Lesson Plan 1:

Play-Party Game of Western Kentucky: *Skip to My Lou*

Grade Level: 2 – 12

Time Required: 20 minutes

Curriculum Connections (KY Academic Expectations):

**Big Idea/Structure in the Arts**

AH-EP-1.2.1, AH-04-1.2.1, AH-05-1.2.1 Observe, identify, describe, analyze or explain use of elements of dance in a variety of dances

AH-06-1.2.2, AH-07-1.2.2, AH-08-1.2.2 Identify, describe, compare or contrast dances and the use of elements of dance

AH-HS-1.2.1 Analyze or evaluate use of styles of dance (Compare Western KY to Appalachian play-party games, compare games with dances)

**Big Idea/Humanity in the Arts**

AH-EP-2.2.1, AH-04-2.2.1, AH-05-2.2.1 Identify, describe or explain how dance has been a part of cultures and periods throughout history

AH-08-2.2.1 Analyze or explain how culture and time periods affect dance

AH-HS-2.2.1 Analyze or evaluate how time & place are reflected in dance

**Big Idea/Purposes for Creating the Arts**

AH-EP-3.2.1, AH-04-3.2.1, AH-05-3.2.1 Experience, identify, describe or explain how dance fulfills a variety of purposes

AH-06-3.2.1, AH-07-3.2.1, AH-08-3.2.1 Identify, compare or explain how dance fulfills a variety of purposes

AH-HS-3.2.1 Explain how dance fulfills a variety of purposes

**Big Idea/Processes in the Arts**

AH-EP-4.2.1, AH-04-4.2.3, AH-05-4.2.3 Perform traditional dances

AH-HS-4.2.2 Demonstrate appropriate alignment, strength and flexibility while performing dance movement

AH-HS-4.2.3 Perform dances utilizing various choreographic forms

AH-HS-4.2.4 Perform social and recreational dances from various historical periods and cultures
Materials Needed and Sources: Music to the common tune *Skip to My Lou*, or CD Player and recording of the tune, copies of the words, for learning to sing the song.

About the Game: This play-party game was very popular. My research showed everyone remembered doing this in Western Kentucky, and published versions of it being played in Appalachia, Tennessee, Indiana, Arkansas, Missouri, Kansas, West Virginia, Virginia, and New York. Movements and exact words sung vary, but this is probably the most common American play-party game.

About the Tune: John Lair, author and musician who started *The Renfro Valley Barn Dance* says that the tune was from an old English hymn “Give Up the World.”

About the Words: This version of words was collected by S.W. Douthitt at a play-party in Carlisle County, Kentucky in December, 1928. Song should be sung to a fast tempo. The singing is the musical accompaniment to the movements. Teach the song first, before beginning the movements.

**SKIP TO MY LOU**

Four in the middle and can’t get about,
   Four in the middle and can’t get about;
Four in the middle and can’t get about,
   Skip to my Lou, my darlin’.

Little red wagon painted blue,
   Little red wagon painted blue;
Little red wagon painted blue,
   Skip to my Lou, my darlin’.

Hair in the milk-churn four days ole,
   Hair in the milk-churn four days ole;
Hair in the milk-churn four days ole,
   Skip to my Lou, my darlin’.

Fly in the buttermilk nine days ole,
   Fly in the buttermilk nine days ole;
Fly in the buttermilk nine days ole,
   Skip to my Lou, my darlin’.

You steal mine an’ I’ll steal yours,
   You steal mine an’ I’ll steal yours;
You steal mine an’ I’ll steal yours,
   Skip to my Lou, my darlin’.

About the Movements: This version of movements came from James Albert Webb, born in 1926, who attended play parties in his parents’ home in Carlisle County, KY in 1930 – 1931 and later played guitar at play-parties in the 1940s and 1950s.

Cross-Curricular Activity: Mr. Webb is in the Rockabilly Hall of Fame for his career playing guitar with the Ray Smith Band. Have students look him up on the Internet.
**Formation:** 4 – 6 couples standing side-by-side, in promenade position (facing counter-clockwise direction, right hand in right, left hand in left underneath), one couple in front of the next, like spokes of a wheel, forming a semi-circle or circular shape. (Called Circassian Circle). Posture is upright but very relaxed.

**Movements:**

On “Four in the middle” verse: Keeping time to the singing, using a bouncy walking step or skipping, all go forward promenading (dance-walking) around the circle.

On other verses: Stop. Face partner, giving two hands straight across. Swing by moving clockwise around each other. On “Skip to My Lou, My Darling” drop hands. Boy or designated lead move on to next girl clockwise around the circle. Face her, giving two hands straight across. On next verse, swing her and on “Skip to My Lou” move on to next girl, and so on. Repeat until back to original partner. End by swinging original partner.

This can be the end of the game, or the entire game can repeat beginning with the promenade around the room, followed by the progressive swing.

Song may be repeated as needed.

**Variations:**

1. Promenade holding closest hands. 2. Swing using one hand, right in right held about neck high, then with next person swing using left hand in left going counter-clockwise around each other. (This is helpful if people are getting dizzy).

**Assessment Suggestions:**

1) **Teacher observation:** Did the student pay attention & cooperate with other players? Was the student ready to perform her/his part when the music cued it? Was the student able to change roles as the game repeated? Did the student use proper body alignment for this style of dance and a dance-walk? After repetitions, was the student able to memorize the sequence of movements in the game?

2) **Questions for discussion or follow-up writing:** What pathway(s) were used in this game? What body part(s) moved most? What level(s) did the movements take place on? What shape(s) did players bodies take? What shape(s) did all the players together make? What force was used in movements of this game? How do these game movements compare to movements you use everyday? What can you tell about players in Western Kentucky in 1928 from this game? How do you think young rural Kentuckians learned to play the games? Where did the games come from? Why do you think someone might have played this game? Was anyone more important than anyone else in this game? Does that say anything about their society? In some play-parties, instruments played the tunes. What instruments do you think may have been used for playing in people’s homes in 1928? Who do you think might have been the musicians? What sort of clothing might have been worn to the play-parties? How would the clothing affect the dancing? Did this game seem happy, sad, or another emotion? Did it seem formal, relaxed, structured, free or another way? Would you want to go back in time and play games at a play-party in 1928? Why or why not?

**Extensions:**

**Literary Arts** – Have students keep a Dance Journal for note taking during class and personal reflection after each class.

- Assign questions from list above to be answered in their Dance Journal.
- Ask students to answer an open-response question in their Dance Journal comparing Western Kentucky play-party games with play-party games or dance of another region or culture (Appalachian, African, African-American, Native American, Latin, etc.)

**Mathematics** – Have students look for patterns in the game. Have them experiment with changing the pattern in one section or repeating one section. Have them analyze what happens to the game and form an opinion on why the game is the way it is.

**Government** – Have the students research the difference between a monarchy and a democracy. This game is democratic – all players are equal. Have students work in small groups to change this game to reflect a totally monarchical society.

**History, Library and Computing** – Have students research life in rural America in the late 1920s. How did players get to the parties? What purpose did they serve? How would people find out about the next party? Why did the parties fall out of fashion by the mid-1950s?