

Alabama Ballet
School
Parent / Student
Handbook

Alabama Ballet School

Mission Statement

Alabama Ballet School provides exceptional ballet training in a nurturing and inclusive environment. Our mission is to inspire and educate students of all ages and backgrounds, fostering a love and appreciation for the art of ballet. Through our commitment to excellence in teaching and performance, we aim to develop dancers who are not only technically proficient but also artistically expressive and passionate about their craft. We believe in the transformative power of dance and strive to instill confidence, discipline, and a lifelong appreciation for the arts in each of our students.

Attendance

All classes and rehearsals are mandatory. Excused absences are limited to family emergency, pre-planned family trip, required-for-grade school activity (this is limited to field trips. All other school activities - dance team, track, cheer, band, choir, theater, etc. will fall under extra-curricular and will not be considered excused or eligible for make-up), injury and illness. Both injury and illness will require a doctor's note to be considered excused. Injured students in Intermediate1 - Advanced levels are required to observe class and take notes. It's extremely important not to miss class. Regular and consistent attendance is important not only for your student's progress but also to prevent injuries. For this reason, prompt arrival to class or rehearsal is imperative. Each student should arrive on time to properly warm up and focus before class or rehearsal begins. Students arriving more than ten minutes late will not be permitted to participate in class. Two late arrivals will be equal to one absence. The same applies to leaving class or rehearsal early. In the event of late arrivals, for an emergency, traffic, etc. please call our school office so we may keep our teachers informed. Full attendance in each class and rehearsal will ensure the proper mechanics are worked through to perform with confidence and without injury. Students will only be allowed three (3) excused absences per semester. If a student incurs more than three (3) absences during a semester, they will not be eligible to participate in any Alabama Ballet professional company or school performance that semester regardless of casting or time prior to production. Absences accrued during the fall semester and until March 1st of the second semester are eligible to be made up. Taking a make-up class will result in absence not counted against the student. Make-up classes can be taken the week prior to absence or the week directly following absence. Make-up class selections and absence requests (if seeking the absences to be excused) must be emailed to nataliehunt@alabamaballet.org

Any Creative Movement – Level 1 students may attend the same level class on a different day of the week.

Level 2 students may attend the Level 1 class on Mondays.

Level 3 students may attend Level 2 on Tuesdays or Thursdays.

Level 4 students may attend Level 3 on Wednesdays.

Level 5 students may attend Level 4 on Mondays.

Intermediate 1 students may attend Intermediate 1/2 on Thursday or Intermediate/Advanced Saturday the 1st semester and Intermediate/Advanced Saturday the 2nd semester.

Intermediate 2 students may attend Intermediate/Advanced Saturday the 1st semester and Level 5 Thursdays the 2nd semester.

Advanced students may attend any level class as a makeup class (including all Day Program classes) if it does not conflict with regularly scheduled classes. In the event they have the day off of school, Day Program classes are open to all Advanced level students.

Due to our spring performance, there will be no make-up opportunities after March 1, 2026.

No absences will be permitted or excused after March 1, 2026.

Teachers reserve the right to determine a student's involvement in their Spring Performance choreography based on absences and participation in class.

Flex Program

We have created enrichment classes for completed Level 4 - Advanced levels meeting 2-3 times weekly for those wanting to continue ballet while pursuing other activities with conflicting schedules. Students participating in the Flex Program will only be eligible for the Spring Performance if committed to attending two weekday classes per week. Other than The Nutcracker, students in the Flex Program will not be eligible to perform in professional company productions.

Inclement Weather and School Closures

The Alabama Ballet School follows Birmingham City Schools for inclement weather closings. In the event of an inclement weather closing, you will be notified by email via Sawyer. However, following us on Facebook and Instagram will also keep you informed with up to the minute closing/cancellation information.

Scheduled School closings

Labor Day-Monday, September 1

Fall Break – Saturday, October 11 (Intermediate-Advanced only) Creative Movement and Pre-Primary Saturday classes will still meet.

