

The Preschool Dance Teacher's Guide To Success

A Simple, Effective and Joyful Method
To Running A Preschool Dance Program

By Megan Meyers

About This Book

I propose a REVOLUTION for studio owners everywhere...

Looking back over history, it has never been easier to be a successful studio owner. Never. It doesn't require a big marketing budget or a huge staff. Achieving success as a studio owner becomes easy once you cut through all the clutter.

It's cutting through the clutter that's the hard part.

In fact, if you aren't as successful as you want with your studio, it probably has nothing to do with you. With so much complicated advice and misinformation available to studio owners it's a wonder we are able to reach any students at all, let alone build a thriving studio.

If the endless noise of tips and tricks propagated by industry seminars and message boards has left you more confused than empowered, take a deep breath and relax. We're about to get rid of confusion, cut through the clutter, and make things as simple as possible.

It's within the simplicity that you'll rediscover and reignite the joy and passion for teaching, inspiring and leading a life full of purpose.

This is a detailed guide that will walk you through exactly how I run my preschool dance program (called Princess Ballerinas). After years of trial and error, and following the rules of "industry standards", I decided to see if I could figure out a better, easier and more joyful way to run a dance program. Turns out, I could! All of my experiments and trial and error have been consolidated into the best preschool program I could possibly create: The Princess Ballerinas Dance Program. Feel free to use the ideas in your own studio.

Join me in the revolution to create more simple and joyful studios around the world, and let's create some magic!

Megan 😊

Table of Contents

Chapter 1: Building on A Strong Foundation: It Starts With YOU.....	4
Chapter 2: Guiding Principles & Philosophy.....	13
Chapter 3: Program Design.....	21
Chapter 4: Marketing Magic.....	33
Chapter 5: Simplifying The Office Work.....	41
Chapter 6: All-Inclusive Tuition.....	53
Chapter 7: Summer Session & Bridging the Gap.....	67
Bonus: Start-Up Guide For Brand New Programs.....	69
Bonus: Re-Launch Guide for Existing Studios.....	76
Final Thoughts	77

Chapter 1: Building On A Strong Foundation It Starts with YOU

"In order to succeed, we must first believe that we can."

Nikos Kazantzakis

Your dance program or studio will be a reflection of you, even if you follow a system and step-by-step instructions, everything you learn will eventually have to be brought to life in the world through YOU. Every part of your program... every class you teach, every email you send, every Facebook post you share will be infused with you and your special energy.

That's very exciting news if you think about it! After all, when you realize your program is infused with your "youness" in every nook and cranny you'll never have to worry about competing with anyone else. Your program, even if you bring in other instructors and staff, will always be permanently flavored as "you" and there's no way to copy, steal or compete with the only wonderful "you" in the world. It's a very liberating feeling to realize that fact- *but it's ok if it takes a while to sink in.* ☺

If your program or studio will be a direct reflection of you, then it stands to reason that your program at its best if you're at your best. If you already have a studio, certainly it's never too late to become your best you, but if you are starting from scratch I would HIGHLY recommend taking a little time to concentrate on tidying up yourself and your life as much as possible before embarking on your new studio journey. I promise that it will make the process so much easier, more successful, more balanced and more joyful.

Here are some areas to do some self-reflection on:

- Are you satisfied with your level of health and fitness? Are you getting proper amounts of sleep, exercise and recovery time?
- Are you satisfied with your diet and nutrition? Are you fueling your body with a balanced and healthy diet? Are you drinking enough water?
- Are you satisfied with the organization in your life? Is your home organized, clean and tidy? Is your car neat and tidy? Is your workspace organized and tidy? Is your teaching space or studio clean and tidy?
- Are you satisfied with your mental, spiritual and emotional state of being? Do you feel happy, fulfilled and balanced?

- Are you satisfied with your financial situation? Do you feel in control of your finances and financial future? Do you have systems in place to manage and track income, savings, and expenses? Do you have enough knowledge to make informed decisions or do you have the help of someone else?

Of course, no one is perfect and becoming your best you is a lifelong journey, but it's important to remember that the most important work you can do in this world is on yourself. When you're at your best, you'll be better able to help others be THEIR best.

Let's jump in a time machine and take a look at your best you in the not-so-distant future. Just imagine that you have a great level of health and fitness. You're taking the time to love, nurture and care for yourself with exercise and proper nutrition. You feel loved and fulfilled spiritually by doing things you love with people you love, and you take time to reflect and notice all of the goodness in your life. Imagine that your finances are in order. You have fun making and spending money on things you love every day. Imagine that your home, car, office and teaching space are clean, organized, beautifully decorated and filled with love. Imagine feeling in control of your body, mind, emotions, finances and all of the "stuff" in your life. Imagine how balanced, joyful, secure and in control you feel. Feels good doesn't it?

Now imagine, how that balanced, joyful, secure and controlled state of being would impact your teaching and your business. When you're teaching, can you see that you'd be able to be more present and in-the-moment? Better able to give of yourself to others? Without your life being full of clutter and stress, can you see how you'll have room to be more creative? More joyful? More easy going?

When you feel in control of yourself and your life, you can give 100% of yourself when you teach. Instead of just teaching terminology and giving corrections, you'll be radiating joy and love to your students and parents of your studio. When you are living your best life as your best self, the joy and light that you'll radiate will be impossible to notice. Just by being your best version of wonderful you, you will naturally shine a light on those around you. They will be attracted to you, they will feel safe and secure around you and most importantly they will naturally feel inspired to become the best versions of themselves.

What a beautiful gift to give the world. And all you have to do is continually strive to be the best version of yourself as possible.

Worksheet

"Be yourself, but always your better self." Karl G. Maeser

Let's paint a picture of your best you.... Take a few minutes to describe what that looks & feels like in each area of your life. Don't think too much, just let the words flow from your pen. There are no right or wrong answers remember.

	What Does It Look Like?	What Does it Feel Like?
The healthy & fit you		
Your best diet & nutrition		
Your best home & car		
Your best office/workspace		
Your best studio/teaching space		
Your best relationships		
Your best financial self		
Your best "self-love" to nurture, care for, and pamper yourself.		

Action Steps

"THE JOURNEY OF A THOUSAND MILES BEGINS WITH ONE STEP." - LAO TZU

Now that you have a clear picture of what it looks and feels like to be your best self, let's think of just ONE thing you can do to take action on moving towards it in each category. Is it something you can do today? Right now?

Think baby steps. What's ONE baby step you can take today to move in the direction of becoming more of your best self?

	What's ONE baby step you can take today to move towards becoming your best you?
The healthy & fit you	<i>Baby Step Idea: Start with parking further away wherever you go.</i>
Your best diet & nutrition	<i>Baby Step Idea: Choose water over other beverages more often.</i>
Your best home & car	<i>Baby Step Idea: Start with de-cluttering. Just grab a bag fill it up and toss it or donate it.</i>
Your best office/workspace	<i>Baby Step Idea: Again, de-clutter. Spend 5 minutes and attack the clutter on your desk.</i>
Your best studio/teaching space	<i>Baby Step Idea: I'm going with de-clutter again. You know what to do.</i>
Your best relationships	<i>Baby Step Idea: Do or say something nice to someone you care about today.</i>
Your best financial self	<i>Baby Step Idea: Start writing down every cent you receive today in a gratitude journal.</i>

Your best "self-love" to nurture, care for, and pamper yourself.

Baby Step Idea: Take a long, hot bath or shower and really enjoy it!

Conclusion

I hope you can see that making yourself a BIG priority will not only help you to live a happier and more fulfilling life but will also allow you to have more success, balance and impact on the lives of everyone you touch in this world- especially your students.

I know this first section may not have been what you expected but I do hope you'll take it to heart. You deserve to be the best you can be in every area of your life. As an educator, you'll have a profound effect on the lives of many of your students whether you realize it or not. I believe that teaching dance is about so much more than terminology and technique. The real opportunity is to INSPIRE students (even the littlest ones) to dream big dreams, be the best they can be and live life to the fullest every day. We can best inspire those sentiments when we are living them ourselves.

"We are told to let our light shine, and if it does, we won't need to tell anybody it does. Lighthouses don't fire cannons to call attention to their shining - they just shine."- Dwight L. Moody

Mindset

"The mind is everything. What you think you become."- Buddha

These are a couple more areas that I wanted to touch on before we dive into the nuts and bolts of running a Princess Ballerinas dance program.

Permission

First, I want to say that you don't need to wait for permission to start a dance program. Some teachers feel like they don't have a dance degree or 100 years of teaching experience so they might tell themselves that they have no business starting a dance program or a studio. Poppycock!

This is a free country (well here in America where I'm writing this anyhow) and you have as much right to start a dance program as anyone else does. There's no king or queen of the dance world that will anoint you as being "fit, authorized, or chosen" to start teaching dance. As valuable and important as dance is... it's not brain surgery. If you have a spark in your heart, a passion for children and teaching and feel drawn to start your own program that's all the permission you need to start a program.

I say, let's have a little more respect for our students and dance parents. They're smart people who are capable of making their own decisions in this world. Let's just decide that if they see value in what you provide, that they will continue to attend classes and pay you money. If they don't, they won't continue and you can go do something else... deal? Of course, that's not going to happen because you have a plan to follow here in your hands.

Personal Responsibility

The flip side of not needing permission from anyone is that no one else is responsible for your success or failure except for you. That's a beautiful thing! You can decide to take good care of yourself so that you infuse the most wonderful positive energy into your program and classes. You can decide to do all of the little things that most studio owners skip, like keeping a clean and tidy space and providing excellent customer service. You can care enough about yourself, your students and program to continue learning and improving (like you're doing). You are in charge and that's a wonderful thing!

Valuing Yourself & Guilt Around Making Money

This is a big one for a lot of dance teachers and women in general and it ties in with all of the foundational information. You need to start with valuing yourself. You deserve everything you want in this life, simply for being here. That alone is enough. Beyond that, you are also giving your time, energy, attention, passion as well as years of experience and expertise.

That is valuable. You are valuable.

You're a premium teacher, providing an exceptional experience for your students and families. There's no reason to be shy about what an awesome job you do. Shout it from the roof tops, don't be shy about asking for and sharing testimonials about your awesomeness and most of all... don't forget to set a real-life premium price tag on your services either.

We'll get more into the specifics of pricing and positioning later on, but I just want you to be OK with making money from your studio. That sounds NUTS to hear perhaps, but I think a lot of dance teachers have guilt around being paid for doing something they love. Since there aren't a lot of successful and highly profitable studios in the world, it leads me to believe that at the root of the problem is that many studio owners themselves don't value what they are offering or they feel guilty about it somehow.

Making a positive impact in the lives of your students and making a great income are NOT mutually exclusive. You can and should do both. Let's just decide right now that you'll be the BEST teacher you can be and provide the very BEST experience for your students and parents. You're also going to make a GREAT income for yourself and your family and that income is going to pay for your BEST life possible. Great! Then it's settled. 😊

Sweat The Small Stuff...

*"Success is the sum of small efforts - repeated day in and day out."
Robert Collier*

The entire Princess Ballerinas business and teaching philosophy is built around providing the BEST dance class experience possible for little dancers, their parents and for the teachers.

Essentially, as a business, we're providing a premium experience at a premium price. This accomplishes several goals all at the same time.

- Ensures the BEST possible experience for the child.
- Ensures the BEST possible service and experience for the parent.
- Ensures the BEST customer base for the program director because her program is full of families who value what she's providing and are happy to pay for a premium experience.
- Ensures the BEST possible income which will allow you as the owner to grow and prosper in an abundance, which per the foundational section can ONLY serve to uplift your students even further by allowing you to live your best life in every area.

What does it mean to be "the best"? Really, just like the quote above, it's not just ONE thing, it's the sum of a lot of little things done consistently over and over again. A lot of studio owners get so bogged down with the day-to-day struggle of their studio that the little things are the first to slide because the little things are easiest not to do.

Here's a list of just SOME of the little things you can do each day, at each class to ensure you have a first class program and experience for your families. Do this stuff each time, every time and you'll NEVER have any issues getting or keeping students. I promise.

- Doing your best to memorize student names as quickly as possible. Use student names in class and when speaking to parents as often as possible. It's an easy thing to do, it makes students feel acknowledged and important (which they ARE).
- Keep your lobby and/or dance room SPOTLESS at all times. Think about Disneyland, they're famous for keeping their parks in tip top shape at all times. Arrive early and pick up garbage in the parking lot (yes, even the parking lot), in your waiting area and in your dance rooms. Make sure restrooms are clean and

fully stocked. Make sure to start with fresh garbage liners in the garbage cans each teaching day. Details matter!

- Be prompt when returning calls or emails. Respond within 24 hours if possible.
- Arrive early for all classes and events. Arrive early enough to get your space ready, materials set up, rosters ready, music cued up, check your hair and makeup. You should greet even your early-bird students with a relaxed and gracious welcome each and every teaching day.
- After class, allow yourself enough time to put everything back nicely so that it stays organized. Schedule yourself enough time at the studio to be able to chat with parents and answer questions after class. If you are always rushing from one place to another, that stressed energy will be reflected in your business. Just give yourself plenty of time to do all that needs to be done.

Notice that none of these things costs any money- only a little extra time, energy and effort. However, the fact of the matter is that 95% of the world isn't willing to put in that extra time, energy or effort. Require yourself to be in the rare 5% and show up a little early and stay a little later. It's worth it, I promise.

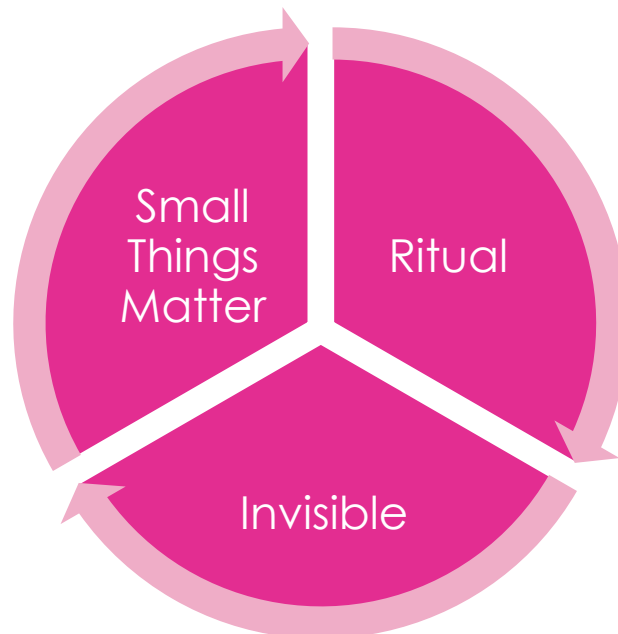
Chapter 2: Guiding Principles & Philosophy

"Never get tired of doing little things for others. Sometimes those little things occupy the biggest part of their hearts". Unknown

The entire classroom and program design for Princess Ballerinas classes has been created with intention and purpose. Every part of it is the way it is for a specific reason and to gain a specific result for the child, the parent and the teacher/studio owner.

