

## **STUDIO FOR THE LIVING ARTS DANCE COMPLEX**

### **CLASS PLACEMENT PHILOSOPHY**

Our professional faculty is extremely careful and dedicated to choosing the correct class level for each student. It is very important to remember that all students are individuals with very different talents, skills, and ability levels and they will not all progress at the same rate.

In maintaining a high quality of dance education, it is therefore sometimes impossible to keep the same students together in a class year after year. Many students may need extra help and a slightly slower pace to help them master new steps that may come easily to others. This is carefully considered when placing students in a class. It is very common to see two children of the same age and with the same number of years of dance training with extremely different capabilities.

Our faculty knows from experience that some children progress faster as part of the "top half" of a class, while others progress faster in the "bottom/younger/newer" half of a class. Unlike academics, where progress can sometimes be measured with a score or a grade, dance progress cannot be measured as simply. There are many factors that cannot be judged by the untrained eye - flexibility, natural ability for movement, the speed at which a dancer picks up choreography, his/her ear for music & beat, his/her performance quality, and also the actual skill level & step vocabulary he/she possesses. Many students "know" many steps, but do not yet have the technique or musicality to execute them properly and with style, which is key in dance. Dance Educators do not move dancers into a higher level class because they know or can do certain steps, but base their choices as much if not more on the quality of how the steps are executed - in combination, with style, and with control. These are the things that make dance an art, not just a sport.

The teacher's judgment should always be respected first and foremost as they look at each individual student through trained eyes.

**OTHER CONSIDERATIONS** The number of times a student studies per week, and his/her attendance may also have an important influence on how quickly he or she progresses.

For instance, a student who has studied jazz dancing for five years on a once a week basis may find himself/herself in a class with a student who has studied jazz for only one or two years but has also been taking ballet and tap classes. Naturally, the second student has been dancing more intensively and this will tend to speed up progress. On the other hand, there are limits to how many classes dancers should take.

Even with intensive level dancers who push their bodies to accomplish many difficult skills, it is important to have AT LEAST two free days a week with no classes to avoid physical and/or psychological burnout or injury. We sometimes find that many students who have taken ballet for several years are usually able to work at a higher level in tap and jazz than those that have had little or no ballet training. This is because ballet encompasses all the fundamentals of dance movement.

In conclusion, we encourage all of our students to work hard to become the best dancers that they can be, but they must work at a level which is suitable for them. Many students are easily discouraged when they are placed in too difficult a class and we want dance to be a happy and enjoyable experience for each student.

Quality dance training is based on trust in the teacher that he/she always has the student's best interest at heart, and that is our #1 priority.

### **Returning Students**

Our goal is to keep each class progressing together at a similar pace while paying attention to the slight mixed level that will naturally arise and change throughout the year. If it is determined by the teacher that a student has been enrolled in the wrong class the studio will contact the parent/guardian immediately. We try to make all placement changes as quickly as possible.

Please email or contact the office if you are unsure of your child's placement for the new dance season.

### **New Students**

For dancers who come to us with experience at other studios or who have been absent from us for some time, we need to ask a few questions to familiarize ourselves with your skill level and capabilities. Once we have done so we will consult with faculty members for class recommendations.

Once the initial placement is determined, the first class is then used as a trial. After the first class the teacher will make an assessment and advise if proper placement has been achieved or if a switch to another class is a better fit. We are committed to finding the absolute best class for each student so that we can ensure proper training and a safe and enjoyable learning environment.