

2026-2027

Debra Franco



Preparatory School of Dance Handbook



Welcome to Debra Franco Preparatory School of Dance!

We are happy to have you at our studio! Please keep this handbook for your reference throughout the year. In it, you'll find important information related to our studio's culture, policies, rules, and regulations.



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General Studio Overview and Introduction

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At Debra Franco School of Dance, we believe every child deserves the opportunity to discover the joy, confidence, and discipline that dance can bring. Beginning at age three, our students are introduced to the beautiful art of dance in a nurturing, structured environment where they are encouraged to grow at their own pace while building a strong technical foundation.

Our youngest dancers begin with ballet, tap, and acrobatics, learning the fundamentals that will support them throughout their dance journey. As they mature and develop the strength, coordination, and body awareness needed for more advanced movement, they may continue their training in Jazz, Contemporary, Musical Theater, and Hip Hop. Our goal is to provide high-quality dance education that is both challenging and enjoyable. Through expert instruction, positive encouragement, and age-appropriate training, students gain more than dance skills—they develop confidence, self-discipline, perseverance, respect for others, and a love for the performing arts that can last a lifetime.

We are proud to offer flexible scheduling, competitive tuition, and programs designed to meet the needs of both recreational and dedicated dancers. For students who are ready for additional challenges, our Competition Team provides opportunities to perform, travel, and compete while continuing to develop their technique, artistry, teamwork, and sportsmanship.

We begin accepting students at age three because our classes focus on dance education rather than creative movement. Children should be fully potty trained, comfortable separating from a parent or guardian, and able to listen, follow directions, and participate independently in a classroom setting. We believe that when children are developmentally ready, early dance training helps strengthen coordination, balance, musicality, focus, and confidence while laying the foundation for a lifetime of learning and achievement.

Whether your child dreams of dancing professionally or simply wants to experience the joy of movement, we are honored to be part of their journey. We look forward to helping every student grow not only as a dancer, but as a confident, respectful, and well-rounded young person.



Genres

- Ballet and tap are **required** for all students.
- Jazz is strongly recommended beginning at age 5, with students encouraged to start no later than 3rd grade.
- Our curriculum is designed with the expectation that students will study ballet, tap, and jazz together.
 - **Ballet** builds the foundation of all dance through technique, posture, alignment, weight placement, and strength.
 - **Tap** develops musicality, rhythm, balance, and coordination.
 - **Jazz** emphasizes flexibility, isolations, jumps, and turns.
 - **Pre-Pointe** is offered beginning at age 10 with at least two years of ballet training.
 - **Pointe** is available after at least one year of Pre-Pointe and upon meeting strength and technique requirements. Strong ankles, calves, feet, and posture are essential.
 - **Contemporary** blends ballet and modern dance while emphasizing musicality, emotion, improvisation, partnering, and floor work.
 - **Musical Theatre** combines dance, singing, and acting to tell stories while developing strong technique and versatility.
 - **Hip Hop** explores rhythm, groove, and street dance styles including breaking, locking, and popping.
 - **Acrobatics** is based on dance acrobatics rather than gymnastics. Students learn tumbling, flexibility, and contortion skills appropriate for stage performance, including back handsprings, back tucks, and aerials. Skills are taught with mats for safety but are performed without mats.
- **Competitive Team**
 - For students who are ready for additional challenges, our Competition Team provides opportunities to perform, travel, and compete while continuing to develop their technique, artistry, teamwork, and sportsmanship.
- **Ballet Training**
 - While we offer a strong ballet program, we do not provide daily ballet classes. Students pursuing a professional ballet career should train at a school offering at least four ballet classes per week for their age group. We are happy to recommend programs better suited to that path.





Our History

Debra Franco Preparatory School of Dance has collaborated with this community to enhance the arts since opening its doors in 1975. We are a national award-winning studio, offering many opportunities to our students such as performing in the Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade, Dance the Magic's Disney Parade, Orange Bowl, National opening numbers, and PowerPak to name a few. Some of our former students still work in the dance industry. While most have not gone on to work in the dance industry, all have a better appreciation of the art and because of the self-discipline of the art have gone on to succeed in all endeavors of life. This studio has produced students who have a great love of dance and the arts.