In general, my philosophy for creating the Princess Ballerinas classroom experience is based on the ideas that

- Small things matter- a lot.
- Must be based on ritual & systems.
- The experience must be seamless and invisible to the customer



Small Things

Let me expand on these guiding principles. We already touched on the concept that small things count in the mindset section (see "Sweat the Small Stuff"). Where this applies to the classroom setting is that doing the small stuff means preparing yourself in advance so that you are professionally pulled together and presenting a physical representation of "your best" when you greet your students at the door. It means arriving early enough for your teaching day to make sure all of your materials, lessons and music are ready to go and the space is ready to create magic for students. It means being present at all times and giving your students your very best. It means rising to the occasion and giving your class your all: your energy, your imagination, your attention. Being present also means that you are open and receptive to the energy and feelings of your students and being able to pivot and change things up or move in another direction when things aren't working. From a student's perspective, it means making it a point to connect with each and every student personally at some point during class. This can mean celebrating an improvement, providing a caring correction, or simply making eye contact and smiling. Obviously, it has to be organic and specific to the situation, but the point is that it's important to make each and every student feel noticed and important at each and every class.

Doing the small things when it comes to parents, means having clear, on-going communication as to what you are about as a teacher, what your program is providing for their child. This means sending out group updates regularly (email is fine) with what the children are learning in class, sharing memorable class moments in addition to keeping them posted on important dates and deadlines.

On a weekly basis this means taking the time to speak with at least one parent after each class, making sure to reach all parents once or twice before the end of the year. On a monthly or bi-monthly basis this means inviting parents into the classroom to explain, demonstrate and share the magic and wonderful education that their child has been a part of and publically celebrating small advancements. Annually, this means providing some sort performance opportunity (in class or on stage) to mark the completion of a season and celebrate a job well-done.

Doing other small things that matter mean elevating the classroom experience with themes, imagination and story. It means sprinkling in fun "extras" like sticker charts, coloring pages and certificates of achievement.

These are all "small things" if you look at each one individually, but those "small things" added up are what make Princess Ballerinas classes so special, personal and memorable.

Ritual

In theory, it's easy to see that doing the small things is important and makes a big difference. So why don't most people do the small things consistently? It's because they don't have a ritual or system to follow to ENSURE that the small things get done each and every time. The ritual is the secret.

What do I mean by "ritual"? I simply mean doing certain things in a certain way at a certain time. You could also think of a ritual as a system, if you want a more practical term. By taking all of the small things that are important and put them into a ritual or system, we remove all of the decision-making. We can simply follow the ritual (which quickly becomes habit by the way) and the small things just get done, on time, on a regular basis without us having to think about or decide to do the small things. They just happen automatically.

Invisible

This brings me to the last philosophical guiding principle of the Princess Ballerinas class experience which is making all of the small things happen automatically based on rituals (or systems) which makes them beautifully invisible to students and parents.

They might not be able to quite put their finger on what it is about you or your program, they just know how your classes make them FEEL. They feel special, important, personally acknowledged and loved. When you have customers who genuinely feel special and loved, it's easy to see how that will translate into amazing student retention and referrals. They'll never want to leave and they'll naturally want to share you with everyone they know.

Quick exercise: Can you think of another business in your town that every made you feel special, important or loved in any shape or form? Possibly not. It's really sad to think about rare it is and really, how simple it is to acknowledge, appreciate people to make them feel special and important. It comes down to caring enough to do the little things and creating a ritual/system to make sure those little things get done. Easier said than done, I know, but it's pretty simple none-the-less. Personally, I think it's an ideal worth striving for.

5 Secret Ingredients

Besides the three guiding principles of...

- Doing the small things consistently.
- Following a ritual/system to make sure the small things get done. □ And making the experience invisible to the student and parent.

There are also **5 Secret Ingredients** that I've built into my Princess Ballerinas program which I believe to be key to ensuring a world-class experience.



A Note About Retention & Referrals

The holy grail for dance teachers/owners is great student retention and lots of referrals. Those two things are natural by-products of providing a world-class experience based on the 5 Secret Ingredients (as well as the three guiding principles).

Ok, let's dive into the 5 Secret Ingredients:

Secret Ingredient #1: Variety

Variety is the spice of life. Especially for a 4-year-old! As teachers, we know that children need structure and repetition to learn and feel confident as they're learning. However, doing the same class, with the same props and the same music for months on end is booooooring. Most adults can't handle that much repetition.

Princess Ballerinas classes are designed to combine the perfect combination of repetition and variety. They are built on a foundation of structure and repetition (which children need to learn) and make it more fun and interesting by layering in themes, stories, thematic music, props and LOTS of thematic imagination.

Then on top of that we sprinkle in extra fun bonuses like story books, coloring pages, sticker-charts, dress-up costumes, and parent performances. Plus, following the guiding principle of ritual and invisibility: each of these fun bonuses provides more than just fun. They serve to deepen the dance-class experience for the student, they support and enhance their learning and these materials also help invisibly educate parents.

We'll go over each of those components more in a bit. For now, I just want to point out the basic importance of variety (a "small thing") and how that's achieved ritualistically and invisibly through Princess Ballerinas classes.

Secret Ingredient #2: Make it Personal

One of the reasons that doing the "small things" is that they allow us to provide a very personal experience. We already touched on this a bit in the last section, but to reiterate, no one wants to be one of a herd. While parents understand that their child is in a group class, not a private lesson, it's important to give as personal of an experience as possible. As we've decided, everyone wants to feel important and special.

Lucky for us there are lots of "small things" we can do to provide a more personal experience. And again, to ensure these things actually get done they've been built into the Princess Ballerinas class experience (ritual) so that they happen automatically and invisibly.

The components that contribute to a more personal experience are...

In class:

- Using students' names as much as possible.
- Making eye-contact and a personal connection with each child at some point during class.
- Parent performances. *This is a very personal and special experience for parent & child alike.*

After class:

- Giving each child a sticker or stamp for a job well done.
- Taking a moment after each class to speak with a parent, and following a ritual (system) to ensure you get to every single parent at least once or twice during the year.

Student Extras:

- Coloring pages that match the theme.
- Sticker charts
- Award certificates that celebrate the completion of each theme.
- Take-home activities.
- Princess Ballerinas Story Books.

Not only do these little extras provide each student with something tangible of their own (important and symbolic for little ones especially), but it also allows them to continue and deepen their dance class experience at home by sharing them with siblings, friends and parents.

Secret Ingredient #3: Growth & Progression

It's human nature to seek continual growth and progress. Even though technical progress may be minimal or slow at the preschool age, it's important that we still acknowledge and celebrate that progress on a regular basis. How do we do that, with a ritual of course! Otherwise, before you know it the year is over once again.

The Princess Ballerinas sticker charts are one of the ways we can track and acknowledge progress each month or session. Some teachers like to spend a few minutes and go through the sticker charts at the end of the theme session, some like to end each class with it. The point is that, it allows you some dedicated time to go through and acknowledge some of the skills, technique, terminology and vocabulary that they are learning during the month. It's important to take the time to notice HOW MUCH these little people are learning, even if it's just learning the word or one element about each term. The sticker chart gives students a tangible representation of progression and advancement. Progressing feels GOOD and seeing that progress helps build self-confidence in their ability to do other things in life too. That's why dance is so transformative for children. Eventually, they connect the dots of "hey, I can learn things and do things in dance class." In other words, "I'm capable". That builds their confidence, and they try new things outside of dance class... and eventually they realize there's no limits to what they can learn, be or do in this world! And it all started with their tiny tot dance class! How wonderful is that!?!

The second tool that helps celebrate growth and advancement is that I give students a certificate to celebrate and commemorate the completion of each theme. Some students really have a fun time collecting certificate after certificate. Again, it's just another symbolic representation that makes each student feel special, important and personally acknowledged for their effort and progress.

Secret Ingredient #4: Build A Community

Creating a sense of community is an important ingredient to providing a world-class experience for your dance families. A community really boils down to the relationships in your studio and there are 4 relationships that I try to foster with Princess Ballerinas classes.

Teacher/Student Relationship: This is an obvious one and has been covered in other sections already.

Teacher/Parent Relationship: This is an often over-looked relationship in many studios. Teachers often forget that they have two "customers". The student of course, but also the parent who is also investing their time and money. There are 4 easy ways we foster the parent/teacher relationship through Princess Ballerinas classes:

- **After-Class Chats:** By taking the time to check in regularly with one parent at a time after class, your showing parents that their child (and they) are important to you.

- **Parent Performances:** Bringing parents into the classroom throughout the year communicates so much more than you might realize. Not only are they learning about what goes on in class, but they also get a front row seat to your teaching style and the way you conduct yourself and relate to your students. You share a part of yourself at these parent performances, just by being you, and that allows parents to get to know you more which naturally deepens their connection with you even in a group setting.
- **Other Parent Communication:** Good communication is the foundation of any good relationship. Following a regular schedule with parent emails with class updates and important dates and information goes a long way in building a solid relationship built on mutual trust and respect.

Student/Student Relationship: Obviously, we don't want a bunch of talking and goofing around in Princess Ballerinas classes but it's important to try to foster a sense of community within each class; a community within your larger studio community. I always try to incorporate elements of team work and friendship into my choice of words or in the way we execute group activities. For example, having children take turns passing out props to one-another or having each student help pick up their spot and return it to the box so that we can clear "our" space for the next activity. Again, it comes down to the "small things", but if you can impress upon your students that you're all there doing something of value together they will feel a lot more special than if they are treated like strangers who all come to class for one hour, one day a week.

Student/Parent Relationship: This is another often overlooked relationship in the dance studio setting. We can connect with our students, parents and help students connect but where we REALLY have a chance to shine is to provide opportunities for parents and their child to bond and connect over their child's love of dance. In Princess Ballerinas classes we can do this with...

- **Home materials:** Coloring pages, sticker charts and certificates give children something to share with their parents and post on the refrigerator at home.
- **Story Books:** Parents & children can read them at home together.
- **Email updates:** Give parents talking points to ask their child about.
- **Parent Performances:** Both parties will look forward to parent performances.

Secret Ingredient #5: Parent Education

The secret ingredient comes back to the fact that it's important to realize we have two customers, and that educating parents about what their child is learning AND the value of that education is up to us. Luckily, it can be fun, systemized and seamlessly integrated to the things we're already doing.

- **Sticker charts** do double duty. Not only do they track progress for students but they also help educate parents that even though the execution might be

rudimentary, Princess Ballerinas are learning real terminology and technique each week in class.

- **Story Books:** Beyond a cute and imaginative story, at the heart of each Princess Ballerina book is a positive message or life lesson that the characters are learning in their dance class. As we all know, dance teaches so much more than just steps. The books help educate and remind parents with a fun activity that they can share with their child.
- **Email updates:** Beyond important reminders, you can also use email to update parents on what students are learning in class. You can be very specific about the technique, terminology, classroom etiquette & manners that their child is practicing. They'd love to know and it's an easy way to continually educate parents.
- **Parent Performances:** In addition to weekly or monthly emails, the in-class parent performances are an excellent way to demonstrate and further explain what students are learning, and the benefits.

As you can see there's a lot of "small things" at work in Princess Ballerinas classes and they are very integrated and serve multiple purposes.

Chapter 3:

Program Design

Classroom Rituals & Systems

As you've seen, there are a lot of little details built into the Princess Ballerina philosophy. I can ensure that all of the little things happen by building them into daily, weekly, and session-based rituals (or systems) that allow them to happen automatically and invisibly for families and students.

Next we're going to dive in and look at the set-up of the various class/session rituals & systems.

Class Structure & Design

Princess Ballerinas lesson plans are set up in a specific way and they always follow the exact same general structure. The 4 main sections are:

- **Welcome & Warm-up Stretches (in a circle):** This gives the teacher and students a chance to come in to the environment and start getting into "learning mode" while we warm up our bodies & minds. This time also gives the teacher the chance to start warming up student imaginations and announcing or reminding them about the imaginary adventure that they'll be exploring that day.
- **"Dancing With My Friends" is the next phase.** This section is a natural transition from our stretching because we are already in a circle and we simply move into some ballet exercises (ex. pliés, tendus) or stationary type movements (ex. arabesque, petite sautés). I refer to this section as "dancing with my friends" because we're generally in a circle, facing one another and all moving at the same time. There's a feeling of unity and team work as we learn and practice during this section of class.
- **"My Time To Shine" is up next:** This is the first time we transition away from the circle and get into larger, traveling steps. Practicing skills across the floor not only allows each child the chance to have the teacher's attention JUST on them for a moment (alone or in pairs) but it also gives us the opportunity to practice other important skills like learning to wait in line and taking turns. For some children, dance class is their first classroom setting and learning these "social norms" is very important and will help them transition into Preschool or Kindergarten where they'll be expected to follow these rules for much longer stretches of time (vs. the 45-60 minute weekly dance class).
- **"Watch Me Perform" is the last big section of class:** Now students get a chance to learn about sequencing, phrasing, memorization, as well as expression and performance even though they think they're just learning fun dance routines.

The Watch Me Perform section of class is typically has three sub-sections that each serve its own important purpose.

- **Character:** This sub-section generally has students literally act out the lyrics giving them a natural and age-appropriate lesson in learning to tell a story through movement and facial expression with intention.
- **Choreography:** This sub-section gives students the chance to practice sequencing, phrasing and memorization by stringing together steps in a particular order, set to music. They also start learning about the basics of dancing in formation (even though they are probably simple formations like lines/windows). Of course, this is also a good time to practice basic performance skills such as smiling to show the audience we are happy.
- **Free Dance:** The free dance sub-section gives students the chance to move freely with the music (and perhaps with a prop occasionally). This allows for some personal exploration and self-expression. Free dance also gives students an age-appropriate stepping stone towards feeling confident and comfortable with improvisation as they move into upper levels of dance in the future.
- **Thank You & Goodbye:** This last section of class is basically a structured way to finish class. A quick recap, curtsy, sticker, words of praise and thanks before students transition out of classroom & learning mode and head back to their parent.

Using a consistent framework is really helpful when teaching tiny tots because even though the themes and skills will rotate, they will know what to expect in the larger sense. They know we start off with a welcome & stretching, then they know we stand up to practice skills in a circle, then we go across the floor, then we do our dances, we do free-dance and then we're done.

By following a general routine each and every class, classroom management becomes easy because the class and students will automatically flow from one class section to the next. Following a consistent routine also helps children feel safe, secure and confident because they know what to expect overall.

Rotating Curriculum

As teachers, we know that all dancers need repetition and lots of practice in order to master their skills and technique (*and by "master" I mean "mastery" appropriate for their age and ability. Mastery of a plié for a 4-year old might mean knowing the term and being able to demonstrate the general movement as opposed to the list of technicalities we would expect a more advanced dancer to know and be able to demonstrate*). We also know that preschoolers need variety to keep their interest.

Plus, there's the added challenge of fitting in every skill we teach at this age into each and every class. Clearly, we can't practice EVERY skill in EVERY class. How do we ensure

we are balancing skill repetition with variety AND maintain consistency so that we make sure we cover all skills and technique equally throughout the year?

The key is the "Rotating Curriculum Model". This is a trick I learned from studying martial arts schools (Note: I'm not a martial artist in any shape or form but the way they design their curriculums, belt programs and the way they run their schools in general is FACINATING, so I've studied them a lot and I've applied many of their strategies to my dance school).

