

## Assistant Teacher Program Packet ATP

Dear Assistant Teacher,

**Welcome to ATP, the assistant teacher program.** We greatly appreciate your willingness to help us make our classrooms even more exciting. While we know that the idea of being an assistant teacher sounds grand, this is actually a commitment to be taken very seriously. Our dancers come to love and rely on the assistant teacher as part of their comfort at dance class. Our teachers come to rely on the assistant as a source of energy, technique, extra hands, memory, and possibly a restroom break. Your commitment to the class(es) you have been assigned is an important part of our studio's success. If you feel that you are in over your head, please talk to us and see if we can work something out or find another assistant to take over.

**So what will you, as an assistant teacher, be learning?** Teaching is a multi-faceted position that requires organization, encouragement, safety, fun, and more at the same time. Some of these lessons will come naturally, while others will be taught or explained to you by the lead teacher. An assistant should focus on skills such as:

- learning to count music
- notating movement and/or choreography
- the best ways to communicate (e.g. choosing the right words, eye contact)
- the art of discipline --- if the teacher gives you permission to discipline
  - no yelling
  - commenting on the behavior, not the child
  - use of distraction to stop negative behavior
- problem solving

### **ATP BEHAVIOR**

You are looked at as a mentor to our dancers both in your specific class as well as in the general population.

- What does it mean to be a mentor?
  - dress code – the assistant must follow the same dress code as the student unless given specific instruction by the lead teacher – this means ballet clothes for ballet, etc.
  - behavior – the assistant must not only conduct themselves as a mentor in the classroom but also in the hallways and other classes as you are always being watched.
  - appropriate language -- this is two-fold = first, no cursing ever and second, speak with your lead teacher about how much they want you to “talk/instruct” in class and when they want you to be just a body. Try to copy the teacher's words when it comes to discipline, corrections, lining up, transitioning..... and only if the teacher wants you to do these things.
  - classroom demeanor (e.g. upbeat and happy) - the assistant and the lead teacher set the tone for class. Leave all negativity, exhaustion, and drama at the door.
  - always dancing full out - while the lead teacher wants to dance everything full out all of the time, due to age and work schedules, this is not physically possible. YOU are the body. YOU should always be dancing full out unless you are asked to mark something.

## ATP In-Class Responsibilities & Expectations

What are your responsibilities in the classroom? Well, these are different for each teacher and will actually evolve throughout the season. Please spend your first class copying the teacher and absorbing how she is running the classroom. If there is time after class, ask her for your specific duties OR at least let her know that you are open to having assigned duties when she is ready to give them to you.

- When possible, be at the classroom door five minutes prior to start time to give the kids a familiar face and a person to ask questions or receive help from.
- take attendance; - I usually start the season taking roll myself so I can learn names, but eventually I give this duty to my assistant.
- try not to stand directly in front of any student (unless asked to block their view) – even though you are up front, make an effort to stand between students so they still have a window. When you are unsure about where to stand or be, please ask the teacher!
- dance *full-out* at all times; unless instructed to mark only
- do not ever speak OVER the teacher – this is extremely important as kids need to hear one voice at a time
- assist teacher with lining up across the floor or when rotating lines; remember we want everyone to have a partner to go across the floor...so count the kids and try to help them get into even lines.
- accompany children to the restroom\*;  
[\*when possible; toddlers should be taken to a parent for assistance]
- distribute notices or literature to students; or stamps to young classes
- set up, transition and/or remove tumbling mats;
- distribute teaching tools and/or props used during class;
- identify and assist students who may be struggling with movement;
- notate choreography in an assistant teacher journal if you find this helpful;
- anticipate the teachers' needs; HAHAAH. .. this one is funny!
- maintain awareness of safety within the classroom, including but not limited to:  
spilled drinks, untied shoelaces, wandering students, children hanging from ballet barres, chewing gum, etc.;
- assist students with:  
changing shoes, lining up for across the floor, spreading out center floor, moving from classroom to another, etc.;
- may be responsible for managing music for the class;
- may be asked to assist students who need extra help with choreography;
- may be asked to lead a warm-up or other curriculum;
- should maintain an encouraging attitude during class.
- ensure that children are *getting along*—assist in keeping the peace;

- try to avoid disciplining students unless instructed by teacher or if there is an immediate danger.... Teachers are responsible for discipline and usually need to handle it, but there will be certain situations when a teacher will instruct you how to “discipline/work with” a specific child. Please just be open and ask the lead teacher what they want you to do in certain situations.
- keep information pertaining to students and/or their families confidential
- attend their students’ classes, rehearsals and/or performances
- turn-off cell phone during classes
- communication with students and/or parents via phone calls, email, text messages, or social-networking sites for personal reasons is prohibited without permission from the director.
- communication with students and/or parents will be made by the Dance Dynamics, Inc. office staff and/or the director. This includes, but it is not limited to, schedules for rehearsals, performances, extra classes, etc. We discourage contact with students and/or their parents without first consulting the director.
- try to arrange for a substitute assistant if you must be absent- First, if your absence is planned ahead of time, ask the teacher if they would like for you to try to find a sub (sometimes the teacher will be fine for one week). Second, if your absence is unexpected, contact the office by email or phone to let the teacher know you will not be there. If you can find someone to sub, we appreciate it, but it is not always necessary. Third, if your schedule changes and you will miss more than one or two classes (planned not sickness), please speak with the lead teacher as we may need to reassign you to another class.

For those of you who are seriously considering teaching, you are welcome to speak with your lead teacher about some of the following theories so you can understand more of the process.

- why and what is appropriate movement for specific ages and skill levels
- class structure and why
  - proper warm-up, time for learning something new and practicing it
  - structure for young ones, variety and flexibility for older students
- the importance of equal treatment for all
- the value of building self-esteem

AND THANK YOU! I know this may seem a bit overwhelming, but we want you to be successful and enjoy this experience as much as possible. WHENEVER you are in doubt, please please please speak with your lead teacher, or Ms. Traci or Mr. David or really any of the teachers. We are here to make you the best assistant teacher you can be!