

The Dance Connection's Competition Handbook

We are SO EXCITED to kick off another amazing season of competition at Dawn's Dance Connection for the 2026–2027 school year! Our team of dedicated instructors continues to bring their passion, creativity, and love of competitive dance to each rehearsal, and we're eager to build on the momentum of last season.

This handbook is designed to keep both parents and dancers informed. Inside, you'll find everything from our goals and expectations to commonly asked questions. While last year was a learning experience for all of us, we're heading into this season with more clarity, more confidence, and the same commitment to growth, fun, and excellence.

Being part of the competition team offers so many benefits for our dancers: more time on stage, personalized feedback from industry professionals, and a deeper focus on strong technique and performance quality. But perhaps our favorite part? The friendships formed and the "dance family" culture that continues to grow stronger with each season. Our goal is to create a space where dancers support one another, work hard together, and celebrate each other's successes.

We understand that being a part of competition is a big time and financial commitment, so we hope to make the following time and cost expectations as transparent and straightforward as possible!

IMPORTANT DATES–

Optional Audition Prep Camp: June 22nd-24th

Auditions (Mandatory-contact if you need a makeup): June 25th

7-10 yrs (as of (9/1/26): 3:30-4:45

11-13 yrs (as of (9/1/26): 4:45-6:00

14+yrs (as of (9/1/26): 6:00-7:15

Competition Year Kick-Off Team Bonding: July 31st

Optional Competition Convention: Time and Location TBD

Christmas Party: Tentatively Dec 13th

Competition Team Showcase: Tentatively February 7th

We are still awaiting competition schedules to be released. We will attend 3 competitions on 3 of the 4 following weekends. We will confirm as soon as we can, but are hoping this gives us a little bit more flexibility in finding competitions we are excited to attend ;)

Competition (Tentative): February 12th-14th

Competition (Tentative): February 26th-February 28th

Competition (**CONFIRMED**): March 12th-14th (**Celebrity Competition**)

Competition (Tentative): March 19th-21st

COMPETITION TEAM GUIDELINES

Communication:

Shaela Eckard will be our primary communicator/administrator for all things related to our competition teams. She will send out audition results, weekly scheduling, competition scheduling, etc. You can contact Shaela at: competitionddc@gmail.com (712) 790-4713

Ages:

The competition team is open to ages 7-18. Students must be 7 by Sept 1st.

Auditions:

Competition teams are selected by an audition process. All students MUST audition in order to be considered for the competition team. Students will be selected for competition groups solely on their audition, NOT age, years of instruction, or how many classes they are enrolled in. As a studio, we believe that there is great value in going through an audition process, as well as putting students in routines that push their technical and artistic boundaries. We cannot guarantee that everyone that auditions will be placed into a competition routine, but do know that those who audition will have a better understanding of what to expect in the audition and be more confident auditioning the following year. However, you as parents know your child's temperament better than anyone. If not being on the competition team is going to completely "devastate" them or hurt their self-esteem rather than be a learning experience that motivates them more later, then perhaps they're simply not quite ready to audition, and that's okay.

Auditions will be held June 25th at the Spirit Lake Studio. Students will have a technique portion of the audition as well as on the spot combination learning in the style they are auditioning for. All students are required to attend the technique portion of the audition.

At the audition, students will let our competition team instructors know how many routines they are interested in participating in, as well as if they have any interest in doing a solo, duet, or trio. The audition judges will take this into consideration when they put together the competitive groups.

Audition results will be emailed out no later than June 30th. These results are **FINAL** and will be respected as such. (No correspondence questioning audition results will be acknowledged). We are a dance family & are very proud of EVERYONE who auditions, but we expect our kids & parents to have good sportsmanship as well.

Please let us know if you have any questions regarding the audition process prior to June 25th so there is no confusion or questions after. (Although please do not email me asking questions like: "do you think my child will make it", or "how good are his/her chances", etc).

Students are able to take our "Audition Preparation Camp" in order to reduce nerves and feel better prepared for auditions (especially if the dancer is new to ballet!). Enrolling in the camp DOES NOT automatically mean the student will make the competition team, but simply a way to make them feel most prepared!