The way a rotating curriculum works is that start with a list of all of the skills/terminology that you want students to learn within a given time period. So, for my Princess Ballerinas classes I have a list of terms/skills that I want to cover within a given dance year. Then, I've divided them into 4 blocks. So for Princess Ballerinas, it looks like this:

PB Rotating Curriculum				
	Skill Block 1	Skill Block 2	Skill Block 3	Skill Block 4
Circle	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Foot positions only. • Plié • Petite sauté • Spring points 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Port de bras • Tendu • Relevé • Arabesque 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Foot & arm positions • Degagé • Retiré • Sauté 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Balancing • Rond de jambe • Spotting • Penché
Across the Floor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grand jeté • Marching • Sauté • Relevé walks 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Port de bras walks • Skipping • Waltz • Pas de deux (moving in pairs & introducing the term) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grand battement □ • Obstacle Course • Chassé • Balancé 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sways • Balancing on 1 foot • Passé walks • Bunny hops

Then from there I simply include each of those skill blocks within a given lesson and rotate them with each lesson plan. I actually include 2 lesson plans for each theme, with a teaching emphasis on the first lesson. Then the following lesson would have the 2nd skill block included in the main lesson. It would look like this:

Session 1:

Lesson Plan 1 (skill block 1)/ Lesson Plan 2 (skill block 2) Session

Session 2:

Lesson Plan 1 (skill block 2)/Lesson Plan 2 (skill block 3)

Session 3:

Lesson Plan 1 (skill block 3)/Lesson Plan 2 (skill block 4).

Session 4:

Lesson Plan 1 (skill block 4)/Lesson Plan 2 (skill block 1)

The next fall, lessons will start the rotation over. By the end of each year, (depending on how many months your school operates) students will focus on each skill block 3-4 times. Using this method, I find provides the PERFECT balance of repetition, variety and it ensures that everything is covered equally.

Note: *Of course, there are exceptions to every rule. If a theme really inspires me to incorporate a different skill than I'm "supposed to" use based on that month's skill block, I might switch out a skill here or there or add/subtract depending on what works with the theme/music but in general, I still to the skill rotation pretty closely.*

Layering In A Theme

Ok, so for Princess Ballerinas classes we know I ALWAYS stick to the same big picture framework. This helps class flow effortlessly because the children know where to go and when, and what to expect at each stage of class.

You also see that we are balancing repetition, variety and frequency of our skills using a rotating curriculum model.

Now, we get into the REAL magic of Princess Ballerinas classes which is the theme and story elements. Sure, we're giving students a little variety with skill rotation, but after a few months they will start seeing the same skills and if that's where we stop with the variety, students (and parents) are likely to get bored before the end of the year. This is when you start hearing "she needs a change of pace, we're going to go do gymnastics (or soccer, or whatever) for a while".

To keep students (*and parents*) continually excited and engaged, we need to add a third layer of variety and we do that by adding a theme. Now even though they're practicing their pliés every 3-4 months, when we layer in a theme, they are learning to plié like a bird on a branch in the fairy garden theme, or by balancing a witch's hat on their head with the Halloween Magic theme, or by imaging their first position is a piece of chocolate cake while they plié in Super Sweet Adventure.

When we layer in a theme, class is NEVER the exact same because there's a new theme each month or session. Not only does a theme give us variety but it opens up a

whole world of thematic music, props and imagery that we can use to elevate the dance class experience to a whole new level.

Using a theme, with matching music, imagery and props we go beyond teaching a dance class to giving our families a fully immersive dance experience. We're engaging their eyes, ears, bodies, and imaginations! It's the difference between a trip to the local carnival or a trip to Disneyland. The difference is in the details and the fully immersive experience. Remember, it's about the small stuff.

Story Books

There are currently four different Princess Ballerinas story books. Primarily they're used as a fun "extra" that families can enjoy at home. The books give parents an inside glimpse into the fun, learning and imaginative experience going on inside their child's class each week. The story books are a fun way to integrate the child's dance class experience into their homelife to share with their family.

Furthermore, there's a HIGHLY-EFFECTIVE marketing strategy that we use the Princess Ballerinas story books for... Ballerina Story Time events. More on that later...

Ballerina Story Time Events: In the Marketing Chapter and the Start Up Bonus Chapter you'll see that the books also provide a unique marketing advantage as well. You can go "on tour" in your community with book readings (then offer an invitation to join your school) or you can host these events at your studio to bring in referrals! The books are designed to be mega multi-taskers for you!

Before Class & After Class Rituals

Disneyland is a HUGE inspiration behind my Princess Ballerinas program. It's my favorite place to visit and I absolutely marvel at all of the detail that goes into the experience they provide their guests. From the cleanliness, to the fully costumed, in character staff to the detail they provide with the sights, smells and sounds. They engage all of the senses, and that's what gives their guests such an immersive and memorable experience. I strive to do the same each week for my Princess Ballerinas.

If you've been to Disneyland, you may have noticed that the attraction experience begins long before you actually get on the ride. Even as you start to walk up to the attraction, the sights and sounds start to change to begin to transition you into the experience. We do this with our Princess Ballerinas classes as well. The second they step into class the playlist is on in the background to start providing a thematic "ambiance" to set the scene for our upcoming imaginary adventure. This is such a "small thing" to

do, but it's just another detail that when added to the mix of other "small things" really adds up to an exceptionally special weekly experience for students.

Session Structure

Now that we've gone over the individual class structure and the role of the themes and books, let's zoom out and look at the structure of a typical session of Princess Ballerinas classes.

Note: Because the lesson plans are going out to a wide variety of studios, most of whom offer classes on a month-to-month basis, I provide subscribers with monthly themed lesson plans. However, at my own studio I've been moving towards longer teaching sessions. Both monthly classes (changing themes monthly) and longer (10-12 week) sessions work very well with the Princess Ballerinas curriculum. There's no right or wrong way to structure your classes. It's whatever works best for you as the teacher or studio owner.

Here's how we run a 10-Week session at my studio:

Pre-Session: Launch the new theme with lots of build-up, anticipation and excitement. Books could be provided for students upon enrollment in the upcoming session. I might even send out an image of a "sneak peek" of one of the new matching props that matches the theme for example.	
Week 1	Introduce students to the new theme (and reflect on some of the major elements of the theme). Teach Lesson Plan 1 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> □ <i>Email sent to parents reminding them of the new session as well as providing an overview of the fun things we'll be learning.</i>
Week 2	Teach Lesson Plan 2
Week 3	Teach Lesson Plan 1
Week 4	Teach Lesson Plan 2 + Pass out coloring page <ul style="list-style-type: none"> □ <i>Email sent to parents reminding them that next week is "Sneak Peek Week" during the last 5 minutes of class.</i>
Week 5	Start focusing on Lesson 1 Parent demo of 1 of our routines during the last 5 minutes of class + a little verbal explanation of what students are learning this session.
Week 6	Lesson Plan 1 Focus + Sticker Charts (if you don't do them each week).
Week 7	Lesson Plan 1 Focus + This is typically when we will launch the NEXT theme to start building up excitement for what's to come. We announce in class for students & send an email to parents).
Week 8	Lesson Plan 1 Focus + Remind students that next week we'll practice in costume for our upcoming Parent Performance Week (builds excitement).

Week 9	Lesson Plan 1 Focus + Rehearse for parent performance in costume (very exciting).
Week 10	Parent Performance Week (Basically warm-up, get costumes on then it's SHOWTIME!) Award certificates passed out at the end and a mention about being excited for the NEXT theme and what that entails.

The structure of the session is designed to sprinkle in some added fun (sticker charts, coloring pages) and continually have students looking forward to something exciting coming up just 1-2 classes a way (parent sneak peek week, costumes, parent performance week, the next theme). This cycle continues for 4 main sessions during a school year plus a shorter summer session (or just summer camps) and a break during the summer months. Of course, following this continual "ritual" or system guarantees that the small things get done, on time, during each session. It's the key to consistency.

Conclusion

I hope you can see that there is a lot of thought, intention and purpose poured into the creation of these little themed lesson plans. There are a lot of moving parts and a lot of detail. As we know, it's those details that make the difference. To ensure that the small things actually happen, and happen on time and consistently it's important to have rituals (or systems if you prefer) around how we perform each part of class and each session.

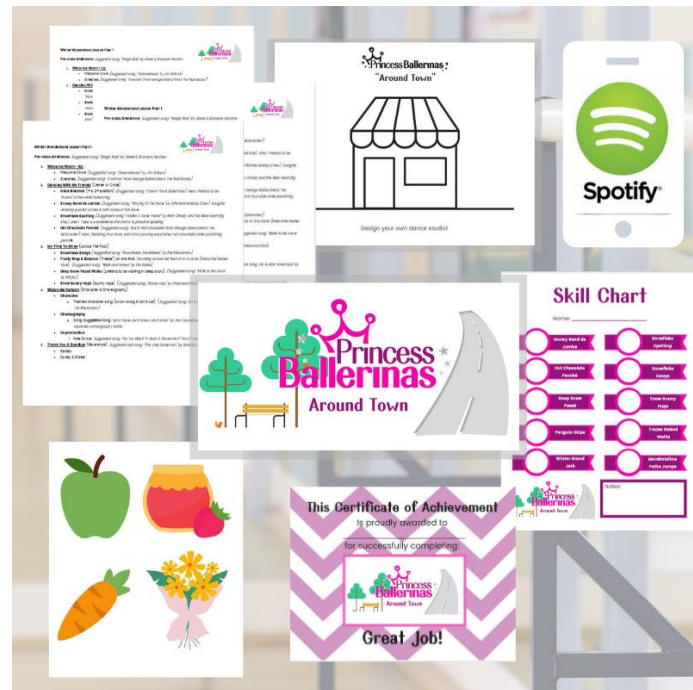
Clearly, I don't give all of this design detail to parents so from their perspective, just like a guest at Disneyland, they simply experience invisible MAGIC. We come off as organized, professional, and detail oriented. They can't put their finger on what exactly it is, but they are continually "wowed" by their experience. They feel special, important, happy and impressed. Several years ago, a parent made the comment that she thought my studio was "the happiest place on earth". It was the greatest compliment I could have ever received!

SAMPLE TEACHING MATERIALS-

“Winter Wonderland Theme”



“Around Town” Theme



Chapter 4: Marketing Magic

The Revolving Door Dilemma-

"If only I had more students!"

This is the #1 myth in the dance studio industry today. In every town across this planet, there are dance studio owners struggling. Struggling to pay their bills, struggling to bring in more staff to share the work load, struggling to grow their businesses. They THINK that the answer to their problem is to get more students. After all, more students, means more revenue and more profit which all businesses need to exist, grow and thrive, right?

However, the big fallacy is in how we go about GETTING those new students.

Is Advertising and Marketing The Answer?

Every dance studio guru out there offers studio owners a bag of marketing tricks and tactics guaranteed to grow their studios. If you attend industry seminars, you'll learn all about Facebook ads, direct mail, door hangers and a whole other host of advertising and marketing strategies that promise to be the solution to our problems.

However, as studio owners, when we become committed to growing our studios via marketing and advertising what happens is that we generally start to drop the ball in other important areas of our business. Often it's the little details that are the first to go, and as we've seen, it's the details that can matter the most to the experience for our existing customers!!

The fact of the matter, which no guru will admit, is that unless you have a full time team to focus 100% on marketing efforts and you have another full time team to focus 100% on providing an amazing customer experience that to focus on one means to lose momentum on the other.

If you don't have that kind of staff powering you (and how many studio owners do??) then you have to know that every hour, day and week that you are spending on marketing efforts is an hour, day or week you're taking away from focusing on your existing students and providing the very best possible experience for them. We know that creating an excellent experience means doing the little things, day in and day out, week after week. That takes effort and focus. It's not difficult, hard or expensive...but you have to make it a priority otherwise the little things are the easiest to let go. If you let the little things slide,

before you know it, you're just providing a "good" experience for your families, not an EXCEPTIONAL one. It's a VERY dangerous and slippery slope. As the experience level for your existing student base declines, your retention and referrals WILL decline as well (guaranteed), and you will have to continue to pour more time and energy into outside marketing efforts just to maintain your student count... and the vicious cycle continues.

There's a MUCH better way!

The entire Princess Ballerinas philosophy is based on providing an incredible experience for your students and parents. As you've learned we've invisibly incorporated the 5 secret ingredients for a successful program (variety, community, progress, parent education and we make it very personal).

Plus, we know that your personal state of energy (based on our level of self-care, diet, exercise, mental and emotional balance) will be reflected into the experience of your students in all areas. We know that when you're at your best, you can give your best and that inspires others around you to do and be their best.

So, it may seem too good to believe but the answer really is to first focus on taking GREAT care of yourself, and then leverage that powerful and positive energy into providing an exceptional experience for your families. That's it. That's all you have to do to have an AMAZING & WORLD CLASS program.

As we'll learned before, doing this will absolutely result in making raving fans out of your parents and students. You'll be giving them something they don't get at any other business in town: attention, love, respect and service. You'll have phenomenal student retention, the majority of your families will stay until the child ages out of your program or your studio (if you offer upper level programs after Princess Ballerinas). With great retention it means that there won't be very many openings in your classes, and the few spots you do occasionally have can be easily filled with the stream of referrals (because you WILL get plenty of referrals when you treat your customers according to the formula laid out in this training).

So, if your new students are coming to you via referral from existing students, then "marketing for new students" simply becomes providing opportunities for your existing families to share you with their friends and family.

Ramping Up Referrals

The first rule of generating referrals is to BE SHARABLE. No one shares the beige, bland or boring parts of their life. Luckily we've already taken many steps to "be sharable" by creating an exceptional experience for our families (*via the 5 secret ingredients*), but we've also built in (*via existing class and session rituals*) several on-going opportunities for your families to share your studio.

Parent Performance Days: Not only do these in-class performances help with variety, and building relationships (teach/parents, parent/child) but they also give your parents a natural opportunity to capture videos and photos of their child having a blast showing off in dance class. Where do you think those photos and videos end up? Yup, All over social media. Naturally sharing the pure JOY and EXCITEMENT that your class is providing. There will also probably be a photo or two of the child holding their award certificate. For another parent who's seeing those darling photos pop up in her feed, why would she go anywhere else when she decides to sign up her daughter for dance? She won't. She'll probably call you.

The other way to leverage the good will you've created with your existing customers is to host low-cost, or free mini-camps or events and extend an invitation to invite a friend. If your next upcoming theme is Super Sweet Adventure you might host a fun 2-hour open house where the children can stop at various stations to get their face painted, decorate a cupcake, play some games, do a little dancing and get their photo taken in a themed photo booth. This kind of event is easy to accommodate a sizable group of students and they are very affordable to host (even if you do them for free, but you can easily cover your costs with a \$5-\$15 participant fee).

Another event idea that opens up with the arrival of the book series is to do Princess Ballerina Story Time Events. This event can be very similar to the event above, but you simply have a dance teacher or better yet be the star yourself (perhaps dressed up in a full costume or teaching clothes) read the book that your next upcoming session will be based on. After the book reading, the children can do some dancing (as a sneak peek for what's to come in the full session) and you could round out the event with a craft or activity that matches the theme. Again, this is very simple, easy and affordable to host before the start of each new session.

