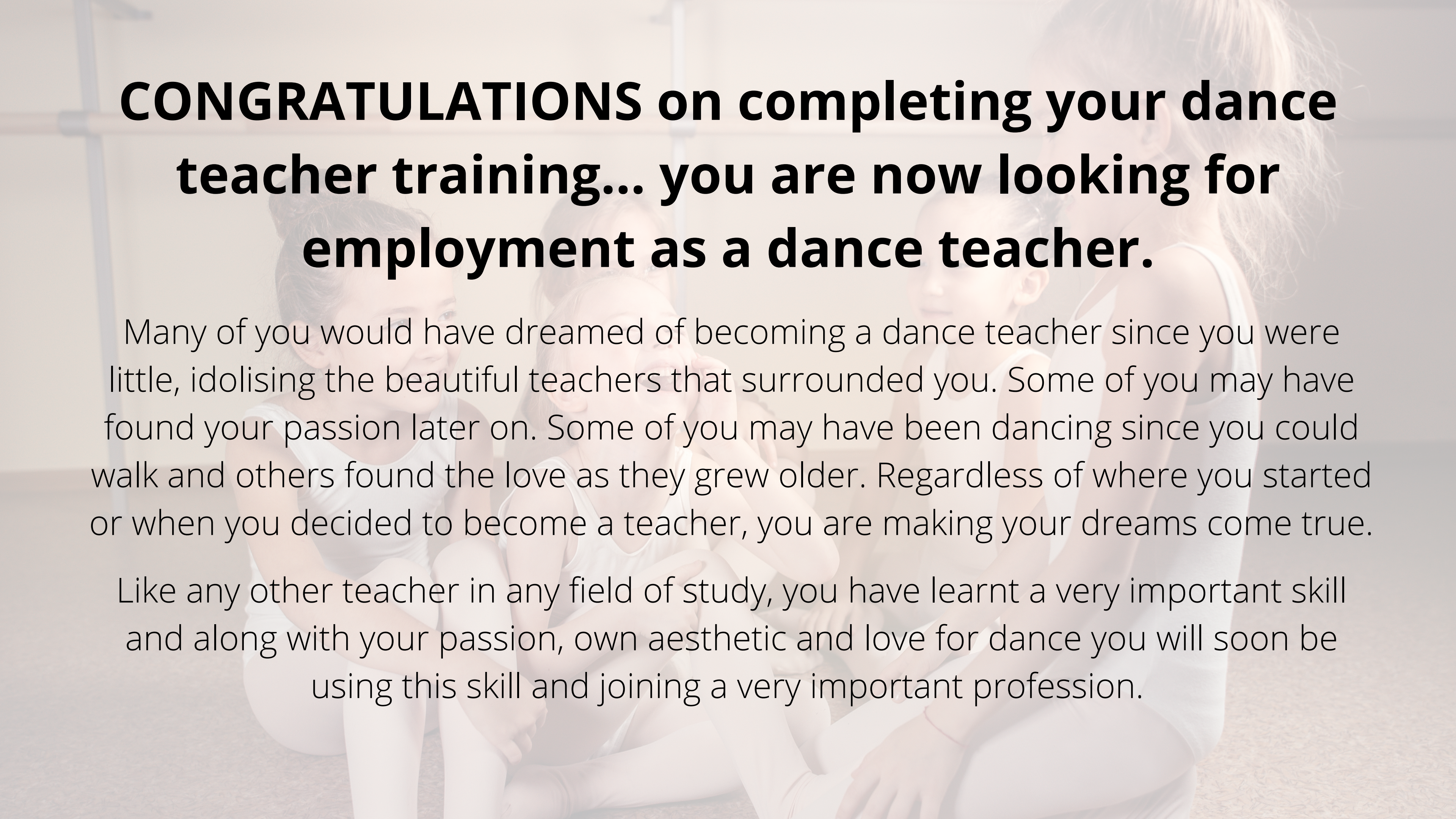


# A Guide For New Dance Teachers





# **CONGRATULATIONS on completing your dance teacher training... you are now looking for employment as a dance teacher.**

Many of you would have dreamed of becoming a dance teacher since you were little, idolising the beautiful teachers that surrounded you. Some of you may have found your passion later on. Some of you may have been dancing since you could walk and others found the love as they grew older. Regardless of where you started or when you decided to become a teacher, you are making your dreams come true.

