

Choosing a dance camp depends on safety, goals, interests

AMANDA KOEHN
akoehn@cjn.org | @AmandaKoeHN_CJN

The beginning of summer signals the perfect time to learn something new or improve on skills.

While dance camps can be fun and help children and teens of all ages develop new skills, which camp to choose can depend on several factors, such as the child's skill level, goals, convenience and safety.



Chesnes

Michael Krasnyansky, co-founder, president and CEO of the Cleveland Ballet in Bedford Heights, and Jennifer Chesnes, owner and director at Studio J Academy of Dance in Beachwood, said for all children and parents, safety should be a top consideration.

Chesnes said parents should inquire about the certifications of any dance camp's teachers.



Krasnyansky

"(It) is important to make sure their children are with a professional at all times," she said.

Being supervised at all times should include pick up and drop off, she said. And parents should ask whether the camp enforces COVID-19 protocols such as masking and social distancing.

Krasnyansky said the quality of the dance floor is important to consider for safety, especially for ballet dancers in programs where they are spending a lot of time training. Specifically, he noted that professionally designed dance

floors have a subfloor layer, which gives dancers flexibility when jumping and moving so it doesn't put too much pressure on their bodies.

"Basically, you need to trust the school ... to trust your teachers like you do your doctors," he said, adding evaluating the cleanliness of the studio – such as whether it is cleaned professionally and how often – is also vital.

Studio J offers week long themed camps for kids ages 3 to 9, where they learn choreography in a variety of dance styles, such as ballet, tap and jazz. The half-day camps include singing, snack time and an end-of-week performance for families. Studio J also has intensive programs for those ages 9 and older in different dance styles, which are a "very intense technique-oriented classes for kids that want to keep up with their dance technique throughout the summer to get ready or up to speed, or maybe try a new genre that they didn't know that they liked," Chesnes said.

"Any sort of dance or active camp, it gives kids the opportunity to get off the screen, No. 1 – to have movement and exercise, which is important for anybody," she said. "And I also feel in (today's) day and age, especially with COVID and it's so restrictive at schools ... we are still masked and such, but they have the opportunity to meet other kids and socialize in a fun atmosphere."

Summer camps also offer an opportunity for children to learn from dance teachers as positive role models, Chesnes said. An energetic teacher can encourage kids to explore their creativity.

Cleveland Ballet offers an intensive summer program under the School of Cleveland Ballet – the official educational arm of the professional dance company. The 21-year-old educational program use placement classes

to determine which level the dancer belongs in during the summer, Krasnyansky said.

Beyond safety and health measures, Krasnyansky explained that which camp families choose depends on their goals. If a child dreams of becoming a professional dancer, parents will want to find an intensive program where improving skills is key. They may want to consider camps that are less based on convenience and consider traveling for the right opportunity.

"That's not appropriate for every child though, he said. "A lot of parents, they are looking for entertainment – trying just to keep children busy for the summer," he said. "That's perfectly fine too, but this is why some schools are good for some children and they are not good for other children."

He said while Cleveland Ballet's training level is very high, it may not be ideal for parents and children who simply want to keep active and have fun close to home.

"If you are looking for professional growth, that's when you are looking to drive an hour or so – we have students from Youngstown, Toledo, Canton, Kent, all over," Krasnyansky said. "But that's a lot of pressure on parents, of course."

If families are seeking a professional training camp, the reputation of the camp should play a large factor. Parents may consider how many former students have gone professional, as well as whether the teachers have professional dancing experience. They likely do not want to select a camp where older students teach younger students for that purpose, he said.

While there are many benefits to dance camps, Chesnes said children should not feel pressured to attend a camp. It should be something they want too, as it's also difficult for teachers if they know a child is not happy about what they are doing at camp. She added that parents may request a trial visit to a camp so children can observe to determine if they are interested in the lessons and feel comfortable in the atmosphere.

And after the decision has been made to attend a dance camp, parents can talk with their kids about the expectations for the summer. For younger kids, Chesnes recommended parents talk about following directions and listening to their teacher as the adult in charge when the parents leave. For older children, she recommended parents reiterate that they committed to the camp and they should focus on having fun and doing their best.

Krasnyansky said for older children in more intensive programs that will go all day, it's important dancing is supplemented with education, like history of dance. Camps may also offer lessons in sports medicine, nutrition and generally how to care for their bodies as dancers.

"A lot of movements in ballet ... (are) very difficult for our bodies, so we need to know our limitations," he said.

A camp that's safe and encourages children to be active holds many benefits, both sources said.

"Camps are a great way to have your child try something maybe new that they haven't done yet, and it may be something they want to do all year long," Chesnes said.

"... You need to trust the school ... to trust your teachers like you do your doctors."

Michael Krasnyansky

Ohio's Premier Summer Camp

This is the **best** camp in Ohio. I don't want to go back!
I LOVE FALCON! I love the staff. ALL MY FRIENDS
Great! Starting staff.
Home!
Alex,
Fun!

FALCON CAMP
Fun for Now. Skills for Life.

800 - 837 - CAMP
www.falconcamp.com

My staff really is my second home!

Traditional Resident

Summer Camp (ages 6–16)

- Only 90 miles south of Cleveland – Carrollton OH.
- For boys and girls - separate activities with planned coed events.
- 2-, 4-, 6- or 8-week sessions
- Horseback riding, sailing, swimming, arts, drama, archery, riflery, nature, sports, fishing & so much more!
- Campers choose own activities within broad framework.
- American Camp Association Accredited Camp since 1959.
- 1:4 staff/camper ratio allows excellent supervision and instruction.

Young Adventurers

Summer Camp (ages 6–10)

- Special one week intro sessions include all camp activities
- Designed to give first time younger campers an outstanding "first adventure"
- 1:3 staff/camper ratio allows for extra attention with living habits, meals, bedtime and social skills.

DON'T MISS OUT! Camp is filling now!
TAKE A VIRTUAL TOUR at www.falconcamp.com

AWARD-WINNING!

Top 10 Camp in USA!
–EarlyChildhoodEducationZone.com
Selected as Ohio's "Coolest Camp" 2021 Best Parenting
–Philly.com

Program Excellence Award
–American Camp Association Ohio
2021 Best Parenting
–Cincinnati Family Magazine

At Falcon, Good Things Happen by Design.