I like events like these because not only are they fun and easy but they do double duty. They help you impress and build even MORE good will for your existing families and they offer a fun event that your families will actually want to invite their friends to.

Note: See the Camp & Special Event Guide for details. Coming Soon: A detailed guide for the Princess Ballerinas Story Time Events so that you can really take advantage of the book series in conjunction with the themed sessions.

Birthday Parties

Another great strategy that does double duty is to host birthday parties at your studio and give your existing families a big fat VIP discount. Birthday parties, especially when they are targeted towards your existing families are basically trial classes full of referrals right? Again, this is a strategy that does double duty because it allows you, yet again, build good will with your existing families AND offer a chance for them to refer your studio. By pricing your birthday parties so that you can afford to offer your existing families an amazing VIP discount (*like \$100 off or 50% off- it needs to be something substantial that's hard to ignore*) it AGAIN gives you the chance to really build up some

customer goodwill and appreciation and it's a mega-incentive to actually take you up on the offer, which is exactly what you want.

Note: See the Birthday Guide inside the Membership for details.

Re-Thinking Our Marketing Priorities

I hope you can see the importance of NEVER EVER EVER taking your eye off the ball of taking care of yourself and providing an exceptional experience. Those two things are absolutely NON-NEGOTIABLE. You can build a VERY successful program just doing those two things.

However, if after doing that, you find that you have enough time and energy to do more, and you WANT to do more then the next rung is to offer a themed event/story time before each event.

If after doing a few of those, you have enough time and energy to do more, and you WANT to do even more (*you have a choice you know- you can simple stop at the first tier and have a very successful program*) then the next rung is to offer birthday parties. These will be popular, especially with that big fat VIP discount, so it's a big commitment to take on parties ever weekend in addition to providing EXCELLENT classes during the week (if you're a 1-woman show I would REALLY think twice about the quality of life you'll have doing this much. You DO NOT need to do parties or events to be successful, they're like extra credit). That being said, birthday parties can be delegated if you have quality staff to help you out.

Then, if and only, if you've absolutely maximized those 3 top priorities for several months and you still want to bring in more students then you might want to do some advertising (*literally to take this next step this would mean hundreds of tiny tots + additional staff and all of the management that goes along with that. If you have less than 200 tiny tots, I would STRONGLY suggest you continue to focus on the first 3 strategies until you reach at least 200 students otherwise you're just spending more money and time to do more work really just to dilute your efforts- don't fall into that trap*).

We already talked about the revolving door dilemma so I have some MAJOR caveats if you do decide to advertise.

1. It MUST be measurable. If you can't tie \$x of dollars to bringing in \$x of students, don't do it.
2. It MUST be able to be fully automated. We don't want to run the risk of taking your attention away from providing an exception experience for your families or taking care of yourself. Therefore, we really don't want to spend ANY time or energy on outside marketing efforts. Unless you have a full time, sophisticated marketing team to hand the reins over to, the only other solution to this problem is to fully automate it so that it can run without you.

As of this writing the best media that is both measureable and can be easily automated is to run Facebook ads. See my *Facebook ad example for a campaign that worked really well for me in the past*. However, I *TRULY* find that the more I focus on advertising (even Facebook) that it's just a matter of time before we start to see a slack in our customer experience so for that reason I REALLY prefer to JUST focus on...

- *An amazing class experience*
- *Events for students + a friend*
- *Birthday Parties*

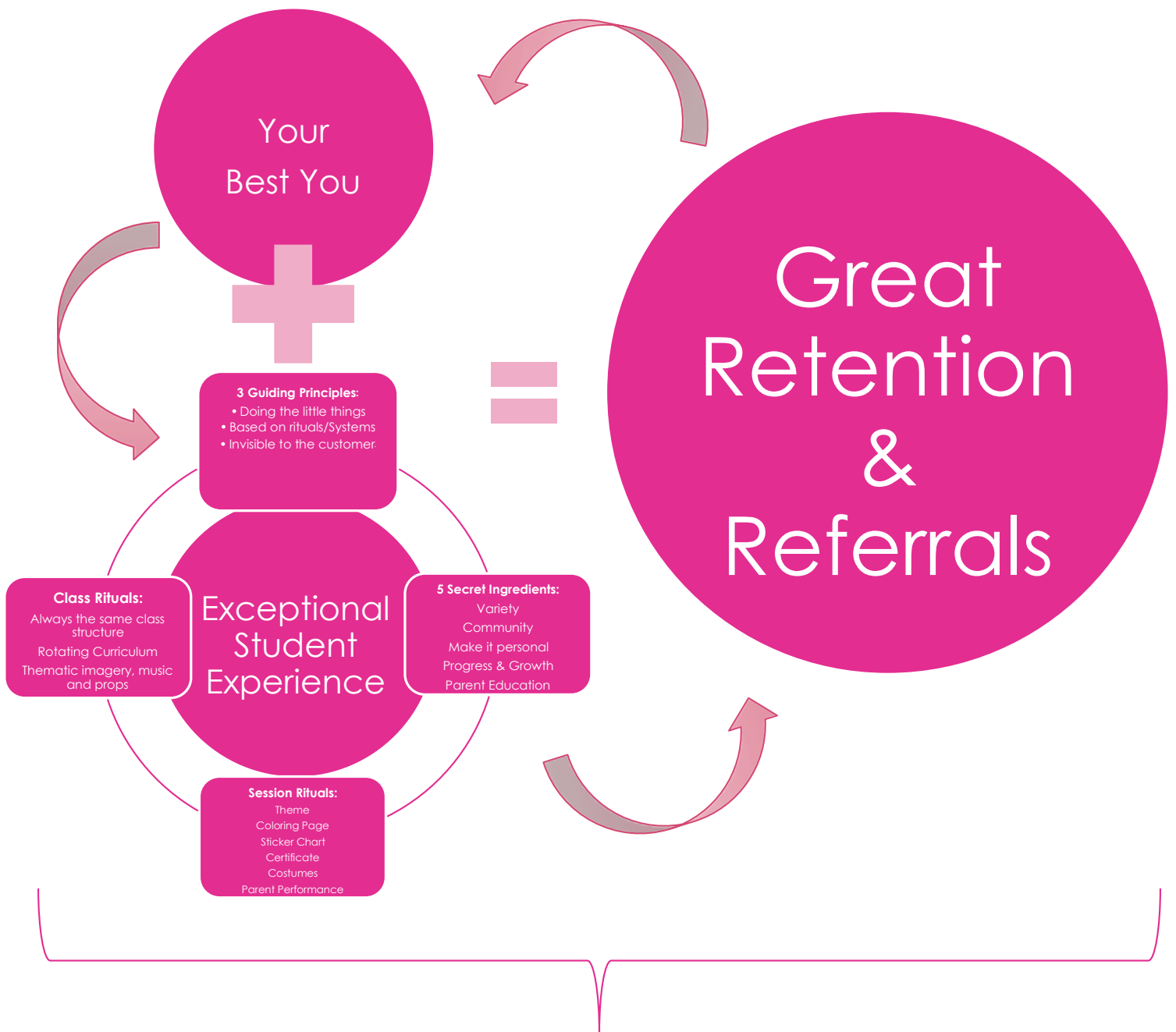
Conclusion

In conclusion, my take on marketing and advertising as it relates to the dance studio business is that there are lots of things you COULD do to bring in more students (parades, post cards, door hangers, bill boards, banners, flyers, demo classes at preschools, online list building with auto-responder sequences, booths at local festivals, local performances every month) but the fact is that when you concentrate on providing an exceptional experience you don't NEED to advertise at all. When you focus on yourself and your existing students you become a self-sustaining entity... thriving and growing through student retention and referrals as a natural by-product of providing an exceptional experience.

It's a perfect "circle of awesome" and it's a MUCH MUCH MUCH earlier, more joyful and more balanced way to run a business too by the way. You'll be so much more relaxed, fulfilled and joyful teaching classes full of families who love and appreciate you. Of course, having a packed program full of raving fans will make you feel AMAZING which contributes to your general health, happiness and well-being which in turn helps you give even more to your families (*the "circle of awesome" again*).

The Exception To The Rule

Of course all rules have an exception, and that's if you are starting from scratch of course you'll need a launch plan to get your first 20-50 students ASAP (See *the Bonus Chapter: Start Up Guide*). Then from there, you can focus on just that first batch of students and let your circle of awesome expand from there. You can EASILY expect to add 50-100 students per year (in an averaged sized community) without any marketing or advertising by just focusing on the methods in this guide.

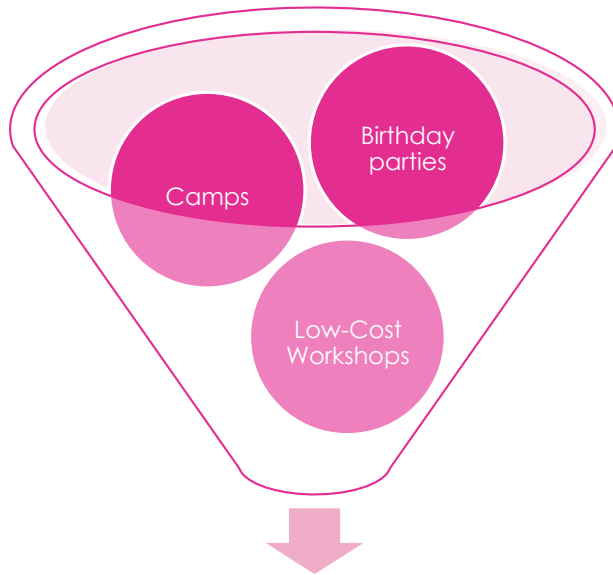


The Circle of Awesome

This process is the core of your business. You can build a fabulous & thriving business built on this process alone. Simply by taking care of yourself, developing your personal power and then funneling that passion and energy into providing an exceptional experience for your students and parents.

Rev Up Referrals

Provide opportunities for your raving fans to refer your studio. The best opportunities are those that are fun for your current student AND give them a chance to invite a friend into your studio.



At each event, extend a friendly invitation to referrals to take the next step in joining your studio family (book a trial, sign-up for a session, etc.).



Supercharge that invitation with...

- A special limited time offer (book your trial class today and get...)
- Instant gratification: Offer a bonus gift included for booking a trial class or enrolling (*dance wear, gift pack, etc.*)

Still Want More Students?

AFTER you've maximized your efforts on retention + referrals, if you want to add more new students into your program I suggest Facebook ads.

- **Facebook Ads-** Effective, affordable & measurable.
- Automate the entire process so that it can be running in the background while you continue to focus on developing your best you + providing an incredible experience for your existing students.
- See the Facebook Ad Guide inside the Membership Area for an example of a VERY successful campaign that you can copy.

WARNING: If you have success with advertising (with Facebook or other means) but you haven't maximized the experience, then you'll find yourself right back to the "Revolving Door Dilemma".

Chapter 5: Simplifying The Office Work

Operational & Administrative Rituals

The design of the entire administrative side of Princess Ballerinas is based on the old U.S. Navy principle of K.I.S.S. –“Keep it Simple, Silly!”.

The never-ending, mundane and time-consuming tasks of managing the administrative tasks within a dance studio are enough to suck the joy right out of your life as a studio owner. However, running a professional business requires that we keep accurate records for ourselves and our studio parents.

So what's the solution?

Let's SIMPLIFY our studios, I say. Let's make managing our studios easy on ourselves and our customers.

Everybody wins when things are SIMPLE and EASY.

Consider Running Your Princess Ballerinas classes separate from the rest of your studio.

If you only offer preschool classes, then it's not an issue but I realize that many studio owners will also have programs for older students at their studio. If that's the case, I strongly recommend you consider running & marketing your Princess Ballerinas classes totally separate from your programs for older students.

Here's why:

In general, you're marketing to totally different demographics. The needs of a preschool family with a child coming 1x per week are TOTALLY different from that of a family with a school-aged child attending multiple classes each week.

Much of the design of Princess Ballerinas classes are based on themed sessions. As you'll soon see this also coordinates well with the enrollment/re-enrollment process.

I find that session-based terms work beautifully for preschool-aged classes and session-based terms will also GREATLY reduce the stress, complication and redundancy of the administrative side of your studio.

On the other hand, session-based terms for older students, who are probably enrolled in multiple-classes don't make as much sense. In general, programs for older students are based on an entire school year and so breaking up payments into monthly installments typically makes paying for tuition more affordable for older students.

For example, an average 6-18 year-old student at my studio pays around \$200/month for classes. It's a lot easier for the average parent to work \$200 into their monthly budget than to have them pay \$600 (or more) per quarter. Parents of older students (who are generally long-time students of the studio as well) are generally comfortable committing for an entire school year at a time.

To reiterate, you're serving totally different markets with Princess Ballerinas classes and upper-level classes. The marketing is different, the messaging is different, their needs and wants are different and the program design is totally different.

For these reasons, I run my Princess Ballerinas classes totally separately from my upper-level classes and I highly recommend you do too.

Session-Based Terms & Payments

As you saw in the section about Program and Class Design, the teaching curriculum is based on 10-week sessions. It makes sense to have the payment sessions match the teaching sessions.

The benefits of session based terms from an administrative point of view are:

- **Simplicity:** You're only collecting payments 4-5 times per year instead of 10-12. *This alone will GREATLY simplify life for both you and your customers.*
- **Clarity:** You're bundling a clear number of classes (in my case 10) with a clearly packaged tuition price (in my case \$200). *Note: More on packaging and pricing in the next section.* Parents are clear on what they are paying for, when the session starts, when it ends. Everything is clear and simple. *(As opposed to monthly tuition which sometimes can be sticky when there are 3 weeks in a month. Even though you probably average 4 classes per month over the course of the year, there's always a handful of parents who balk at paying their regular tuition rate in say, December, when there are fewer classes.)*
- **Less Distraction From What's Important:** As we've seen in previous sections, focusing on delivering an AMAZING experience is really all that matters at the end of the day. We want to reduce distractions that take us away from that. The fact is, that every time you're in "enrollment" mode you're not necessarily in "retention" mode. You can only do so many things at one time. When enrollment is always open (like with month-to-month classes) you're ALWAYS dealing with new students coming in, trials, enrollments, drops... and before you know it, you're back to being consumed with administrative tasks and NOT providing a magical experience. It's hard to be magical when you're stressed out about students adding and dropping every week, all year long. As you'll see, with the session-method we are only enrolling for a short time before each session. This frees us up to focus 90% of the time on serving your fabulous families. It's a much more relaxing way to run a studio as well.

- **Ritualistic:** One of the guiding principles for the design of the Princess Ballerinas program is that everything is based on rituals (systems). You'll see that rituals are also built into the administrative side of managing classes. This not only simplifies the process for you but the repetition also helps you build a culture of expectations for your studio parents. They get used to the timing and know what to expect each session in terms of payment and re-enrollment, because they are always the same and run on a predictable schedule. After a few sessions, it just becomes "this is how we do things here" and life runs so smoothly for everyone involved. Preschoolers aren't the only ones who like to know what to expect when they come to class, their parents do too.
- **Invisible Marketing Forces:** You'll also see that the beauty of the session design is that you'll benefit from leveraging the help of "invisible marketing forces" that naturally occur when you follow the Princess Ballerinas session design. Besides having parents get used to your studio's "rituals" when it comes to enrollment and tuition payments, the structure of session-based enrollment also naturally triggers the forces of anticipation, scarcity, social proof and FOMO (fear of missing out) in your favor to boost re-enrollments and retention each term without you having to do ANYTHING. Talk about ease & simplicity!

