

— a step
above
DANCE COMPANY
AT OSWEGOLAND PARK DISTRICT

PARENT & PARTICIPANT
handbook

2018-2019



strive. dream. believe. inspire.

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part I AN INTRODUCTION TO A STEP ABOVE DANCE COMPANY

MISSION STATEMENT

The Oswegoland Park District welcomes your family to A Step Above Dance Company. Thank you for your interest in our competitive team program. It is our goal to provide an opportunity for your child to learn, grow, develop, and mature into an outstanding young adult. Dancers will learn life skills such as communication, teamwork, leadership, and dedication.

Dancers will develop confidence that comes with the knowledge that they can accomplish amazing things if they put their minds to it. Participating on one of our competitive teams is a lot of fun, but also requires commitment from both the dancer and his or her family. This manual will provide information and insight into how the program operates and detail what you can expect from us in the coming year.

Providing a fantastic dance experience is our first and foremost goal. If you still have questions or concerns regarding Company after reading this manual, please call 630.554.4478.

COMPETITIVE DANCE VS. RECREATIONAL DANCE CLASSES

Being a part of A Step Above Dance Company will require your child to commit to more hours of training than recreational dance classes; but it will also offer them the opportunity to overcome disappointment, learn personal discipline and perseverance, and develop time management skills. A Step Above will present dancers the opportunity to perform in front of many audiences, as well as other dance teams. We encourage our dancers to learn from each performance and competition, and challenge them to share and learn technique from their team members and competitors.

Families are responsible for transportation to and from Park District classes, performances, and competitions.

Each group will practice a different number of hours per week. As your dancer progresses up the competitive ladder, the hours and days of scheduled practice will continue to grow, along with the program cost.

Company runs for nine consecutive months September–June. Dancers and their families should expect performances and competitions to consume at least one weekend per month January-June. Time management is a necessary consideration in your decision to join the Company. For our most up to date performance/competition schedule visit the “Dance Company” page of the Oswegoland Park District website.

AUDITIONS

Initial placement and subsequent advancement from one group to the next is determined by the dance staff. Objective measures of learning will determine advancement such as technique, showmanship, and the ability to pick up a routine quickly; however, subjective elements such as commitment, desire, courage, coachability, and integrity will also be considered.

Auditions are closed. Parents are free to wait in the lobby area or may leave and pick up their dancer when auditions are finished. A group with four or less participants may be combined with another group. An email will be sent regarding group placement. All audition results are final. We reserve the right to place participants in groups we deem the best fit.

Advancement to the next group is decided by the instructors based upon a combination of factors including skill level, attendance, and attitude.

BALLET RECOMMENDATION

To understand and appreciate what goes into the development of a competitive dancer, one must understand exactly what it is we are trying to achieve by recommending ballet classes to all company dancers. It is important to take ballet because it is the foundation of all other dance disciplines. Through ballet, dancers will learn correct terminology, develop skills, and build strength and control.

- Dance terminology carries through all disciplines of dance. The ability to recognize and correctly pronounce terminology in French allows dancers to execute specific movements.
- Skill development will focus on basic and new skills. Basic skills are needed to accurately perform other styles of dance. If a dancer does not have strong basic skills, their entire performance is weakened. Basic skills must continually be refined in order to move to more difficult skills and to improve performance. New skills are introduced as the instructor sees fit.
- Building strength and control plays a role in the prevention of injuries when performing different skills such as leaps and turns. Instructors may use different ways of conditioning to challenge and build the dancers' strength.

part II PROGRAM POLICIES

DANCER GUIDELINES

The decision to join A Step Above Dance Company is important as it reflects a commitment to the team for nine months. The following guidelines outline what is expected of each team member:

- Arrive to practice, performances, and competitions on time and ready to participate.
- Company dancers should come to practice in a black leotard and tights, appropriate shoes, and with hair tied back. This allows instructors to more precisely see formation changes and ensure proper alignment while dancing. For safety concerns, please do not wear any jewelry (other than stud earrings) during practice and avoid excessively baggy clothing.
- Work hard and try your best. Concern yourself with things over which you have control, your attitude and your effort.
- Treat others how you would want to be treated and treat instructors and peers with respect. Kindness and respect are important when working on a team and when competing against other dance companies.
- Support fellow dance members and be courteous, friendly, and welcoming. Strive to be a positive role model for all dance students in Company and our recreational dance program.
- Eating and drinking (aside from water) will not be allowed during practice time. We do encourage dancers to bring plenty of water and healthy snacks to consume on breaks.
- If you are not feeling well, please let your instructor know. We want all of our dancers to learn to respect their bodies and listen when it needs to slow down. If you are sick, on medication, or injured, we need to know.
- Cell phones and other electronic devices may not be used during practice times.