Our Mission

Our Mission is to provide our student with quality education in the fundamental foundation of dance, so they can progress to their desired results; to build wonderful human beings, with self-discipline and a high work ethic; to prepare them for whatever the future may hold. Dance develops the individual physically, artistically, intellectually, emotionally, and socially. We try to encourage our dancers in all aspects

Our Values

We want to instill in our dancers lifelong healthy habits and positive body image, using a developmentally appropriate curriculum while creating a family-friendly environment when it comes to music, costumes, and choreography. It is important to us that our students work hard and are kind. We don't have to be the best dancer, but we do have to try our best. The dance world is very small, and it is important to be kind and make friends—not just in our studio, but to all we meet in our dance career.

Basic Schedule

- We operate on the school-year calendar, with classes running August through May. Registration is for the full school year.
- Our studio has two major performances:
 - A Christmas show: Nutcracker / Mistletoe Magic alternate years.
 - Spring Showcase: presented yearly in May
- Additionally, we dance at these events:
 - Nursing Homes
 - About Town Performance
 - Dance Teachers United Convention Vicksburg & Hattiesburg
 - Immerse Convention / Memphis
 - Revel convention / Mobile
- While we generally follow the local school calendar, the studio remains open on some school holidays. Refer to the studio calendar for specific dates.
- Competition team schedules will be discussed at the parent meeting, with tentative dates included on the annual calendar.

Studio Programs

- Every student will be enrolled in ballet and tap in order to take other classes.

Curriculum

- Our curriculum combines established syllabi with material developed specifically for our studio.
 - Tap: Primarily based on the Al Gilbert syllabus
 - Contemporary: Incorporates Horton, Graham, and Limón techniques
- We believe every dancer learns differently and do not follow a one-size-fits-all approach.



Assessment and Evaluations

- Placement is based on both age and ability. Teachers evaluate each student on technique, execution, work ethic, and emotional maturity—not simply the ability to perform steps.
- Most students remain with their class throughout their dance education, progressing together each year. If a placement change is recommended, it will be discussed with both the parent and Ms. Debra.
- Students with previous dance experience will be evaluated before placement.

Classes

- Basic information on classes was given on the page with general information.
 - We offer classes from beginner to advanced in: Ballet, Tap, Jazz, Acrobatics, Musical Theater, Contemporary, Yoga, Hip Hop, Adult Ballet, Adult Tap, and Adult Jazz

Other Programs/Services

- Competition Team
- Semi-Private and Private Lessons
- Summer Camps
- Intensives
- Guest Teachers
- Convention Opportunities

Who's Who and Studio Contact

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Studio Owner

- *Debra Franco*

Managing/Financial Director

- *Debra Franco*
- *Juanita Smith*

Faculty

- *Debra Franco*
- *Leigh Jolly*
 - New and older beginners, subbing for my classes, and wherever I need her
- *Genevieve Rushing*
 - Contemporary, Musical Theater and younger Jazz classes
- *Nalini LaTorre*
 - Yoga
- *Marneicha Wilson*
 - Our returning hip hop teacher

Office Staff

- *Juanita Smith*
 - CPR and First Aid certified

Teaching Assistants/Student Helpers

- Students in 6th Grade and above can help.
- If interested please contact Ms. Debra



Business Hours

- Open
 - Monday thru Friday: 3:00-10:00 pm
 - Saturday: 9:00 am-1:30 pm
 - Sunday: Closed

Contact

- Phone
 - 601-638-7282 — Studio Phone
 - 601-630-5543 — Ms. Debra's cell
- Email
 - miss.debra.39180@gmail.com
- Address
 - 3420 Wisconsin Ave.
 - Vicksburg, MS 39180

Please do not contact any of us after 10:00 pm or before 9:00 am. Individual staff should not be contacted. All business should go through the studio. I know we are a small community, and it is easy to run into someone about town and give them information. However, that information does not always make it back to the person needing it. It is always best to email or contact Ms. Debra in a text so we have it in writing.

