

How many students are in a class?

Students should have enough room to move and use their bodies to the fullest. Even more importantly, the *class size must permit individual correction*. “Bad habits learned in the very early stages of training sometimes hamper a person’s growth for years to come,” says Early.

Another aspect of class composition is the age range. The younger the child, the smaller the range should be. Developmentally, a 3 year old is very different from a 5 year old.

Because we place priority on individual attention and teaching correct placement, classes at the Claire School of Dance are kept small. Maximum size is 12 students and classes normally range from 5-10 students. Class ages are based on developmental milestones.

Making this Important Decision

For a parents with no dance background of their own, distinguishing the good dance schools from the not-so-good can be a challenge.

With these few questions, a parent can look past promotional spin and make a more informed choice.

More about Finding the Best Dance Instruction

Quotations in italics and where indicated, are taken from *Finding the Best Dance Instruction: Look Before You Leap* by Barbara Early. This excellent guide, written by a professional dancer, includes a no-nonsense approach to choosing a teacher for ballet, jazz, tap, creative movement, ethnic, and adult forms of dance.



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We can also be contacted at
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Four Things Parents Should Know In Choosing a Dance School

“The world of dance is as foreign to most people as outer space,” says Barbara Early, Broadway performer and author of *Finding the Best Dance Instruction*. These four questions will help ensure that you are entrusting your children, and your dollars, to a competent and qualified teacher.

What does the Studio Look Like?

The floor is the big issue... Never, never, never dance on concrete or a surface that has concrete directly underneath it.

Dancing on concrete will shock and jar muscles and can lead to lasting knee and back injuries. The best floors are “sprung” or “floating,” set on risers of wood or dense foam. The ideal surface is a vinyl composite “marley” flooring, used by professional companies around the world. However, not all studios use marley because it is very expensive.

The studios should also provide adequate light and ventilation.

The Claire School of Dance has sprung floors in all its studios and all studios at Grace United have “marley” floor coverings. All studios are spacious and airy, with plenty of natural sunlight.

Who’s Teaching the Class?

Check that the class is taught by a qualified, experienced, friendly adult instructor who understands the complexities of dance and who really likes children.

A qualified instructor has an extensive background in both teaching and studying dance, with many, many years of training. She or he will have attained an advanced level of expertise in the type of dance he or she is teaching. The instructor, particularly if teaching young students, needs both patience and enthusiasm.

Instructors at the Claire School of Dance have achieved an advanced level in their specialty. All have extensive performing experience. All are experienced teachers who receive a written curriculum and regular “teacher training.” All teachers genuinely love their work and the children they teach. Many of our teachers are certified by the American Ballet Theatre (ABT).

What is the Teacher Teaching?

There should be a difference between “predance,” for children younger than seven, and technique classes for the older beginner.

Rhythm, timing, space and its use, levels, directions, and size are the main focus in a (creative movement) class... It can be very harmful to young developing bodies if taught by someone who is trying to inflict technique on preschool-age children.

In a beginning ballet technique class, the focus should be on developing proper alignment rather than learning “steps.” Alignment is keeping parts of the body “aligned,” so that stress does not cause injury. Turn-out is another area that may cause significant injury if not handled properly. A good teacher will stress proper development of turn-out.

Another indicator of good ballet teachers is **whether they can tell you the style of ballet they are teaching**. If they cannot tell you whether they teach Vaganova, Cecchetti, RAD, Bournonville, Balanchine, or the ABT National Training Curriculum, they are unlikely to have received good instruction themselves.



Another indicator of a good school is the **absence** of “combo” classes. Ballet, tap, and jazz should each be taught in a separate class.

At the Claire School of Dance, children ages 2 1/2 through 7 participate in creative movement and preballet programs. At age eight, students move into technique classes. Each kind of dance - jazz, tap, or ballet - is taught in a separate class. Ballet classes are based on the National Training Curriculum of the American Ballet Theatre.

----Behind every good dancer is a devoted parent.----