

Frequently asked questions:

1) Why didn't my child move to the next level?

All children from Prek - 4th grade make a natural progression to the next level based on age. Beyond 4th grade, class progression is relative to regular class attendance, class work ethic and attitude (including coming prepared, dressed properly and on time), maturity, physical strength and strength in ballet technique. Level IIB spans grade 4 - 6. Level IIIA spans 5th grade and up. LABT Company dancers - Trainee Levels IIB and IV are by invitation or audition only. IIB spans grades 6 and up and IV spans grades 9 and up. Students in these levels are expected to be "pointe ready", willing to commit to 3 or more classes a week, weekend rehearsals and 2 performances besides the annual recital. They are also expected to continue training during the summer months. For those not wishing to be part of the LABT company - we offer the Level III/IV Recreational Ballet class that meets once a week and does not require the above commitment.

2) Why do they have to go to ballet class more than once a week beginning in 4th grade?

Just as in any sport, it is important to begin to train more than once a week to begin to specialize the training of a ballet dancer to prepare them for more advanced skills. Think of any sport - soccer, cheer, volleyball, basketball - all require more than one day a week of training. Classical ballet beyond 4th grade is extremely athletic and physically demanding. This is why we offer Recreational Ballet to students from grade 6 and up who wish to continue ballet classes more for leisure.

3) Why must all students take ballet at the LCDA?

The LCDA is a classical ballet studio that also offers other types of dance classes to enhance the skills of all dancers. Without ballet all movements in most other styles of dance would never be performed properly, and this is something all dancers must realize. Movement in jazz, lyrical, contemporary, and modern derive from the five positions of the feet created in ballet. To master those positions and movement one must take ballet to be able to apply it to the other styles of dance. Ballet is also the most demanding, most disciplined of all styles of dance; but also the most rewarding. With a solid foundation, classically trained dancers can transfer their skills into jazz, contemporary dance, or any other dance form they might decide to pursue. Accomplishing that solid foundation is crucial to becoming a great dancer in any dance style. This alone proves that a study of ballet is necessary for any dancer who wants to succeed in any style of dance.

3) Why must LCDA students be age 4 by Sept. 30th to begin dance lessons?

The LCDA has 3 certified Elementary Educators on staff who have found that true PreK age is the best age both physically and maturity-wise to begin our structured classical ballet syllabus. There is creative dance and play involved in our PreK and Kinder syllabus, but our students are also taught true ballet basics.

4) Why do the students have to have hair in a bun?

Not only do ballet buns meet the standard expectation and appearance of ballerinas, they have a functional purpose too. Having hair up in a ballet bun allows the instructor, and dancer, to see the line that is being created by the shoulders, neck, arms, and back, and make corrections if necessary. The buns also prevents any distractions that can be caused by a 'flying' pony tail during leaps, jumps, and turns. Often times, dancers get hit in the face with their pony tail during turns, creating a distraction to their spotting and technique.

5) What does it take to be invited to join the LABT Junior or Senior Company?

To be considered to move to the LABT Trainee Levels IIB and IV, a dancer must have at least 4 consistent years of classical ballet training (including summer work), consistent class attendance, and the appropriate amount of both physical and technical strength to keep up with the fast pace and advanced skills presented in these levels. They must also exhibit the right amount of maturity, self motivation and attention to class work to be considered. These dancers also must be strong enough to begin pointe work and this again is based on physical and technical strength, but also foot shape and foot strength as determined by the director and present teacher. Hopefully, you all took advantage of the FREE VOUCHER to bring your dancer to our SPRING

GALA to see just how advanced our Jr. and Sr. Co. members actually are! These dancers are in class anywhere from at least 5 - 10 hours a week! The final decision for a dancer to move to this level is made by the director.

6) Why can't she my child start pointe?

The decision to start pointe work is made **only** by a skilled and knowledgeable ballet teacher.

Students attempting pointe work before being ready risk, at the very least, building bad habits which may take years to correct. More serious is the potential for injury or permanent damage to the bone or muscle structure of the foot, which far outweighs the risk of disappointment. To avoid these problems, a teacher must consider several things in selecting students who are ready to begin pointe work:

Age -- No student should attempt pointe work before the age of 10. The pressure of the body's weight on the foot and toes, which are still soft and growing before that age, can cause malformation of the bones and joints. Many teachers prefer to wait until the student is 11 or 12 years old.

Training -- The student must have had at least two to three years of serious ballet training and be currently taking at least three classes per week. This is the minimum time and preparation needed for a student to develop sufficient technique and strength to prepare her for pointe work.

Bone Structure -- The structure of the student's ankle and foot is of great importance. The ideal foot has toes of nearly equal length which provide a "squared-off" platform on which to stand. Students having a long big toe may experience some difficulty and discomfort on pointe, since the entire body weight must be supported on just the big toes, but this type foot does not necessarily prevent the dancer from dancing well, safely, or relatively pain free.

The most difficult foot shape to work with is when the second toe is the longest. If the difference in length is slight, certain modifications can help relieve the pressure on that toe. The second structural consideration is the degree of flexibility in the ankle and amount of natural arch in the instep. A student whose feet have insufficient flexibility and /or arch will not be able to place the ankle in a direct line between the knee and the toes on pointe and can be dangerous. A foot that has an extremely flexible ankle and/or an extremely high instep will need special care and consideration from a teacher with a watchful eye. This type ankle is often very weak and may require extra strengthening work before pointe work is attempted.

Physique -- The student's individual physique must be carefully evaluated. She should have strong abdominal and back muscles which hold the torso in proper alignment, and she should show consistent use of these muscles in and out of ballet class. Strong leg, ankle, and foot muscles must be able to hold the entire leg in proper alignment. Supinated or pronated ankles are a great risk on pointe and careful attention must be paid to assure that the muscles around the ankle are sufficiently retrained to hold the ankle strongly in correct position.

Attitude -- The student must have a good attitude: paying close attention to and working diligently on the corrections given by her teacher.

Peers -- It is important for students and parents to understand that the guidelines listed above are **minimum** age and technique requirements. Because students develop at different rates, it is unlikely that an entire class would be ready to attempt pointe work at the same time. Most students who require further work on posture, strength, or other special problems will eventually be able to join their classmates on pointe.

7) Why should dancers take classes during the summer?

Summer sessions provide a unique opportunity for dance students to work intensively in developing their bodies, their technique, and their artistry. In the summer session students come to class during the day when they are not as tired from their school work, and everyday activities and can focus entirely on their dance training. The intensity of attending dance classes everyday and taking a variety of classes each day allows the dancer's body to gain flexibility and strength. The classes also allow student to be reminded more consistently on the correct body placement and technique allowing them to develop "muscle memory". Students often make significant progress during the summer session that allows them to improve faster during the academic year. They also get a kick start before the next year begins which helps to boost self confidence!