



Introduction:

How you schedule your dance classes can be a strategic and lucrative decision for dance studios aiming to optimize their profits and enhance overall business efficiency. This offers numerous benefits, not only for the studio itself but also for the convenience and satisfaction of the students and their families. This enhanced convenience for families and efficient use of resources can contribute significantly to increased profitability for dance studios!

Thank you to Jodi Shilling, Kim Field, and Hillary Parnell for contributing to this masterclass.

Goals:

By the end of this masterclass, you will:

- Know how to create your master studio class schedule to encourage frequency and make certain classes more available to working families.
- Learn how to set your pricing structure and how to set your budget.
- Understand the importance of how communication will encourage your students to sign up for more classes.
- Be inspired to open additional classes based on need and/or start a rental agreement for outside use of your facility.

Top 3 benefits:

1. By “stacking classes”, you can maximize the utilization of your facility and instructors to increase profit.
2. Creating a schedule based on stacking will lead to cost-effective resource management.
3. Students and families may find the option of attending consecutive classes more appealing, as it accommodates their busy schedules and provides additional training and team-building opportunities.

Things to consider before implementation:

1. First, do you have a re-enrollment plan for your students? Use [the DSOA Re-Enrollment & Engagement System](#) to help you plan out your timeline for your re-enrollment process, plus the steps you should take to engage your parents.
2. Do you have a process for inviting/recommending students to take more classes?
 - a. If you don't invite your students to or recommend them to try more classes, then they probably won't be as willing.
3. Is your staff invested in getting students to take more classes?
 - a. Staff members should be your best ambassadors.
 - i. You might consider offering them a referral incentive!

4. Do you have a [customer journey visual that you can give parents](#)? Parents often want to see what their child's trajectory is so having a visual to give will help them visualize their child at your studio for years to come.

Class Scheduling Convenience & Calculations:

Stacking classes is when you create your schedule so that, for example, your 8-10 year old's can take multiple classes back-to-back on the same day.

Making your schedule convenient for parents is one of the biggest factors in students taking more classes. Especially for your preschool and recreational programs, offer those younger students a class on the same days/times as some of your older students' classes so siblings can be at the studio at the same time.

Doing this allows families to make fewer stops at your studio per week. This makes it very convenient for families and therefore makes it more likely for them to pick dance over other activities.

Here's a guide on how you can go about reevaluating your class schedule and how to start building a schedule that focuses on frequency:

1. Conduct a needs assessment:
 - Survey your current students and their families to understand their preferences and constraints.
 - Identify peak hours and popular time slots that accommodate the majority of your target audience.
2. Age group consideration:
 - Group classes based on age and skill levels.
 - Consider offering back-to-back classes for specific age groups, allowing families with multiple children to consolidate their studio visits.
 - Align schedules for classes catering to different age groups, ensuring siblings can attend classes simultaneously.
 - Offer family-friendly time slots that cater to both older and younger students, minimizing the number of trips parents need to make to the studio.
3. Trial periods and feedback:
 - Implement trial periods for new schedules to gather feedback from students and parents.
 - Regularly seek input and adjust the schedule based on feedback to continually improve the overall experience.

4. Promote the benefits:

- Clearly communicate the benefits of the revised schedule to parents, emphasizing the convenience and flexibility it offers.
- Highlight how the new schedule enhances the overall dance experience for students and families.

By approaching class schedule reevaluation with a combination of data analysis, flexibility, and communication, you can create a schedule that meets the needs of both students and their families while optimizing the efficiency of your dance studio.

Profitable Pricing Structures:

Calculate your finances based on your schedule:

Once you've structured your schedule to promote frequency, you need to establish your pricing structure. The DSOA encourages you to track your numbers, always. With this [Financial Calculator](#) you can calculate your class capacity revenue and profit, your maximum output, basic profit & loss for your studio, and new programs! This incredible calculator will help you see what your numbers are currently and help you set obtainable goals as you move forward with frequency in mind!

Common misconceptions for incentivizing frequency:

The biggest mistakes studio owners can make with their pricing structure is discounts. When you give multiple discounts, you end up taking money out of your own pocket.

Let's break this down more.

1. Most commonly, studios provide a discount for taking a certain number of classes or a flat rate for unlimited classes. The students taking a full schedule of classes offered are your most serious students and should be paying for those classes. Especially because these are often going to be your competition students. They're serious about their training and you're giving them the best teachers, choreography, etc. so they need to be paying for the quality of what they're receiving.
 - *We do, however, suggest offering a 5%-10% discount if a student pays for the year in full. This is money in your pocket upfront to help for unexpected expenses that may come up.*
2. The second common misconception about pricing is sibling discounts. Why should you lose income because a family has more than 1 child who dances? You're offering convenience to them by stacking classes and offering classes for multiple ages on the same day, you don't need to also lower their tuition.

3. A third misconception is how you're choosing your class prices. Are you picking numbers based on what feels right? Are you picking prices based on what your competitors charge? Or are you using inherited pricing from studio owners before you? All of these could be hurting you.

