

 a step
 above
DANCE COMPANY
AT OSWEGOLAND PARK DISTRICT

PARENT & PARTICIPANT
handbook

2024-2025

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 dance 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. Being a part of Dance Company is a lot of fun, but also requires commitment from both the dancer and their 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 the Recreation Supervisor at 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 is a year long commitment. Dancers and their families should expect performances and competitions to consume at least one weekend per month beginning in January. 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, coach-ability, 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.

ADDITIONAL CLASS REQUIREMENT

All Company dancers are required to take a weekly ballet class in addition to their Company practices. Ballet classes will be at full price. Any additional dance class will receive a 10% discount, with no limit to the number of classes eligible for the discount.

Ballet

It is important to take ballet as it is the foundation of most dance disciplines. Through ballet, dancers will learn correct terminology, develop the technique needed to perform certain skills and tricks, and build strength and control.

Additional Dance Styles

In addition to ballet, dancers may take styles such as jazz, lyrical, musical theatre, tap or hip hop. Taking different styles of dance expose dancers to many styles and techniques which will help the dancer become better rounded as a performer. Dancers may find themselves enjoying a style they never thought they would.

Different Instructors

Every teacher offers their own teaching style. By taking additional classes, dancers will have the opportunity to learn from multiple instructors which can develop a solid foundation of skills and strength.

Building Strength and Technique

Building strength and control plays a role in the prevention of injuries when performing different skills. Dancers may also become more proficient in different techniques. Each style has moves, rhythms, and other characteristics that are specific to that style. Taking different classes will expose the dancer to more technique and skills.

part II PROGRAM POLICIES

DANCER GUIDELINES

The decision to join A Step Above Dance Company is important as it reflects a commitment to the Company. 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 appropriate dance clothing with 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 experience.

- Check email and BAND app regularly to stay current with Company activities.
- 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 instructor 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.
- Please maintain integrity in your social media posts regarding the dance program, instructors, and competitions. Be mindful when posting photos or videos of other children or choreography.

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.

BEHAVIOR 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.

Please maintain integrity in your social media posts regarding the dance program, instructors, and competitors. Be mindful when posting photos of other children or choreography.

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 physically, verbally, or non-verbally (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.

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 mandatory. 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.

An absence at least two weeks 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.

INJURIES AND MEDICAL ISSUES

Safety is always top priority and preventative measures are taken to avoid injuries as much as possible. All Company members must sign a waiver before participating in Company.

Injured dancers are expected to participate to the fullest extent possible. If a dancer cannot participate, they will be expected to keep a journal and take notes during practice.

Full monthly payments must still continue to be paid. Your account may be adjusted for time missed once the dancer is released to return. A doctor's note is required in order to return to practice if the dancer is out for more than one practice.

If the injured dancer is released from a doctor within 5 weeks of a competition, the instructors and Recreation Supervisor will determine if the child may still compete. The dancer must be released to full activity before competition payments are made in order to compete.

Dancers with any special needs due to medical conditions (example – asthma) must be responsible to be able to take care of those needs themselves or they may have a parent/guardian present to assist. Instructors are not able to hold or administer medications.

If the dancer will miss practice or is unable to remain in Dance Company for any medical reason, please contact Rockie Veverka at 630.554.4478 or rveverka@oswegolandpd.org. Once a dancer is withdrawn from the Company, they may not be able to re-join until the next Company season.

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.

COMMUNICATION

The Oswegoland Park District utilizes Remind to deliver real-time competition updates via text messages to participants. Additionally, the BAND app will facilitate communication and reminders for parents and dancers, including competition details, media sharing, calendar functionality, and weather advisories. To ensure approval to our BAND, all members are required to use their first and last name. .

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 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 is a year long commitment. Fees are split between practice, competition, and costume, and are paid monthly throughout the season. All dancers are expected to individually purchase undergarments, shoes, and warm ups.

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.

