

Sugar Land ballerina Olivia Morrow
Photo by Candace Byers Photography

A young girl with long brown hair, wearing a white tutu, white leotard, white tights, and a tiara, is smiling and posing against a pink background. The background features decorative swirls and a textured pattern.

From
Ballet
to
Ballroom

Written by Brenda Thompson

Photos by Candace Byers Photography

*P*opular dance programs on television are inspiring people of all ages to get up from the couch and learn how to strut their stuff themselves. Sugar Land has several options to choose from in the area, but you should keep a few things in mind before you or your child enrolls in any program.

First Steps First

Erica Noyes' toddler daughter recently finished her first ballet class. "I knew Caroline would enjoy dressing up in ballet dancewear and having fun. To her it's like pretending to be a princess!" exclaims Noyes. "I think dancing will also help teach her coordination and grace."

Amie Thrutchley's daughter Megan also wanted a similar program and started with a ballet and tap combo class. "She still loves the ballet the most but really enjoys tap dancing, too," she says. "What three-year-old doesn't like stomping around and making a lot of noise?"

Teion Parker's five-year-old daughter Skye started taking ballet and tap at the early age of three at Studio 03. The owners and teachers Holley and Trish Owens are twin sisters that have been dancing there since they were three as well. "Holley and Trish are so amazing with young children and helped to start building a strong foundation early for Skye," says Parker. "We really started here because it was close to home but soon realized what a gem we had found. They have a passion for it and stay on the cutting edge of dance."

Dancing Through Sugar Land



Ballet, Tap, and Jazz

With so many different types of dance styles available, how do you know which one to start with? "Ballet students typically need to start sooner than any other form of dance due to the development of strength and technique required," says Michael Banigan, Artistic Director at Fort Bend Academy of Dance and BalletForte. "One's age isn't much of a factor as much as the desire to work hard as well as the love of dance because it can help a person overcome their deficiencies despite starting late," he explains.

Trish Owens of Studio 03 also believes that age and ability level are not important. She suggests starting with ballet class and never stopping it because she is convinced it is the foundation that all dancers need.

Finding Your Dance Home

Choosing a studio may prove just as difficult as the dance type. Ask around to see what friends and neighbors recommend. What may be right for one may not be the best for another. Decide if you want a program designed just for fun and exercise, or one that will challenge you or your child to grow as a dancer.

The Fort Bend Academy of Dance offers a curriculum for the career minded artist as well as the hobbyist seeking the highest level of training in classical ballet, jazz, and tap. The stu-



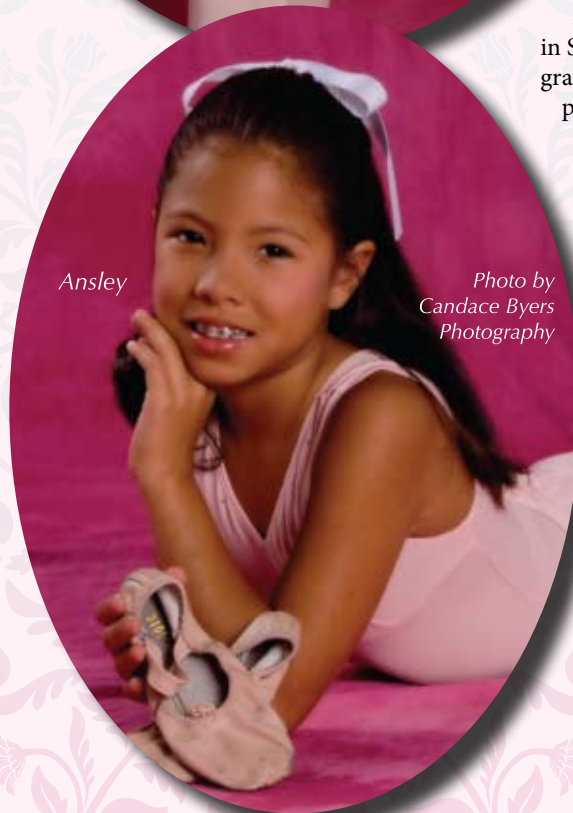
Arianna

Photo by
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Photography

dents have a unique opportunity to perform in a pre-professional ballet company, which includes BalletForte's annual The Nutcracker performed at The Stafford Centre. However, membership to the company is not exclusive to Fort Bend Academy of Dance students.