Studio Rules and Regulations

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Attendance

Regular attendance is essential for students to develop technique, artistry, and confidence. Missing class also means missing choreography and skills needed for advancement.

- ***Students may miss no more than 11 classes*** ($\frac{1}{3}$ of the year) and still perform in the Spring Showcase.
 - Absences must be made up by attending another class of the same genre, preferably within one month or before a planned absence.
- ***Show week rehearsals are mandatory.***
- ***If a student will be absent or late, please notify the studio by text, email, or phone.***
- ***Late Arrival***
 - Students arriving more than 15 minutes late will observe class to avoid injury from missing warm-up.
 - When arriving late:
 - Wait outside the classroom until the music stops, then knock and wait to be invited in.
- ***Illness & Injury***
 - Please keep students home if they have a fever or a contagious illness (such as flu, COVID, or strep).
 - Students who are injured but able to observe are encouraged to attend and learn.
 - If a student must withdraw due to illness or injury, tuition will stop upon completing a form with our office staff. Tuition continues to hold their place if they plan to return.



Dress Code

Proper dance attire honors each dance style, promotes safety, allows instructors to correct technique, reduces distractions, and creates the best learning environment.

- **General Requirements**

- Wear a cover-up to and from the studio.
- Dance shoes are for indoor use only.
- No street shoes on studio floors.
- Label all shoes with your child's name inside.
- No jewelry in class.
- Hair must be secured off the face. Ballet buns are required for students in level III and older, Competition Team members, and all Ballet, Pre-Pointe, Pointe, and Contemporary classes.
- Girls wear pink leather ballet shoes and tan tap shoes (Mary Janes through 5th grade; heels beginning in 6th grade).
- Boys wear white ballet shoes and black tap/jazz shoes.
- ***See the following page for class by class details and examples.***
- Students not in dress code will observe class. If changing clothes before class, please arrive 10-15 minutes early.
- **Purchasing Dancewear**
 - The studio orders acrobatics and ballet leotards, acro shoes, and hip-hop shoes.
 - The studio does carry some tights for purchase.
 - Purchased items are charged to your studio account.
 - Dance Shoes and Tights can be purchased from:

The Dance Wearhouse
1011 N 7th Street West
Monroe LA

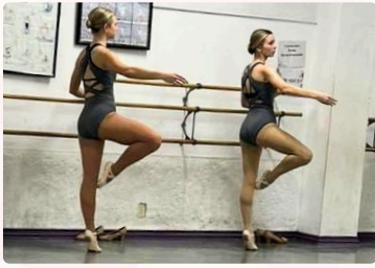
Soul to Sole
120 Depot Drive
Madison MS



- **Hygiene**

- **Students should:**

- Wear clean dancewear.
- Keep dance shoes and bags clean.
- Use deodorant when age-appropriate.
- Avoid heavily scented products.
- Feminine hygiene products are available in the studio.



• *Ballet and Tap*

- Class Leotard
- Pink Leather Ballet Shoes and Tan Tap Shoes
- Tights- Pink
- Hair in a Ballet Secured Bun starting at Level III



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• *Pre-Pointe / Pointe*

- Class Leotard
- Pink Convertible Tights
- Hair in a Ballet Secured Bun
- Ballet Shoes for Pre-Pointe; Pointe shoes for Pointe



• *Jazz, Musical Theater*

- Leotard or 2-piece Dancewear of your choice
- Tights - Tan
- Jazz Shoes
- Hair in a Secured Bun



• *Hip Hop*

- Debra Franco Shirt from any event (Ex. Showcase, Christmas, Student Helper)
- Baggy Bottoms or Shorts (not jean shorts or pants)
- Hip-Hop Tennis Shoe - will be ordered
- A Secured Hairstyle