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 or media fees may be required for 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 BAND and email about two weeks prior to the event. Additional competitions or performance, schedule changes, and cancellations will also be communicated by BAND, email, through Remind, or in class. Most competitions set entry deadlines. After the deadline date, the competition will send a final performance schedule depending on the number of entries. 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. Please be aware that dancers may compete anytime between Friday at 8:00am to Sunday at 10:00pm.

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.

SMALL GROUPS/DUETS/TRIOS & SOLOS

Dancers may have the opportunity to compete in a small group, duet/trio or solo.

Company Instructors will create groups based on skill level and strength in dance style. Instructors will take preferred dance style or group members into consideration but will have final say.

Dancers may learn choreography from any Park District dance instructor. All of our instructors on staff have the strengths and capabilities to create choreography.

Practices to learn and clean choreography will take place in three – four one hour rehearsals June – August. They will also have six hours of rehearsal throughout the season. Dancers are expected to attend all choreography practices in order to learn and clean their dance.

Large group dances take precedent over any small group, duet/trio or solo. Dancers are expected to attend their regular weekly large group practices in order to participate in a small group, duet/trio or solo. Dancers who habitually miss weekly group practices may be pulled from their small group, duet/trio, or solo.

COMPETITION ETIQUETTE FOR DANCERS

- Competition time of arrival will be distributed with other event information 10-14 days prior. Please keep in mind that dancers should always plan on arriving at least an hour and a half before their first dance is scheduled to perform.
- Dancers must remain with their group in the designated dressing room 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 jacket on.
- 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 Company groups.
- Respect all competition workers, judges, and instructors. Under no circumstance should you attempt to contact a judge during or after the performance. Points can be deducted from the team or disqualification 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 may have to pay an admission fee at performances and competitions. Dancers will also have the opportunity to purchase items from the competitions such as trophies, emblems, t-shirts, etc.

COMPETITION JUDGING

Competition judges put in a great deal of time learning and studying the art of dance, and may even be professional dancers themselves. Most dance scores are given on a scale of 100.

Most competitions include the following categories on their scoring rubric:

- Age Group
- Level
- Dance Style
- Group Size
- Technique
- Performance/Stage Presence
- Presentation
- Choreography
- Overall Impression

This type of scoring methodology is what's known as "adjudication". Each dancer receives an adjudication score, which is simply their numeric score. At an awards ceremony, adjudication awards are usually the first to be given.

Once adjudicated scores are announced, dancers may also receive an overall award. Overall awards are where dancers will learn their standings within each category as first, second, third, and so on.

Most competitions take the average age of the group performing and set different ages into divisions. Usually the names of the age divisions are Mini, Petite, junior, Teen, and Senior.

Competitions may have between two – Five levels. It is up to A Step Above instructors and the Recreation Supervisor to place dancers in the correct level at each event. The criteria for levels range from how many hours a dancer trains, to how many years they've been dancing, to what skills are in the routine.

The technique portion on a scoring rubric is always the majority of the score at a dance competition. The most important piece of dance is often technique and proper way to execute skills.

Execution of performance and stage presence is usually the second most important on the scoring rubric. This is how comfortable the dancer is in the performance and how they are able to connect with audience and judges. Stage presence is important because even with proper technique, if a dance is performed at low energy or with the wrong facial expression, it diminishes the perceived skill level of everything else.

Presentation is often given a smaller percentage of the score. Presentation includes costuming, hair and makeup, and the walk off and on stage.

Choreography scoring includes how well a story is being told, physical levels, transitions, age-appropriate movement and music, and how unique a routine is. Although choreography is out of the dancer's control, Instructors can take this information to make changes.

Dance judging may be subjective and different judges tend to focus on different aspects of performances. Dance staff can give more detail outside of the competition if parents have questions about scoring.

part IV STAFF CONTACT INFORMATION

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PARK DISTRICT INFORMATION

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