Like any other teacher in any field of study, you have learnt a very important skill and along with your passion, own aesthetic and love for dance you will soon be using this skill and joining a very important profession.

# Introduction

Though dance remains unregulated as an industry, it is the industry standard that teachers in dance schools are trained and have a true desire to work as a teacher.

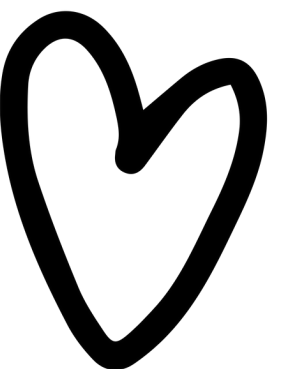
Your training has equipped you with very important skills that you will use throughout your career. If you have not received any formal training and aspire to be a teacher it is highly recommended that you complete a teaching course.

In Australia that may be a Certificate IV in Dance Teaching and Management or a Diploma of Dance Teaching and Management. You may choose to study at a university and obtain for example, a Bachelor of Creative Arts and a Bachelor of Education, these qualifications will allow you to teach in primary and secondary schools along with private dance schools. To support your teacher training, you may have been a part of a syllabus for example RAD or Cecchetti and these organisations have teacher training to ensure students are equipped to teach their syllabus on graduation.

The key here is **TRAINING**.

Throughout your teacher training you have learnt about delivering safe and effective classes, lesson structure and planning, learning outcomes, health, injury prevention, learning styles and so on.

Now it's time to put that all into practice!



# Landing your dream job

So now it's time to apply for jobs, attend interviews and make a great first impression.

## Interviews

Interviewing for a dance teacher position is a super important part of the process. This is a great opportunity for you and the dance school you are applying to, to work out if it's a good fit. In the interview the school wants to know about you, your work ethic, why dance teaching is important to you and how you would fit into their school.

It's also important for you to ask questions about the school and the students and work out if you could bring your best self to the job.

### **A few tips:**

- Do some research on the school before you attend your interview. Check out their website and socials. Does this seem like a school that you would like to be involved with. Do you think you could bring something to the team?
- Be on time for your interview
- Be yourself. Who you are is amazing, so show your best self.
- Be respectful and kind, these qualities are so important for teachers to possess so make sure you show these parts of your personality.
- Ensure you have all of your qualifications, WWCC and any other documentation you have been asked for

## **What will happen in the interview:**

You will meet with the studio owner or another senior person at the studio

Remember - they want you to be good! So find that confidence and show your best self.

You will be asked some questions such as:

- Why do you want to work at this school?
- Why do you love teaching?
- Can you give me an example of how you have handled a difficult situation in a class whilst you were training?
- Do you work well under pressure?
- Have you choreographed a routine before, tell us about that?
- What genres do you teach?
- What are your personal qualities?

And so on.....

REMEMBER - Answer honestly. Finding the right fit is best for everyone.

## **What you will be asked to provide:**

Your current CV

Training qualifications

Your WWCC

ID (for example a drivers license or uni card)

First Aid certificate



## **The next step:**

If your interview goes well and both yourself and the employer align, you may be asked to progress in the interview process. This could include:

- Providing contact details for referees (you should have a list of referees to help support your job search. These referees should have already been contacted and asked if they could be put down as a reference for you. You could ask teachers, mentors, managers from other jobs or character references including family friends.)
- Attend a second interview
- Meet some other staff from the school and have an informal chat
- Take a trial class. You may be asked to come back to the studio and teach a trial class which is a great step forward in your application process. Trial classes are important so that you can get a feel for the students and the school and the school can see the way you teach and engage with children. Once again, just be yourself!

### Notes on trial classes:

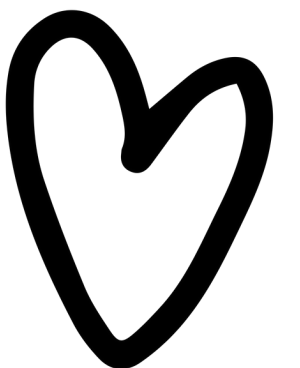
- You must ensure you are told what age, what genre and what level you will be teaching so you can prepare adequately.
- Someone from the school (preferably the studio owner) must stay in the class with you at ALL TIMES. You must never be left alone in a trial class.
- You must be paid for a trial class. If you are teaching a whole lesson and you prepare for the class you should be compensated for your time. It is perfectly within your rights to discuss this with the studio owner.
- You should not be left to deal with any emergencies in the trial class, there should be support for you should there be an injury, accident or any other unexpected event.

