



**the
Dance Connection**
6635 Kennedy Ave. Hammond, IN 46323
(219) 844-6225
www.thedanceconnectiononline.com

The Dance Connection Handbook

A Guide for Students and Parents

Welcome to The Dance Connection!

This handbook will serve as your guide to The Dance Connection and its philosophy of dance education.

We take our roles as a mentors and teachers in your child's life very seriously. It is our objective to inspire a passion for the art of dance in every child who passes through our doors. In the process, we strive to set the right example and help your child (and you) create memories that will last a lifetime.

Philosophy

The Dance Connection is committed to providing high-quality dance classes to enhance the overall development of the child. We provide a safe and child-centered environment to encourage our students to explore dance with qualified, nurturing teachers.

We believe that dance training encourages young people to develop a positive self-image as they increase awareness of their physical being. Along with improving coordination skills and developing muscular awareness, dance classes give children the freedom to express themselves through movement.

The highest educational standards are expected from all The Dance Connection faculty members. They are lifelong learners who continue to educate themselves through certification programs, teacher-training schools, conferences, and other learning opportunities.

ABOUT THIS HANDBOOK

FOR MORE THAN 50 years our school has been a leader in dance education. We believe that our success comes as a result of providing solid training and quality service, as well as our underlying belief in the strength of our organization. We have created this handbook to offer our students and their parents a clear understanding of their commitments and responsibility to the school.

FOR OUR STUDENTS

The first step to becoming a successful dancer is making a solid commitment to your classes. Strong technique is a key ingredient and class is where you develop that technique. Come to each class prepared to learn and without personal distractions. Class time is your chance to focus on yourself, so try to leave your concerns or worries at the studio door. True progress is made when you look at each class as an opportunity to become better at what you love to do. Dance full-out, stretch a little further, become more aware of your technique, and make the most of every class.

Respect for the teachers is essential. Listen to each correction given, whether it's directed at you or another dancer. A correction is an honor; it shows you how much a teacher cares about your progress as a dancer. Nothing can stop those students who apply themselves in every class and appreciate their teachers' knowledge and experience.

FOR THE PARENTS: "WE'RE IN THIS TOGETHER"

We believe that children's success depends on the support of their parents or guardians. Because your commitment to the process makes an enormous difference, we encourage you to be a part of your child's dance education.

Our programs rely on a positive atmosphere and educational experience for our faculty and students and their parents. Cooperation between all parents is expected. Showing respect—for other parents, the students, and the faculty—makes an important impression on the children. You are a role model for your child about how to interact with others in a professional setting.

Your child's presence at all classes is imperative. The spirit of teamwork and the lesson of dedication are a big part of our school's educational process.

Parents and teachers may look at a child's learning from different perspectives. However, we believe they share a common goal: to ensure that every child receives the best possible training, both physically and mentally. Mutual respect among our faculty and our students' parents provides the children with the ultimate care and education.

Special Information for Parents of Preschool Students

Our purpose is to provide the highest-quality preschool education in a secure, nurturing, and stimulating environment. The Dance Connection serves the physical, emotional, and intellectual needs of the preschool students. We meet these goals with our age-appropriate curriculum and ongoing communication with parents.

The first few weeks of classes serve as an introductory phase to help students become comfortable with the overall dance experience, the classroom, their teacher, and their classmates.

Right from the beginning we focus on your child's coordination, listening skills, musical awareness, and developing imagination. We accomplish this through age-appropriate music and

song, simple stretching exercises, ballet and tumbling basics, and games in an environment of creativity.

Preschool dance is about helping children learn to tap into their imaginations and express themselves creatively, not necessarily about learning steps (although they do get introduced to some basic steps). So don't be disappointed if your child doesn't pirouette around the house or look like a budding ballerina right away.

Preschool students perform one dance routine in our annual recital.

Separation From the Parent

The process of separating from the parent as the child attends dance class is an important accomplishment of preschool children.

As children mature, they begin to identify themselves as independent personalities. In separating from you, the parent, your child is learning

- to develop an interest in the activities of the dance class;
- to feel comfortable with other children in the class;
- to understand that his/her parent will come back and pick him/her up;
- to understand that all parents leave their children and come back for them.

It is important to know that at times young children will explore the limits of attending dance class and say they don't want to go. This period may occur anytime, but it is usually short-lived. Here are some suggestions that might help you handle the situation:

- Emphasize what the child is doing at the dance class rather than what you do while he/she is in class.
- Before you leave, see that the child is involved in an activity or is in the hands of a teacher.
- Avoid prolonged good-byes.
- Ask the teacher for help in separation. We expect the crying (and usually the tears are for the parent's benefit).

It May Not Be the Right Time

If your child cries or does not want to take class, don't panic. If we push children and create more stress than they are already experiencing, they may come to perceive dance class as a bad experience. That kind of negativity could make them apprehensive about dance for a long time, which isn't good for anyone involved. Never force your child into the classroom. If it doesn't work out this year, we encourage you to have your child try again next year.

We recommend that children be encouraged to practice at home but not forced to do so. Repetition is one of the key elements for success with preschool dance students; the more they

practice, the more confident they will feel. Practicing with your child allows you to join in the dance experience.

FOR ALL PARENTS AND STUDENTS

Understanding Dance Education

As a parent, you play an important role in supporting your student financially, but your emotional support is of equal—and perhaps even greater—value. Encourage your child to be the best that he or she can be regardless of what others may achieve. Dance is an individual art form and children need to be allowed to achieve at a pace that's comfortable. No two students will progress at the same rate, even if they experience the exact same training. It's important to encourage children to focus on themselves, give their all, and be satisfied with their own accomplishments.