• *Contemporary*

- Leotard
- Footless or Convertible Tights
- Hair in a Ballet Secured Bun



• *Acrobatics*

- Class Leotard
- Tights
- Black Arco Shoes - purchased from the studio



• *Adult Classes*

- Whatever is preferred by the instructor

Behavioral Expectations

- ***To maintain a safe and respectful environment:***
 - No food, gum, or drinks in the studio.
 - No running or roughhousing.
 - Respect studio property and equipment.
 - Keep hands to yourself.
 - No cell phones during class.
 - Use appropriate language.
 - Be kind and respectful.
 - Bullying will not be tolerated.
 - Follow instructor directions.
 - Students disrupting class may be asked to leave.
- ***Families should:***
 - Keep conversations respectful and family-friendly.
 - Remain outside studio rooms during class.
 - Refrain from photography or video unless approved.
 - Represent the studio positively at performances, competitions, and on social media.

Pick Up and Drop Offs

- Enter on the left side of the building.
- Park only in designated spaces.
- Walk children to and from the front door.
- Drive carefully and do not block traffic.
- Families may wait outside or in their vehicles during class.

Questions or concerns should be directed to the studio office. If staff members are teaching, leave a message, email the studio, or text Ms. Debra. We will respond as soon as possible.



Competitions

Students with at least one year of dance experience may audition for the Competition Team.

- ***Requirements***
 - Audition
 - Attend required technique classes
 - Saturday flexibility/tricks class
 - Home conditioning assignments
 - Weekend rehearsals (primarily second semester)
 - Four required conventions
 - Three Regional Competition as well as one Nationals
 - Summer dance training (two weeks of camps or intensives)
- Competition members may participate in solos, duets, and group dances at Ms. Debra's discretion. Soloists must have completed ***at least one year*** on the Competition Team.
- Competition attendance is ***mandatory***. More than ***three*** absences may result in dismissal from the team or affect future eligibility.
- Competition expenses include rehearsal, choreography, entry fees, costumes, and required team items. Fees are expected to be paid according to the studio payment schedule.

We communicate important studio information through the following:

- **Email** (Primary Method): Class updates, schedules, announcements, newsletters, and other important information. Families should also use email for general questions and communication.
 - Email: miss.debra.39180@gmail.com
- **Text Messages**: For time-sensitive information only.
 - Ms. Debra: [\(601\) 630-5543](tel:601-630-5543)
- **Remind App**: Used for reminders and urgent studio updates.
 - To sign up: enter rmd.at/2022 on your phone's web browser and follow the prompts to join Franco Dance 2022-23
 - Or sign up for text notifications by texting [@dfd2022](https://www.remind.com/texting) to the number 81010
 - More Information on the studio door
- **Social Media**:
 - Facebook: Debra Franco School of Dance
 - Instagram: [@debrafrancodancer](https://www.instagram.com/debrafrancodancer)
- **Website**:
 - www.debrafrancodance.com
- Families may also receive newsletters or printed handouts when needed.

Emergency Notifications

- Families will be notified by **email and Remind** if classes are canceled due to weather, instructor illness, or other emergencies.

Updating Contact Information

- Please notify the studio by email or phone if your contact information changes.
- **Office Hours**
 - Monday–Friday: 3:00–6:00 p.m.
- **Outside Office Hours**, messages will be returned as soon as possible.
 - Saturday: Studio is open; office is closed.
 - Sunday: Closed.

Contacting the Studio

- For questions, please email or call the studio:
 - Email: miss.debra.39180@gmail.com
 - Phone: [601-638-7282](tel:601-638-7282)
- For time-sensitive matters only, contact:
 - Ms. Debra: [601-630-5543](tel:601-630-5543)

Please do not contact the studio through Facebook Messenger or Remind for questions or business matters.





Annual Performances

• *Christmas Performance*

- Nutcracker/Mistletoe Magic alternating years
- Optional, but strongly encouraged.
- Auditions for Nutcracker: September 12th
- Every student who auditions will receive a role, typically one dance in each act.
- Costume fitting: September 13th

• *Spring Concert*

- Mandatory for all students.

