

4 THINGS EVERY PARENT SHOULD KNOW BEFORE CHOOSING A DANCE STUDIO

If most dance studios seem to have qualified, friendly instructors, experience teaching children, and a big show at the end of the year, aren't they all pretty much the same? Does it really matter which place you decide to enroll at? Yes. There are 4 main things that can make a huge difference in the quality of instruction your child receives, the amount of extra work and hassles the parents must deal with, and the overall enjoyment and satisfaction of being involved with a dance program. Here are four things that every parent should consider before deciding on a dance studio for their child.

1) WHAT TYPE OF DANCE FLOOR IS USED AND WHAT ARE THEIR FACILITIES LIKE?

Dance is a wonderful outlet for exercise and in building self-esteem and self-confidence. It is also a very physical activity that requires a lot of jumping and moving. Although good for the body, this can put stress on your bones and joints. Since most dance footwear does not provide cushioning or support so that the dancer can "feel" the floor, the shock of dance movement can place a lot of pressure on the knees and lower back. One of the best ways to prevent potential injuries for you or your child is by choosing a studio with a professional, *raised* hardwood floor that will absorb the shock of jumping. Very few studios use professional floors because of the expense involved, and usually opt for regular floor tile for a studio dance floor. This will greatly hinder student's growth and appreciation for dance.

Our special raised floor doesn't "grab" like newer synthetic floors, thus, reducing the risk of injuries and allowing students to dance longer without getting tired. We also provide air conditioning in our dance room, which really keeps our students energized (especially during these intense hot spells we've had lately!). Along with a good cooling system, we also provide heating during the cold winter months. This is especially important since muscles need extra warming up in order to avoid sprains and tears. Having two perpendicular walls of mirrors that start at floor level helps the student see his or her alignment from the front *and* the side view at the same time, ensuring a better foundation and proper placement for turns and jumps. (This is especially important during barre work in Ballet)

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 at a faster rate, 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 concepts and instructions. Our smaller class sizes make sure that no fundamental concepts are being missed. A smaller class size also allows our teachers to ensure that students are not developing bad habits or improper technique.

Our studio limits all of our classes (ages 6 and up) to a maximum of just 10 students per class. With our preschool dance classes (ages 3-5) we limit all of our classes to a maximum of just 7 students per class.

3) WHAT ARE THE "EXTRAS" REQUIRED FOR THE YEAR END SHOW?

Most studios put on a year end show in a professional theatre. Students that perform in the show must have a costume for their dance number. Some studios may require parents to pay an extravagant amount for each child's costume or send them on hunts for specific costume pieces or props. This can be inconvenient and frustrating for parents who are busy or on a budget. Most studios also require parents to purchase tickets for the recital performance night.

Our studio works extra hard to find colorful, modest costumes that are at a low cost and won't require a lot of sewing or altering so that parents won't have to worry about extra hassles. Our studio also gives each family 2 free tickets for our year-end show. This way you as a parent will not be faced with any extra work or expenses and can focus on enjoying this wonderful time of making memories with your child.

4) CAN I GET IMMEDIATE ASSISTANCE AND CUSTOMER SERVICE?

In many studios the teacher or the studio owner conducts classes and does the administration. By trying to do two jobs at once, the class may suffer as the teacher has to use class time for customer service issues, or the studio may have no customer service available if the teacher is in a class. To have a good experience, it is important to choose a studio that can assist you with details like costumes or schedules, even if a teacher is occupied in a class. Our studio has office staff on hand during all regular class times, so you can get immediate assistance.