PARENT GUIDELINES

A family's role in Company is key to a successful team experience.

- Check email and website regularly to stay current with Company activities. Email is our first form of communication. You may give us as many email addresses as you like.
- If you have questions or need to speak with your child's instructor, please do so before or after practice. Any other questions or concerns may be directed to the Recreation Supervisor.
- Please make arrangements to have your dancer picked up on time.

- Let us know if your dancer will miss practice by calling 630.554.4478, emailing Rockie Veverka at rveverka@oswegolandpd.org, or emailing your dancer's coach directly.
- Attending our parent meeting is beneficial. It is a great opportunity to have your questions about Company answered and communicate with the Recreation Supervisor and staff. The parent meeting will be held the day of auditions while your dancer is in class. Please set aside time to attend.
- Bring any concerns that arise directly to the instructor for resolution.
- Parents are expected to support the Dance Company and their child by focusing on efforts, improvements, and performances in order to ensure success of each dancer. Remember that children learn best by example.
- Negative comments regarding dancers, judges, dance staff, or anything related to dance will not be tolerated during practice, performances, or in the lobby.

The dance staff believes that the order of importance is always (1) family, (2) education, and (3) dance. If you choose to be a member of this program, it is assumed that you have allowed appropriate time for family functions and school responsibilities. If your child is unable to make the commitment this program requires, we can provide alternative opportunities for your family's needs.

DISCIPLINE POLICY

It is the goal of the Oswegoland Park District to provide each program participant an environment that is safe and secure, therefore, every participant is expected to treat other participants and Park District staff, volunteers, equipment, and facilities with respect.

The following behaviors are expected of participants:

- Be willing to listen and follow directions
- Accept the responsibilities of representing A Step Above Dance Company by displaying a positive attitude, and exhibiting good character and habits
- Use appropriate language
- Show respect to other Company members and competing teams
- Encourage and support all A Step Above participants

The following behaviors are considered unacceptable:

- Harming and endangering oneself
- Harming others such as, but not limited to:
 - Fighting, hitting, biting, or kicking others
 - Verbally or non-verbally abusing others (name calling, taunting, bullying, etc.)
- Using inappropriate language

- Failing to follow verbal instructions
- Intentional misuse of dance equipment
- Vandalism
- Theft
- Exhibiting behavior that undermines the authority of Park District staff

These discipline procedures are intended as general guidelines for the Park District staff and volunteers who are at all times expected to use good judgment and common sense to ensure safety and security for program participants.

DISCIPLINE PROCEDURES

If unacceptable behavior occurs, the Park District staff will follow the guidelines listed below:

1. Verbal warning
 - Park District staff will address the student directly
 - Explain what the warning is for
 - Let the participant know what will happen if the behavior continues
2. Verbal warning and consequence
 - A second verbal warning will be delivered
 - A parent will be contacted
 - The participant will have to sit out of the practice or activity
 - Let the participant know what will happen if the behavior continues
3. Behavior Log
 - A parent will be contacted
 - A written behavior report will be taken and signed by parent
 - The participant will be suspended for the remainder of the practice
4. Suspension
 - A parent will be contacted
 - A written behavior report will be taken and signed by parent
 - The participant will be suspended for a time frame determined by the Dance Coordinator
5. Removal from program
 - A parent will be contacted
 - A final written behavior report will be taken (and signed by parent)
 - Participant may be removed from the program

Steps may be eliminated based on severity of offense at the discretion of the Recreation Supervisor.

ATTENDANCE

Attendance is expected and involves arriving on time and staying for the entire practice and performance. If a dancer must miss practice or a performance, please call the Recreation Supervisor at 630.554.4478 or email at rveverka@oswegolandpd.org. If a dancer needs to leave early, prior arrangements need to be made with the instructor. Company members who miss practice or habitually arrive late and leave early from practice will have trouble performing to their highest potential and will hurt the group performance at events and competitions.

Attendance is important so that the Company is well prepared for performances and competitions. If a dancer is injured, they are expected to carry out all responsibilities of non-injured members within the limitations of their injury (such as cheering on fellow Company members at competitions and performances).