At Studio 03, diversity is essential. "We're not known as 'the ballet studio' or the 'competition studio' but as a studio that offers all dance techniques to the recreational and professional tract dancer," say the Owens sisters. "Our faculty is highly trained in their specialized areas, and after completing our dance program, we believe if our dancers leave and want to make it in the dance world, they will flourish."

If you're looking for a more easygoing program that is not so competitive, Melissa Jacobs, owner of The Little Gym in Sugar Land, may have the ideal program for your little one. "We offer a dance program that combines gymnastics for children ages three to 12 in a relaxed, nurturing environment," says Jacobs.



Ansley

Photo by
Candace Byers
Photography

Dancing With the Stars-Sugar Land Style!

If showing off your own twinkle toes is more your style, then look no further than the locally franchised Fred Astaire Dance Studio in Missouri City. Their services appeal to people of all ages and offer a number of partnership dances such as ballroom, Latin, country and western, and even belly dancing!



Taylor, Tara, Arianna, Robynn, Baylee, Julianne, Ansley, Olivia, and Kaylee

“Many students come to this studio to seek a new form of exercise or may want to learn a new hobby. Others want to learn how to dance for a special occasion or even spice up their marriage,” says Liz Porter, a dance instructor at the studio. “Our dance instructors have been called a therapist, a friend, a motivator, and a personal trainer—whatever you want us to be,” she adds.

“We’re very proud of our rich heritage and are truly honored to carry on the dream of Mr. Fred Astaire himself. He envisioned everyone returning to an age of elegance where couples once again danced together.”

Beyond The Basics

Dancing has more benefits than just learning a new skill. It also teaches discipline, respect, poise, grace, and confidence.

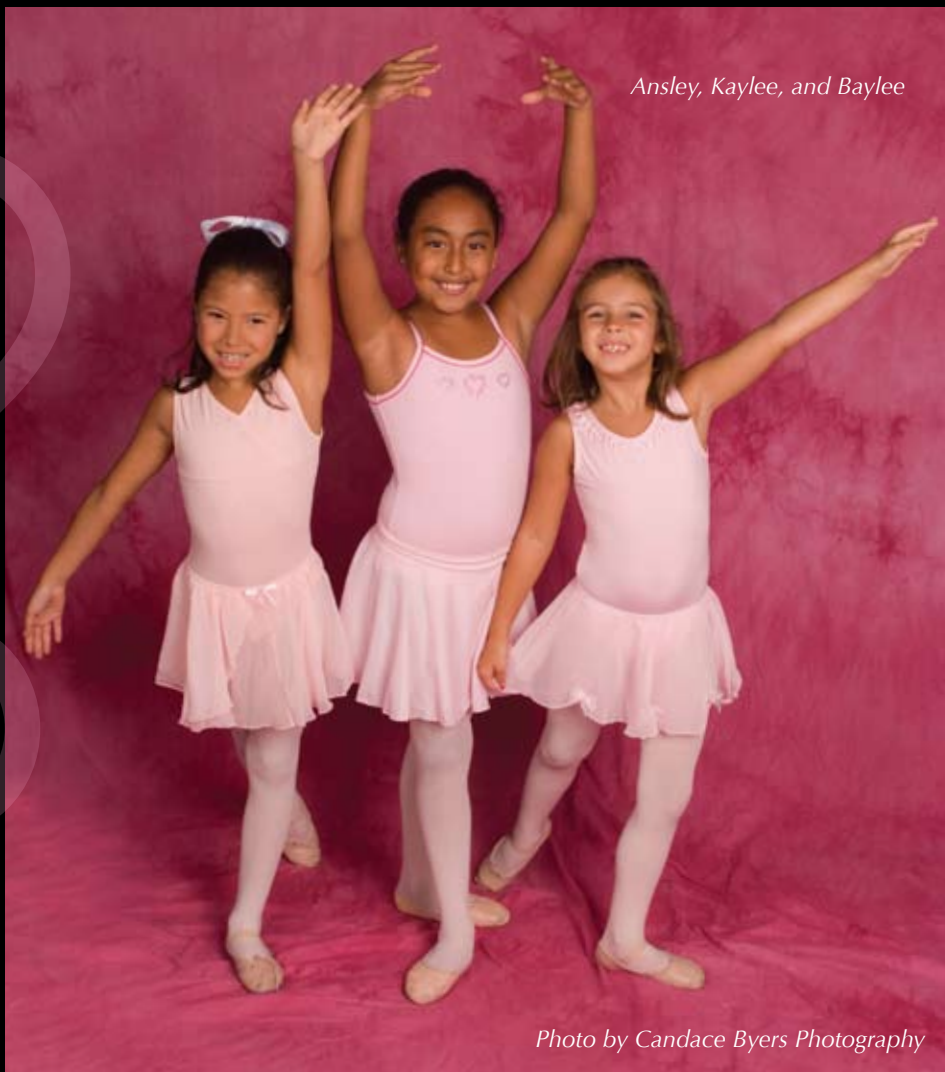
“You’re not only keeping your physical body in shape, but you’re learning many great life lessons in the dance classroom,” says Owens. Parents also get involved as volunteers backstage during recitals, which adds to the family feel of the program.