## **The Final step:**

If you were unsuccessful in getting the job please do not be disheartened. Trust in your training and passion for teaching and know that the right school will be out there for you. You may attend 5 or more interviews before you find the right fit. Be proud of yourself and keep searching.

If you have been successful and offered a position at the school CONGRATULATIONS, you should be very proud of yourself. Now its time for you to get your career started!

It's important to note that as a dance teacher it is often important to find work at more than one school as most schools would not have the volume of work you need to support yourself. This is very normal so do not be put off. The exciting part is that you get to interact with lots of people and many wonderful little people throughout your career.



# Employment

So now you have got the job... What happens next?

## The Job

Throughout the interview process the school would have spoken to you about what classes they were wanting you to teach including genres, ages and levels. They will now confirm those classes for you and give you your teaching timetable. By accepting these classes you are agreeing to fulfil the role and job description. You will be given a job description which clearly lays out your duties and responsibilities also who you report to. If you have any concerns about your abilities or if you find something on your teaching timetable you had not discussed, now is the time to raise this, not after you commence teaching.

You will be given contact details for the school and important people, save these in your phone and on your computer.

Ask your manager what the dress code is. Do you need to wear a uniform? A certain colour? What is expected of you? Remember, every school will be different so be sure to follow the direction of your manager at each organisation. Respecting dress codes and presentation guidelines is important,. each school establishes their identity and values through their teachers so please represent them respectfully and with pride.



# Contracts:

You will be given a contract of employment to take home, look over, get advise if needed and take back signed before you commence your work.

You may be hired as an employee of the school and if so you will be given an employee contract. This means you are being employed as a staff member and your benefits will include super, sick leave and holiday pay. You will also have your tax taken out by the business. The employment contract should outline all of the terms of your employment including hours to be worked, termination of your contract and so on. If you have any concerns or do not understand anything in your contract you should ask a trusted friend, accountant or family member.

Many dance teachers are hired as contractors and you will receive a contractors agreement. A contractor offers a service to a business however they are not deemed an employee. You will provide an invoice for your hours worked. You will not receive holiday pay, sick pay and your tax will not be taken out for you. You should have your own insurance to cover the work that you do.

IMPORTANT NOTE: As a contractor you MUST save money to pay your tax. Each time you get paid you should set a percentage of that payment aside for your tax. You should also have a super fund and pay money into this as you go. If you are self employed (a contractor) you may not get super paid. HOWEVER if you earn more than \$450 per month from a single business you are deemed an employee for super purposes and this employer must pay your Super. This should be in your contractors agreement and should be discussed with you at the time of employment. This is a complicated area and often it comes down to the individuals circumstance for example other employment. We highly recommend you get good advice from an accountant. Advice for individual circumstances will vary.

# Pay:

Different jobs fall under different 'award rates', so it is quite easy in other industries to find out how much you should be paid from a graduate right up to an executive. Of course companies have the freedom to pay employees as much as they see fit, however this must be over the award rate (the recommended industry standard). Many dance teachers operate as contractors which means the rate is essentially up to them. The considerations that need to be made include training, years of experience, offering, professional experience and so on. Contractors also need to consider the lack of entitlements ie. sick leave and factor that into an hourly rate, more on this below.

Pay presents a challenge in the dance industry as we are not regulated and we do not have a specific award. We actually fall under the *Fitness Industry Award* according to the Fair Work Ombudsman. This unfortunately does not represent our industry and the work that we do, however it does outline minimum pay rates so that no one can be taken advantage of.

Many schools will offer you a pay rate at your interview, always check that this is at least the minimum standard as per the Fitness Industry Award.

We must acknowledge that being a dance teacher is challenging (yet very rewarding).