MISSED PRACTICES

A Step Above Dance Company will not offer make-up classes or credit for non-medical class absences. If a practice is missed it is the responsibility of the dancer to learn any choreography they have missed.

In order for any absences to be excused, the Recreation Supervisor and instructor must be notified in advance. Exceptions to this will be for unforeseen emergencies such as injury, severe illness, or death in the family.

An unexcused absence at least one week before a performance or competition may result in your dancer being removed from the dance under the discretion of the Recreation Supervisor and dance instructor. If a dancer misses practice during choreography, they may be choreographed out of the section of the dance they have missed.

An absence from a performance or competition without prior notification may also result in removal from future performances.

PRIVATE LESSONS

The Park District offers private dance lessons for those who express an interest in more concentrated, personal training. The normally scheduled classes and performances take precedence over any private lesson. Company members taking private lessons must be current with their tuition payments and any other financial obligations to the Oswegoland Park District. Private lessons must be paid in full to complete registration and are billed separately from Company fees. To schedule a private lesson, please contact the Recreation Supervisor at 630.554.4478.

PARENT MEETING

A parent meeting will be held the day of auditions. At this meeting you will receive important information regarding practices, the billing process, performances, events, and competitions. This meeting is also a great time to bring up any questions or concerns. If at anytime you would like to schedule a private meeting, please contact the Recreation Supervisor at 630.554.4478.

CANCELLATIONS & REMINDERS

The Oswegoland Park District uses Rainoutline.com to send text and/or email notifications to its participants with occasional program reminders or in the event of inclement weather. A Step Above Dance Company has its own Rainoutline extension used to remind you of holiday practice cancellations, performances/competitions, and picture day. We highly recommend Company dancers and their families sign up for these reminders by following the steps below:

1. Visit www.rainoutline.com
2. Search & select Oswegoland Park District
3. Choose "Dance Company" to view the current status
4. Chose "Email & Text Alerts" from the left to create an account to receive text and/or email notifications

EMERGENCY PROCEDURES

In the unlikely event of a medical emergency involving your child, the Oswegoland Park District has in place the following procedure:

1. Emergency first aid will be administered, including a call to 911 if necessary.
2. You will be contacted using the emergency contact information provided.

FINANCIAL POLICY

Your child's involvement in dance is a commitment of time, effort, and money. The dancers practice in a studio under the direction of educated, experienced, and professional staff. In addition to wages, the overhead incurred in a running a large dance program includes space, utilities, insurance, supplies, and administrative costs.

There will be only one registration required for a dancer to participate in the Dance Company that runs over multiple seasons. Company starts the second week of September and goes until mid-June. Fees are paid three times annually and include costume and competition. All dancers are expected to individually purchase undergarments, shoes, and warm ups.

There are three different methods of payment:

OPTION 1

- Fees may be paid by completion of an Auto-Charge Authorization Form, which allows the Park District to charge your payments on the date they are due to your credit card (Visa, MasterCard, American Express, or Discover).
- This method of payment protects you from the additional cost of late fees.

OPTION 2

- Fees may be paid by completion of an Electric Funds Transfer (EFT) Form, which allows the Park District to charge your payments on the date they are due by withdrawing directly from your checking account.
- This method of payment also protects you from the additional cost of late fees.

OPTION 3

- Fees may be paid by cash, check to the Oswegoland Park District, or credit card on or before the due date.
- Invoices are not mailed.
- An email reminder will be sent out approximately ten days prior to the due date.
- If the payment is received six or more days after the due date, a \$25 late fee will be charged to your account.
- If payment is still not made after the late fee is administered, the dancer will be suspended from the program until payment has been made.
- If you cannot make a payment on time, you may avoid the late fee by contacting the Park District's billing department.

In the event of a divorce or separation, the custodial parent is responsible for making payments on time and will be held accountable to pay all past due and late fees. Late fees may be waived if the parent contacts the billing department prior to the due date. The custodial parent will receive all bills and tax statements.

Injured dancers are expected to participate in practice and support fellow Company members at performances to the extent possible. There is no reduction in fees until the total amount of time missed exceeds one month and only upon being released to return to full practice will your account be adjusted. Any dancer who is out for more than a week must show a "return to activity" release signed by their doctor in order to return to practice.

ADDITIONAL FEES

Additional spirit items may be available for purchase during the season and are not included in regular tuition fees. Prices for spirit items will be announced prior to order date.