Big Picture Timeline

Fitting it all together...

	What's Going On In The Classroom	Communication Going Out To Parents	Invisible Retention Marketing Forces at Work	Admin Rituals
Week 1	Session Starts/Introduce new theme	Email sent to parents reminding them of the new session as well as providing an overview of the fun things we'll be learning.		The <u>ONLY</u> Trial week for new students. *** See <i>trial student system</i> *** New student lead collection: Any families who inquire (call, stop in, email, trial request online, etc.) outside of the enrollment window (weeks 8-10) should be notified of your next upcoming event and/or enrollment opportunity.
Week 2	Lesson Plan 2			
Week 3	Lesson Plan 1			
Week 4	Lesson Plan 2 + coloring page goes home	Email sent to parents reminding them that next week is "Sneak Peek Week" during the last 5 minutes of class.		
Week 5	Focus on Lesson Plan 1 + Parent "Sneak Peek" during last 5 min	Email: Reminder and excitement about "Sneak Peek Week" + heads up that we'll be announcing our next theme soon + a heads up on VIP enrollment dates.	Gives parents a chance to see how much their child is learning and loving class before they need to enroll in the next session.	Offer to add them to a "Parent Notification Email List" for the next session when enrollment for new students opens in week 8. Offer to send some information in the meantime to get them excited about joining your studio when the opportunity opens up in a couple of weeks.

Week 6	Focus on Lesson Plan 1 + Sticker Charts	Email sent out: Educational update + announce the next	By announcing the next theme + VIP Priority Enrollment week	Send out an email to your mailing list announcing the next theme +
---------------	---	--	---	--

		theme + reminder of VIP enrollment dates are next week.	you're naturally building excitement and anticipation for your next session.	enrollment dates (after your current students get to enroll) + enrollment instructions. Doing this in advance gives them a heads up + builds anticipation. It also lets them know there will probably only be 1-2 spots open in each class so they better act quickly when enrollment opens!
--	--	---	--	--

Week 7	Focus on Lesson Plan 1 + announce next theme to students.	Email: VIP priority registration is LIVE and ends this week.	By limiting VIP Priority week to one week, you create a natural sense of scarcity. About half of your families will reenroll right away which creates a sense of "social proof" and "fear of missing out" for the other half.	The majority of your current families will enroll this week. "Enrollment" can be as simple as having them drop off payment in a collection box to reserve their spot or you can have them enroll online if you want too. Keep it SIMPLE.
---------------	---	--	---	--

<p>Week 8</p>	<p>Focus on Lesson Plan 1 + Remind students that next week is rehearsal in costume!</p>		<p>OPTIONAL: If you decide to host a story book event or a themed minicamp based on the NEXT theme. Weeks 8-9 would be a great time to do it because enrollment is open for new students so it's a great time to ramp up referrals and invite them to join before the next session.</p> <p>Bonus enrollment incentive: You can even offer these events for <u>FREE</u> for your current students who are enrolled in the NEXT session. For</p>	<p>Enrollment opens for new students to fill any remaining spots. They can drop off the registration form to a collection box with payment or enroll online (depending on what you want to do). Again, KEEP IT SIMPLE.</p>
			<p>example, perhaps the event fee is \$10-\$20, but <u>FREE</u> for students enrolled in the next session AND a friend.</p>	
<p>Week 9</p>	<p>Focus on Lesson Plan 1 + Rehearse parent performance in costumes.</p>	<p>Email: Reminder + build excitement about parent performance week next week!</p>		<p>Ideally, your classes will be totally full at this point and you can relax and enjoy the last couple of classes + a break between sessions if you wish. If you still have openings, you still have 2-3 weeks to send follow up emails or call returning students who haven't yet enrolled.</p>

Week 10	Last class of the session + Parent Performance in costume + Certificates	Email: Reminder about parent performance week this week and reminder about the first date for the NEXT session.		
Well Done! Take a week or two off if you like to rest and re-coup between sessions knowing you're fully enrolled with cash in the bank... or keep the party going and run sessions back to back. Whatever works best for you!				

Scheduling the 4 core 10-12 week sessions.

I like to build my sessions off of the winter break. So my Oct-December session will end mid-December (with a holiday themed performance) and then we'll come back after a 2 week break in January with the start of the winter session.

Enrollment Rituals & Policies

VIP Registration Week

Referring to the timeline, you'll be announcing and building excitement and anticipation (a POWERFUL mental trigger) for the NEXT theme in week 6 of each session. This is AFTER you've done sneak-peek week so parents have had a chance to see the fun & progress of the current session and you can start slowly building up for the NEXT session (*Secret Ingredient "Variety" is at play here*).

We're also providing lots of reminders (along with educational updates) so that parents know in advance what's coming and what they need to do.

By giving your currently enrolled students a "VIP Priority Registration Week" you're building good will and giving them "first dibs" on keeping their spot in class for the super fun next session.

By limiting "VIP Priority Registration Week" to just one week, you create a natural sense of urgency and scarcity. There are only so many spots in class, maybe the class is currently full. Parents know they'll need to act quickly to make sure their child doesn't miss out on the fun in the next session.

Additionally, I find that we re-enroll about 50% of our students on the first day of VIP Registration Week. Then scarcity, fear-of-missing-out and social pressure ("all of her friends are signed-up already") kicks in and that incentivizes the other 50% (or close to)

to enroll before the end of the week. Of course, lots of people are procrastinators so much of that other 50% of re-enrollments will come in on the last day. It's human nature, but that's why limiting this process to JUST ONE WEEK is important and that's why IT WORKS.

The Actual Enrollment Process

Keep it simple, keep it simple, keep it simple.

Literally, if you have under 100 Princess Ballerinas you could set a cute collection box out each VIP Registration Week and "re-enrolling" can be as simple as dropping off a check. No IOUs, or verbal enrollments. Nope. Check in box. Period. This puts the ball in the parent's court to re-enroll, re-enroll on time and to pay on time.

Payment=Enrollment. It's simple, it's easy, it works.

Note: This is assuming that you already have a registration form on file for the family since they are continuing students. Basically, they just need to pay for the next session to continue.

Tracking enrollment can be done on a simple spread sheet with the payment amount and payment date to track enrollments.

Literally, this doesn't have to be rocket science. Don't over complicate things.

Simple Example:

	Fall Session		Winter Session	Spring Session	Summer Session
Students	Payment Method	Amount			
Stacy Miller	Ck #442	\$200 8/2/16			
Alexa Smith	Cash	\$200 8/2/16			
Mia Meyers	Ck #7899	\$200 8/2/16			
Angelica Johnson	Ck #9877	\$200 8/4/16			
Rosa Aguirre	Ck #0988	\$200 8/2/16			
Emily Ramirez	Cash	\$200 8/3/16			
Emma Edmeyer	Cash	\$200 8/4/16			

	Total Tuition	\$1,400						
--	----------------------	----------------	--	--	--	--	--	--

Do yourself a favor and keep simple but CLEAR payment terms. Parents WILL come up with a million and one variations if you let them.

You're giving ample notice, plenty of advance reminders and clear instructions (*you could even post an entire year's worth of due dates & session dates in your lobby or on your website to REALLY help them plan if you want*). When other payment requests come in, simply explain that your policies are in place to make things clear, fair and simple for everyone and that you're unable to make any special considerations.

Most of your parents will appreciate your simple and easy system and will appreciate your professionalism. It may take a session or two to "train" everyone on the new system, but it won't take long to get everyone on board. Anyone who puts up too much resistance probably isn't worth keeping in your studio anyhow.

Create fair policies then STICK TO THEM. That's the easiest way to weed out the occasional "bad apple".

Online Registration:

Another easy way to automate your VIP Priority Enrollment Week is to use an online enrollment system like Jackrabbit or Dance Studio Pro (there are many others too). Most systems allow you to open up enrollment for active students BEFORE new students. Just set your dates to match your VIP Reg Week and you're good to go! Opening enrollment is as easy as sending an email on the first day of VIP Registration Week.

The nice part about an online system is that it's paperless and can be fully automated. Parents can enroll in their PJs at midnight if they want.

The downside, is that the software costs money, a merchant account to process credit cards costs money (you'll pay 2-4% on all charges... it adds up, trust me), setting up and learning a new system can be a pain and then you have to train parents to use it too.

If you have 100+ students or you already use a system for your upper-level classes, then it probably makes sense to use the same system for your Princess Ballerinas too.

Regardless of what you use to actually track enrollments, the most important policy I can recommend is payment=enrollment. That ensures you're paid on time, each session. No chasing or reminding... EVER.

Ramp up Referrals with Special Events

In the marketing section, I showed you that after focusing on providing an AMAZING class experience, that the best way to bring in new students is to host fun events for your current students and offer for them to invite a friend. This way you're building goodwill

with the people who matter most to your business (current customers) and you're providing fun opportunities for them to share your studio with their friends (the best new student you can possibly get is a referral from one of your current students).

According to the Princess Ballerinas session timeline, you'll have most of the spots for the NEXT session filled by existing students during VIP Priority Registration Week. Then any remaining spots will open up for new students during weeks 8-10 before the next session begins. That makes weeks 8-9 the PERFECT time to host one of those fun referral events.

Ideally, it will tie in with the next theme to increase excitement for the new session coming up. A Ballerina Story Time Event, a themed mini-camp would be a perfect chance to meet new students and also extend an invitation to book one of the last few remaining spots for the new session.

Again, having scarcity, a limited window of opportunity, social proof ("my friends do this it must be great") and anticipation for the new theme will all act invisibly in your favor to fill up your next session before it ever starts!

"Dig the Well Before You're Thirsty"

There's a Chinese Proverb that says "dig the well before you're thirsty". In this case, we want to build up a list of potential new students BEFORE we're ready to enroll. Again, we can use scarcity, anticipation and social proof in our favor ("sorry classes are currently full but our next session starts in a few weeks"= "These classes must be great! I want in!" in the mind of a new parent).

According to the Princess Ballerinas timeline, we're really only pre-enrolling for a few weeks before each new session begins but that doesn't mean you can't be collecting a list of potential new students during the rest of the session.

You might have an online form on your website where parents can request a trial class, or they can join the notification list for the next session starting in a few weeks. Or they might call or email you, again, you can add their contact information to your notification list.

This collection of potential new students can be on an automatic "drip" system in the background all session long. It's not a big distraction from the most important work at your studio (providing AMAZING classes). Then when week 6 rolls around you'll have a whole new bucket of potential new families who you can launch the new theme to, and let them know that after the VIP Priority Registration for current students that they are welcome to enroll in any remaining open spots. This is GREAT positioning for your studio. Who doesn't want to be a part of THAT program? Sounds like THE place to be, and it is!

Once more, we are invisibly using the natural powers of scarcity, anticipation, fear-of missing-out and social proof to inspire parents to take action. No begging for new

students, we don't have to offer any discounts or and no expensive advertising required!

The Actual Enrollment Process for New Students

Just like with continuing students, I recommend the very simple policy of payment = enrollment. Period, end of story.

Of course, with a new family you'll also need them to complete a simple registration form and participant waiver but for new students the enrollment process can simply be extended to Registration Form + Payment = Enrollment.

Again, you can just keep it simple and accept a check and a registration form or you can do the online route if you have a large program.

Just like with continuing students, you're providing ample notice and clear, simple instructions. This system puts the burden of responsibility on PARENTS to sign up and pay you on time if they want their child enrolled.

Using this method, you'll never have any outstanding collections, you'll be paid in full with cash in the bank before the first day even starts (*no prorating ever needed*) and no reminding or chasing down late payments EVER (*which isn't exactly fun for you or great for building a warm and fuzzy community environment*).

Trials & Risk-Free Guarantees

Should you offer trials for new students? Well, it depends.

If when week 8 (open enrollment) rolls around and your classes are only half-way full then I would probably offer to enroll new students on a trial basis because you will get more people to sign up this way.

When I offer trial classes, which isn't often, usually it's just for the fall to kick off each new school year, especially if I've had a lot of 5-6 year olds "age out" of PB and into our upper-level classes. I call week 1 of each new session the "Trial Week" and we'll offer new students to just enroll in the first class (they MUST attend during week 1, the official "Trial Week") for the price of just 1 class (\$20 in my case). I don't offer free trials because for one thing, I value what I'm offering and secondly, I want to respect my current customers. They are paying to be there, why shouldn't the new student pay as well? We are doing them a big enough favor by allowing them to just pay for the first class before deciding on the rest of the session, we don't need to throw FREE into the mix as well. It's not good positioning for you or your studio. Anyone really interested in getting their child enrolled into a quality program like yours won't mind paying for a single class one bit. If they do, it's a MAJOR red flag and I would recommend they try somewhere else (with a friendly smile of course).

What's more likely to happen after a few sessions of following the Princess Ballerinas methods is that your classes will be 90% full with just 1-2 openings for each new session.

In that case, you may decide not to offer any trial classes at all for new students. This is what I do most of the time because our classes are always at or near capacity and we always have referrals or a list of new students ready to join for a full session.

The alternative to booking trial classes, is to offer a risk-free, money-back guarantee through the 2nd week of classes. This way, a new family is enrolling (and paying) for the entire session upon enrollment like everyone else but you're given them an "out" if it doesn't work out for whatever reason. Of course, refunds are rare, but new parents feel comfortable knowing they won't be out a full \$200 if their three-year-old won't even enter the dance room on the first day. It also just gives brand new families that extra bit of security and confidence they need when signing up for something new. You know, in case you're some kind of evil dance teacher with a nightmare of a studio (*which of course you're not, and their child will love you!*). I prefer the "risk-free, guarantee up through the 2nd week for new students" because it's a done deal UNLESS they request a refund. It's just a simpler, more streamlined method for bringing in new students.

With a trial, it's a bit more work and follow up. With a trial, they're going to come to the first class, and then you'll need to follow up with them after-class to see if they want to continue. Usually you'll get the "we'll discuss it and let you know" or "I'll need to discuss it with my spouse first" response and out the door they go. Maybe they'll be back next week, maybe they won't. Even if you provided an AMAZING class during the trial, there's a good chance they'll get distracted during the week and even if they intend to come back, they might not. All of the invisible forces of scarcity and anticipation are out the door, so they have the upper hand in deciding to come back or not. It's not a great position to put yourself in, but if you have a bunch of open spots to fill then it's better than nothing.

Refund Policy

Outside of the refund policy for brand new students (and even they must request a refund within the first two weeks of a new session starting) all other tuition payments are non-refundable. I just simply say that we're unable to offer refunds for any reason. If there are unusual circumstances, sometimes we'll offer a class credit good through the rest of the year (put a time limit on it!) and of course if a really rare situation occurs (death or serious illness in the immediate family or something else terribly extreme) you can always make a personal decision and offer a refund if the situation calls for it. In general, parents are only paying for 10-weeks at a time. If they miss a class or two they are welcome to do a make-up class during the session. Otherwise, tuition covers their child's space in class whether she attends every class or not.

