

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

If most dance studios seem to have qualified, friendly teachers, experience teaching children, aren't they all pretty much the same? Does it really matter which studio you decide join? 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 help 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.

Our studio has floating floors that have over 700 high density foam blocks under the floor surface and a marley top surface that is imported from England. 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?**

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 smaller class sizes make sure that no fundamental concepts are being missed. A smaller class size also allows our teachers to ensure that students are not developing bad habits or improper technique. This also allows us to raise the level of expectations; therefore our students can progress with their skills at an increase rate.

Our studio limits all of our classes (ages 6 and up) to a maximum of just 15 students per class. If at any point these classes exceed 15 students, we add an assistant for every 7 students. With our “Rising Star” classes (ages 3-5) we limit all of our classes to a maximum of just 8 students per class with one assistant. If at any point these classes exceed 8 students, we add an assistant for every 4 students. Lone Star Jazz believes that every student should have the opportunity to dance; therefore we will not turn any child away because of class size. Instead we will add assistants or create a new class.

### **3. What are the “extras” required for the year?**

Most competitive studios attend several competitions each year. Several of these competitions are out of the area, or even out of the state. With all of this distance to travel, there are additional costs and time. Students are required to attend competitions, extra practices to prepare for those competitions, performances, and some have a year-end show. There are competitions, costume fees, and alterations and gym rental fees, as well as some require new dancewear purchases that change every year.

Our studio participates in no more than 5 required competitions and all of the required competitions are in the local area and most are in the Montgomery County area. Our competition fees are reasonable because there is no need for additional cost like hotels rooms, extra meals and gas. Our dancewear does not change every year. All costumes and required dancewear is age appropriate.

### **4. Can I get immediate assistance and customer service?**

In many studios the teacher or the 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, schedules, payments, and privates even if a teacher is occupied in a class. At Lone Star Jazz we love to get parents feedback about teachers, classes, etc. We would like for our families to feel some ownership in our program.

Our studio has office staff on hand during all regular class times, so you can get immediate assistance. We also have our phone calls forwarded so your calls will be answered when we are not in the office. The office staff produces a weekly and/monthly letter about updates and general information to keep the parents and students informed. All students have a file folder that contains these notices. Our studio has a website that is updated weekly with information for students and parents.