Recreational Class Requirements:

All competition dancers (Large Groups, Small Groups, & Solos) are required to take a recreational ballet class during the 2026-2027 school year. Additionally, students must be enrolled in the style of dance they are selected for in competition (i.e. a student that is in a group hip hop routine must be enrolled in a ballet and hip hop recreational class for the 2026-2027 school year). These classes are NOT included in your competition fees, but are charged as a normal recreational class.

Spirit Lake Studio:

Currently all of our competitive team instructors are based out of our Spirit Lake studio. For this reason, all competition auditions, choreography learning, and rehearsals will be held at the Spirit Lake Studio. We hope that our Jackson Studio families consider commuting to be a part of our competition team! :)

Optional Competition Convention:

New this year! We are hoping to attend an optional convention this fall to help kick off our competition season. This will be a fun opportunity for dancers to learn from a variety of choreographers, dance alongside their peers, and get excited for the year ahead!

Pricing and location are still TBD, but we will share more details as soon as they are available.

Team Bonding & Special Events

A big part of what makes our competition program special is the *team experience*—and that includes plenty of fun outside the studio, too!

We're kicking off the season with our Competition Kick-Off Camp, a full day of dance and team bonding!

July 31st

Approximately 2:00pm–9:00pm

At the Spirit Lake Studio

This day will include a full day of team bonding, a pizza party, and a movie under the stars on the studio parking lot jumbotron! Students should be picked up around 9:00pm.

There is a \$50/student fee to help cover instruction, food, and activities—this will be included in your August deposit (outlined at the end of the handbook).

In December, we're planning a holiday party (possibly including a fun Secret Santa exchange!) to celebrate mid-season progress, and we'll wrap up the year with an End-of-Season Celebration in the spring. These events are designed to bring our team closer together and celebrate all their hard work throughout the year.

Competition Team Showcase:

We will put on a relaxed “Competition Showcase” in February for all of our competition routines (tentatively February 7th). Students will be able to show all local friends and family their routines before we begin the competitive season! Venue and time will be announced as soon as those details come together.

The Dance Connection Handbook:

As an extension of The Dance Connection, all policies listed in our recreational handbook apply to our competition students.

=====INFORMATION REGARDING GROUP (4 OR MORE DANCERS) ROUTINES=====

TIME COMMITMENT FOR GROUP ROUTINES

By trying out for the competition team you have taken the first step towards committing to your team. As part of our team you are expected to be respectful to your fellow dancers and teachers. It is very important to be at all of your practices. Dancers should come to practice with a positive attitude, ready to learn and work hard. Bring your heart and passion for dance to every practice, this will allow us to improve every time we enter the room.

Choreography Learning:

Each Group routine will have 1 or 2 choreography learning dates during the months of August/September where they will learn the entirety of their competition routine. These rehearsals are MANDATORY. Students will be expected to practice their routine with a video (taken during their rehearsal time), until weekly rehearsals begin in mid October. The time slot will be agreed upon by the group.

Weekly Rehearsals:

A mandatory, weekly rehearsal will be held on Sundays mid October through February. Each group routine will have a 30 minute time slot. We will set a permanent schedule as soon as we have that available, **but please expect some time changes dependent on choreographer’s discretion.**

Students are allowed 2 absences (this includes vacation, illness, etc). If a third absence occurs, students are required to connect with their instructor to decide what is needed to continue. The instructor may just ask for additional at home practice, a video of them rehearsing, or may require the student to pay for the additional lesson (\$30/30 min). If a fourth lesson is missed, the student will be removed from the competition piece and is required to pay the remaining tuition and costume fees associated with the dance routine in full.

Competitions:

All competitions are mandatory. It becomes very difficult to re-work routines between competitions. Students should review the competition weekends and make sure they are available during those dates BEFORE auditioning.

FINANCIAL COMMITMENT FOR GROUP ROUTINES

Tuition:

Tuition is charged October through March on the 10th of each month. Tuition covers more than just the weekly rehearsals. We have attached a list of the following costs that are included in your tuition fee.

