



Competition Dancer Program

A Guide for Students and Parents

The Mission of Dance Express, a non-profit organization, is to educate, enrich and enable the lives of children and teens in the Livingston County and surrounding areas, through exposure to and instruction in the dance arts.

Dance Express welcomes all qualified dancers regardless of race, color, religion, national origin, or gender.

For Our Dancers:

Once you have been accepted into the Competition Dancer Program, the first step to becoming a successful dancer is making a solid commitment to your classes, rehearsals, and performances. 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, rehearsal, or performance 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 and choreographers you work with are essential. Listen to each correction given, whether it's directed to you or another dancer. A correction is an honor; it shows you how much a teacher cares about your progress as a dancer. Always say thank you when a teacher or choreographer offers you constructive criticism. Nothing can stop those students who apply themselves in every class and appreciate their teachers' knowledge and experience.

All rehearsals are dedicated to choreography or "cleaning" the choreography. A dancer who misses a rehearsal holds back the progress of the entire group. Repeating the choreography from a previous session for those who were absent takes up valuable rehearsal time, which could result in a performance that is not up to par. When we clean choreography, we may also change it. Dancers who miss a cleaning session may not be properly prepared for the upcoming performance and could end up letting themselves, their team, or the school down.

Performances and competitions are your opportunity to show the world the results of your dedication and hard work. To make the most of this opportunity:

- Arrive at performances at least one hour prior to the scheduled time, unless otherwise advised by your teachers.
- Be sure you are properly warmed up.
- Present yourself in a professional manner, with costumes pressed, shoes cleaned, and all accessories accounted for.
- Go out there and show the audience how much you love to dance!

**True Progress is made when you look at each class, rehearsal, or performance as an opportunity to become better at what you love to do.*

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

will assist in auditions to be held by that guest instructor. All fees for Guest Instructor's dances will be added to the account of each selected dancer.

enormous difference, we encourage you to be a part of your child's dance education.

Our program relies on a positive atmosphere for our faculty, competition participants, and their parents; it promotes a positive learning experience for all involved. Cooperation between all parents is expected. Showing respect for the other parents, along with the students and faculty, makes an important impression on the children. You are a role model for your child, demonstrating how to interact with others in a professional setting. Your child's presence at all classes, rehearsals, and performances are 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, they share a common goal: to assure that every child receives the best possible training, both physically and mentally. Mutual respect between our faculty and our dancers' parents provides the children with the ultimate care and education.

Understanding Dance Education

As a parent, the financial support of your student is important, but of equal—perhaps even greater—value is your emotional support. Encourage your child to be the best that he or she can be without regard to what others may achieve. Dance is an individual art form; each child needs to achieve at a pace that's comfortable for him or her. No two students will progress at the same rate, even if they experience the exact same training. It's important to encourage the children to focus on themselves, give their all, and be satisfied with their own accomplishments.

Dance education encompasses far more than technique or the steps your children will learn. We believe the discipline of dance training gives young people a better understanding of commitment by offering them the chance to learn, experience the spirit of teamwork, and understand what hard work can accomplish. Our goal is to educate the minds, bodies, and souls of our students, to teach them the skills needed for a successful life, whether or not they stay involved in dance.

Class or Choreography 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 where he or she will feel confident, in order to promote the development of self-esteem. Some dancers who are placed in a higher level become dis-

couraged, only to lose their passion for dance. Others respond to the challenge of being in a class with dancers who are more proficient by pushing themselves to work harder. Placement is highly individual and the factors that go into the decision are complex. Please see the school's director if you have questions or concerns about your child's placement.

Do's and Don'ts

Some parents may compare their child's progress or class or choreography placement to that of others in the program. Watch for this behavior in your children as well, and encourage them to focus on their own accomplishments. Looking to others for inspiration is a good thing; however, a negative focus or comparison distracts from the energy that could be focused on becoming a stronger dancer. In addition, speaking negatively about your child's teachers, fellow dancers, or other parents in front of your child—or other students—could result in problems far beyond your original concerns. Often children will react to their parents in a way that imitates the parent's behavior with other adults or authority figures.

Children learn important lessons from their teachers and parents, acquiring important behavior patterns through their example. Our school's faculty takes that responsibility seriously. It's our philosophy to encourage our students to feel, think, and act respectfully to their peers, the adults in their lives, and themselves. If you have questions or concerns about your child's dance education, don't panic—and please don't talk only with other parents when questions arise. Make an appointment to speak directly to your child's teachers or the director of the school. Please conduct all communication through the school office rather than approaching your child's teacher or the director between or during classes or calling them at home. Please contact instructors MSD/DE emails. If you do request a conference, please listen carefully to what your child's teachers have to say. They spend a significant amount of time with your child and can offer expertise in the field of dance education.

Image/Behavior

The children and parents involved in the Competition Program participate in many outside activities, each of which becomes a reflection of the school's philosophy.