Thanksgiving- November 24-29

Christmas - Monday, December 8 through Saturday, January 3

Spring Break- Monday, March 23 through Saturday, March 28

Other important dates for this season

Fall semester begins – August 18th

Nutcracker Auditions – September 7th, 9:00am-1:00pm. All students must be 8 years of age prior to auditioning.

Dancer's Night In – September 13th

Sleeping Beauty Auditions - January 4th, time and eligible levels TBA

Spring semester begins - January 5th

Alabama Dance Festival January 23-25th (6th grade students and above are invited to participate in classes) Day Program will perform

Summer Intensive Auditions January 11th (Level 5 – Advanced), time TBA

At Home Performance - January 31st at 2pm (Day Program, Advanced and Intermediate 2)

Parents Observation Week - February 2-7

Level 4-Intermediate 2 exit exams will take place Tuesday, March 17-Friday, March 20

Level 1-3 exit exams - April 6-9th

Lower School Rehearsals for Spring Performance – Fridays April 3 & 10 and Saturday April 18 (Level 1-5, Boys 1 & 2 and Flex 1)

Upper School Rehearsals for Spring Performance – Saturdays April 4 ,11 and 18 (Intermediate 1-Day Program, Flex 2)

Spring Performance Dress Rehearsal – Saturday, April 25th

Last day of regular classes – April 25th

Spring Performance (Level 1-Day Program) Sunday, April 26th

Level 4-Intermediate 2 exit exams will take place Tuesday, April 28-Friday, May 1

Reports of Progress (Creative Movement-Primary levels) May 2nd

Intermediate 1 – Advanced will continue to have combined classes April 27 – 30, 4:30-7:15pm

Parents Observation

There will be an opportunity to observe your students' class during the second semester. Parents Observation Week is February 3-8, 2025. If your child has class multiple times per week, their observation day is scheduled. When observing, we ask that you do not bring younger siblings and keep walking in/out of doors to a minimum. Some class sizes can be quite large, so we ask that out of respect and safety for our students and faculty, observation week is limited to **parents and legal guardians only.**

Parents Observation schedule for Level 2-Advanced (as they meet multiple times per week):

Level 2 - Tuesday, February 3rd 4:00-6:15 pm (this includes jazz if applicable)

Level 3 – Wednesday, February 4th 4:00-5:30pm

Level 4 – Thursday, February 5th 4:00-6:30pm (this includes contemporary)

Level 5 – Thursday, February 5th 4:00-6:30pm (this includes contemporary)

Intermediate 1 – Monday, February 2nd 4:45-8:15pm (this includes conditioning and pointe)

Intermediate 2 – Monday, February 2nd 4:45-8:15pm (this includes conditioning and pointe)

Advanced – Wednesday, February 4th 4:30-8:15pm (this includes pointe and contemporary)

Flex 1 – Wednesday, February 4th 5:00-6:30pm

Flex 2 – Tuesday, February 3rd 6:00-8:15pm (this includes pointe if applicable)

Spring Performance

Our Spring Performance for Levels 1-Day Program will be held at Sirote Theater at 2:00pm on Sunday, April 26, 2026. Dress Rehearsal will be held on Saturday, April 25, 2026, time TBA. Mandatory Rehearsals for Levels 1-5, Boys 1, 2 and Flex 1 will be held on Fridays, April 3 & 10, and Saturday, April 18th. Mandatory Rehearsals for Intermediate 1-Day Program, and Flex 2 will be held on Saturdays April 4, 11 and 18th. Rehearsal times TBA. All rehearsals for the spring performance are mandatory. There will be no excused absences during the rehearsal period. If a student is unable to attend all four mandatory rehearsals in full, they will not be permitted to perform. There will be no exceptions. A non-refundable \$150 production fee for all students involved in the Spring Performance as well as a \$150 costume fee for all Intermediate 1-Advanced, and Flex 2 students due by February 2026. In

January, we will launch our BANDApp page for the 2026 Spring Performance. Each parent will need to download the app and accept our page invite. All communication regarding the Spring Performance will be found within the app.