• *Competition Team*

- Tryouts: September date TBA
- Students must have completed at least one year of dance.
- Audition required; acceptance is not guaranteed.

Performance Fees

• *Nutcracker/Mistletoe Magic Performance:*

- \$100 (1 student)
- \$120 (2 students)
- \$140 (3 or more students)
 - Includes:
 - Costume rental
 - 2 complimentary tickets
 - Performance T-shirt
 - Video link
- Fee is drafted in November.

• *Spring Concert*

- \$120 (1 student)
- \$155 (2 students)
- \$190 (3 or more students)
 - Includes:
 - 2 complimentary tickets
 - Program book
 - Performance T-shirt
 - Video link
- When purchasing extra tickets, times and dates will be given at a later time.

Performance Day

- Arrive **1 hour early** for auditorium performances.
- Arrive **30 minutes early** for informal performances.
- Photos are welcome.
- Videos may be recorded, but only 10 seconds or less may be shared online.
- Volunteers will be requested in advance if needed.

Costumes

- **Community performances (nursing homes, performances around town):**
 - Arrive in a cover-up over costume with hair and makeup complete.
- **Auditorium performances:**
 - Do not wear costumes to the theater. Dressing rooms will be provided.
- **What to Bring**
 - All required dance shoes
 - Pink and tan tights
 - Makeup and hair supplies (pins, gel, hairspray, elastics, hairnet)
 - Costumes (if not already at the venue)
- Parents, family members, and friends are **not permitted backstage** during performances.



Rehearsals

- Performance choreography is learned during regular class time.
- Additional rehearsals include:
 - Christmas performance rehearsals (announced as needed)
 - Full-studio rehearsals beginning approximately three weeks before the Spring Concert
 - Extra rehearsals may be scheduled if needed. There is no additional fee, and families will be notified by email.
- Attendance at all scheduled rehearsals is required.
- Run-throughs will begin at the studio and later move to the auditorium. Dates will be announced closer to the performance.
- Students should wear:
 - Class leotard
 - Tights
 - Hair in a secure ballet bun
 - Stage makeup (when requested)
 - All required dance shoes
- Students should be dropped off with a staff member and picked up promptly at the designated studio or performance entrance.
- Parents and guests may not observe rehearsals, enter classrooms or backstage areas, or take photos or videos during rehearsals.



Tuition

Monthly rates for 1st class		2nd class and each additional class	
1 hr	\$55	1 hr	\$40
1 ¼	\$60	1¼	\$45
1 ½	\$70	1½	\$55
1 ¾	\$75	1¾	\$60
2 hr	\$80	2 hr	\$65

- **Unlimited Classes** For \$275 a month
 - We will not charge more than \$275 a month no matter how many classes you take. When your tuition reaches this amount, we stop charging. You could come to every class we offer every day and your tuition would be \$275

Additional Fees

- There is a **registration fee** of \$40 per student and First Month tuition is required to be placed in a class.
 - \$10 off for each additional child's registration fee
 - **Registration** will be:
 - August 1st from 4:00-7:00
 - August 13th from 4:00-7:00
 - August 15th from 4:00-7:00
 - After September the registration will increase to \$45 per student
 - Registration commitment is the Academic Year (August-May)
- **Performance Fees** are billed in November and April
 - **Christmas Show Performance Fee-**
 - One student - \$100 ➤ Two in a family - \$120 ➤ Three in a family - \$140
 - **Spring Showcase Costume** is billed from September through February at \$17 per class
 - Ex: If your child is enrolled in ballet, tap, and jazz that is \$17 per class and a total of \$51 added to your statement for these months.
 - **Spring Showcase Fee**
 - One student -\$120 ➤ Two in a family - \$155 ➤ Three or more in a family - \$190
- **Workshops, Summer Camps, and Intensives** are all due at time of service unless otherwise stated
 - We can draft from the account
 - Guest teachers are paid in cash at the time of the event. All the money goes to Ms. Debra or Ms. Juanita. We will pay the guest artist
- **Private Lessons**
 - Billed and paid through the studio per class to Ms. Debra
 - Directly to the teacher at the time of service or other faculty or special guest