Please keep the following in mind:

- We never speak negatively about teachers, dancers, parents or other schools.
- We never create conflict with the directors or judges of events in which we participate.
- We never recruit dancers from other schools.
- The school director handles all communication with the directors of our outside activities.

dents with outstanding costume balances will not be allowed to compete. **THERE ARE NO EXCEPTIONS TO THIS POLICY.**

Jewelry and make up

An instructor may require jewelry for a particular dance; it must be purchased through Dance Express. All dancers will purchase and wear the same make up; details will be available prior to first convention.

Early Dismissal or Students Leaving the Program

If a Competition dancer is dismissed or leaves the program, an alternate may replace him or her. The student leaving the team is required to cover all fees incurred by his/her replacement and to turn in all costumes to the school office until the end of the season, they will be returned to the student after the last performance. If a student misses a mandatory rehearsal, competition, workshop or performance they may be dismissed from the program. **PLEASE READ AND CONSIDER THE SCHEDULE THOROUGHLY—ENTRY AND WORKSHOP FEES ARE NON-REFUNDABLE.**

Alternates

Instructors will be selecting dancers to be alternates for their pieces. An alternate will be expected to attend all rehearsals for that number and be able to take the place of a dancer for various reasons. Alternates will not be expected to cover any fees for that dance, the original dancer will be billed.

Fund-Raising

Fundraisers are optional. Dance Express will schedule various fundraisers during the year. Proceeds of fundraisers will be shared between all Dance Express Members based on their participation. If a member's earned share of their total fundraising efforts exceeds troupe costs, the balance will be applied to the required technique classes only. All fundraisers must be approved by the directors of Dance Express and according to internal policies.

AUDITIONS FOR THE UPCOMING SEASON

Auditions are scheduled for dates in June. "Dance Express Fees and Schedule" publication. Auditions results will be emailed.

New this year - Dancer's with any outstanding balance for either Dance Express or Maria's School of Dance will not be permitted to audition.

GUEST CHOREOGRAPHERS

Dance Express may contract Guest Instructors/Choreographers, to hold Master Classes and/or Choreograph competition pieces. All Dance Express members are strongly encouraged to attend their workshops. If a competition piece is contracted, Dance Express directors and instructors

AS OF JANUARY 1, ALL REHEARSALS ARE MANDATORY, THERE WILL BE NO EXCEPTIONS PERMITTED. Conflicts are NOT allowed.

***Please attend all meetings and read all newsletters and postings to keep updated about any commitments. Important information will be shared by email. Please make sure that DE staff have an up to date email for communication.**

Workshop fees & Competition Entry Fees

All fees for workshops and competitions, as well as dates and venues are based on previous year's publications, and are subject to change if necessary. Dancers will be placed in the appropriate master classes by instructors individually for each convention.

At auditions each student will make a deposit of \$100.00. This fee will be deducted from the workshop fee for each student. If a student auditions, and is not chosen for any dances, the deposit will be returned. If a student auditions, is selected for a number and then drops after audition results are posted, the deposit will be forfeited by that student. There will be no refunds and no exceptions.

Fees are based on the assumption Dance Express will compete at three competitions and participate in two workshops. If Dance Express participates in three competitions that all require workshop participation, the workshop fees will be adjusted accordingly.

Tuition and Expense Policy

Part of the commitment to the Competition Program is being up-to-date with all accounts related to participation and regular class tuition. In order to participate in both competitions/workshops and recitals DE member's accounts must be current. Dance Express payments are due on the 30th of each month. ***A late fee of \$10.00 will be added to each account if funds are received after the 15th of the following month for all delinquent accounts. NO EXCEPTIONS WILL BE MADE.*** Fees for competition and workshops will be combined, and billed in four equal payments for troupe. For current fees, please see Dance Express's fees and schedule.

Costumes

Costume payments are the sole responsibility of the parent or guardian. Each competition number requires a costume. The average cost of a costume is \$30 to \$200. Costumes may also be rented from the studio from \$5.00 to \$30.00 each. All costumes rented or furnished by the studio will incur a \$10.00 cleaning fee. Costumes will be at the discretion of each teacher. If any studio costume is not returned in acceptable condition, the student will be charged the additional cost for repair or replacement. Stu-

- No parent or dancer may call or question the directors of any event. If you have a concern, please contact the director of our school.
- Dancers must always conduct themselves properly. Any behavior deemed inappropriate may be cause for dismissal.

Tips: Dress Code Requirements

- All Dancers are required to wear proper dancewear and the correct shoes for each dance/class
- Make sure shoes are clean and polished for each performance, in the correct shoe by October 1st.
- Hair must always be in a ponytail with all loose hair secured away from the dancers face.

Audition Requirements

Members must be 6 years old by January 1st of the competition season. Students must audition in the appropriate age group according to their age as of January 1st of the upcoming season unless otherwise instructed. Gymnastics tricks may be performed during auditions if the dancer is willing to perform them during competitions. However, tumbling is not a requirement of Dance Express.