LINES OF RESPONSIBILITY

If you have a question or concern about an instructor, safety issue, or policy, please speak with your child's instructor first. If they are not able to resolve the issue, you will be referred to the Recreation Supervisor and then the Superintendent of Recreation. This line of responsibility is meant to encourage parents to maintain ongoing communication with Company instructors.

part III COMPETITIONS AND PERFORMANCES

COMPETITION & PERFORMANCE SCHEDULING

Information regarding performance or competition schedules will be sent via email and distributed in class at least two weeks prior to the event. Additional competition or performances, changes, and cancellations will also be communicated by email, on the "Dance Company" page of the Oswegoland Park District website, and in class.

Most competitions set entry deadlines. After the deadline date, the competition will send a final performance schedule depending on the number of entrants. It is not appropriate to call a competition to see if they have posted schedule information, please let the dance staff handle communications. It is a good idea to clear the weekend of a scheduled competition on the chance that there will be last minute changes that could conflict with your plans.

PARTICIPATION IN COMPETITIONS & PERFORMANCES

All performances and competitions are mandatory. If a dancer is unable to attend a performance or event, that dancer will hurt their group's performance. The Recreation Supervisor should be contacted as soon as possible if a dancer is unable to attend a scheduled performance or competition. Competition fees are non-refundable except for extraordinary circumstances.

COMPETITION ETIQUETTE FOR DANCERS

- Competition time of arrival will be distributed with other event information at least two weeks prior. Please keep in mind that dancers should always plan on arriving at least an hour before their first dance is scheduled to perform.
- Dancers must remain in the designated warm up area while waiting to perform.
- Each dancer should accept the scores their group receives with dignity and without criticism. Dancers cannot control the scores they receive or the performance of each individual dancer. They can only control their own performance.
- If a group receives a disappointing score, the instructor will work with that group to better their score or performance for the next competition or event. Dancers are part of a team and they need their fellow members to be positive, in control, and ready to perform.
- Be courteous, respectful, and polite to all competition officials, hosts, competitors, and instructors/coaches. This includes remaining off cell phones during awards. The only time you should approach a competition official is to thank them for hosting or judging a competition.
- Dancers should arrive in costume, with their warm-up on, and bring their Company to keep their belongings in during the competition.

- Dancers should stay dressed in the Company warm-up jacket for awards. Dancers are obligated to stay for the entire award ceremony and to accept any award with courtesy and gratitude. All dancers should remember that they are not just representing themselves, but also A Step Above Dance Company and the Oswegoland Park District.
- Dancers should remain with the Company until competition is over and a dance staff member releases them.

COMPETITION ETIQUETTE FOR PARENTS

- Cheering and applause is always welcome. Please be sure to cheer for all three Company groups.
- Respect all competition officials and instructors. Under no circumstance should you attempt to contact an official during or after the performance (judges, score keepers, etc.). Points can be deducted from the team for failure to follow these rules.
- Be respectful and considerate of all competitors.
- Parents, friends, and/or relatives of the dancer are not allowed into the warm-up area of the competition.
- No video or photography is allowed during competitions for the safety of dancers and protection of choreography. Each performance is professionally filmed and photographed. However, parents are allowed to film or photograph during the awards ceremony.
- All dancers are expected to stay until the end of the awards ceremony. They should cheer all award recipients – especially other Company members.

COMPETITION AND PERFORMANCE EXPENSES

Dancers are responsible for their own transportation to and from competitions and performances. Spectators should be prepared to pay an admission fee at performances.

COMPETITION JUDGES

Competition judges put in a great deal of time learning and studying the art of dance, and may be professional dancers themselves. Spectators are often unaware of special requirements, rules, and skill values that are factored into the final score. Dance staff can give more detail outside of the competition if parents have questions about scoring.

Although judging is primarily objective, an element of subjectivity exists because different judges tend to focus on different aspects of performances. As stated before, please do not approach a judge, either during or after a competition about a score awarded to the dancers.

part IV ADMINISTRATIVE STAFF

A STEP ABOVE DANCE COMPANY INSTRUCTORS

ALEX SHIELDS (STRIVE) is a ballet, jazz, tap, poms, and junior hip hop instructor. Alex has been dancing for 15+ years and has been teaching recreationally for 4+ years to dancers of all ages. She is currently the head coach for the Strive team on A Step Above Dance Company. Alex is currently obtaining her Bachelor's degree in Elementary Education from Aurora University in Aurora, IL. Most importantly, Alex believes that dancing is a unique way for all participants to express their feelings and emotions within choreography.

