

4 Things Every Parent Should Know **Before Choosing a Dance Studio**

If most dance studios seem to have qualified, friendly teachers, 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 4 things that every parent should consider before deciding on a dance studio for their child.

1. What type of dance floor is used?

Dance is a very physical activity that requires a lot of jumping, which can put stress on bones and joints. Most dance footwear does not provide any cushioning or support, so the shock of dance movement can place a lot of pressure on the knees and back of a dancer. The best way to prevent against potential injury is by choosing a studio with a professional "floating floor". A floating floor is a dance floor that rests on a system of high-density foam, to absorb the shock of jumping. A high density foam base is superior to a "sprung" floor, which usually consists of a wood structure built on the regular floor.

The top layer of the dance floor is also an important factor. A vinyl composite "marley" floor is accepted worldwide as the best surface layer for recreational to professional dance. Facilities such as the Royal Winnipeg Ballet, the Royal Academy of Dance in London, England, and Riverdance-the Touring Show, all use marley floors as their dance surface. A marley floor allows dancers to slide, with a degree of "controlled slip, but is not slippery so there is less risk of slips and falls. Very few studios use professional marley floors because of the expense involved, and usually opt for a regular floor tile for a studio floor.

Each of our studio dance classrooms have floating floors that have over 700 high density foam blocks under the floor surface and a marley top surface. Our special floors help reduce the risk of injuries and allow students to dance longer without getting tired.

2. What is the size of the class? Are there Teacher Assistants?

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

Our studio limits the size of all of our classes, according to age level. Our class sizes are generally half the size of a typical learning classroom! All of our evening Pre-school and Kinder classes have Teacher Assistants accompanying the Teacher to ensure that each child receives individualized attention throughout the class.

3. What are the qualifications of the teachers?

Most studios employ teachers who are professionally qualified in the area of dance they will be teaching. Many studios use inexperienced teachers who “learn as they go” while teaching your children. We feel it is extremely important that our teachers are not only trained in dance, but are also trained in educating children. There are thousands of great dancers, but few make excellent teachers. Our studio strives to provide your children with the absolute best instructors possible. Our teachers are professional and experienced in dance and teaching. Many of our teachers have early childhood education degrees, which means our teachers are fully equipped to make your child’s dance education experience fun, engaging, and complete. We teach correct terminology (don’t laugh --- many teachers don’t!), respect and discipline, and proper technical training is at the core of our philosophy. Our teachers make dance class engaging, upbeat and fun, all while giving your children the best, most complete, curriculum in dance.

Our studio also believes in using a Student Teaching Program, which allows intermediate and advanced dancers enrolled in our studio to be placed as Teacher Assistants in Pre-school and Kinder classrooms to work alongside the Lead Teacher. Teacher Assistants provide Pre-school and Kinder classes with an extra set of eyes and hands to help the Lead Teacher ensure that individualized attention is given to each student and proper technique is being taught to each student.

4. Can I get immediate assistance and customer service?

In many studios the teacher or 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.

At many studios, parents may feel overwhelmed just looking at the piles of papers stacked on the front desk, wondering if your personal information is being kept confidential and records accurately maintained. Our studio is always kept organized and in tip-top shape, making it a relaxing, efficient, and pleasing environment to be in. At many studios, parents frequently feel out of the loop when it comes to receiving information and having questions answered, especially if you are new to dance. Our staff is always friendly and well informed with the latest, most up-to-date information, and you will be too, with our monthly dance newsletters.