A dancers attendance, participation and attitude in regular classes will also be considered when dancers audition as well as achievements and peer placement .

Classes

All dancers are **REQUIRED** to attend their regularly scheduled classes in addition to all rehearsals and performances. Any DE member with poor attendance may be dismissed from the program. Dancers will register for classes by the first of September. The program requires dancers to take classes in ballet, tap, and jazz. A technique class for each additional style of competition number will be required, if a student competes in any other style of dance. There will be required workshops in which it is expected that all team members will participate. There will be an additional charge for workshops/master classes. All dancers must show respect for their teachers at all times. Inappropriate behavior could result in dismissal from the program.

Rehearsal and Other Information

Rehearsals are an important part of the commitment to the Competition Program. All dancers are expected to work hard and arrive early enough to give themselves time to warm up prior to their scheduled rehearsal. Each dancer will be allowed to miss 2 rehearsals, please give the studio at least 3 weeks notice of any potential conflicts prior to scheduling rehearsals. Rehearsals will be posted at the studio on the "Competition Dancer Bulletin Board" as well as on the web site. It is the student's re-

sponsibility to check the board often and be aware of all scheduled practices. If a student misses a posted rehearsal, the directors may schedule a private lesson with each instructor for each dance rehearsal they miss. Scheduled private lessons will occur **PRIOR** to the next rehearsal. Private lesson fees will be added to the dancers account. The minimum private lesson will be one half of one hour. Additional rehearsals may be scheduled at the discretion of the teacher/choreographer. All dancers are required to participate. Parents are NOT allowed in the classroom during rehearsals OR private lessons unless permitted by the instructor. This is distracting to the student and the teacher. It is expected that all dancers will be on their best behavior during rehearsals and work as team players at all times.

The Focus Is Not Simply on Competition

Since it is our goal to instill a passion for performing rather than merely the desire to win awards, competition dancers also have a mandatory “showcase” performance at Alverson Center for The Performing Arts in the spring. Our solid reputation for quality reflects our attitude toward competition and our goal to develop in each student a genuine respect for dance as an art form. We consider participation in competitions not simply part of our students’ training as dancers; it’s also an important part of how we influence them as people. With the right focus, the experience gained in competition can be an excellent source of self-confidence. If the dancers feel good about a performance and understand that they become better each time they go onstage, they are truly growing through the competition experience. Hitting that stage and doing the best they can is what it’s all about; whether they win—or which award they win—is secondary.

Through participation in competitions, we hope to instill in our students an appreciation for other dancers and schools. We are not out to beat anyone; instead, we hope to inspire and motivate both students and faculty by exposing them to the highest caliber of talent available. Only then can we produce the best dancers and teachers possible. For us competition is an education!

ABOUT COMPETITIONS

Competition dances

Members will participate in three competitions and all scheduled workshops. They will also perform in the annual Dance Express Spring Recital. The directors of Dance Express may allow groups to attend additional competitions and or nationals. Only full groups will be allowed to compete. Fees for this will be added as required. Please be aware that DE Instructors or Directors may not attend.

NEW THIS YEAR — *Dancers auditioning may compete as a soloist, duet/trio, group or a member of the musical theater number. The musical theater number may consist of all styles of dance as well as vocal and character work. All other dances will be determined by dance genre. Students selected for acting or singing, will be required to attend the corresponding class(es).*

All students are required to audition in ballet tap and jazz. If a dancer wishes to audition in Hip Hop it will be a separate audition piece. Audition results are final and will not be changed.

Also, dancer’s whose accounts are due for any studio balance on the date of audition, will not be allowed to audition.

Attendance

Dancers are expected to attend all technique classes. If a dancer misses more than 20% of their technique classes, and have not completed a make up class, they will not be eligible for a solo the following season.

There are two options for a dancer to make up a missed class. They may attend another class in the same discipline, at an appropriate level and have the instructor sign a make up form.

Student’s sitting out but in attendance:

If a student is sitting playing on their phone, talking to others, etc. this will still count as an absence.

If a student is observing the class and takes notes, the student may show the notes to the instructor for approval and the student will be counted as present.

Graduating Seniors

All graduating high school seniors who have been members for at least three years will be allowed to compete and perform as soloists if they choose. They may compete as a soloist, or they may choose to compete as a duet/trio with other graduating seniors.

Scholarships

Dancers will receive a school credit for the amount of any cash scholarship awarded based on overall scores, split evenly between the dancers in that dance. It will be applied to required technique lessons. If a dancer does not continue dancing, the scholarship will be forfeited. There will be no refunds given for any scholarship. All cash awards for choreography, costume, or any other title will be kept by Dance Express. If a troupe member wins a tuition scholarship thru a workshop audition, that student will automatically be given a solo the following year. They may also audition at the June Auditions for a 2nd solo. All regular fees apply to both solos.

Independent Entries

No dancer may compete in any competition as an independent entry without permission of the director.