

Selecting a Dance School

There may be a Fred Astaire or Isadora Duncan hiding inside you or your child, but choosing a dance school can be intimidating when unsure what to look for. There are as many schools as there are educational and artistic viewpoints. This guide provides a few things to keep in mind when choosing a dance school. The points are in no order of priority.

Professional Background/Accreditation

- Asking about the training, professional background and accreditations of the teacher(s) will give you an idea of how qualified they are. Some teachers may have degrees in dance or dance teaching certifications. Others may have years of experience studying with a master or performing professionally. Be wary if this information cannot be provided to you.
- Below is a list of dance associations that provide educational syllabi and teacher accreditation for ballet, jazz, tap, ballroom and modern dance. They have differing mandates and histories – check out their websites to learn more.

CDTA – Canadian Dance Teachers Association

www.cdtaont.com

RAD- Royal Academy of Dance Canada

www.radcanada.org

ADAPT – Associated Dance Arts for Professional Teachers

www.adaptsyllabus.com

Cecchetti Society of Canada-Ontario Branch

www.cecchetti.ca

ISTD – Imperial Society of Teachers of Dancing

www.istd.org

Teaching Principles on class structure, performances/recitals, examinations, competitions

- Class Structure: Do you want a recreational environment or rigorous pre-professional training? Would you prefer classes that foster creative expression, or more structured technical training? The following points will give you an idea of how class time will be divided between preparing for exams, performances and competitions. (While reading, take into consideration the extra time and financial commitments that are involved).
- Performances/Recitals: Annual recitals allow students to experience rehearsing and performing on a stage. Recitals generally mean more money for parents, but they also give families and the school something to look forward to. Some schools also have performance ensembles that are involved in community showcases (may or may not be by audition).
- Examinations: An accredited dance school may offer dance exams that follow a structured syllabus through several grades. Syllabus provides a learning framework for the students and the teachers. If the school offers exams, much of the class time will be spent mastering a specific set of exercises over the year. Schools without structured exams may choose to vary the class exercises more frequently. Exams don't necessarily make the student a better dancer, but they do provide goals and rewards for students to reach. Choose what is best for you.
- Competitions: Some dance schools participate in adjudicated dance competitions with other national and international schools. In competitions, the students are

ranked and awarded trophies and prizes. Class time will be spent learning and mastering a specific routine for competition. They provide dancers with goals, performance opportunities and team building. Again, choose if this is best for you.

Class Size

- Schools should have a maximum and minimum class size. Keep in mind that smaller classes means more individual attention from teachers. Some schools will provide an assistant or second teacher for larger classes. Ask the school their policies. Anything over 15 students may be getting too large, especially with young children.

Safety Standards

- Teachers should have some background of safe movement practices and/or anatomy. Most teaching certifications provide this. Feel free to ask.
- Other considerations may be first aid qualifications, police background checks on teachers, fire safety regulations.

Fees

- Ask about class fees as well as additional fees for costumes, recitals/performances, competitions, fundraising events.
- Although every school has different objectives when setting prices, per class rates generally range between \$11-\$17 dollars (1 – 1.5 hour class).
- Ask about available scholarships and the possibility of exchanging classes for volunteering services.

The opportunity to try or watch a class

- This is the best way to see if the school is right for you. Many schools allow students to try or watch a free class before committing to enrolment.