

5 Things Every Parent Should Know Before Choosing A Dance Studio

If most dance studios seem to have qualified, friendly, well trained teachers, experience teaching children and a recital at the end of the year, aren't they all pretty much the same? Does it really matter which place you enroll at? Yes. There are 5 main things that can make a huge difference in the quality of instruction your child receives, how much they progress and the amount of extra work and hassles the parent must deal with. You and your child's overall enjoyment and satisfaction with being involved in a dance program can depend on them. Here are 5 things that every parent should consider before deciding on a dance studio for their child.

1. Does the Studio Offer all the Programs I Need? Is There a Set Way for Students to Progress?

If the studio is servicing only one part of the dance studio industry you may wind up needing to find a new studio as soon as you begin. If they only teach how to be a butterfly or princess to pre-dance baby ballerinas, where do you go when your child is older and ready for more? If they only teach once a week recreational classes you will need to find a more serious studio if your dancer wants more rigorous, professional training. And if one dancer in the family wants serious training and the other just wants to take class for fun, you will be traveling between two studios as well as paying more tuition without the benefit of a family discount. Also there is nothing more frustrating for a parent or student when it is unclear where they are in their dance training because the studio has no set way to measure a their students' progress.

At this studio we service all sectors of the dance studio industry: Pre-Dance, Recreational Dance, Commercial Dance and Professional Training Academy specializing in Classical Ballet and Contemporary Dance. A student may start with us as a 3 year old and at age 8 go into the Professional Training Academy or Recreational Dance Division. If one of your dancers wants competition and a dance company experience and the other only wants Hip Hop for fun, we have it here. No need to drive between studios or not benefit from a family discount.

Our leveled program is easy to follow. Level 1 sets the foundation for level 2. It's that simple. All students at this studio are advanced only by testing or teacher evaluation. In May every student in the Ballet Academy is tested on the technique and artistry they have achieved throughout the dance season. All other disciplines in all other divisions have an evaluation class. Although the teachers are allowed to teach using their own style and techniques, they are given written goals and curriculum targets that they must achieve with their students. An impartial, experienced teacher from outside the studio comes in and evaluates each student on how well they have achieved these goals and targets. If the student shows that they have mastered their current level, they are moved on to the next. The parent at any time may request to see the goals and targets for the year and may receive their dancer's test or evaluation results by e-mail. There is never any mystery about what a class is working on or how your dancer got put into a class.

2. What is the Size of the Class?

If the dance class has fewer students in it, each child will receive more personalized attention, learn more and have more fun. With younger students it is easier for a teacher to maintain control over the class and make sure each student understands the instruction and their basics. Our smaller class size allows our teachers to ensure that students are not developing bad habits or improper technique.

Our studio limits all classes based on student's ages and ability levels. Pre-dance Division is limited to 6 students in pre-school, 8 in pre-primary and 10 in Primary. All other classes are limited to a maximum of 12 students.

3. Are the Different Programs Conveniently Scheduled to Avoid Extra Trips to the Studio?

If you have more than one dancer or you know your child will want to take more than one style of dance, you may be coming several times a week if the classes are not scheduled with convenience in mind. At this studio we piggy back classes together as much as possible minimizing trips to the studio. On any given day pre-school, pre-primary and primary all run at the same time so that pre-dance siblings can come on one day at one time for the right level for their age. Putting a 6 year old in a class with 4 year olds just to save an extra trip to the studio is never a good idea. We also have days when pre-dance, recreational dance and professional academy classes run at the same time. We attempt as much as possible in the Professional Academy to have rehearsals after required classes and most ballet classes are followed by another style of dance at the same level. We also offer family discounts. It couldn't be easier to have everybody in the family dancing as often as they like.

4. What are the Performance Opportunities? If There are Extra Performances Does Time Spent Rehearsing in Class Interfere with Time Spent Learning Technique?

Every studio has a year end recital but we offer more without sacrificing the time spent on technique. All time spent on our other performances is done in rehearsal classes. In the Professional Ballet Academy the student is involved in only one class that takes part in performances. All other required classes are for technique only.

We do a full length story ballet each January for all Professional Academy ballet students. For those who want a dance company experience our students may perform as part of our dance companies in March along with professional dance companies from the area in an evening of dance, A Concert of Art in Motion. Our competition teams perform at two competitions per year.

5. What Kind of Customer Service Can You Expect? Are You Kept Well Informed to Avoid Any Surprises?

Costumes, schedules, recitals, tickets, required dance wear and fees. It can all be very confusing if the parents are not kept well informed. There is nothing more exasperating to a parent then to get hit with hidden fees and unexpected work. When you enroll in classes here, you are given a Parent Hand Book that will go over everything you need to know for the entire year. It will include studio closures, performance dates and locations, costume fees, ticket sales, required dance wear and shoes as well as tuition policies. It will explain our divisions and their requirements. If your questions are not answered by this pamphlet, the front desk is always available to answer your questions. A copy of our hand book is also available on line if you should lose it. Our website is not only set up for new students to learn about us but for our parents to access all our hand outs and to view and pay their account on line.

With our hassle free recitals you will never sew, build a set, raise funds, be a part of stage crew or manage any studio functions. Just come and enjoy the show. We want your experience with us to be as enjoyable as your child's so we strive for excellence in our relationship with you as well. It's all part of the extra value you get as a member of the Art of the Dance Family.