Tickets for the performance will go on sale in March 2026 and must be purchased prior to the performance date. Tickets **will not** be available through Michele Swader in our office as they have previously. Once released, they will be available on our website as well as UAB's website and at the theater's walk-up window. More information to follow.

Reports of Progress

Reports of Progress for Creative Movement - Primary will be held at the Alabama Ballet Center for Dance on **Saturday, May 2nd**. Each class will have their own presentation in our main studio for parents and family friends. Performance times will be determined at a later date and emailed to parents in January.

Tuition

Tuition will be paid through HiSawyer.com. As you register for classes through our website, you will be taken to HiSawyer.com where you will register for class, enter your information, and choose a payment plan. Payments can be made per semester due once at checkout and January 5th, or in eight monthly installments due once at checkout and continuing on the 15th of each month beginning in September. Tuition is not charged in the months of December or May.

Dress Code

Leotards (female): Each class has a designated uniform color (see below). Your dancer may wear any brand of their designated leotard color, however we ask that every dancer own at least one of our uniform brand leotards so that when the time comes for exams, reports of progress, presentations, and spring performance the entire class matches. Our uniform leotards are as follows:

All levels wear Energetiks brand, Annabelle style. Applause Dancewear in Homewood has our uniform leotards, socks and shoes in stock.

Parent / Child Creative Movement with Ballet: Students may wear any color leotard, pink socks and pink ballet slippers. Parents may wear any clothing comfortable to move in.

Creative Movement with Ballet - white leotard, pink socks and pink ballet slippers

Pre-Primary- pink leotard, pink socks and pink ballet slippers

Primary- baby blue leotard, pink socks and pink ballet slippers

Level 1 - dusty rose leotard, pink or flesh tone tights with matching ballet slippers

Level 2- jacaranda leotard, pink or flesh tone tights with matching ballet slippers

Level 3- burgundy leotard, pink or flesh tone tights with matching ballet slippers

Level 4- hunter green leotard, pink or flesh tone tights with matching ballet slippers

Level 5- red leotard, pink or flesh tone tights with matching ballet slippers

Intermediate 1 - navy leotard, pink or flesh tone tights with matching ballet slippers and pointe shoes

Intermediate 2- mulberry leotard, pink or flesh tone tights with matching ballet slippers and pointes shoes

Advanced - black leotard, pink or flesh tone tights with matching ballet slippers and pointe shoes

Tights note: Level 1 and up wear pink or flesh-toned tights. The color of your ballet tights must match the color of your ballet slippers and pointe shoes. Do not wear pink tights with flesh-toned shoes or vice versa. If wearing pointe shoes, elastics/ribbons should also match. Tights should be clean and neat without holes.

Pointe Shoe note: All elastics and ribbons should be trimmed and sewn. No elastics or ribbons should be frayed, or safety pinned. All ribbons should be neatly tied and tucked in.

Jazz/Contemporary- uniform color leotard, black jazz pants or shorts with black jazz shoes

Stretch - class uniform should be worn; ballet warmups may be worn at the teacher's discretion. All students in stretch/conditioning classes will need a yoga mat.

Male Dancers: fitted white t-shirt or leotard, black tights held in place by a belt rolled with the tights at the waist, dance belt and black ballet slippers. Students in Creative Movement through Level 4 may choose to wear black bike or athletic shorts in lieu of tights, with white

or black socks and matching ballet slippers. Students in Level 5 and above should wear tights.

Hair should be neatly secured away from face and neck. A ballet bun or equivalent (braided crown, French twist, etc.) is preferred for all levels but not required until Level 1. Unsecure hair can be a distraction and potentially dangerous.

Other than small stud earrings, no jewelry is permitted in class. Smartwatches, watches, bracelets, anklets, necklaces, titbits, rings, anklets and body art are not permitted in class.