“They help dancers get lined up, make sure they have enough make-up on, and check to see if their hair is pulled back completely. But most importantly, they help maintain order while the show is in progress,” they add.

Before You Dance

If you’re serious about enrolling your child in dance lessons, there are a few things to consider. Here are some tips to prepare you and your child.

- ♥ Be ready to make the commitment.
- ♥ Always dress the part. Ask for a list of what is required for class and recitals.
- ♥ Get a deal on clothes by checking larger discount stores for dance clothes and shoes.
- ♥ Ask what types of fees and payment options you have. Look at the cost of tuition as well as recital performance fees and costume fees.
- ♥ Shop around. New students shouldn’t be afraid to shop around for classes.
- ♥ Don’t be afraid to ask questions. Read information about the dance curriculum and the background of the instructors before choosing a studio.



Ansley, Kaylee, and Baylee

Photo by Candace Byers Photography

Sugar Land Area Dance Studios

Whether you're two or 92, Sugar Land has a dance studio just for you! Take lessons at any of these schools and you'll be dancing in no time!

ANN MOODY SILL DANCE STUDIO

11110 S. Hwy. 6
Sugar Land
281-498-8270
amsds.com

BILL AUSTIN'S ACADEMY OF DANCE

16215 Lexington Blvd.
Sugar Land
281-565-5327

COOKIE JOE'S DANCIN' SCHOOL

1415 Hwy. 6
Sugar Land
281-265-1042
cookiejoedance.com

CYNDE LOMONTE DANCE DIMENSIONS

3434 FM 1092
Missouri City
281-499-1111
cldance.com

DANCE WORKS INC.