ALLY GORECKI (DREAM) is a dance instructor teaching all ages at both recreational and competitive levels. While she has trained in jazz, ballet, lyrical, hip hop, and poms throughout her dance career, tap and musical theater have always been her passions. In college, she choreographed and performed for a company affiliated with Marquette University in Milwaukee, WI for 5 years. Upon moving back to the Chicagoland area, she began teaching with the Oswegoland Park District and has been happily doing so for the last 4 years. She has two Bachelor degrees from Marquette University and currently works in education. Miss Ally is a proud founding member of A Step Above Dance Company, where she coaches Dream. Their team has won awards locally and has taken home various judge's choice awards over the years. Miss Ally strives to instill pride and self-confidence in all of her dancers. She hopes each child walks away from her classes with a passion for dance and an appreciation for all of the hard work they have put in.

BELLA MAHONEY (ASSISTANT) teaches various styles and ages and assists with A Step Above Dance Company's, Believe group. She has been dancing since she was two years old, and began competing at the age of four. She has been trained in various dance styles including but not limited to, ballet, pointe, lyrical, contemporary, modern, and musical theater. She has been named an ISHA All Conference Dancer in 2017, as well as 2018. Isabella has choreographed for numerous musicals around the Oswegoland area at many different levels of experience. Her goal as an instructor is to help students grow in their creativity, confidence, strength, and broaden their dance spectrum in a lighthearted environment.

CECI MINDER (ASSISTANT) is a dance assistant and pre-ballet instructor trained in many genres of dance including ballet, tap, jazz, lyrical, poms, and hip hop, among many others. She began taking dance classes at the Park District at the age of four, is a former founding member of A Step Above Dance Company's Inspire group, and was in the Assistant in Training Program for four years. Currently, she is member of the Oswego High School Varsity Dance Team. Her overall goal as an instructor is to provide students with a fun and challenging way to express themselves.

MELISSA GRAY (INSPIRE) is a dance instructor teaching various ages and levels recreationally and competitively. She began dancing at the age of four, studying several styles of dance, including ballet, lyrical, contemporary, jazz, tap and hip hop. In high school she was captain of the West Aurora Dance Team. She has a Bachelor's degree in Art from Aurora University, where she was also captain of the cheer and dance team. She has been teaching dance locally for over 10 years and has been part of the Park District dance staff since 2010. She is a founding member of A Step Above Dance Company, where she coaches Inspire. Their group has received numerous awards at local dance competitions. Melissa's favorite styles to teach are ballet and lyrical, but her favorite style to perform is tap.

MONIKA SZIRON (BELIEVE) has been training dancers at recreational and competitive levels for the past three years. Before joining the OPD dance staff, she was head junior varsity coach and assistant varsity coach for the Superior High School dance team. As a dancer, she trained at the School of the Minnesota Ballet and graduated from the school in 2011. She was also a varsity member of her high school dance team and gymnastics team. After high school she was a member of the University of North Dakota dance team. Aside from dance, Monika has a Bachelor's of Arts in Communicating Arts, a Master's of Arts in Digital Communication and Media Arts, and is currently a PhD student at Illinois Institute of Technology. She has placed in the top 10 in Division 1 at the 2012 UDA College Dance Team National Championship, Danced in the corps de ballet at The Minnesota Ballet for several seasons and toured with the company. In dance, but also with all that she does, she aims for inclusivity.

RACHEL MOFFETT (ASSISTANT) is a preschool dance and pre-ballet instructor for Oswegoland Park District. Previously, she has taught jazz, pom, and hip hop to dancers at various ages and levels. Rachel attended Oakland University and Macomb Community College, where she was a member of the show choir and The Macomers. Her dance training began in elementary school and has continued since then. She has studied styles varying from ballet to ballroom to hip hop. Rachel believes that you are never too old or too young to begin to dance. To her, dance is a fun way to be active and to express yourself in ways that you never expected.

STAFF CONTACT INFORMATION

Recreation Supervisor
Rockie Veverka
630.554.4478
rveverka@oswegolandpd.org

Superintendent of Recreation
Tom Betsinger
630.554.4460
tbetsinger@oswegolandpd.org

Dance Company Billing
Susan Lipnick
630.554.4443
slipnick@oswegolandpd.org

PARK DISTRICT INFORMATION

Website oswegolandparkdistrict.org
Phone 630.554.1010