

What to Look for When Choosing a Dance School:

Some reasonable questions a new dance parent may ask themselves are:

Aren't all schools pretty much the same? What does it matter where I send my child?

The short answer: NO! *Dance deals with your child's body during critical years of growth and development. Poor training can cause lasting physical damage, while with proper training, your child can grow to be strong and graceful. A school's emotional atmosphere can also affect your child's self-esteem and happiness. We frequently get students who have studied for up to ten years at second-rate schools. It's very sad to see how little they've learned and what poor value their parents have received for their money.*

So, how can you choose a dance school wisely?

• **Decide what your goals are:**

- What you want for your child will depend on his/her age and previous training. If old enough, your child can help with this, ask them what they would like to get out of it. Is your child serious about being a great ballet dancer? A Rockette? On TV? Or do they just like to move, or to listen to music, or being with their friends? What are your child's goals? Are they looking to obtain grace, fitness, involvement in a challenging activity, or just *their special time*?

• **Gather information**

- Search the internet for *Dance Instruction* or *Dance Schools* in your area and call/email those schools for information. Below are some questions that might be helpful:
 - *Does the faculty consist of people who have been trained to teach or who have extensive teaching experience? Do they use students as teachers?*
 - *Are there performing opportunities beyond the end-of-year recital?*
 - *Is the recital or any other performance mandatory?*
 - *Is the school affiliated with a professional dance company?*
 - *Is the studio competition focused or technique focused?*
 - *Has the school produced any college level or professional dancers? With whom are they dancing now?*
 - Which methods of ballet training are used? While there are many acceptable methods of training, watch for: quizzical looks, blank stares or responses like "no one ever asked me that before". An example of a tried and true training method includes the [Royal Academy of Dance](#) syllabus—a safe, methodical and progressive teaching technique whose roots date back over 75 years. Other time-tested methods include ABT, French, [Cecchetti](#) and [Vaganova](#) syllabi.

• **Develop a “Short List” and Visit the schools on that list with Dancer.**

- Things to look for when visiting a school:
 - *What type of flooring is used Wood? Concrete? Is there professional non-slip dance surface installed? It should be sprung wood with or without non-slip covering*
 - *Does the school work only on a recital or competition dance from November through June or do the students learn and develop their technique throughout the year – learning how to dance; not just a dance?*
 - *Are the children en pointe at ages 9 or 10 (long before the bones in the foot are fully formed which may cause deformities later on in life)? Standard age is 11 for pre-pointe.*
 - *Does the teacher treat the students with respect, giving constructive criticism, or is it negative and demoralizing?*
 - *Did you find watching the children’s class a good experience? Were they having a productive, enjoyable time?*

• **Get and carefully check references**

If, after your visit, you’re still interested, you may leave a request for a parent of a current student to call you to answer such questions as:

- What is their overall impression of the school? (Are they content and completely satisfied?)
- What is the focus of the school? (Would they say the central focus of the school is teaching and a love of dance?)
- Who really teaches the classes? Older students or qualified teachers?
- When a student makes a mistake, is there yelling or a gentle correction?
- Is their child fond of his/her teachers? Does he/she have fun and look forward to the next class?
- Has their child learned a lot?
- Is the school a “revolving door” or do most students stay?

• **Make your decision**

Choose the school that places your child’s physical and emotional well being above all else. Glitzy costumes and mega productions are not as important as your child’s health and happiness. Another consideration is whether you feel you’ll be getting safe, quality training for your money.