867 Dulles Ave.
Stafford
281-261-9700

DUFOUR DANCE CENTRE

3410 Hwy. 6
Sugar Land
281-242-1010

FOOTPRINTS CHRISTIAN DANCE CENTER INC

929 Eldridge Rd.
Sugar Land
281-242-4488

FORT BEND ACADEMY OF DANCE

5022 Hwy. 90-A
Sugar Land
281-277-5735

*FRED ASTAIRE DANCE STUDIOS

6238 Hwy. 6
Sugar Land
281-277-1335
fredastaire.com

GOTTA DANCE

2601 Cartwright Rd.
Missouri City
281-403-4095

JANA BROWN'S CENTER STAGE DANCE

16566 Southwest Fwy.
Sugar Land
281-242-0806

KIDS IN DANCE STUDIO

2435 Texas Pkwy.
Missouri City
281-208-5961

KINARD DANCE SCHOOL

15510-J Lexington Blvd.
Sugar Land
281-980-1886
kinarddance.com

*LITTLE GYM OF SUGAR LAND

3571 Hwy. 6
Sugar Land
281-277-5470
thelittlegym.com

MASTERS OF DANCE

4111 Greenbriar Dr.
Stafford
281-240-8276

ROBIN'S DANCE STUDIO

3643 Glenn Lakes Ln.
Missouri City
281-499-3921
robinsdancestudio.com

SUGAR LAND DANCE CENTER

9920 Hwy. 90
Sugar Land
281-491-7530
sugarlanddancecenter.com

STUDIO 03

7002 Riverbrook Dr.
Sugar Land
281-937-0090
studio03.com

* denotes Sugar Land Magazine advertiser

Bright Lights, Big Dreams!

Most programs conclude with a performance. At smaller studios, the end of year show is usually held on the last day of class. Larger studios though, tend to offer a full-length program showcasing all the students.

“The recital at the end of the year is perhaps the most important performance for the young dancer...after all, dance is a performing art!” exclaims Banigan. “It allows the student to bring together both performance and technique before an audience. One learns how to cope with nerves while gaining valuable experience.” He adds, “For the parent, the recital can act as a gauge of their child’s progress.” Fort Bend Academy of Dance is one of the few studios that creates and performs a full length ballet. Students learn how to work within the confines of a full length ballet which include sets, costumes, and props.

Setting the Stage

Whatever your motivation may be, Sugar Land has several options for you and your little one to choose from. And it doesn’t matter if you’re just starting or just want to learn a new way to cut the rug. The hardest part may be waiting until your first class! **SLM**

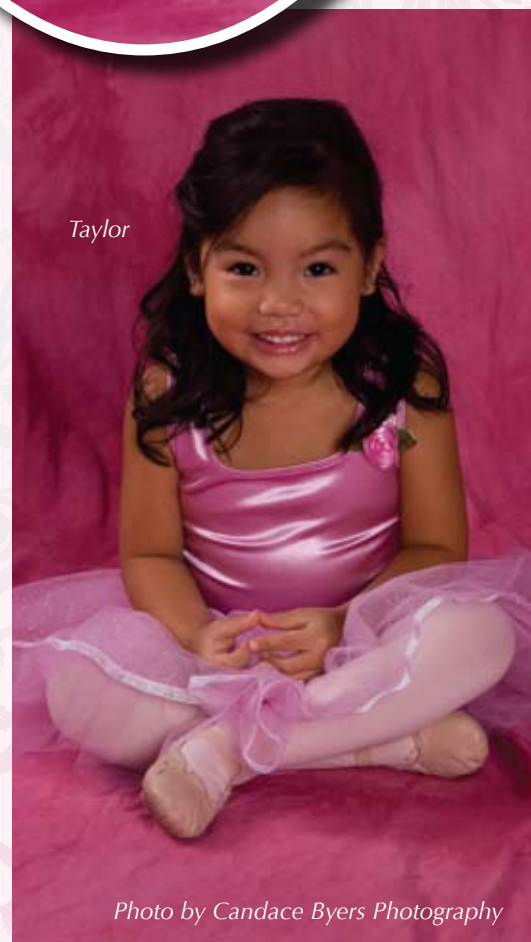
BRENDA THOMPSON is a freelance writer, volunteer, and mother. She has lived in Fort Bend County for 15 years and enjoys attending all types of dance performances.



Camryn

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A promotional image for Fred Astaire Franchised Dance Studios. It features a man in a white shirt and a woman in a white dress with a large floral corsage. The text reads: "FRED ASTAIRE FRANCHISED DANCE STUDIOS. Dance like a star. Social and Ballroom Dancing for Couples and Singles. 6238 Highway 6 www.fredastairehouston.com 281.403.0800. Call Today to Schedule your First 2 FREE Private Lessons with Mention of This Ad".



Taylor

Photo by Candace Byers Photography

Robynn



Julianne



Beautiful

Olivia



Ansley



Kaylee & Baylee



Ballerinas

Taylor



*Special thanks to
Candace Byers Photography
and all our Sugar Land Ballerinas.*