Make-Up Classes

I offer unlimited make-up classes. It's a great value for parents, it's a great marketing benefit to parents of preschoolers (even if they don't every attend make-up classes, they like to know they can) and since all of the teachers are teaching the same classes, it's easy for families to pop in for a make-up class on another day/time. In general, very

few parents actually take their child to attend make-up classes so I don't ever have issues with over-crowding or anything like that. The benefits far outweigh the problems. If overcrowding ever became an issue, you could limit make-up classes to just the classes that had room available.

Chapter 6: All-Inclusive Tuition

Pricing & Packaging

Think outside the box of “industry standards”.

The way I design my pricing and packaging of classes, like the design of all of the other areas, is created to make life easy for the studio owner and valuable and easy for the studio parent. Everyone wins with these methods. I wouldn't have it any other way.

First, let's look at the “normal” way to set up pricing and packaging in a dance studio.

- Classes are sold on a monthly basis, average of 4 classes per month. Most studio owners are collecting tuition on a monthly basis (10-12 payments per year)
- When a new student enrolls, typically most studios are charging a registration fee. Possibly for returning students as well. (1 payment per year)
- Students need dance wear, tiny tots at least typically need dance shoes, leotard, skirt and tights. Studio owners often offer these items for sale upon enrollment or they sell them in their lobby. (1-2 payments per year)
- Then if you offer a year-end recital, you have to collect money of recital fees like costumes, tights, dance shoes, rehearsal fees, tickets, photos, dvd, and possibly other optional items as well. Typically, these fees are broken up into costume deposits which are due mid-year with the rest of the fees due at the end of the year at various points. (2-4 payments per year).

With the “normal” way of collecting fees, studio owners are needing to collect individual payments from parents 14-20+ times per year! That's a lot of individual transactions going on within a studio for each family... all year long.

Every time you need to collect money from parents, you have to notify them, educate them on WHY you need to collect the money and provide a breakdown of the fees due. Then you have to actually COLLECT the money, which is an administrative nightmare of payment collection and data entry IF everyone pays on time. Most likely, you will also have to remind, and remind and remind some parents before you get all of the money collected. Oh...and did I mention that (compared to class tuition) there's not a whole lot of profit in dance wear, costumes or recital fees so much of this work is really for PENNIES above and beyond your real revenue source (class tuition). Plus, all of this busy work (for pennies) is taking you away from the most important job at the studio which is to provide and AMAZING, EXCEPTIONAL and PERSONAL experience for each and every one of your students.

Asking people for money all the time isn't magical. It's not magical for you, nor your families. Don't worry... there IS a better way.

All-Inclusive Pricing

Enter the concept of “bundled pricing” or “all-inclusive” pricing. It's a beautiful, beautiful thing.

Let's look at a quick non-dance example:

Pretend you are taking the morning off to go think in a coffee shop alone. Maybe you're going to use the time to think about how you can implement all of these new Princess Ballerinas strategies into your preschool program to make everyone's lives better, happier and easier. A GREAT use of your time, if you ask me.

You walk into a quaint little mom & pop coffee shop downtown somewhere. You already know what you want, your usual, so you walk up to the counter and order a non-fat vanilla latte and a blueberry scone.

“Great!”, says the shop owner behind the register. “First there's a \$2 registration fee to order coffee from us. It helps us cover our insurance and our office manager, Martha, who works in the back. Then, it'll be 43 cents for the milk, \$1 for the espresso, and 50 cents for the squirt of vanilla syrup. Plus, \$1.20 for the scone and 5 cents for a napkin. Oh, and cups are required in order to drink our drinks (and no you can't bring your own) so that's another 10 cents. So it'll be \$5.28 right now. Then when you leave, we charge a 20 cent exit fee to throw away your garbage and walk out the door so be sure to get back in line to pay for that part before you go. Thanks and have a great day!”.

As a customer, how does that make you feel? Do you feel warm and fuzzy? Loved and cared for? *Didn't think so.*

No one likes to be nickel-and-dimed. It's confusing and complicated for everyone involved. Yet, that's how most studios treat their customers. They nickel-and-dime them to death.

If you're currently operating this way, it's not your fault. Pretty much everyone does it because, well, that's just the way everyone else does it. Pretty solid logic.

But let's look at another scenario:

You've taken the rare morning off to go do some studio thinking and planning in a coffee shop. You're away from the demands of your studio and your home and you're on a mission to get some time to yourself to just THINK.

You walk through the front door of the cute little coffee shop and the owner, Mary instantly recognizes you and greets you by name. “Oh, hello [insert your name here]!”, taking some time off from the studio are you? I see you're child free as well this morning! Good for you, taking some time for yourself”. Go ahead and sit down, will you be having your usual non-fat vanilla latte with a blueberry scone? Wonderful, it'll be out in a jiffy.”

You sit down at your favorite table, the one by the window, and pull out your notebook to start brainstorming. Mary quickly comes over to serve up your latte and scone with a cheerful smile on her face. Not wanting to interrupt you, she simply leaves it on your table and whispers "if you need anything else just let me know" and tip toes off to cheerfully serve other customers. The latte and scone are delicious!

After a fruitful 90 minutes of thinking, brainstorming and planning you're ready to go. You pack up and out the door you go, ready to take on the rest of your busy day.

But what about paying?

You're a regular member at the coffee shop so you have a credit card on file. You know each time you stop in for your usual, a vanilla latte and a blueberry scone that they'll just go ahead and charge you the \$8 automatically. This was all set up in advance the first time you visited the coffee shop so that you could have better and faster service each time you stop in.

Let's look at the differences. In the first experience, their problems become your problems. Do you really care what their insurance or Martha in the back costs them? You're there to relax and enjoy, you don't even want to hear the word "insurance"!

And it's confusing, there are a lot of numbers flying around. How can you be sure everything is accurate? Why does the espresso cost so much compared to the coffee? And if you have to buy a cup, why can't you bring your own? And a registration fee? Let me get this straight, I have to give you money before I can give you MORE money? "Sweet gig you've got here Mary", you think to yourself. "You must be making a FORTUNE!"

In the first experience, there's a lot of emphasis on the COST of everything. There's a lot of time spent waiting in line and placing your order. It's just bottleneck after bottleneck, stopping you from enjoying your experience. Which is the WHOLE REASON you're there in the first place! You went in for enjoyment and peace and quiet so that you could think and relax. Nothing about the way Mary runs her shop in the first example helps you achieve that goal. In fact, you'd probably never go there again. You'd probably just buy a Keurig and drink your coffee at home just to avoid the experience in the future!

In scenario two, the emphasis is on creating a smooth and enjoyable experience for you, the customer. When you first joined the coffee shop their prices and policies were all explained to you ONE TIME so you knew what to expect in the future. You knew that each time you came in for your latte and scone, it would be \$8, plain and simple. So now, each FUTURE time you come in, there's no need to mention price or payments (or late fees, or reminders). Mary can concentrate on cheerfully SERVING you and you can get right to enjoying your experience inside the coffee shop, which is the whole reason you're there! You're still paying for the experience and Mary is still covering her costs and getting paid... it's just packaged MUCH better in the second scenario.

One last interesting note is that in the first scenario you're paying almost 50% less, but it FEELS like you're paying much more. And in some ways you are, you're also "paying" with confusion, time wasted waiting in line... in fact, since it defeats the entire relaxing experience, you might argue that the entire \$5.48 is wasted. On the other hand, do you really mind paying the extra \$2.50 in the second example? Not at all. I'd probably pay at least DOUBLE and not even flinch.

In the second scenario, you're getting a much more personal and enjoyable experience, simply and easily. Mary can concentrate on providing you a personal and enjoyable experience AND as a bonus, Mary happens to be making 50% more AND you're happy to pay. Everyone wins, as it should be.


Price the Total Experience

We can do the same thing in our studios. By bundling everything a Princess Ballerinas family will need into one flat "all-inclusive" price we can simplify EVERYONE'S lives and get back to focusing on SERVING and delighting your customers with a great experience.

Be in a category of ONE

Since you're offering FABULOUS Princess Ballerinas classes, these aren't just run-of-the-mill tiny tot classes. If you apply everything we've covered up until this point into your program, then students are also getting a whole host of other things included into their experience. This allows you to be spun out of the game completely when it comes to "competing" with other studios. There simply isn't any competition. You're providing a totally unique experience and so parents LITERALLY can't compare you to any other studios. You're light years ahead of the pack.

Let's look at a side-by-side comparison:

<p>Typical Tiny Tot Dance Class:</p> <p>What's Included?</p> <p>4 weekly tiny tot classes</p>	<p>What's Included?</p> <p>Your little ballerina will love exploring a new imaginary dance adventure each and session complete with a theme, themed music, thematic imagery and matching props to bring each story to life!</p> <p>This session is "Raindrops & Rainbows", a magical theme to celebrate the Spring!</p>  <p>What's Included?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 10 weekly themed classes.• A coloring page to match each story.• A personal sticker chart to track and celebrate learning each new term and skill during the session.• Each session ends with a parent performance in costume (<i>costumes are provided on a dress-up basis at no cost to you</i>).• Each session also ends with a child getting her very own Certificate of Achievement to celebrate her effort and dedication. Each certificate reflects the session theme so many children enjoy collecting them session after session.
---	--

<p>Typical Tiny Tot Class continued:</p> <p>Recital Fees:</p> <p>Students will have the chance to perform for family and friends at an optional, year-end, professional dance recital!</p> <p>Recital Fee: \$50 per dancer due in January. <i>This helps us cover the cost of the theater and additional rehearsals.</i></p> <p>\$75 per costume. A \$50 costume deposit is due November 1 with the \$25 balance due by February 1. <i>There are no refunds on costumes.</i></p> <p>Recital Tickets: \$15 per ticket.</p>	<p>Princess Ballerinas Classes continued...</p> <p>About our Recital:</p> <p>Spring session students will have the chance to perform for family and friends at an optional, year-end, professional dance recital!</p> <p>We offer special "Princess Ballerinas" recitals which are only 30-minutes in length. They are also 100% stress free for you and your child. At our Princess Ballerinas recitals, the children arrive in their costumes and sit with their families during the show. Each class will be invited up to perform on stage with their teacher, then get a little award before returning to their seat to watch the rest of the show. Our Princess Ballerinas recitals are very relaxed and very sweet. This way, your little dancer can get the fancy theater experience in a way that's very welcoming, gentle and age-appropriate for them.</p> <p>Are there additional recital expenses? Nope. The Spring session tuition includes a professional dance costume that's yours to keep, a complimentary professional group photo, 2 complimentary recital tickets for parents and a complimentary DVD of the performance as a year-end thank you!</p> <p>Note to you as the studio owner or teacher: I believe a spring recital for Princess Ballerinas classes is 100% optional. Most studios are already doing a spring recital so this is how I frame a recital experience for my Princess Ballerinas students since I have the theater rental anyway.</p> <p>It also works GREAT to simply offer in-class parent performances at the end of each themed session (or a couple times a year if you change themes monthly). Especially if you offer costumes on a dress-up basis for the experience.</p>
---	---

Which would you rather sign your child up for?

From the parent's perspective, the Princess Ballerina's offer is more interactive, more interesting and more clearly laid out from a packaging standpoint. It's simple, easy to understand and they know EXACTLY what they can expect for their \$200 tuition.

Not to mention, it's also SO much easier from your perspective as well. In the non-PB example you're collecting money every month for tuition, then a deposit in November, then a recital fee in January, then the balance for the costume in February, then for tickets before the show. *PHEW! I'm exhausted just thinking about it!*

And all along your studio parents are feeling nickel-and-dimed.

In the Princess Ballerinas example, if you run 4 10-week sessions a year, you're collecting \$200 four times upon enrollment (remember payment= enrollment during VIP Priority Registration Week so you're always getting paid on time, effortlessly).

Each session you're delivering an AMAZING classroom experience based on a story and a theme, with thematic music, imagination and props. They get to practice performing for their parents during sneak peek week and parent performance week. They're getting fun little goodies like their own book to take home at the start of the session (or at the Ballerina Story Time events that you host before each new theme).

Then, when the recital rolls around, you get to be the dance version of Santa Clause and simply pass out beautiful costumes to each child to take home. Then a photographer comes and takes their picture, then you're giving parents 2 complimentary tickets to the show and then you're sending them a complimentary DVD. (*Details about Princess Ballerinas recitals coming up*).

Instead of always talking about money and collecting money (and incessantly reminding, reminding, reminding parents to pay...again) we've reversed the cycle and you get to DELIVER, DELIVER, DELIVER dozens of times over the course of the year but only collect money 4x per year. It's a much better ratio of asking for money vs. delivering goodies and service, don't you think?

Premium Pricing

It's totally up to you what you charge, but as we near the end of this guide, I hope you can see that the Princess Ballerinas experience is truly an in-depth, service-oriented, customer-focused and all-inclusive experience. In comparison to the average preschool class experience (dance or otherwise), I would say that the Princess Ballerinas class experience is "premium" by anyone's standards. Especially, if you are really going the extra mile and paying attention to all of the "small stuff" each and every class- that alone bumps you up into the premium category.

You can choose to provide a premium experience and charge average prices but because you're providing a premium, all-inclusive service I recommend you charge a premium price to match.

Now, a "premium price" doesn't mean you have to charge ridiculously high prices. I'm not advocating that. I just mean you should consider pricing your program with prices that are on the upper-end of the spectrum for your area. Spend a little time and do some competitive analysis, and don't just limit it to dance studios. Look at what parents in your area are paying for dance lessons, martial arts, gymnastics, and even tutoring (Sylvan Learning Centers/Kumon/Learning Academy, etc.). If prices range from about \$10-\$15 a class, I would charge *at least* \$15 a class, probably even closer to \$20. That's what I mean by being at the upper-end of the pricing spectrum relative to your local community.

Like it or not, price is one way that value is communicated to your market BEFORE they get a chance to experience it. If there were two cars for sale for \$5,000 and \$50,000 and you knew nothing else about them, which would you guess is the nicer car? The \$50,000 one, of course ONLY because it's price is higher and if we don't have any other information we have to assume that higher prices mean better quality.

Higher prices communicate better quality to your market too. It's incongruent to offer an "all-inclusive, premium program" but then charge average or below market prices. You want to communicate the fabulously exceptional experience you offer in everything you do, including your pricing.

Apples to Oranges Comparison

"I can't charge more than all of the other studios in my area!", you might be thinking.

First of all, yes you can, especially if you're providing a more premium experience AND offering all-inclusive pricing.

However, to help you justify it further, another HUGE benefit to the all-inclusive packaging model is that it literally makes a direct comparison to other studios impossible for parents. Notice, we're NEVER listing out what they are paying for a costume or for pictures or for each class... never. They just know what's included in the all-inclusive bundle of awesomeness and that they're paying \$200 per 10-week session (maybe more or less depending on how much you charge per class and how many classes are in a session).

They don't even KNOW if your classes are more or less expensive than the studio down the street because they don't know what they're paying for each individual item. And the truth is, they don't really care.

Think back to the coffee shop example, do you really care what you're paying towards the milk or the espresso individually? You just want a vanilla latte, right? It's the same for your families, they just want to sign their child up for a great experience in a Princess Ballerinas dance class.