In order to set your pricing structure, you first need to set your budget. By creating a budget before the season begins, you will predict your expenses and revenue. You have to know and understand where the money is coming to build your financial systems, especially your pricing structures. The New Program Calculator will help you determine if certain programs take up too much of your peak hours while not generating enough revenue. This exercise can provide clarity and help you recalibrate.

Pricing Structures That Work

1. Sliding scale
 - a. A sliding scale will provide a small discount for those who take more classes. This is an excellent incentive to getting students to take more classes.
 - i. 1 class = \$15
 - ii. 2 classes = \$28
 - b. You want this discount to be small. It should be no more than 10% and be determined by your budget!
2. Flat fee rate
 - a. A flat fee rate is a very simple structure that your customers can easily understand. If you have a complicated pricing structure with multiple discount calculation options, your customers might get confused and ultimately not sign up. But if they understand the price and it's straight forward, they're much easier to convert.
 - i. 30-minute class = \$35
 - ii. 45-minute class = \$55
 - iii. 60-minute class = \$75
3. Charging for Premium Classes
 - a. Examples of premium classes are extension classes, preschool classes, and competition classes. These types of classes require extra lesson planning, extra curriculum development, more thoughtful and artistic choreography, etc.
 - b. When you're explaining these premium charges, share the pricing confidently. You are worth the price and you know you are providing an excellent service for that price. If you're confident, it's an easier buy in.

Consider different pricing structures for different programs. Maybe your recreational program works best on the flat fee rate and your competition program is better on the sliding scale.

Ways to increase frequency with your competition programming:

If you have a competition program, require multiple dance styles for participation in the company. The more competitive groups need to take more styles to make the well-rounded performers.

For example, if a dancer is on the jazz competition team, then they should be required to take:

- Ballet
- Jazz
- Turns, Leaps, and Jumps

Sidenote:

If you start combo classes in your Early Childhood Program, dancers get a taste of taking a few different styles early on and it will feel intuitive to take more classes as they get older.

Communication:

Communication is key when getting students to taking more classes! Many times, the students and parents might not even know what's available to them. Once you've set your schedule to accommodate students eligible for back-to-back classes, you need set your marketing to advertise. There are many ways to communicate the options to your students.

Touchpoints prior to the season starting:

Evaluations:

Doing evaluations is another fantastic way to connect with your students personally and recommend additional classes for the upcoming season. By providing substantial information about a student's development and progress, parents are appreciative of the detail and attention given to their child. This level of information and guidance helps suggesting additional classes make sense to the parents and students, especially those who are taking their child's dance training seriously. [Click here for more on how to use evaluations to promote more classes!](#)

Reminder: Acquiring new students cost 7 times more than retaining existing ones. Instead of solely focusing on attracting new students, prioritize bringing back those who have already experienced your classes. Building retention is the key to a dance studio's success!

Enrollment touchpoints:

Students should be encouraged to trial multiple classes during their enrollment process. Your teachers and team should be also recommending them to take more classes when they register.

Saying things like, "Most people take tap and jazz together" will encourage them to try it out!

You can also encourage this during our [6-Week Onboarding System](#). During this system, there are key touchpoints where you will check in with new students and see if they want to add other dance styles to their schedule!

Mid-season touchpoints and cross-promoting classes:

Trial Invitations:

During key moments throughout the year, you can personally invite students to stay for an additional class (free trial) on you. October and January are traditionally great times for this.

Sampler Mini Camps:

Throughout the year you can offer "Sampler" Mini Camps (2-hour Saturday class where dancers pay \$40 to try several styles).

Mid-Year Evaluations:

Another strategy is to use the [mid-year evaluation system](#) again to encourage even more classes.

Cross-Selling:

Another way to encourage students to try new classes is through cross-selling classes. Cross-selling strategies work well because they highlight how certain classes can benefit and complement each other. For example, if a student is enrolled in a jazz class, promote a hip-hop class or jazz funk class immediately following, emphasizing the benefits of increased musicality experience and movement quality discovery. As mentioned earlier, communication is key to educating families on a students' class options.

Here are some other ideas:

1. Teacher Swaps are a great way to get kids interested in what other teachers are teaching. For instance, choose a week and have all your studios rotate teachers just for fun.
2. Special invites to students directly from instructors to be a "special guest" in another style for a month is very effective.
3. You can offer co-current class options to help students level up more quickly. For example, a student might take a Level 1 and then Level 2 Ballet co-currently after their progress report is delivered.

4. Having performance team students or competition students take class for a week with younger groups can be very inspirational. It helps to buddy up in class, do partner work, and have the team students talk about the benefits of additional styles.

Reminders for Staff:

Getting students to take more classes is also very dependent on the classes themselves and your teachers! Students take more classes if both the teacher and the class is interactive and engaging. When students find the learning experience enjoyable, they are more likely to sign up for additional classes. Teachers should incorporate innovative teaching methods and student feedback to enhance the student's overall experience.

Teachers can also build in cross-promotion of other classes into their lesson plans by visiting other classes. Each class can take turns showing off their recital dances or combinations. This often creates a spark of curiosity in students and parents will email shortly after about adding a style.