Tuition Billing

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- You will receive a statement of Monthly Charges and Costume Fees on the **1st of every month** with a total of all charges
 - **Full Year** - divided into equal monthly payments
 - **Automatic Withdrawal** will be on the 8th of the Month
 - This will be for tuition, costume fees, and any other dance charges
 - You may pay in full per semester in advance
 - **Family/multiple siblings discounts**
 - There is a 5% discount on more than one child
- If tuition is not paid by the 8th of the month, you will be charged a \$10 fee, with an additional \$10 fee applied every 5 days thereafter.
- All fees are **non-refundable**
- If a check is returned or if your account fails to process and is returned, you will be charged a \$40 NSF fee in addition to the amount owed.

Refunds, Cancellations, and Related Policies

- All fees are **non-refundable**
- You will be charged a late fee of \$10 for every Five days past due
- If you are more than 2 months behind, your child will have to observe until your bill is current.
- If one or more people are paying your students' bill, it still needs to be paid by the 8th of the Month
- The office will need all information for each party for automatic withdrawal and written instructions of how much is to be pulled out of each separate account
 - If you have questions about your account, please contact our office staff - Juanita Smith at 601 638 7282
 - email - miss.debra.39180@gmail.com
- We do not have make-up classes for inclement weather or facility issues if we are unable to be open. We try our best to not cancel classes.
- If a teacher is sick, they will have a sub unless otherwise called or emailed if there is no sub.
- Students can make up classes of similar level and dance style.
- If Makeup days are needed, we will make up on the weekends.
- When we reach our class limit, names are put on a waiting list. If anyone drops, the next student on the list will be placed in that class. If we have enough students or studio space, we will open another class.



Private Lessons

- We do private lessons for any students
- We do private lessons for the competition team
 - Fees vary depending on how long and what is being rehearsed and who is rehearsing them
 - No less than \$30 an hour
 - Ms. Debra's regular fee is \$60 an hour
 - Ms. Debra will assign choreographers for students unless otherwise communicated with Ms. Debra
- The purpose of the private lessons:
 - For students to learn and rehearse solo choreography for competition or performance
 - For students to improve their technique and skills
 - For whatever purpose the students choose
 - Students book private lessons: through the studio, with the teacher directly, or a combination of the two



2026-2027

Aug. 17th Classes Begin
Sept. 7th No Class
Sept 20th Immerse/Memphis
Oct 3rd Flea Market Performance
Oct 5th-13th Class Will Meet
Oct 16th-18th REVEL/Mobile
Oct. 26 -31st Wear Halloween Costume
Nov 14th -15th DTU Vicksburg
Nov. 21st -28th . Thanksgiving Holidays
Nov 22nd -27th Macy's Parade
Dec 5th Christmas Parade
Dec 19th -20th Nutcracker
Dec 21st -Jan 3rd ... Christmas Holidays
Jan. 4th Class
Jan 18th No Class
Jan. 29th -31st DTU Hattiesburg
Feb 15th -16th Class
March 8th -12th Spring Break
March 26th-28th Easter Break
April 24th Flea Market Performance
May 3rd Rehearsals Begin
May 23rd Spring Concert

Exact dates for workshops, conventions, competition events and performances will be posted as soon as possible.

Please check the emails regularly for any changes, or our website
Debrafrancodance.com



Contact Us

→ *Phone:* [601-638-7282](tel:601-638-7282)

→ *E-Mail:* miss.debra.39180@gmail.com

→ *Website:* www.debrafrancodance.com

→ *Address:* [3420 Wisconsin Ave. Ste. 2](#)

→ *Facebook:* [Debra Franco School of Dance](#)

→ *Instagram:* [Debrafrancodancer](#)
