



Welcome to the Metro Parks dance program! In order to ensure a vibrant and healthy dance environment for all students, parents, and teachers, please read the following information carefully for some important information regarding your child's dance class.

The primary goal of the dance division is education. Our teachers want to offer your children the highest quality training possible in a supportive environment. Many students take our classes simply to enrich their lives and discover the joy of movement, but for the students who would like to go on to dance professionally or seek a college degree in dance, we want to ensure they have the requisite skills to be successful. Additionally, we help students develop as educated audience members and unearth the positive effects that physical activity and creative expression can have on their overall well-being.

EXPECTATIONS FOR EVERYONE

We are proud to offer high-quality dance education in the public sector to a wide variety of students and families from diverse backgrounds. It is expected that all students and parents will treat each other, faculty members, and Metro Parks employees with respect and will show support to each of our dancers, faculty members, and companies-in-residence regardless of race, gender identity, body type, socio-economic status, disability, political or religious beliefs.

Please read through the [Parks and Recreation Participants Code of Conduct](#).

DANCE DIVISION STAFF CONTACTS:

Kathryn Wilkening, Supervisor

Office: 615.862.8439

kathryn.wilkening@nashville.gov

Christen Heilman, Specialized Skills Instructor-Full-time

Office: 615.880.2787 x72721

christen.heilman@nashville.gov

Katie Eliason, Specialized Skills Instructor-30 hrs

Office: 615.880.2787 x72720

kathryn.eliason@nashville.gov

Sherry Hipps, Cultural Arts Superintendent

Office: 615.880.2787 x72706

sherry.hipps@nashville.gov

WEBSITES: dance.nashville.gov • friendsofmetrodance.org

SOCIAL MEDIA: [Facebook](#) • [Instagram](#) @metrodancenashville #centennialyouthballet

WHAT TO DO ON THE FIRST DAY OF CLASS

- Sign-in at the front desk to ensure your child is registered and shows up on the roster.
- Check that your contact information is accurate. Our most effective mode of communication is e-mail. Please make sure we have an e-mail address that you check regularly and feel free to add the e-mail address of any other adults who need to receive information about your child's class(es).
- For classes at CPAS, pick up a parking pass to display on your dashboard when you are parked in the side lot. You do not need a pass to park in spaces in front of the building by the playground.

CLASS ATTENDANCE POLICY

Consistent attendance and punctuality are key ingredients for a dancer's success! Classes and levels are cumulative and build on developmentally appropriate skills learned and mastered from year to year. Students are strongly encouraged to study for the full academic year. Students learn foundational skills during the fall session and continue to build on those skills during the spring session. Students must complete the full fall and spring semester of the same class (including day/time) before moving up. Students with excessive absences may be asked to continue in the same level the following year to master skills needed to progress. Please consider your child's full year schedule when committing to a dance class. Students must be the minimum age for both fall and spring sessions on August 15, 2023 to align with MNPS age requirements for the school year. New students hoping to join the winter/spring term must have the Dance Supervisor's approval before registering. Please notify the teacher or supervisor if you know your child will be absent. **Please Note:** *We are sensitive to the physical and mental needs of the students to support their optimum health. We simply aim to provide guidelines for successful training in a typical year.*

For Ballet: Intermediate Sage/Rose, Advanced I, II, III Students

This policy was developed to provide a framework to help students develop the healthy practice, stamina, strength, and rest they need to perform classical ballet at a high level in a healthy way. While the policy is not in place to penalize students who miss class, inconsistent attendance tends to affect a student's technical progress and factor into future casting and placement decisions.

- Up to 4 excused absences will be tolerated per semester.
- If a student makes up the class within 2 weeks, it does not count as an absence.
- Make-ups should be on a different day and, if a class in the same level is not available, in a level lower than a student's current level. For Advanced I students, they will have the option of taking Intermediate Rose/Sage and doing barre work en pointe with prior instructor approval.
- Students are reminded that they are guests in make-up classes and may not receive individual corrections. Guests are expected to stay in the back or to the sides and allow registered students to take precedence in the space.
- Students who are late to class and miss pliés may be asked to observe class and fill out an observation form provided. This is for the dancer's safety. Observing a class can be a useful tool to provide students a different perspective on their technique. Students may observe up to 2 classes per semester (unless they are observing due to injury).
- Students who are injured or have a non-communicable illness may choose to observe class and will not be counted as absent.
- Students dancing en pointe must attend a minimum of three 2-hour classes a week to practice pointe safely. Students who do not attend consistently may not be allowed to be en pointe at the teacher's discretion.

If your child is going to miss class, please e-mail the appropriate dance staff member ahead of time with the date of the class missed and the planned make-up date. For non-Dance Staff teachers, e-mail the supervisor to communicate to the teachers. For last minute emergencies, please call the front desk at 615-880-2787.