- Choreography of Group Routines
- Selecting and Splicing Music
- Rehearsals
- Administration Time
- Teachers' Travel and Food at Competitions
- Team Bonding Activities

Tuition is \$57/month(Oct-Mar) for groups of 6 or more.

Tuition is \$75/month (Oct-Mar) for groups of 5 or less.

Tuition is pulled monthly (Oct-Mar) for each group routine your student is selected for. As you may note, weekly rehearsals are only held October-February. The beginning of October and March tuition fees help to cover the costs listed above.

Families are liable for the full tuition fees if they quit mid-season or are forced to drop a routine due to absences. We are enforcing this tuition policy as the competition groups are smaller than traditional class sizes and the fees must be collected to ensure success of our competition program.

Audition Fee:

There is a \$20 audition fee that will be pulled from the student's account upon registration. This covers the teachers' time for preparation of audition, time it will take to create audition groups, and the administrative end to create groups into our jackrabbit system.

Costume Fee:

For each routine your student is selected to be in, they will be liable for 1 costume fee. The fees match those for our recreational program:

2nd grade-5th grade costumes are \$89

6th grade - 12th grade costumes are \$99

Parents or guardians accept full responsibility for all expenses, including surcharges and postage for costumes that are ordered late. The Dance Connection is not responsible if costumes are not received in time for the recital due to late payments. Costume payments are the sole responsibility of the parent or guardian.

If the student does not finish the competition year, parents may be liable for the remaining costume fee. If the costume can be returned/canceled, a \$25 return fee will be applied to the student's dance account.

Company Jacket:

Students will be required to purchase a company jacket to be worn at competitions. Cost is approximately \$90-\$105. This will be the final year with the current jackets. New jackets will be designed for the 2027-2028 year.

Entry Fee:

The studio is charged per student, per routine entry fees. This fee will be determined once we have selected the competitions we will be attending, but families should expect to be charged between \$80-\$105/group routine their child is participating in (fees are dependent on size of group).

As we will be attending 3 competitions, parents will be charged 3 entry fees.

Media Fee:

Most Competitions include a Media Fee (approximately 35-50/competition/student). These fees will automatically be passed to the dancer.

Potential Additional Fees:

- Shoes
 - Dance shoes will need to be the same for all students. They will be the same shoes used for recreational classes.
 - Hip Hop students may be required to purchase a Hip Hop shoes used for the routine
- Tights
 - Students need to purchase tights (same used for recital), that have no rips or tears for competitions
- Jewelry/hairpieces
 - Certain routines may include additional hairpieces or jewelry (based on the choreographer's discretion). The studio will purchase these so they are all the same, and will charge the student's dance account.
- Props/Sets
 - If a routine includes a prop or set piece, the cost of the props/set pieces will be divided up by the students in the piece and charged accordingly
- Travel
 - Students and families are responsible for getting their students to and from the competition as well as lodging (as applicable).

Total Group Competition Fees PER ROUTINE:

Tuition: \$342-\$450 (\$57-\$75 over 6 months)

Audition: \$20

Costume Fee: \$89-\$99

Entry Fees: \$240-\$315 (\$80-\$105 x 3 competitions)

Media Fees: \$105-\$150 (\$35-\$50 x 3 competitions)

Tights: \$10

TOTAL: \$786-\$1,044

-----**INFORMATION REGARDING SOLO ROUTINES**-----

SOLOS

Sydney Baumhover will be the Solo Director starting Fall of 2026. Her phone is (712) 210-4485

Requirements:

- Students must participate in at least 2 group competition routines in order to be considered for a solo, duet, or trio.
- Students must be enrolled in a ballet class for the 2026-2027 school year
- Students must be enrolled in the style their routine is in

Selection:

Students will let the competition team instructors know if they have interest in doing a small group routine on their audition form. Solos, Duets, and Trios will be selected based on the instructors' discretion. There will be a limited number of small groups available based on studio/teacher availability.

Students chosen for small groups will work on their routines often on their own time, so we are also looking for students/groups that are self-driven and have a history of rehearsing often on their own at home.

TIME COMMITMENT FOR SOLOS

Choreography Learning:

Each small group will meet in September or October to learn their choreography. This may be a one-time learning situation or broken up into 2 smaller time frames based on teacher/student availability.

