form of a long term endowment for the programs.

In response to intense student interest, there are plans to have a record 12 middle school and high school programs and 9 elementary programs in the 2025-26 school year. Of those 21 programs, 9 of the programs (primarily at the secondary level) do not have a district-employed teacher that is skilled to teach the program, so a contracted teaching artist is needed to continue those classes. Without a leader for their program, students will not be able to engage directly with their cultural heritage by creating art through dance, as Ballet Folklórico does.

SAISD encompasses 79 square miles of the inner-city, including some of its most impoverished zip codes. The district is made up of 44,000 students, 87% of whom are classified as economically disadvantaged. This means that if co-curricular activities are not offered as in-school or after-school experiences, most families cannot afford to pay for these programs, like Ballet Folklórico. Additionally, 90% of students in SAISD identify as Hispanic, with the vast majority tracing their lineage to Mexico. Ballet Folklórico has proven to be a valuable way for students to connect to their cultural heritage, strengthen their identity, and grow in their confidence.

In the 2024-25 school year, 659 students were a part of a Ballet Folklórico program at any level (an 8% increase from the 2023-24 school year). In 2023-24, students participating in fine arts programs like these had at least a 2.2% aggregate improvement in attendance, discipline, and academic performance across SAISD high schools.

Description of Project and Proposed Use of Impact SA Funds:

Ballet Folklórico allows under-resourced students to engage in a co-curricular activity related to their cultural heritage, giving them the opportunity to 1) spend time outside of school in a productive and safe environment; 2) connect to their cultural identities that have been shaped by their family histories; and 3) channel their passions to create beautiful art. Currently, SAISD Foundation funds support uniforms and elementary school instruction. The district previously paid to contract teaching artists through the Tobin for schools without a trained educator on staff, but with that funding being cut, this expansion support will allow classes to continue. The majority of teaching artists are at the secondary level, and without these programs, it will be prohibitively expensive for many students to continue Ballet Folklórico after elementary school. To allow our students to thrive, we must uplift their cultural identities and help them grow in this art form that brings them joy.

Cultural arts are growing across the SAISD community. As we have partnered with SAISD in the expansion vertically (elementary to high school pipeline) and in the breadth of schools, we have seen an 8% increase in the number of students participating in Ballet Folklórico during and after school from 2023-24 school year to 2024-25. With new programs in 2025-26, an additional 150 students will participate. Funding from ImpactSA will allow this program to continue to thrive.

\$72,000 of the funds requested will be used to pay contracted teaching artists for the second semester of the 2025-26 school year. SAISD Foundation has secured gap funding for the teaching artists' first semester but not the second. The services will not be "additional" but rather fill the gap left by cuts to the original services of the existing program. Thus, the population served will be the same. \$18,000 will be used to support additional dresses and uniforms for students, while \$10,000 will be indirect costs.

Impact on People to Be Served - Measurable Outcomes (Described in "S.M.A.R.T." terms):

Specific: 1) Increase the number of students enrolled in Ballet Folklórico programs both in school and after school by 23% to a total of 800 students.

2) Students enrolled in Ballet Folklórico programs both in school and after school will outperform students not enrolled in those programs on both English and Math standardized assessments by 4%.

3) Students enrolled in both in school-based Ballet Folklórico programs during the school day and after school will have higher attendance in school than their peers.

4) Students who participate in Ballet Folklórico will grow in confidence and identity formation.

Measurable: 1) We have fostered an extensive partnership with SAISD allowing attendance and participation data to be easily accessible through class and after school rosters.

2) Our data sharing agreement with SAISD includes reporting on academic outcomes. This is for both group data and comparison data.

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4) Instructor reporting occurring bi-annually including students will share personal stories of growth and development of their cultural identity and confidence.

Achievable: We have seen an annual increase in the number of students joining Ballet Folklórico. For 2024-25, that increase was 8%. Well-established programming and experienced instructors foster an inclusive environment and enthusiasm. With strategic vertical alignment (elementary to high school), programs will grow. Impact statements from alumni like Nadia strengthen our conviction. At a recent grant award for additional dresses she noted, "students need programs that speak to their culture and help them grow in their identity formation—programs that make them feel seen and heard so they can shine!"

Relevant: The vision of the SAISD Foundation is that all students thrive in SAISD public schools. Through programming to date, we have found that many of the students who join Ballet Folklórico programs have not been a part of any other co-curricular program, meaning they find a new sense of belonging and a new system of support. If more students attend school more often, as they grow increasingly academically successful in English and math and gain confidence, students will thrive. Additionally, expanding student experiences in cultural arts is a key objective of our 2020-2025 strategic plan.

Time-Bound: We will acquire the data biannually at the end of the second 9 weeks and the end of the fourth 9 weeks. In doing, so we will be able to adjust programming mid-year to ensure we reach the projected outcomes by the end of the school year 2025-2026. Student enrollment data will be reviewed in August to ensure that there is time to drive additional student participation in classes or after-school programs before enrollment deadlines.

Project Budget:

Funding Source	Amount	Narrative
Foundations/Corporations	\$18,250.00	PNC Bank supports the program at Harris Middle School
Individuals	\$12,000.00	Individual donations to purchase dresses and uniforms
Other	\$381,158.00	In-kind funding for volunteer teachers + SAISD Foundation funding of teaching artists and other program costs including transportation to performances + SAISD funding for current high school and middle school programs
Total Other Revenue	\$411,408.00	

Expense Category	ISA Exp	ISA Narrative	Other Exp	Other Exp Narrative
Indirect Costs	\$10,000.00	N/A	N/A	N/A
Agency Personnel (Salaries, Wages, Benefits)	\$0.00	NA	\$182,000.00	In-kind funding for volunteer teachers
Consultant and Professional Fees	\$72,000.00	Funding for the second semester of contracted Ballet Folklórico teaching artists	\$54,000.00	Funding for the first semester of Ballet Folklórico teaching artists
Program Supplies and Expenses	\$18,000.00	Funding for supplies such as Ballet Folklórico dresses and uniforms	\$175,408.00	Funding for program support at high schools, middle schools, and elementary schools including transportation to performances along with supplies such as Ballet Folklórico dresses and uniforms
Total Expenses	\$100,000.00		\$411,408.00	