In terms of experience, you're so far ahead of the pack that other preschool programs (dance or otherwise) aren't even in the same category as Princess Ballerinas. Do you know of other preschool programs that include stories, and a fully integrated thematic experience, and dress-up costumes, and coloring pages, and sticker charts and certificates and parent performances???? Plus, "all-inclusive" tuition with a "free" costume, photo, DVD and tickets at the end of the year?? Me neither. That's the point. You're WAY out in front of the pack leading the way.

From the parent's perspective, you're the clear choice in every category:

- ✓ Superior Experience
- ✓ Great Value
- ✓ Lots of bonuses included

- ✓ Convenience

Why would they go anywhere else?

Princess Ballerinas Recitals

Offering Recitals: The Choice Is Yours

If you're starting from scratch, and you only offer Princess Ballerinas classes, I don't think recitals are necessary since there are already so many opportunities for parents to watch their child perform throughout the year with sneak peek and parent performance weeks (especially if you're bringing in dress-up costumes each time).

Honestly, the theme-based program of Princess Ballerinas classes is so fully immersive with the themes, student bonus materials and parent performances that it can easily stand on its own in the marketplace without adding an on-stage recital into the mix.

I also think it's a function of what your families are used to. If your program is new, and your families have never done a recital, I don't think they'll miss it one bit. On the other hand, if you're an existing studio who has been doing recitals for years, most likely your families would miss the experience if you suddenly took it away.

Recital Benefits

The benefits of offering an annual recital is that it's another opportunity to really give your families a unique and special experience outside of the classroom. Even though, you've done everything in your power to make the classroom experience AMAZING, as a dancer you know there's nothing quite like performing for an audience on a stage. The costumes, the lights, the excitement... it's simply magical and unfortunately we can't quite replicate that magic in a classroom setting.

The other big benefit is that holding an annual performance is that it allows your families to invite more family and friends to watch the performance, which is great for really building a sense of community as well as exposing a greater number of people to your program. This also adds to creating a special and memorable experience for your students as well, of course.

Recital Negatives

From the studio owner, it's a lot of work and additional expense. You have to rent a theater, sell tickets, coordinate with all of your families to make sure everyone knows what to expect, where to go, etc. Recital time is probably the most stressful time of the year for most studio owners. There are a lot of moving parts to manage. From ticketing, to programs, editing music, creating show scripts for theater techs, dealing with theater contracts and fees. Each student will need to be sized for costumes, then those costumes will need to be ordered, organized and distributed. Some will need to be

exchanged for other sizes. My recital plan (coming up) is as simple as it gets and it's still a lot of work.

Compared to tuition, recitals really aren't very profitable so it's exponentially a lot more work for a few additional pennies. For this reason, it really comes down to understanding what purpose the recital serves in your overall business. If to you it's an important part of the experience, and the work is worth it... then go for it.

I happen to offer a recital experience for my Princess Ballerinas because I'm already doing a recital for my older students but to be honest, if I moved to another town tomorrow and started a Princess Ballerinas program from scratch, I don't think I'd offer an on-stage recital. I would just focus on offering the best 10-week program. I really don't think not offering an on-stage recital experience is a deal breaker if you're just teaching tiny tots.

Recital Choreography

What do they perform on stage? I've done Princess Ballerina recital choreography a few different ways. They all seem to work just fine, so I think it's really up to you. I've had the dancers all perform one longer routine, or 2-3 shorter routines from the year (each performed back-to-back) and each class does the exact same routines. This is a very simple format, at it allows flexibility for make-up classes and class transfers leading up to the show. I also don't have to worry about cutting a bunch of music.

I've also had each class do their own recital routine, in place of the themed choreography for the session before the recital. This way everyone has their own routine, but it's a lot more work for me for choreography, and music...

You can also do a combination of the two because if you have 12 PB classes, and there are 4 in each 30-minute show. Technically you could run routine A, B, C and D in each of the three shows and no one would ever know the difference. That's a good way to simplify things but still give everyone in each show their "own" separate routine and costume.

The shows are so short, tiny tot choreography is so similar anyhow and everyone is really there to see their child perform on stage, I don't think it really matters which route you take.

The Princess Ballerinas Recital Experience

Like everything else in the land of Princess Ballerinas, I've tried to simplify and maximize the experience as much as possible for everyone involved: dancers, parents and myself.

There are no additional required fees for our Princess Ballerinas students. The recital is an extension of our Spring session and students will automatically get a costume, 2 complimentary tickets for parents, a professional group photo and a DVD of the performance. *More on that next...*

First, let's go through the recital timeline during the final weeks before the show which is typically the first or second weekend in June:

6-8 weeks before the show: Costume measurements are taken at the end of class.

6-8 weeks before the show: A simple parent handout is sent home with exact show times, checklists and an explanation of what to expect.

4-5 weeks before the show: Order & organize costumes. Because of my timeline I only order costumes from companies that carry "in-stock" costumes like Revolution, Weismann's, Just For Kix, Discount Dance... I've always had PLENTY to choose from and I can see the inventory when I go to order. I order hundreds of costumes this way each year with no issue.

Parents can also start picking up their complimentary tickets at this time. Additional tickets can be purchased now or at the door. We average about 4 tickets sold per dancer, on top of the 2 complimentary tickets for parents. Most of those extra tickets are purchased at the door by family and friends so it's not an additional expense for the parents.

3 weeks before the show: Costumes are passed out in class. We try them on in class and run the dance once or twice. Costumes go home with families.

1-2 weeks before the show: Picture week. Either our last class or 2nd to last class is picture week and "dress rehearsal" in class. Students wear their costume to class with the required hair, tights, and shoes. I have a professional photographer come in to do photos during our regular class times. This way, it's convenient for families. This method works for me because I can pay a photographer hourly for her time because she's coming in for an entire week's worth of classes (older classes too). If you were ONLY running a few Princess Ballerinas classes, it would probably make more sense to have a photo day on a designated picture day or you could even have a photographer do live "action shot" photos instead of portraits.

The Day of The Show: Dancers arrive to the theater with their family in full costume, ready to dance, about 45 minutes before the performance. I have someone mark off students on a roll sheets as they arrive to the lobby.

Dancers sit with their families in the theater during the show. I typically emcee the show and I'll call up each class one at a time to do their routine on stage with their teacher. I have a "filler" soundtrack between each routine track to keep the momentum of the show going while dancers are transitioning off and on the stage. It's actually the best part of the show usually. The audience loves seeing all the little ballerinas scurry up to the stage, where a few will wonder around while we get everyone in position. It's all very sweet and low key. They dance, get a big applause, get an award ribbon then they go back to their seats to watch the rest of the show.

A Princess Ballerinas show is typically 30 minutes in length. I'll usually include about 3-5 Princess Ballerinas classes and I'll have a group of older dancers open and close with a family-friendly routine to round out the show as well as show parents and dancers what their dancer can accomplish if she sticks with it.

As for logistics, theater house lights stay on at a dim level during the entire 30-minute show so that everyone can see as they walk around on and off stage, but there's still a "theatrical feel" and the stage lights are pretty much just simple white light as well. No black outs or curtain. Very simple so we don't distract from our star performers.

Note about rehearsals: There are no on-stage rehearsals for Princess Ballerinas. They just show up and do their thing on stage. After having hundreds of dancers perform this way, it's surprising how successful it is. Literally 99.9% of dancers have no problem going on stage, finding their spot and performing (usually with a teacher on the corner of the stage). Very rarely will a child be too nervous to perform, it happens occasionally, but even those children have a good time getting dressed up and going to the theater for "their" recital.

The most important thing about not having rehearsals is that you have to check, then double check that your playlist has all of the correct cuts, in the correct order (with backup cds/ipods). Running a show "live" without any rehearsals means you have to be super organized, but it's a lot easier for everyone else in the long-run.

Rethinking Recital Packaging and Pricing

There are no additional fees for the recital for our Spring session students. Yup, you heard that right...

Here's how I think about recital fees: It's just another expense.

I look at the cost of the books, thematic props, dress-up costumes and the recital costume, the group photo and the DVD the same way I look at the cost of my teachers, and rent and insurance. They're all just expenses that I incur to deliver the

experience to the customer. Some are fixed expenses that I incur no matter how many students I have (like rent, props and dress-up costumes) and others are variables that I incur based on the number of classes I run (like teachers and utilities) or they're based on the number of students I have because each child will need their own (story book, coloring page, sticker chart, recital costume).

It goes back to the coffee example. If having milk is part of the "latte experience" why would you expect to have to pay separately for it? You would just price the latte to cover your costs and make a profit, right?

If a recital is part of your Princess Ballerina's annual experience, just roll the expense of the costume into the price just like you do with your rent, and utilities.

Let's look at an example (a very simplified example, I realize):

- You have 100 Princess Ballerinas, enrolled in 7 weekly classes.
- You offer 4 10-week sessions a year priced at \$200 per session (\$80,000 per year)
 - Your overhead costs per hour is \$30 (rent/utilities/insurance) (\$8,400 per year).
- You're teaching the class yourself, so there's no employee expense.
- You spend \$300 on 15 sets of dress up costumes each session (\$1,200 per year).
- You spend \$100 on themed props each session (\$400 per year).
- You spend \$47/mo on a Princess Ballerinas membership (\$564 per year).
- You spend \$15 per book, per dancer each session (\$6,000 per year). □ You spend \$30 per recital costume per child (\$3,000 per year) □ Your theater expense is \$2,500 for an 8-hour rental.
- Free photos 20 cents each + \$500 to have a photographer come in.
- DVDs cost about \$500 for a videographer and \$200 to copy 100 DVDs.
- In addition to tuition, you also generate an additional \$40 in ticket revenue per dancer (\$4,000 per year).

Let's do the math:

Annual Revenue:

Tuition: \$80,000
Additional Ticket Sales: \$4,000
Total Revenue: \$84,000

Expenses:

Overhead Expense for 10 classes per week: \$8,400
Experience Expense (dress-up costumes, books, props, membership): \$8,164
Recital Expense (theater + costumes): \$6,720
Total Expense: \$23,284

Total Profit Before Taxes: \$60,716 teaching 7 classes per week. That's a 72% profit margin before taxes! Not bad for a part-time business where you're truly impacting lives and having a blast providing an exceptional experience.

Note: Recital income is pretty basic here. You can bump up your revenue by selling tshirts, concessions and flowers at the performance. In general, the recital income and costume expenses are pretty much at break-even. This is another reason, I think you could do without a recital all together if you are JUST running a Princess Ballerinas program.

Let's look at those "Experience Expenses" on a per-student basis. For every \$800 you're generating (the annual income of a Princess Ballerina), you're spending \$81.64 per student, per year (just 10% of your revenue) on the things that really make it an exceptional experience... the Princess Ballerinas lessons, music, and teaching materials, the props, the dress-up costumes, the books and the recital costumes.

Let's break that \$81.64 cents down even further. If you're charging \$20 per class, each student is only paying \$2 per class for their book, coloring page, sticker chart, recital costume, props... the parts that really add a whole new dimension to their experience.

So really, because you're providing a more immersive, all-inclusive experience including books, coloring pages, sticker charts, thematic music and props, and costumes... in short, a more "premium" experience, you can charge more. I'm talking the difference of charging a few dollars higher per class than other studios in your area. With those higher prices, you can afford to offer lots of little perks but you can also make a better profit at the same time.

Everybody wins!

Chapter 7:

Summer Months & Bridging The Gap

Summers can be a rough time for dance studios because enrollment typically drops off when school is out, but studio owners are still stuck paying to keep their studios running. This is one reason, if you're teaching less than 20 classes per week it might make a lot of sense to find a space you can rent hourly (church hall or recreational center). Yes, it's a pain to haul a bin of props and costumes with you to class each week, but the BIG upside is that you're only paying your overhead expenses when you're running your classes. If you choose to take some time off during the summer, you can afford to do so because you don't have a huge rent obligation to cover.

Even if you do have your full time space, it's a good idea to calculate your overhead expenses so that you're covering them during the main 40-weeks of classes (*or 44 weeks if you run 11-week sessions or 48 weeks if you decide to run 12 week sessions*). If you do decide to run a shorter summer session or summer camps outside of the 4 main sessions, look at it as a bonus.

Personally, I choose to maximize the 40 weeks of the year that we're running classes and enjoy taking the summers off along with all of our families. As long as you plan ahead and organize around your business around this schedule, it's no problem at all.

If you do decide to offer a summer session of classes, you may want to offer about half as many class times (so that classes are still full) or instead of running a summer session of classes, you may want to consider offering a couple weeks of camps. This way you can consolidate your enrollment to a few weeks if you expect enrollment to be lower than usual in the summer.

When I do offer Princess Ballerinas camps, I usually offer them for 2 hours a day Monday-Friday which gives us a total of 10 hours (same as a 10-week session). So basically, you can pack a 10-week session's worth of instruction in to a single week, add in some matching crafts and you've got a camp!

Another alternative to summer camps and summer classes, is to stretch out the sessions to 11 or 12 weeks. That way, you can still run just 4 sessions per year but it will pretty much take you year-round (plus a couple of weeks off during the holidays).

Taking Summers Off?

If you decide to take a break between your recital and fall sessions make sure to bridge the gap with a pre-enrollment offer for your existing families.

This is the one caveat to the VIP Priority Registration process because technically there's a gap between the Summer and Fall sessions if you go with the standard 10-week session format.

You can still follow the normal enrollment schedule, and run your VIP Priority Registration process during week 7 like you always do but I also like to throw in an enrollment bonus just to seal the deal with all of our families before heading into the summer break.

It's far better to have families committed for the fall session with cash in the bank going into the summer, even if you have to give out some bonuses to make it happen, than to finish out the Spring session and head off into summer not knowing where your next dollar is coming from or who will be back in the fall.

Some ideas for Fall VIP Enrollment bonuses are...

- \$100-\$150 Birthday Party Credit good for the next 12-months (if you're offering birthdays). This is a GREAT bonus for your families and a sure way to guarantee a bunch of referrals coming in over the next year. Just make sure you can accommodate that many parties. It could end up being 1-2 parties every weekend, all year long.
- A credit towards dance wear in the fall. Most preschoolers will need to get new dance wear each year since they grow so fast.
- A credit towards a summer camp or summer event.
- Some additional free tickets to the recital.
- Put together a bonus fall enrollment package for your current families with a combination of some or all of the above. You can also offer tiered bonuses. Like the first 20 families to pre-register get bonus package x, and the next 20 families get bonus package z, but everyone gets bonuses h, l and j. That's a good way to build some excitement and extra scarcity into your Spring pre-enrollment push but you can put a limit on things like the birthday party credits, for example.

Bonus Start Up Guide

Your Location

"Wherever you go, go with all your heart." - Confucius

If You're Just Starting Out:

If you're just getting started, I HIGHLY recommend finding a space that you can rent by the hour. This will allow you to keep your overhead low and you'll put more money in your pocket right from the start.

I would expect to pay anywhere from \$20-\$30/hour on average depending on the size and type of space. Ideally you'll have your rent be about 10% of your revenue (at capacity). Depending on where you live you might need to pay more, or you may find a steal. That will give you a general idea though.

The most important part of the Princess Ballerinas dance class experience are the intangibles. Your spirit and energy in class, the imaginative explorations, the joy of moving to music. The next set of important features are quality customer service, professionalism and doing all of those little things all the time when dealing with your customers. No matter what, remember that the IMPORTANT stuff can and needs to be present no matter where you end up teaching your classes. The magic can go with you wherever you need it to.