INCLEMENT WEATHER

Metro Parks Dance generally cancels classes if Metro Schools close for weather but may elect to hold afternoon classes if students can travel safely. If we cancel classes, we will notify families via e-mail, will post on social media (@metrodancenashville), and generally schedule a make-up at the end of the semester.

STUDENT EXPECTATIONS

- Dancers should **arrive at least 5 minutes before class begins**, dressed in the proper attire, and ready to work.
- Dancers should neatly store their belongings in the cubbies provided in each studio. Younger students are advised to leave belongings with their grown-up in the lobby.
- Dancers should show respect to the teacher through active listening when the teacher is giving instructions, asking questions only related to the task at hand, making relevant comments when addressed by the teacher, and demonstrating an openness to new information.
- Phones must be silenced and put away during class. Texting and phone calls should be made from the lobby before or after class or during a break.
- Dancers are expected to respect the space of others.
- Dancers are not allowed to chew gum or bring food into the studio. Only bottled water is allowed.
- Dancers are not allowed to hang on the ballet barres.
- Dancers should conduct themselves appropriately in the lobby and dressing room before and after class as well. Please no running, gymnastics or screaming.
- Dancers should go to the bathroom before class.
- Dancers should make sure to pick up all trash, take all of their belongings after class, and leave the studio as they found it.

PARENT/GUARDIAN EXPECTATIONS

- **For Early Childhood Classes** – For classes that do not include parent/caregiver participation, please note that one important goal of the class is to help build a child's independence. To that effect, we ask that family members wait outside the studio while class is in session. We do understand this may be your child's first time in a class on his/her own and the teacher will work with you if your child has trouble making the initial adjustment. You will be welcomed into the studio on the last day of class during the fall and spring sessions for an Observation Day where the students will have the chance to show you what they have learned. We also ask that you or a proxy parent remain close by in case your child needs to go to the bathroom during class time.
- **For All Classes** - Parents and family members are not allowed to watch classes inside the studio unless invited by the instructor or given permission by the supervisor. We happily welcome you to watch classes during Observation Week, the last week of classes each term.
- Please keep noise in the waiting area to a minimum.
- Please keep children in the lobby occupied with quiet activities.
- Please supervise children in the waiting area at all times, including on the walking track at Sevier Park Community Center and by the herb garden and fountain at the Centennial Art Center.
- Please do not block active hallways and doors in case an emergency exit is necessary. In the unlikely event of an emergency, please follow directions given by a Metro Parks employee.
- Please properly dispose of trash after eating snacks in the waiting area.
- Please do not enter a studio or the dance office without an invitation from a staff member.
- Please do not touch anything on the front desk or adjust the thermostat in the lobby.
- Please pick up students promptly after class. Many instructors teach back-to-back classes and may not be able to supervise your child after class.
- When picking up your child from class, please come to the lobby or wait at the front door so that the staff can ensure children are leaving with a trusted adult. If there is no front-desk attendant and a student has been waiting beyond 5 minutes for pick-up, they will be invited to wait in the supervisor's office or sit quietly in an in-progress class.

- In an effort to keep a safe and secure building with limited staff, please note that the building is only open when classes and events are happening. The doors will be unlocked a half hour before classes begin and will be re-locked 15 minutes after the last class for the morning, afternoon, or evening block of classes has begun if a Metro Parks employee is not present in the lobby.
- If your child has a problem that you would like to discuss with the teacher, please schedule an appointment. The limited time between classes does not make it possible for your child's instructor to address individual problems during the teaching hours. If you need to reach a staff member, please utilize their office e-mail or phone number. If a teacher gives out their personal cell phone number to use in the event of offsite performances, please do not text or call outside of the event or working hours.
- *Please note:* Because dance is a physical art form, "hands on" correction is often the most effective teaching method. It is one of the best ways to help children develop dance skills such as placement, turn out, balance, and proper stretching of feet, arms, and torso. However, not all children learn the same way and some are sensitive to touch. If you or your child would prefer only verbal corrections, please let the instructor or supervisor know so that we can ensure a positive, comfortable dance experience for every child.

PERFORMANCE OPPORTUNITIES

Performance is introduced in a developmentally appropriate way. For all classes, an observation class at the end of the fall and spring sessions serves as a time when the students can share what they have learned with their family members and friends and is a great way to introduce them to dancing in front of an audience. When they are first eligible to perform in our program in *The Mini-Nutcracker* (students must be 9 years old and in Ballet: Beginning III or higher and must have completed the previous spring semester in ballet with Metro Dance), they will have had a positive, low-pressure experience before they actually go on the stage. Fall transfer students in the eligible levels are invited to understudy. Children who reach Advanced I, II or III are eligible to participate in the Centennial Youth Ballet, if they wish to commit the necessary time to class and rehearsal. Centennial Youth Ballet students perform in a spring concert in addition to *The Mini-Nutcracker*. Occasionally, we are invited to participate in a local festival and will invite students to participate in a short group dance as time and staff resources allow.