Particularly as a contractor the challenges include working in your own time to:

- prepare classes and choreography
- choose and edit music
- practice and refine your own technique
- research your craft and professional development
- travel
- often being asked to attend additional rehearsals, competitions and concerts without pay

And more....

As a contractor you are also often required to supply your own materials, however dance schools would generally have audio visual equipment for you to use and a space to teach in so the dance training industry does differ from other industries. This is why as a dance teacher being engaged as a contractor, hourly rates will be higher than an employee and often those in other industries.

With all of that being said, it is important for new teachers to have realistic expectations for pay.

Teaching, like all careers, has a sliding scale for pay, meaning that as you get more experience, training and completed professional development, your pay will increase. Always be respectful of those that have come before you and the hard work and determination they have invested in their jobs to receive rewards such as pay increases. Expecting a high rate of pay straight out of training is not good practice. Regardless of your technique or skill as a dancer, this is about your skill and knowledge as a teacher and this can only be improved and extended with experience. You may be the most proficient dancer with impeccable technique however this does not determine your skill level as a teacher. Teaching is a learnt skill, just like dance, it takes many many years of experience to perfect. And still then, teachers continue learning.

Most dance teachers paid as contractors will receive from \$25 per hour to \$80 and above. \$25 an hour is an excellent starting point and it gives you plenty of opportunities to prove yourself and be rewarded as you move up.

# Codes of Conduct

Before commencing your employment you will be given a code of conduct which outlines very clearly how you are expected to behave in the organisation. It is very important that you receive a child safe code of conduct which outlines how you should behave around children. You will also receive information about how you should conduct your classes, communication with children and others in the organisation, rules and policies of the studio and how you are generally expected to behave to represent yourself and your employer. These codes of conduct are an essential part of employment especially when working with children. You should read these thoroughly, refer to them often and uphold the codes at all times.

Each school should clearly identify what the disciplinary procedures are for not upholding the codes of conduct. Any breaches of these codes should be followed up by the school immediately. If you have breached a code and you were unaware of this, speak openly and honestly with your manager, with good communication you should be able to move through this. Consistent breaches of the code(s) is considered gross misconduct and you will face serious consequences including possible termination. This will all be laid out in your employment contract.



# Behaviour

It is important in any job to behave appropriately. Represent yourself in the best way possible, always. To be successful, respect is a super important quality. Respect your managers, your peers and your clients. Always remember to:

- be on time (set a good example for the young people in your care). Arrive at the studio at least 15mins before your class starts
- be organised. Have your lessons planned and all of the equipment you need ready and working. Do not keep children waiting whilst you organise yourself, they are clients and they are paying for a service. It is rude and disrespectful to have them wait for you.
- lead by example
- be kind
- be honest
- finish your classes on time and vacate the studio ready for the next teacher to start their class
- leave the studio clean and clear

# Absence and leave

Covering a teachers work is difficult because there is so much to consider. You were hired because of your expertise and to cover a class, your manager will need to find some with your level of experience teaching the age, genre and abilities of students.

If you are sick and can not attend work you should call your manager as early as possible. Do not wait, you must give them as much time as possible to fill your teaching schedule. Be clear about how long you think you may be out for. Everyone gets sick and you will not be in trouble, just be respectful of your students and the school and call in as early as possible. You should never be asked to cover your own classes, this poses a child safety issue. Your manager will do this for you.

If you wish to take a day off or take holidays, again you should speak directly with your manager and do this as early as possible. It is recommended that dance teachers take holidays and time off during school holidays to avoid missing classes, however sometimes this is impossible due to family commitments, weddings, important events and so on. Once again, you should never be reprimanded for asking for time off but ensure you do it as early as possible. Some schools may have a time off request sheet that you will need to complete. As a contractor you really do not need the same permission as an employee, you contract your services without the same commitments as an employee. HOWEVER it is respectful and good practice to seek approval in the right way, you have many little people to consider so doing the right thing for them is always important.

