

— a step
above
DANCE COMPANY
AT OSWEGOLAND PARK DISTRICT

PARENT & PARTICIPANT
handbook

2021-2022



strive. dream. believe. inspire.

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PARK DISTRICT INFORMATION

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A STEP ABOVE DANCE COMPANY INSTRUCTORS

ALLY GORECKI (BELIEVE) 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 (INSPIRE) teaches various styles and ages. 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.

RACHEL MOFFETT (DREAM) 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, 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.

MCKENNA POTTER (STRIVE) has been dancing for the past 14 years. She has experience in the following styles: Jazz, Poms, Ballet, Hip Hop, Lyrical/Contemporary, and Tap, with both Contemporary and Hip Hop being her favorites. McKenna has competed for four years with Jazz, Lyrical/Contemporary, and Hip Hop style dances and was a part of the Performance Troupe for three years. As a child, McKenna loved theatre and took part in several plays and musicals. McKenna helped initiate a dance team at her school where she held a Captain position. She participated in the dance team for two years where they advanced to State Finals placing top twelve. McKenna attends Aurora University where she is studying Health Sciences.

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.

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 most dance disciplines. Through ballet, dancers will learn correct terminology, develop skills, and build strength and control.

- Dance terminology carries through most 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.

COMPETITION ETIQUETTE FOR PARENTS

- Cheering and applause is always welcome. Please be sure to cheer for all four 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.

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.

DUETS/TRIOS

Dancers will have the opportunity to compete a duet or trio at three competitions throughout the season. Company Instructors will create groups based on skill level and strength in dance style. Instructors will take preferred dance style into considerations but will have final say on dance style and group members. Practices to learn and clean choreography will take place in three one-hour Sunday practices September-November. They will have 15 minute rehearsals before or after their regularly scheduled practices throughout the season and one run through the weekend before competition. Dancers are expected to attend all three practices in order to learn and clean choreography. Dancers are expected to attend their regular weekly group practices in order to participate in a duet/trio. Dancer who habitually miss weekly group practices may be pulled from their duet/trio.

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.

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.
- 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

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

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.

Different colored or type of shoes, undergarments, or costume pieces may be required for certain performances.

Spectator entry fees or media fees may be required for certain performances or competitions.

Team parties may require an additional fee for materials and supplies.

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 Cultural Arts & Special Events. 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 shutterfly page, 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.

Late Payments - Practice Fees

Practice fees are due on the 12th of the month. On the 15th of the month, a \$25 late fee will be charged to your account. If you cannot make the payment on time, you can avoid the late fee by contacting the Oswegoland Park District's billing department @ 630.554.4064 prior to the due date to make an alternative plan. If that plan is honored, you will not be charged the late fee. If a payment has not been received five (5) days after the due date, and you have not contacted the billing department, your child's participation may be disrupted. The third time your account is past due, automatic payments will be required to continue in the program.

Late Payments - Competition Fees

Competition fees are due on the 22nd of the month. On the 25th of the month, a \$25 late fee will be charged to your account. If you cannot make the payment on time, you can avoid the late fee by contacting the Oswegoland Park District's billing department @ 630.554.4064 prior to the due date to make an alternative payment plan. If that plan is honored, you will not be charged the late fee. If a payment has not been received five (5) days after the due date, and you have not contacted the billing department, your child's participation may be disrupted. The third time your account is past due, automatic payments will be required to continue in the program.

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 10 days prior to the due date.

- 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 Recreation Supervisor
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 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

Three 30-minute private lessons are included in practice fees. The normally scheduled practices and performances take precedence over any private lesson. Dancers may use their lessons to work on certain technique, skills and memorization of their routines. They may not use their lesson as a make-up class for missing their regularly scheduled practice. Company members taking private lessons must be current with their tuition payments and other financial obligations to the Oswegoland Park District

EVALUATIONS

Your dancer will receive an evaluation of their progress and a recommendation for recreational dance classes in November and again in May.

Any questions regarding class placement, please contact your dancer's instructor directly, or the Recreation Supervisor at 630.554.4478.

PARENT MEETING

One to two parent meetings will be held each season. At these meetings 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 split between practice and competition/performance and are paid four times throughout the season. All dancers are expected to individually purchase undergarments, shoes, and warmups.