Class Placement and Advancement

Alabama Ballet reserves the right to determine level placement for each student. New students aged eight and above who did not train at Alabama Ballet the previous year will be required to take a placement class. Our faculty will determine a student's placement in a class appropriate for their abilities. Current students will advance to the next level at the discretion of the artistic staff and only once they have met the criteria of their current level. A faculty assessment/exit exam will take place towards the end of each spring term to determine the student's fall term placement. Under the new school structure, advancement occurs on an individual basis and students may be placed at the same level for two or more consecutive years before they advance.

Level 1 - 2 will be examined by the Director of Curriculum, Isabella Cowles

Level 3 will be examined by Ms. Cowles and another faculty member

Level 4- Intermediate 2 will be examined by a panel of five faculty members including the Artistic Director Christopher Stuart and Director of Curriculum, Isabella Cowles.

Exit criteria and specific class/level expectations will be given to parents during the student's first class period of the school year. We will strive to make placement transparent. In the event our directors or faculty members see an issue, we will make every effort to communicate with the parents. It's important to remember that everybody is different in regard to growth. A student must demonstrate physical strength along with proper alignment to perform the more difficult steps free of injury. All students Level 3-Advanced will receive a mid-year progress report the week prior to first semester's end.

Before beginning pointe work, each student in Level 4-5 will be required to participate in a pre-pointe strengthening class. At the end of the class, students will be evaluated by our professional company's physical therapist as well as meet technical criteria before pointe work is permitted.

All current and rising Intermediate 1 - Day Program students must attend at least two weeks of Alabama Ballet's four-week Summer Intensive unless they are participating in another professional company's intensive or injured. Failure to maintain high-level training throughout the summer will result in dismissal from level/program.

Arrival and Pick-up

Students should arrive and depart promptly. If possible, students should arrive 10-15 minutes early to prepare for class or rehearsal. Students arriving more than ten minutes late to class will not be permitted to participate (this is a precaution for the physical safety of the dancer). The dancer should remain and observe class to be marked as present.

Please do not park in the roundabout. If your dancer is not yet out of class, please park in a parking space to wait. This is a safety matter. With multiple classes and/or rehearsals releasing at the same time, stopping in the roundabout can cause traffic to back up into the street on 1st Avenue South.

Our lobby is open to parents for drop off and pick up. Creative Movement – Level 3 classes will wait as a class at a designated place in the hallway where their teacher will meet them. During classes, our hallways and lobby are off limits to those that are not students or employees. Because Alabama Ballet School shares a building with the professional company, where important business activities are ongoing, we kindly ask parents and students to maintain a quiet atmosphere in the lobby and hallways.

Our lobby is closed to parents during business hours (9:00am-5:30pm) Monday – Friday.

All students should remain inside the building until their parent or guardian has arrived. Students are not permitted to wait outside without supervision for any reason.

Scholarship Awards:

New Annual Scholarships Beginning This Year

We are excited to announce the introduction of two new scholarships that will be awarded at the end of each school year:

1. Alabama Ballet Student Achievement Award

Open to students currently enrolled in Levels 1–5.

2. Rising Artist Scholarship

Open to students currently enrolled in Intermediate 1 – Day Program.

Each scholarship will cover full tuition for the following school year.

Candidates will be nominated by their teachers based on a range of criteria, including but not limited to:

- Class attendance – Must adhere to the school's attendance policy
- Work ethic – Demonstrates consistent effort in each class and clearly demonstrates skill building outside of class
- Technical progression – Demonstrates dedication to technical improvement, progresses regularly, and seeks out assistance for weak areas
- Integrity – Approaches each class and performance with best effort, prepares well, consistently shows dedication and enthusiasm
- Character - Treats colleagues with respect and care, brings best effort to each class and performance

All nominated students will be considered by the faculty during the second semester, and recipients will be announced and recognized on stage during the school's Spring Performance.

