**Name/Title:** **Celebrating St. Patrick's Day with Dance (March 2010)**

**Purpose of Event:** To learn a dance pattern based on Irish step dance movements as well as information concerning the country of Ireland and the history of St. Patrick's Day.

**Suggested Grade Level:** 4-12

**Materials Needed:** Irish music. The music can be purchased from iTunes: Morrison's Jig by The Irish Experience. It can be purchased for $0.99. Put the song name in "search store" button. View Entire Lesson (PDF)

# Description of Idea

View Entire Lesson (PDF)

**The Irish Step Combination** – The different combinations described below can be used in any order and repeated any number of times. As they are written, the combinations will end with the slower portion of the jig music.

**As the song begins, hold for 2 sets of 8.**
1-8 touch R toe down (1), step on R foot (2), touch L toe down (3), step on L foot (4) Repeat RL for counts 5-8

1-8 touch R toe down (1), step on R foot (2), touch L toe down (3), step on L foot (4), touch R toe down (5) step on R foot (6) Stomp L (7), Stomp R (8)

**When music begins:**
1-4 hop R (1), step L to L (2), cross R over L (3), step L (4)
5-8 hop L (5), step R to R (6), cross L over R (7) step R (8)
Repeat the 8 counts.
1-8 hop R (1), step L foot behind R (2), hop L (3), step R foot behind L (4), hop R (5), step L foot behind R (6) step RLR (7&8) – (An easier version would be to do a 4th hop-step instead of the RLR steps.)
1-8 hop R (1), step L in front of R (2), hop L (3), step R foot in front of L (4), hop R (5), step L in front of R (6), step LRL (7&8) – (An easier version would be to do a 4th hop-step instead of the LRL steps.)

**Repeat both sets of 8.**

1-4 step L to the L (1), step R next to L (2) , step L to the side and (3) hop L (4)
5-8 step R to the R (5), step L next to R (6), step R to the side (7) and hop L (8)

**Repeat both sets of 8**

1-8 (hopping on R foot with each movement) point L toe to L side (1), bring L foot up in front of shin (2), point L toe to L side (3), bring foot behind calf (4), point L toe to L side (5), bring L foot up in front of shin (6), step L (7), step R behind L (&), step L next to R (8)

**Reverse the above combination.**

1-4 hopping on the R foot kick front (1), side (2), front (3) step L (4).
5-8 hopping on the L foot kick front (5), side (6), front (7), step R (8)

**Repeat the above combination.**

Begin with the first two sets of eight toe-steps.

Repeat the entire dance beginning with a hop on the L foot and performing the combinations on the opposite side.

At the end of this combination the music gets much faster and the students can be challenged to repeat the combination at an even faster pace.

## Variations:

This combination can be done with a partner. The partners can face one another with the dancers mirroring one another. It can also be done in a circle with every other person moving either towards the middle of the circle or away from the center of the circle during the hop front and back steps and the opening toe-steps. If the dance is done in lines the students can also move in opposite directions during the toe-step counts and change line positions.

## Assessment Ideas:

Students can be asked to research the costumes of Irish dance, looking for historical influences on the costumes. Older students can be asked to construct and teach an original 8 count for the dance.

## Teaching Suggestions:

Anticipatory Set:

* **Famous Facts of Ireland**: (http://www.realirishfood-recipes.com/famous-facts-of-Ireland.html

Dr. Pat O'Callaghan won Ireland's first ever Olympic gold medal as an independent nation; he won his gold in the hammer event in 1928 in Amsterdam.

Four Irish people have won the Nobel Prize for Literature: William Butler Yeats, George Bernard Shaw, Samuel Beckett, Seamus Heaney.

Ireland’s mascot, of course, is the Leprechaun. The Leprechaun is an Irish fairy who is a small, short (about 2 feet tall) old man. He is dressed like a shoemaker with a cocked hat and a leather apron. He also has pointed ears and a coat of green. According to legends, Leprechauns are rather unsociable, preferring to be left alone to make their shoes. It is also thought that these whimsical creatures possess a hidden pot of gold! So treasure hunters are always looking for Leprechauns by listening for the sound of the shoemakers’ hammers.

Ireland’s magic number is three, hence the shamrock symbol. The Irish believe that everything good comes in threes: faith, hope and charity; sky, earth, and underworld; and past, present and future. Even when story telling, the Irish tradition is to use three adjectives. This makes both intensification and exaggeration always a part of a good Irish story!

* **Types of Irish Dances**: Irish dances are known as Reels, Jigs, Slips, Light Jigs, and Single Jigs. All of these types of dances are known as “soft shoe” dances. Hard Shoe dance includes dances known as Hornpipe, Hard Jig

and Treble Reel. Today, jigs, reels, hornpipes, sets, half sets, polkas, and step dances are all performed. Solo dancing or step dancing first appeared at the end of the eighteenth century.

The huge success of the Riverdance and Lord of the Dance has placed Irish dance on the international stage. Dancing schools in Ireland today are filled with young pupils keen to imitate and learn these dancing styles.

* **History of St. Patrick's Day**: St. Patrick's Day, celebrated each year on March 17th, is an Irish holiday celebrated around the world. It honors the patron saint of Ireland, St. Patrick, who is one of the most celebrated religious figures around the world. He was born in 385 AD. When he was 16 he was captured and sold into slavery. He escaped when he was 22 and lived in a monastery for 12 years.

St. Patrick used the shamrock (which has 3 leaves on each stem) to explain about God and the Trinity.

Another tale says that St. Patrick drove the snakes from Ireland by standing upon a hill and using a wood staff to drive the serpents into the sea, forever banishing them from Ireland. Although Ireland has no snakes, this story is probably no more than a metaphor for bringing Christianity to Ireland and driving out the pagan religions.

St. Patrick's Day is celebrated with a large parade in Dublin, Ireland. It is also celebrated in the United States. New York hosts one of the largest St. Patrick's Day parades in the world. Chicago even dyes the Chicago River green on St. Patrick's Day.

http://www.britannica.com/bps/image/293754/288/Young-traditional-folk-dancers-at-a-street-festival-in-Dublin

**Map of Ireland**: http://www.britannica.com/bps/image/293754/61327/
**Coastline of Ireland:** http://www.britannica.com/bps/image/293754/100114/Aerial-view-of-Irelands-coastline

## Images:








Submitted by **Brenda Goodwin** who teaches at Missouri State University in Springfield, MO. Thanks for contributing to PE Central! **Posted on PEC: 3/17/2014**.

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