Bi-Monthly Check-ins:

Students will be required to communicate the progress of their solos/duets with Sydney. Sydney will schedule a time with each soloist once in October, once in December, and once in January for her to give feedback, critiques, and make any changes she sees fit.

Weekly Rehearsals:

Solos and Duets will not have a weekly rehearsal time. Students of solos will need to schedule "Cleaning" sessions with instructors or select high school students (chosen by instructors) after they have been taught their routine. These sessions can be weekly, bi-weekly (recommended for ages 8th grade and younger), or monthly (for responsible high school students). These sessions will be scheduled primarily on Saturday or Sundays based on studio availability. It is in the students best interest to be warmed-up and know their routine thoroughly before the cleaning session as the instructor wants to use the time effectively (not re-teaching! :)

Competitions:

Small groups will perform in the same three competitions as our group routines. Small groups will be responsible for their own warm-up and preparation of their routines at the competition.

FINANCIAL COMMITMENT FOR SOLOS

Tuition:

There is no monthly tuition fee associated with small groups, as we are not holding weekly rehearsals.

Choreography Fee:

Students will be charged a \$250 choreography fee due at time of scheduling. This fee includes the learning/teaching time and the time spent choreographing for the piece. Students are able to select the instructor they wish to choreograph the piece (based on their availability).

Studio Rental and Cleaning Fee:

Soloists and Duet groups will be charged a one time fee of \$200/student to cover studio rentals and the bi-monthly check-in times with Sydney. This will be included in the Student's August Deposit.

Payment for "Cleaning" Sessions will be made directly to the instructor/high school student that is facilitating the class.

Instructor rate: \$20/30 min

Student rate: \$15/30 min

Costume Fee:

Students in solos have the option to order costumes through the studio (which will follow the same cost & timeline as group competition pieces), or are able to source their own costumes. Students should have a plan for their solo costumes no later than January 1st.

Entry Fee:

The studio is charged per student, per routine entry fees. This fee will be determined once we have selected the competitions we will be attending, but families should expect to be charged \$175-\$225/competition for solos. As we will be attending 3 competitions, parents will be charged 3 entry fees.

Potential Additional Fees:

- Shoes
- Tights
- Jewelry/hairpieces
- Props/Sets
- Travel

Total SOLO Competition Fees:

Choreography Fee: \$300

Cleaning Fees (Monthly): \$100

Studio Rental Fee: \$150

Costume Fee: \$99 (or source your own)

Entry Fees: \$525-\$675 (\$175-\$225 x 3 competitions)

TOTAL: \$1,074-1224 (Plus Monthly Privates/Rehearsals)

-----**PAYMENT SCHEDULE**-----

Downpayment August 10th: Students will have a “downpayment” in the month of August. The hope is that this payment helps to spread out fees throughout the year. This payment will cover the Costume Fee for each routine, 1 (Estimated) Entry Fee for each routine, 1 (Estimated) Media fee, the August Team Dance Bonding Camp, Studio Rental Fee for Solos, and Company Jacket (for those that need one!). For example if a 5th grade student is in 2 competition routines, (and new to the competition team) her down payment would be:

(EXAMPLE:)

Costume (2 routines at \$89): \$178

Entry Fee (2 routines at \$95): \$190

Estimated Media Fee: \$35

Competition Camp: \$50

Jacket: \$95

TOTAL DOWN PAYMENT (for 2 routines): \$548

We will be holding fundraising opportunities during the month of July for students to really get involved and help contribute meaningfully to the competition downpayment

Monthly Tuition October-March Pulled on the 10th of each month:

\$57/month(Oct-Mar) for groups of 6 or more

\$75/month (Oct-Mar) for groups of 5 or less

Entry Fee #2 October 15th:

\$80-\$105/group routine

\$175-\$225/competition for solos

\$35-\$50 Media Fee (per student NOT per routine)

Entry Fee #3 January 15th:

\$80-\$105/group routine

\$175-\$225/competition for solos

\$35-\$50 Media Fee (per student NOT per routine)