We look forward to celebrating the hard work and dedication of our students through these new awards.

Dancer's Night In

An Exciting Evening for Our Level 2 – Day Program Students!

We're thrilled to invite all **Level 2 – Day Program** students to our very first **Dancer's Night In** – the perfect chance to spend a fun and relaxing evening with fellow dancers!

Date: Friday, September 12th

Time: 6:00 PM – 9:00 PM, **Cost:** \$20 per student

Location: Alabama Ballet Studios

Join us for a night full of games, fun activities, and lots of laughs as students connect, bond, and build friendships outside the classroom. **Pizza and snacks will be provided** to keep everyone fueled for the fun!

Don't miss out on this special night – we can't wait to see you there!

Studio and Classroom Etiquette

We encourage students to come dressed for dance class. However, if they must change into their uniform at the studio, they may use the lobby bathrooms. All company and teacher dressing rooms are off limits to students and parents.

Our kitchen/break room is closed to students and parents. In the event your student needs assistance with a snack/meal, our evening receptionist will be happy to help.

Due to students and staff members with life threatening allergies - no nut products may be consumed in our facility.

Water is the only beverage permitted inside our facility. All bottles must have a closing top. No straws or straw caps. At no time should students have sodas, energy drinks, etc. Food will only be permitted in the hallway and never inside a studio.

Students are expected to keep the studios clean. All trash is to be thrown away. No trash should be left behind in the hallways or studios.

Students in Level 4 - Advanced are permitted to stretch inside the studio prior to class. At no time should any student in Creative Movement - Level 3 be in a studio without adult supervision.

All students' belongings should be taken into the classroom with them and placed neatly in a cubie or designated floor area. No dance bags or belongings should be left in the lobby or hallway while students attend class.

All belongings should be labeled.

If your student has misplaced something or left it behind, if found it will remain in the basket at the front desk for one week. Please check periodically for lost items as anything unclaimed at the end of each month will be donated.

Ballet slippers and pointe shoes should not be worn outside the studio. Oil and dirt are hazardous and damaging to our floors and your students' shoes.

Cell phones should remain silent and in students' dance bags. At no time should a cell phone be answered or used during class. In the event of an emergency, please call our

office. Parents should keep their phones silent while in the lobby. If you must take a call while dropping off or picking up, please step outside the studio.

Students should go to the bathroom before class.

No chewing gum in studios.

No hanging on the barres in the studio.

No talking during class.

No running or yelling in hallway or studios.

No sitting down or sitting out of class without teacher's permission. If any student asks to sit out more than two consecutive classes, parents will be notified and asked to schedule a parent/teacher meeting.

Any upper school student with a continued injury or health issue through/past one semester will be asked to join the Flex Program for their physical safety. Once an injury or health issue has healed, parents will meet with teachers to discuss a class plan moving forward.

Alabama Ballet School is a "Bully Free Zone." No disrespectful comments or gestures to teachers or fellow classmates and no physical fighting of any kind will be tolerated.

Students under the age of 18 are not permitted to follow/friend request or contact faculty members or company dancers on social media, through email or text messaging.

Parents should refrain from contacting faculty members through personal cell numbers. Should your student be taking private lessons with a faculty member, communicating personally is a necessary exception. In the event there is a classroom issue, or for all other inquiries please email nataliehunt@alabamaballet.org.

If parents need to address an issue, we ask that (unless it's an emergency) emails are not sent the evening of an incident/the issue occurring. Emails longer than one paragraph will be answered once via email. If there is a second email sent regarding the same issue, we will address the issue in an in-person meeting.

By signing below, I understand and agree to all policies stated in the handbook. I recognize the BANDapp will need to be downloaded and followed in January 2026 for the Spring Performance information. I recognize my student must be present in every class after March 1st and attend each of the four mandatory rehearsals in April and May 2026. If he/she is not present in class or rehearsal, I understand they will not be eligible to perform regardless of time left prior to performance.

Parent's Signature _____

Date_____