

Tips for Choosing

A DANCE SCHOOL

Not all dance studios are created equal, and with no licensing or regulatory system in place, parents and guardians should do some research before selecting a dance school. A poor program can not only create bad habits that are hard to correct, but can also dampen enthusiasm and cause physical harm. Parents and guardians should ask questions. Here are a few tips to consider when selecting a dance school for your student.

STRUCTURED PROGRAM

Look for a structured program for each level with a set curriculum. Children have their own timetable for development and class placement should be based on ability and not age. And students should pass milestones in their current level before being promoted to the next. Placing a child at a level that is inappropriate for them may cause unnecessary harm and frustration.

TECHNICAL FOUNDATION

The sole purpose of a dance school is to ensure your child's continuous, safe growth as a dancer. While performance is an essential part of that growth, a good school will not let it replace a basic emphasis upon building a strong, technical foundation. Some recreational or competition schools tend to devote the majority of their class time to preparing for recitals or competition, rather than firmly establishing proper technique.

DISCIPLINED ENVIRONMENT

To foster the discipline and organization that is essential to the art form, a studio should have a sense of structure to it and adequate basic facilities. Rooms should have barres and mirrors on at least one wall. Check to see that the studio uses sprung flooring that is well-cushioned and non-slip. A set list of uniform regulations with regards to leotard and tights, proper hair styles and neat shoes, also suggests that the school is well regulated and a positive learning environment. Smaller class sizes mean that the students will get the individual attention they need. Dance is often an exercise in patience, as gradual adjustments are made for each student over the course of many months and years. Classes with more than 15 students make this level of detailed attention harder to accomplish.

TEACHING QUALIFICATIONS

Finding qualified teachers is probably one of the most critical elements in the search for a dance studio. Exposure to a poorly trained instructor in the early stages can lead to injuries and bad habits that are hard to reverse. Ask where and how the teachers were trained themselves. Look for someone who has danced with a professional company, has a degree in dance or holds certifications in a reputable teaching syllabus that allows a teacher to know what, when and how to present a technique. Keep in mind, a dance degree, certificate, or professional dance experience does not necessarily make a good teacher. In the end, teacher quality is determined by the results achieved.