If you've decided to offer "Princess Ballerinas" classes specifically, then of course you'll need to specific teaching materials, playlists and books that contribute to the thematic experience (and save you a ton of time too!).

With that all considered, really any open space will a non-slip surface can work. Think about spare rooms in church halls, recreation or senior centers, hotels, gyms. You don't need mirrors or barras for Princess Ballerinas classes, in fact, sometimes they can be a distraction at this age. Carpet is fine, you don't need sprung Marley for preschoolers.

You may even look into renting space in the mornings at an existing studio. Not all offer preschool aged classes and it might work out to be a really good fit for both of you. Note: If you go down this route, be sure to maintain ownership and control of your Princess Ballerinas program. By following this plan, you'll have packed classes before you know it and you may decide to expand into your own studio and add additional

programs for older children. If possible, strictly maintain a rent-by-the-hour relationship to give yourself the flexibility to move and take your students with you when you do.

As for a parent waiting area. Ideally, there will be a separate space for parents to wait close in some sort of lobby, but it's not a requirement. Personally, I like to keep parents close by for potty breaks and the occasional tears so that I can keep class moving but you can encourage parents to make sure their child uses the restroom before class too. If there's no waiting area, parents can go run an errand or wait in their car if they need to. It's not a deal breaker, especially with the phenomenal experience you're providing in class.

Working Through A Parks & Rec or Community Center.

If you decide to work through a Parks & Recreation center, see if you can rent the space by the hour instead of contracting through them. Much of the design of Princess Ballerinas classes involves having access to your families (via email mostly) and controlling enrollment dates for returning and new students each session.

You may not have the control or flexibility to operate as I've described in this guide if your only option is to list your classes in their guide books and enroll according to their procedures and operating dates.

Unless you can have full control of your program by renting a room hourly, I would highly suggest you find a location where you'll have full control over your business.

Already Have Your Own Studio Space?

Think of ways you can give your studio family's a "first class experience". This doesn't mean you need a butler to serve champagne and caviar but there are lots of little things you can do.

- If it's been a while since you've decorated give your whole lobby a fresh coat of paint. Paint is cheap and it will transform and freshen up your space.
- Consider upgrading your furniture. I used to have all plastic Ikea chairs in my lobby until I did a parent poll to get feedback one year. I was expecting feedback on our classes, but the number one suggestion was "MORE COMFORTABLE CHAIRS". We happened to be doing a studio make-over that summer and we brought in all upholstered furniture for the lobby. The chairs weren't really terribly expensive (you could still go with Ikea), but it made a HUGE difference in the look of our lobby. It was a total upgrade and much comfier for parents too. I was a little worried about how the fabric would hold up, but really it's been fine even with hundreds of kids and parents coming through our lobby each week.

- Mostly just make sure you keep your lobby and studio spaces fresh and clean at all times. If you have admin staff, they should be able to do a quick vacuum and surface wipe-down each day before and during classes. Have a cleaning service come in at least once per week for a deeper clean and be sure to do things like touch up your paint and steam clean carpets/furniture every 6 months or so. The key is to get this all on a schedule, otherwise it's easy to put off for far too long.

These are easy things to do, but they are also easy things NOT to do and they're common areas where studios drop the ball. Don't be that studio.

Accounting, Banking, Insurance & Taxes

Depending on where you live, most likely need a local business license, and you'll need some basic accounting tools. Whichever location you choose, will require specific insurance coverage. All of this is outside the scope of this book and is going to be specific to your location, but is all pretty standard stuff. Seek out some help with a local accounting firm, SBA, or Chamber of Commerce to get everything set up correctly from the start.

You can probably get everything in place within a few days or a week. It's not very difficult to get any of this stuff in order, though it is very important to make sure it's done correctly.

Launch Plan

You've found a location to teach in, you've got your teaching materials in place and your banking and accounting is all set up... now all you need is students!

As you've read, the Princess Ballerinas method is very much based on student retention and growth through referrals. That's great when you have students, but what about when you're starting from zero?

We need a plan to enroll your first 20-40 students ASAP to get started.

If you'll recall, I don't believe in offering free trials because my thought is that if I have paying students in the class, then trials should be paying too.

That's my view once classes are rolling, but I do think FREE can be a powerful launch strategy to get you started and FAST. This is the ONLY time I'll be advocating for "free" when it comes to your classes because it's a one-time launch strategy. Just this once, then NEVER again...You won't need to anyhow.

Step 1: Set up as many FREE Ballerina Story Times, free classes/ demos, event booths and as you possibly can in your area for 4-5 weeks before you open. Basically, you're going on a 4-5 week "promotional tour".

- Call preschools to see if you can come in and do a free class or Ballerina Story Time.
- If it's during the summer, you can offer to come guest teach at preschool summer camps (or do a Ballerina Story Time).
- Get in touch with your local mom's club and see if they have any big events or preschool play dates coming up that you can do a Ballerina Story Time or a little demo class at.
- Attend fairs & festivals: Run a free mini-class or Ballerina Story Time every hour on the hour.
- Set up "Ballerina Story Time events" at your local library, book stores, wherever you can!

In other words, be everywhere as much as you can for a 4-5 week period doing Ballerina Story Time events, teaching free classes (30 minutes is fine) and just meeting parents and potential students. See if you can set up 8-10 events during the 4-5 week period.

***Ballerina Story Time Events:** While you're on "tour" this can be as simple as a book reading of the next Princess Ballerinas book that your first 10week session will be based on. I would dress up as a dance teacher (think "classic" like a wrap sweater, wrap skirt, new tights (or nice leggings) and nice new shoes, hair in a bun or French twist). You can spend 10-15 minutes reading the book, then bring a little boom box and have the children do 1-2 simple activities or movements from the book, then pass out fliers for the "Grand Opening Special Opportunity".*

Step 2: Invite everyone to enroll in the first month for FREE!

At each event you attend while on your promo tour, have a flier ready to pass out or send home with information about your new program that's coming soon. Offer a

"Limited Time Grand Opening Special (an \$80 value!- *obviously adjust this for your own pricing*" where the entire first month will be completely FREE.

Be sure to mention on the flyer that space is incredibly limited for this very special "Grand Opening Opportunity". Give very simple and clear instructions. Do you want them to call to enroll? (Be sure to ANSWER THE PHONE if this is the route you take)? Do you want them to register online? Give them ONE clear, simple action to take to enroll in the free month.

Also be sure to include the enrollment dates to participate in the free month. They need to be clear on the start and end dates of the "Grand Opening Special" and when they need to enroll by.

Step 3: Personal Phone Calls

Give yourself those 4-5 weeks to get out into the community to get the word out about your new program and the opportunity to check it out totally FREE. I would add in one extra week, where you're not doing any promo events, to get ready for your free session to start and to do this next step.

During the gap week, be sure to call everyone to remind/confirm that the free session starts the following week. Be sure to start paying attention to all of those "small things" right from the start. Look at the parent and child's name on the enrollment form before each call. Ask them about their child, have they danced before? Have they attended any other classes before? Are they excited to start dance class? Plus, of course ask if they have any questions. Try to have a nice, personal conversation with each family if you can.

You very well might book a TON of free enrollments. Be sure to take the time to make these personal phone calls the week before you start no matter how many you enroll. If you think you can only handle calling 40-50 families, then only enroll that many. Quality over quantity. We want these free month students to convert to paying customers after the free month, so it's better to impress and build a relationship with fewer families than to book so many free enrollments that you have to skip with personalization (HUGE MISTAKE- don't do it). Calling everyone gives you a chance to start building relationships with your future students, you'll TOTALLY stand out and impress the parents and you'll make a great impression on what they can expect from you in the future... nothing but excellent service and instruction!

Step 4: Start teaching the free month.

Teach the first 2 classes and do an AMAZING job. Pull out all of the stops to make a connection with your new students and parents.

You'll want to save the first book-based session for the first full 10-week session, so I would pick one of the non-book lesson plan themes for your free trial month (*like the "Princess Ballerina" theme*). I would definitely still plan on having cute props and at least pink dress-up tutus for the parent demonstration day. Even though this is a free

session, you still want to introduce them to all of the little things that your program offers. Plus, you want word of mouth to start spreading AND think about all of those videos and photos that will be posted on social media after the parent demonstration day. Even if every one of the free month families doesn't enroll right away, think of them as being your first set of word-of-mouth ambassadors. What do you want them to say about your new program and their experience?

Remember, the entire premise of Princess Ballerinas is to deliver an incredible experience and to "be sharable". Don't skimp on the free session of classes!

Step 5: Make an offer to officially join

After the week 2 class, let your families know you'll be bringing them in for a sneak peek during the last 5 minutes of class the following week. After the 5-minute sneak peek, make an offer to officially join your program.

Let them know that there's still 1 more class left in the free session, but that you wanted to let them know how they could sign up to continue if they're interested. This is just a casual invitation to continue if they're interested. No pressure at all.

Have a flyer ready to hand out with the details of the first 10-week session starting in 2 weeks (how to enroll, rates, what's included, etc.).

On the flyer be sure to include a clear deadline (for example, close enrollment at the Saturday before the session begins on Monday). And give clear directions on how to enroll (*drop a check in the pink drop box, see me after class, or enroll online whatever you decide to do*). Quickly go over all of the info verbally after the week 3 "sneak peek" before you pass out the fliers.

I would also suggest throwing in a "Founding Family" bonus for enrolling in the first 10-week session. I would suggest throwing in a leotard with an attached tutu since it's something they'll need for class anyhow. You can find simple leo/tutu basics online for \$10-\$15 a piece. It's a SMALL price to pay to welcome aboard your new families to your program. I would even get nice white gift bags and pink tissue paper to wrap them up before passing them out to really impress and welcome your new families.

Bonus Idea: *If you can afford to purchase a bunch of leotards in advance (get mostly smalls and a few mediums), you can pass them out immediately upon enrollment after you announce the offer during week 3 of the free session. This way, you'll start getting sign-ups right away after that 3rd class (because they'll want their free tutu! And you'll probably get the rest after the last class.*

If you want to wait for the sign-ups to come in first, you can always deliver the tutus on the first day of the session. This way you can use the money that comes in from sign-ups to pay for the tutus.

Step 6: Teach the Last Class in the Free Month.

You've already made your invitation to join, so you can just focus on finishing out the free month without a sales pitch. Have a fun last class, finish with a parent demonstration and thank everyone for participating in your first month of classes.

You have clear instructions, deadlines, and incentives in place, working their magic for you. You can sit back and watch the enrollments come in. If they want to join, they will. If now's not a good time for them to sign-up, you've made an AWESOME first impression. They'll be sure to tell their friends and you're likely to see them in class again in the near future.

Important: STICK TO YOUR ENROLLMENT DEADLINES, even though it's the first session. You MUST close enrollment after the first week and stick to it in order to start "training" your new families on how your program operates. This might be difficult to do during the first session, but TRUST ME, it will pay off in the long-term (and by longterm, I mean your next session). You'll need to stick to your payment policies as well for the same reason.

If you let new students continue to enroll and trickle in (or if you do trials) after the first week of the session. You're not going to be able to focus 100% on delivering an AMAZING experience to your first set of families.

Once you do the free month, and make an offer to join for the first 10-week session, CLOSE ENROLLMENT after week 1 of the 10-week session (this should be clearly communicated in advance to your free month families by the way), even if your classes are only half-full.

Regardless of class size during your first 10-week session, at this point, you can start following the regular session plan and start list building for your NEXT session. You can be sure, the stragglers will jump on board ON TIME for session 2 and I promise your program will continue to build from there.

Be clear about how people can do business with you and don't waiver. They will either get with the program or not, some people just like to test their limits when dealing with a new person or business. You teach your customers how to treat you. Whatever you do, do not budge from the policies and deadlines. Remember, they are there for a reason.

Initial Results: I would expect at least 50% of your free month families to enroll in the first 10-week session. If you want to start your program off with 20 paying students, aim to book 40-50 free month families. If you want to start off with 50 paying students, aim to book 100 free month families. How big do you want to start off? If you want 50 paying customers for the first session, you will need to HUSTLE during those 4-5 weeks of demos and meet & greets. Be everywhere for those 4 weeks. Call in all of your favors to friends and families to get the word out about your “promotional tour”, your new program and the “Grand Opening Special Opportunity”. It’ll be a CRAZY busy 4-5 weeks, but you can launch BIG and have a solid base to start and grow your program from. Plus, you’ll be profitable from the start and that’s a VERY good thing.

Bonus:

Re-Launch Plan For Existing Studios

If you want to incorporate some of the ideas from this guide, it's probably best to notify your families of the changes you'll be making to your tiny tot program in the spring or summer, then start fresh in the fall.

In general, most people fear change, so instead of using the word “change” it's better to position all of these changes as an exciting new launch of a fabulous new program! Strangely, people hate “change” but they LOVE “new”. Go figure.

How to Re-Launch?

If you'll be offering specific Princess Ballerinas classes, running 10-12 week sessions like we went over in this guide and incorporating the Princess Ballerinas themes into your program, you could finish out your current season and then follow the launch plan laid out for brand new studios. This plan will work even BETTER for you because you have an existing customer base who will be super excited to jump on board. If you have less than 20 students, and you want to grow your program, following the “launch plan” for brand new programs will help you grow and re-launch bigger and stronger than ever.

If you have a fairly large program (40+ students), then ideally, you can re-launch in the spring or summer leading with all of the exciting new things your program will offer to your families (themes, coloring pages, performance weeks in costume, sticker charts, etc.). I would offer a really attractive VIP Pre-Enrollment Bonus Package to get your current families on board and cash in the bank before heading into the summer months (ideally before your recital). Then you can use the summer months to get ready for the new program (get props together, lesson plans, teacher training, studio spruce up) and

if you have room in your classes you can do a few Ballerina Story Time events at your studio or you can go out into the community (see the launch plan for the brand new programs).

Final Thoughts

Running a studio doesn't have to be the nightmare that many studio owners experience. It can be easy and a joy to own a studio and to teach dance for a living, and it should be. It just requires us to think outside the box of "industry norms". To give a different and better experience for our families we need to deliver the experience in a better and more exciting way. To have a more fluid, balance and stress-free existence as a studio owner we need to ritualize and get a plan for everything!!

Of course, you can create a plan of your own from scratch but if you simply want to have fun teaching dance, changing lives and making an impact on the world through your studio... the Princess Ballerinas methods and teaching tools give you everything you need to get started NOW. Joining the Princess Ballerinas membership is affordable and accessible for all studios regardless of your current student count (*another revolutionary concept!*). There are no long-term contracts, big upfront investments and you all of the teaching materials (lesson plans, etc.) are customizable so you can use them as you see fit for your studio.

Thanks for reading this book. At the very least, I hope you've gain some new ideas that you can use to simplify your program. If you've decided to offer Princess Ballerinas classes at your studio, WELCOME! It's a lot of fun and it will be an exciting new adventure for you and your students. I look forward to having your join our tribe of passionate and savvy studio owners.

Happy Dancing!

Megan

Please visit [Princess Ballerinas.com](http://PrincessBallerinas.com) to get started today!

www.PrincessBallerinas.com