

Rhythms of the Diaspora – Teacher Packet

Interactive West African & Afro-Cuban Drum, Dance, and Culture Program

Program Overview

I'm Jordan Taylor Hill, a multidisciplinary artist and cultural educator. Rhythms of the Diaspora brings West African and Afro-Cuban traditions to life through live drums, movement, and storytelling. Students don't just watch—they move, drum, sing, and lead. The program is BOCES Arts-in-Ed (Co-Ser 411) aid-eligible and fully self-contained (we provide the drums).

Featured Rhythms & Sequence (typical assembly flow)

- Rumba Columbia (*Cuba*) – high-energy opening.
- Dundunba (*Guinea*; “strongman dance”) – power, call-and-response.
- Soko – quick call patterns to engage the room.
- Intro & Spoken-Word: brief welcome + poem “Through These Eyes/Alright”
- Makru (*Guinea*; *celebration dance*) – student groove, movement phrase.
- N’Goron (*Ivory Coast*) – fusion piece highlighting diaspora links.
- Instrument Breakdown: djembe & dundun family; roles and textures.
- Rumba Guaguancó (*Cuba*; *partner-play, clave/time*) – rhythm + movement.
- Kassa (*Malinke/Guinea*; *harvest rhythm*) – community & work themes.
- Participation: students come up to drum/move; brief reflection.
- Che Che Kule (*Ghana*) – optional call-and-response song for all ages.

Note: Elements are interchangeable depending on age band, schedule, and space. Workshops and residencies expand any of the above into deeper practice.

Learning Objectives

(*NYS Arts Anchor Standards: Creating, Performing, Responding, Connecting* · *SEL: Social Awareness, Relationship Skills*)

- Perform a basic djembe pattern with correct hand technique and ensemble listening.
- Explain one musical pathway of the African diaspora (e.g., West Africa → Cuba) using rhythm examples.
- Demonstrate call-and-response, polyrhythm, and keeping time with clave.
- Reflect on how shared rhythm and movement build community, leadership, and belonging.

Key Vocabulary (teacher-friendly)

- Diaspora – movement of peoples/cultures and their traditions.
- Malinke – Mande ethnic group (Guinea/Mali) linked to rhythms like Kassa.
- Djembe – West African hand drum.

- Dundun — bass drum family (*dundun/sangban/kenkeni*).
- Dundunba — “strongman” rhythm/dance from Guinea.
- Kassa — Malinke harvest rhythm.
- Makru — celebratory dance/rhythm (Guinea).
- N’Goron — Ivorian rhythm; your fusion piece connects traditions.
- Clave — Afro-Cuban time pattern (e.g., Guaguancó).
- Rumba (Columbia/Guaguancó) — Afro-Cuban styles with song/movement.
- Call-and-Response, Polyrhythm, Ensemble, Improvisation.
- Che Che Kule (*Ghana*) — call-and-response children’s song.

Sample Assembly Flow (45–60 minutes)

1. Welcome & Rumba Columbia (ignite the room) — 3–5 min
2. Dundunba dance + Soko calls — 6–8 min
3. Intro + “Through These Eyes/Alright” (poem) — 3–4 min
4. Makru movement phrase → student drumming — 8–10 min
5. N’Goron fusion piece → diaspora link — 5–6 min
6. Drum talk: djembe/dundun roles — 4–5 min
7. Rumba Guaguancó (clave/time + movement) — 6–8 min
8. Kassa (Malinke harvest rhythm) — 4–6 min
9. Participation & Reflection (option: Che Che Kule/dance/guest artist) — 3–5 min

Suggested Pre/Post Activities

- Listen & Map: Track pulse in N’goron or dunun melody for Kassa.
- Diaspora Map: Trace one rhythm’s journey West Africa → Caribbean.
- Journal: “How did drumming together change how our class listened and led?”

Logistics & Safety

- Space: min 20’x20’ (gym, cafeteria, or stage).
- We provide: all drums/percussion; setup/teardown; mics as needed.
- Volume: school-safe; dynamic control (≈ pep-band level or lower).
- Group Size: assemblies = full gym/aud; workshops = 30–60 students/period.
- Load-in/out: 30–45 min in; 20–30 min out; standard doorway access.
- Accessibility: seated options and non-percussion roles included.
- Insurance: Certificate available upon request.

Booking & State Aid (NY)

- BOCES Arts-in-Ed (Co-Ser 411) — aid-eligible.
- Formats: 60-min assemblies, workshops, or multi-day residencies.
- Pricing: Typical assemblies start at \$3,000; residencies quoted based on scope.
- Next Step: Hold a Date (Quote) — we confirm within 1 business day and coordinate BOCES paperwork.