## Loyalty

Finding employment at a wonderful studio with a great team is such a special experience. Many dance studio owners will invest in their team through professional development (offering training or paying for individuals to take part in training), offer important learning experiences and mentoring, provide excellent employment conditions and reward staff through staff events, bonuses and awards. As a sign of respect, your loyalty is the best thing you can offer. Having open conversations with your manager and discussing any concerns is the best way to keep an employer/employee relationship healthy. You can show your loyalty by sticking with your studio especially through difficult times, always speaking kindly of the business and those within it and bringing your ideas and inspiration into the studio and your classroom. Once again, you will no doubt come across those in the industry who do not deserve your loyalty and the key is to leave this studio as quickly as you can. Do not invest your time, energy and love in an environment that does not give that back to you. COMMUNICATE! Do not assume that your manager knows how you are feeling. Sometime what may feel like a big problem to you has a very easy fix and by talking to your manager you can make these changes happen. Most dance school owners want you to stay around and they want to invest in you.... let them! Being appreciated is a big part of developing your confidence as a teacher but also as a person. We all deserve to be appreciated for our hard work. Show appreciation for those around you and help build a culture of respect in the studios you work in and the industry as a whole.

# Mentors

It is so very important in life to have people you look up to and learn from. Personal and professional development is ongoing, we never stop learning! Having people around you who inspire you to be better and do better is very important. We have some incredible and very worthy mentors in the dance training industry. Professional dancers are very inspiring and they often motivate us to learn new things and expand our technique and dance knowledge. Other dance teachers are very important in your network and you will find some teachers who you look up to and aspire to be like. Watch these amazing people closely, observe how they interact with children, parents and peers. Learn from them and inject your own personal teaching styles with the parts of them that you connect with. Learning from other teachers is what pushes us to be better, to find out what we are truly capable of. Being a teacher means always improving and learning from those around us.

## Being a mentor

You yourself are now a mentor. You will mentor many hundreds even thousands of young people in your career. This must be put above everything else, your responsibility as an adult and someone who has significant influence over young people is a big deal and must be taken seriously. As a teacher you must ensure you are always setting a good example for those around you, students look to you to learn how to behave.

As a young teacher it is easy to feel pressure to be a certain way, this is very normal. This could be pressure to play a certain type of music or teach a certain type of movement or trick for example. Do not be overwhelmed by this pressure, always remember that you are now a qualified professional who is responsible for the young people in your care. Making choice to impress your students will never bring about the results you are hoping for. Your job is to make choices that keep them motivated yes, but that keep them safe.

You must always put thought and care into the following:

- **Music:** The music you choose can influence the mood of a class, so its important you put thought into your choices and plan your music before class. Unfortunately, some music which seems perfect for class with a great beat and feeling is totally inappropriate for young people. You need to consider:

- the lyrics; is there swearing? Sexualisation? Violence?

- the corresponding video; Did you know that most students will go home and watch the songs video? Have you seen it? is it over-sexualised? Does it depict women in a negative way? Does it depict violence or illegal behaviour?

- **Movements/choreography:** An exciting part of dance is seeing a teachers point of view through their own choreography. Its an amazing part of our world, being able to be creative and expressive is a hugely satisfying part of the job. And you should always approach your choreography with this in mind, it is a chance to be creative and tell a story regardless of the age or level you are teaching. Teachers can feel pressured to mimic popular movements or moments shown through social media or other platforms.

This is a dangerous culture to get caught up in and is not a responsible source of inspiration for dance teachers. It is important you stay committed to your teaching and learning outcomes and don't be thrown off track by popular culture. Sure, we should let it influence some of our choices but only ever in a safe way. There is a culture of over-sexualisation in popular dance movements online and it is not suitable for young people. Social media also shows a culture of dangerous tricks. These tricks are not supported by health professionals and can cause great damage to young people now and into their future.



As a teacher you must be responsible for the student's whole health and wellbeing. Phases and crazes will come and go, but your responsibility to teach sound technique and artistry will never change. Our responsibility is to raise and mentor children to love and appreciate dance, to learn how to look after their bodies, express themselves through movement, find their creativity, stay fit and healthy and make friendships. And for some children, we are supporting their dream to pursue dance professionally.

As a mentor, it's very important that you support every child's mental and emotional wellbeing. These little people look to you as their teacher and mentor to guide them and help develop their self-esteem. Teachers are so incredibly privileged to have the opportunity to impact young people's lives in a positive way, what an exciting and important job! Support a child's psychological and emotional health by thinking about what your words and actions mean to them. Always put the child first and ensure through the use of clear boundaries and fair and just discipline you set up a safe environment in your classroom. Be kind and respectful and enjoy watching your students flourish.