NATIONAL HONOR SOCIETY FOR DANCE ARTS

Metro Parks Dance is one of only two NHSDA chapters in Nashville and we'd be delighted to have your dancer join us! The National Honor Society for Dance Arts' purpose at CPAS is to: Celebrate the artistic merit, leadership, and academic achievements of dance students; Build community within the organization; Create opportunities for growth and leadership among the student body. Students gain points toward honor society induction with every single class they take during their high school years in with the Metro Parks Dance Division, Summer Intensive, and by helping backstage! This year we hope to build a mentorship program to help Advanced and Intermediate students grow in knowledge and community. Members of NHSDA are eligible to publish in the national newsletter, apply for special scholarships, and network with other driven young dancers throughout the country.

Contact Chapter Sponsor, Christen Heilman, at christen.heilman@nashville.gov for more information.

PHOTO / VIDEO / SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY

- Parents may take photos of their child(ren) during the invited Observation Week. Please do not post or tag photos on social media of children other than your own without permission from the student/parent.
- Parents are asked to initial a digital photo/video release upon registration giving permission for the Metro Parks Dance Division and Friends of Metro Dance to post photos/videos taken by staff or a professional

photographer/videographer (hired for performances) on Facebook and Instagram. We do not name the students without getting further explicit permission from the families. If you prefer that your child's likeness is not used on social media at all, please let us know and we will be more than happy to respect your wishes.

CLASS PLACEMENT & POINTE WORK

Class placement is determined by instructor recommendation. At the end of the spring semester, an e-mail with class placement is sent out to families. Ballet students in Ballet: Beginning III and higher will also receive a written evaluation with more specific feedback. Great care is taken in the placement process as well as the construction of the class schedule and the assignment of teachers. Students are placed according to their current stage of ability, physical and psychological development, and age. Students progress faster by spending the time necessary to master the fundamentals, rather than rushing ahead to a more advanced level.

Students are invited for a pointe evaluation when they are in Ballet: Intermediate III and approximately 12 years old. Pointe readiness evaluations are conducted by a physical therapist specializing in dance and ballet training with input from the instructor and supervisor. The dance staff will send more information to families about pointe evaluations at the appropriate time.

REFUND POLICY

If a registered student needs to withdraw, please inform the Dance Supervisor in writing no later than one week prior to the first class. Because some classes have minimum enrollment requirements or waitlists, it is important that students who are registered are committed to the class for the full session. Metro Parks has a no refund policy once a class is in session unless the class is cancelled by the department.

FRIENDS OF METRO DANCE

Get involved in your child's dance education by joining Friends of Metro Dance, a non-profit organization established in 1995 that supports the Metro Parks Dance Division beyond the scope of government funding. Their mission is to enhance the art of dance in the Metro community; enrich the programming of the Metro Parks Dance Division; and encourage the growth of dancers of all ages and abilities through funding and volunteerism. The organization:

- Provides financial and volunteer support for two annual performances by Centennial Youth Ballet: the ever-popular Mini-Nutcracker and a spring performance that showcases a range of ballet works from classical to contemporary.
- Sponsors programs such as Dancing with Parkinson's and partners with artists and organizations to provide free community-based classes, workshops, and performances to dancers of all ages, levels, and abilities.
- Provides financial [scholarships](#) to assist families with class tuition and dancewear including a Performance Pointe Shoe Fund. Friends also provides a stipend for students attending the annual Tennessee Dance Festival.
- Enhances the studios at Centennial Performing Arts Studios and other community centers by providing state-of-the-art sprung floors, marley dance surfaces, mounted mirrors, sound equipment, and more!

How can you participate?

- **BECOME A MEMBER** and receive a quarterly newsletter, invitations to special community events, and the warm and fuzzy feeling that comes from supporting the program in what it needs to thrive.

- **BECOME A SPONSOR.** Our winter and spring performances are our primary fundraisers and are solely funded by FOMD and your generous contributions. Please help continue these Nashville traditions and ensure their success by becoming a sponsor or being a community liaison to secure sponsorships from local businesses.
- **DONATE.** Make a financial contribution or donate in-kind goods or services.
- **VOLUNTEER** at performances, events, or on a board committee.
- Choose Friends of Metro Dance as your favorite charitable organization when you shop at Kroger. Learn More:
 - The Kroger Community Rewards program makes fundraising easy by donating to local organizations based on the shopping you do every day. Once you link your Card to our organization (**Friends of Metro Dance Nashville**), all you have to do is shop at Kroger and swipe your Shopper's Card. [Learn More](#)
 - Already have a Kroger Shopper's Card? [Follow these instructions to link your card to our organization.](#)

Learn more at FriendsofMetroDance.org or email Kathryn.wilkening@nashville.gov with questions or interest.