Not all children will develop into professional dancers. One of the primary goals of our faculty is to teach life lessons and skills that offer children the best chance for success. Dance education encompasses far more than technique and the steps your children learn. We believe the discipline of dance training gives young people a better understanding of commitment through learning, experiencing the spirit of teamwork, and discovering what they can accomplish through hard work. Our goal is to educate the minds, bodies, and souls of our students, teaching them the skills needed for a successful life, whether or not they stay involved in dance.

Class Placement

The school faculty meets regularly to discuss the students' progress and/or placement. It is our policy to offer appropriate opportunities to every child.

Placement decisions are derived from many years of teaching experience. Often a child is placed in a particular group or class where he or she will feel confident, in order to promote the development of self-esteem. Some students who are placed in a higher level become discouraged, only to lose their passion for dance. Others respond to the challenge of being in a class with students who are more proficient by pushing themselves to work harder. Placement is highly individual and the factors that go into the decision are complex.

A typical student at The Dance Connection will spend *at least* two years in each level. Some students more, some students less. Each student is a unique individual who will progress at his or her own pace. Our instructors will know when it is the right time for your child to advance.

STAYING INFORMED

We work hard to make the dance experience organized and fun. Keeping you informed is one of our primary goals. Please read all newsletters and other school information.

Newsletters and important updates are printed and handed out to our students at the conclusion of class. The same newsletters and updates are posted on the The Dance Connection website.

Website www.thedanceconnectiononline.com

We are constantly updating our website. News, important parent and student information, contact information, and more are available online 24 hours a day.

Facebook Page

“Like” the Dance Connection page on Facebook to receive regular updates on school events. Please invite your family and friends to “like” the school.

Dress Code Requirements

We require that all students wear proper dance attire to their classes. The more you look like a dancer, the better you will dance. Any color leotard and tights may be worn. All long hair must be pulled back in a ponytail or a bun.

Ballet Class: Leotard, tights, ballet skirts, and ballet shoes. Teachers **must** be able to see the lines of your body to make proper corrections. All students enrolled in Ballet I & up **MUST** wear a leotard and tights to class. No exceptions.

Jazz Class: Leotard, tights, biker shorts, jazz pants, and jazz or ballet shoes are acceptable.

Modern: Any of the above is acceptable. Bare feet or dance paws.

Funk Jazz/Tap: Any of the above is acceptable, but **NO JEANS** are to be worn to class. Tap shoes for tap class. Jazz shoes are required for funk jazz class.

Tumbling: T-shirts, shorts, sweatpants, and clean, lightweight tennis shoes are to be worn. All shirts must be tucked in.

Zumba: Please bring a clean pair of shoes for class. We don't want to track in the dirt and weather from outside as many of our classes lay on the floor.

JEANS, KHAKI PANTS, JEAN SHORTS, KHAKI SHORTS, BAGGY T-SHIRTS OR SWEATSHIRTS WILL NOT BE PERMITTED IN CLASS!

Registration Fee

An annual registration fee of \$10 per family covers the cost of mailings, insurance, handbooks, rehearsals, and so on. Registration fees are not refundable.

Tuition and Expense Policy

All payments are due during the first week of the month. Our payment schedule is based on a 4 class per month basis over a 9-month period. The August classes and months with 5 weeks make up for vacation time. We accept checks and cash. Please make sure that you receive a receipt

from us when you make a payment. It helps to clear up any questions, should you have any. There will be a \$10.00 fee for all returned checks.

Discipline Policy

In order to maintain a happy, healthy, professional environment, students are taught the importance of being a part of the group. We encourage students to have respect for other students, the teachers and staff, and studio property, and we foster the development of good habits and compliance with rules of conduct.

Arrival and Departure

We do not allow children to wait outside for rides home. This is for their safety. Please come inside the studio when picking up your child from class. Children under age 10 should be picked up immediately after class. Students ages 10 and older must be picked up no more than 15 minutes after their class is completed.

Attendance

All students are expected to attend their regularly scheduled classes. Each class offers a step forward in the educational process. A missed class could leave a child one step behind the other students. During the months of February through April, choreography for the recital will be taught and rehearsed. It is important for children to feel completely confident with the choreography and the year-end performance. Missing class during this period could result in frustration for the students and their teachers and classmates.

Tardiness

Dance is a physical activity that requires the body to be warmed up in order to execute movement safely. Late students miss the proper warm-up and/or barre and therefore may sustain injury. Students who arrive more than 10 minutes late may be asked to observe class for reasons of personal safety.

Makeup Classes

Regular attendance to class is encouraged, however we know that there will be times when you have to miss. It is our policy at The Dance Connection that we **do not offer refunds or credit** for missed classes. We suggest that your child make up the missed class by attending another class of your choice at the proper level. Missed classes should be made up by the end of the month in which the initial class was missed.

Lost and Found

Please mark all dancewear, shoes, and personal items with your child's name. We will make every effort to locate and return lost items; however, we cannot be responsible for any items that your child brings to class.

General Policies

- Parents, siblings and friends must wait in the waiting room during class. There is not enough space in the dance room to accommodate observers. There will be times during the year when you are invited to watch your child's class.
- Only water is allowed in the studios. No food, drinks, or gum.
- Students - No cell phones or computers may be used during class time. (This means no emailing, Internet use, or text messaging.)
- Never speak negatively about teachers, students, or parents from other schools.
- All students must show respect for their teachers at all times. Inappropriate behavior could result in dismissal from the school.

A FINAL NOTE

WELCOME TO THE DANCE CONNECTION! We look forward to an exciting, rewarding season!