Being a good mentor also means respecting your students. Learn names as quickly as you can, children feel invisible when they are not known. Acknowledge your students outside of the classroom and use praise and positive feedback within it.

Good mentors never stop learning. Continue to educate yourself on dance medicine and research, technique, teaching practices, safe dance, creativity, artistry and more. There are plenty of organisations that offer professional development for dance teachers. Attend conferences and festivals and never lose your love for learning.

# Victorian Child Safe Standards and the National Principle for Child Safe Organisations

There are some important Government initiatives that you should be very aware of. There are State and National standards that you need to adhere to as a person who works with young people . These standards exist to keep children safe from harm.

## The Victorian Child Safe Standards

The Victorian Compulsory Minimum Child Safe standards were developed from the findings of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, this Royal commission has informed significant work and further research in the area of protecting children. There are 7 child safe standards that must be implemented into all organisations that work with children.

The standards are:

Standard 1: Strategies to embed an organisational culture of child safety

Standard 2: A child safety policy or a statement of commitment to child safety

Standard 3: A Child Safety Code of Conduct

Standard 4: Screening, supervision, training and other human resources practices that reduce the risk of child abuse

Standard 5: Procedures for responding to and reporting suspected child abuse

Standard 6: Strategies to identify and reduce or remove risks of child abuse

Standard 7: Strategies to promote child participation and empowerment

When implementing the standards, organisations must be guided by the following principles:

the cultural safety of Aboriginal children

- the cultural safety of children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds
- the safety of children with disabilities.

It is **COMPULSORY BY LAW** that all dance schools implement these standards and you should be trained on them and what your responsibilities are.

YOU as a teacher have a legal responsibility to keep children safe and this must be taken seriously. You need to be aware of, and be responsive to, any criminal offences in each State and territory to help protect children from harm. In some states these criminal offences carry prison sentences.

## The National Principles for Child Safe Organisations

The National Principles aim to provide a nationally consistent approach to creating organisational cultures that foster child safety and wellbeing. The National Principles reflect ten child safe standards recommended by the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse. All organisations that you work for should have implemented the National Principles and/or the Victorian Child Safe Standards (they cover the same areas).

### Further Training:

It is very important that you are trained on these standards and your responsibilities within them. Keep Kids Safe in Dance offers training for studio owners and teachers. [www.keepkidssafeindance.com.au](http://www.keepkidssafeindance.com.au)

# In conclusion:

Dance studio owners are highly passionate and driven individuals. Opening and running a dance school is no easy feat. Great courage is required to operate as a sole trader and take the financial and personal risks required to run a business. They deserve the respect of their employees and appreciation for all that they do to deliver a quality service to the public. Owning a business can be very stressful and working within an unregulated industry provides many challenges.

As with all things in life, you may meet the occasional studio owner who does not do the right thing, does not operate with integrity and engages in practices that are not fair or legal. It is up to you to choose the right people to work for, to ensure you are happy in your work and supported by your employers. The dance industry is generally a very supportive network that will offer help if you need it. Reach out to those around you if you are worried or if you feel like you are not being treated properly. Everyone deserves to work in environments that are safe, free from discrimination and bullying and that follow fair employment procedures and practices.

The whole industry is behind you, without our dedicated, passionate and loving teachers we would not have an industry! You are the backbone, be courageous and strong and thank you in advance for your service.

**GOOD LUCK - WE ARE WITH YOU!**



At Keep Kids Safe In Dance, our mission is to:

01. Promote and support institutions and teachers that strive to provide environments where kids are safe to learn, grow and thrive in dance.
02. Educate institutions, teachers and the wider industry of the issues surrounding the training of young people in the dance industry and the environments in which they learn.
03. Provide guidance on implementing the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations and the compulsory minimum child safe standards in the dance industry

**We offer important child safe training:**

**Studio Owner Child Safe Training  
10 hour Course Online**

**Teacher Child Safe Training  
4 hour Course Online**

Contact us for a chat at anytime.... we're here to help

[www.keepkidssafeindance.com.au](http://www.keepkidssafeindance.com.au)

[info@keepkidssafeindance.com.au](mailto:info@keepkidssafeindance.com.au)