Scheduling for Teachers:

Your schedule should be fully focused on profitability. Be careful not to focus too much on your teachers' availability. Build the schedule first and then plug in your teachers. This is why it's so important for your teachers to be versatile in teaching various ages and classes so you can stack classes and your teachers can still have a full night.

Testing New Classes

Before launching a new class, test your students' interest and viability by promoting the class concept. A preliminary marketing campaign directed at current families can help in gauging interest levels.

Start by requiring a deposit; this financial commitment serves as a tangible indicator of genuine interest and helps you gauge the potential success of the class. If a substantial number of families are willing to put down deposits, then you can move forward with offering the class.

Once you've secured enough deposits, find the teacher and start promoting the class to fill available spots.

On the other hand, if the response falls short, be transparent and considerate. Return the deposits to those who expressed interest, maintaining trust and goodwill with your community.

This approach not only minimizes the risk of investing resources in an unpopular class but also engages your community in the decision-making process, fostering a sense of involvement and loyalty among your current families.

Additional Ideas for Scheduling for Profit:

Have you considered morning classes? A lot of studio owners are finding great success with morning preschool classes throughout the week. Others are opening up morning yoga and stretch classes for adults. This is a great way to reach new students who aren't available in the evening, as well as creating more income for the studio.

Examples of daytime ages & classes:

- Preschoolers & homeschoolers
- Fitness classes
 - Yoga, Barre, Pilates, etc.
 - *Senior citizen or retiree fitness classes also work great in the morning/daytime*

If you're a larger studio, you most likely have classes on Saturdays. This is a great idea to reach working families who can't get their kids to the studio during the week. It's also ideal for students who are involved in multiple extra-curricular activities. Saturday classes tend to work well with their schedules.

Examples of weekend ages & classes:

- Preschoolers
- Technique classes for recreational students involved in other sports & hobbies
- Company/competition rehearsals

Solos, Duos, and Trios:

If your program includes solos, duets, trios, or private lessons you'll need to consider those practice times when creating your master studio schedule. These should never be during prime times. They should be in off times - early in the afternoon before group classes, later in the evening, or weekends at non-peak times. These students are dedicated and will come when needed for 1:1 time.

Outside Renters:

Lastly, implementing an [outside renters agreement](#) not only provides a structured framework for leasing space but also opens up diverse income opportunities for studio owners, allowing them to tap into additional revenue streams through renting their space for various events or purposes.

Outside renter ideas:

- Birthday parties and other children's events
- Performance & rehearsal space for pre-professional or professional dance companies or local individual artists
- Pop-up shops for entrepreneurs to set up temporary retail spaces.
- You can rent the space as a backdrop for photo & films shoots, film productions, or commercial advertisements.
- Music/piano lessons: All you need is about 100 sq ft office and a keyboard or piano
- It's also great if you can host your Chamber of Commerce Committee meetings and work those partnership and sponsorship connections.

If your facilities can accommodate, you might consider renting out your office space or meeting rooms as a rentable workspace. Predominantly in larger cities, this works well as remote and traveling workers are often looking for spaces to rent short-term for in-person meetings.

Wins:

WIN/SHARE Each year we do report cards for the students and hand them out at dress rehearsal with the new schedule, new tuition, performance calendar, etc. This year I created a new format that had the teacher feedback and class recommendations for next year with check boxes. We also included an offer for 20% off September tuition if they turned in their class choices before July 1st. The day after recital I sent a Thank you note to everyone with a reminder about the report cards. Not only did we receive a lot of great feedback on our end of year shows, we also have 50 enrollments for next season! This is 50 more than I have ever had this early and there is still 1 more day! I'll send another reminder in the morning 🙏

2022-2023 Class Recommendations

Early Learners 2.5-5			Juniors 11+			Theatre		
Itties 2.5-4		Sat 10-10:30		Tap	Mon 5-6	Mini Acting & Music 4-6		Mon 5:15-6:30
Bitties PreBallet/Tap 4-5	✓	Thurs 4-4:45	X	Contemporary	✓	Adv Acting 12+		Mon 6:30-7:30
		Sat 10:35-11:20		Conditioning		Adv Musical Theatre 12+		Mon 7:30-8:30
Mini Movers 4-6 (with experience)						Int Acting 9-11		Tues 5-6
Mini Ballet		Wed 4:30-5:15	X	Ballet	✓	Int Musical Theatre 9-11		Tues 6-7
		Sat 11:30-12:15	X	Hip Hop	✓	Beg MT/Acting 6-8		Wed 5:30-6:30
Mini Tap		Thurs 5:15-6	X	Jazz	✓	Movement for Actors 12+		Thurs 5-6
		Saturday 12:15-1	Seniors 14+					
Mini Acro		Tues 4:30-5:15		Tap	Mon 5-6			
	✓	Wed 5:15-6		Contemporary	Mon 6-7			
		Tues 5:15-6		Conditioning	Tues 6-7			
Mini Hip Hop		Thurs 4:30-5:15		Ballet	Tues 7-8:30	Here are the classes we recommend for your student next year. Check off the ones you want or add more then turn this sheet back in by July 1st for 20% off September tuition!		
					Thurs 7-8:30			
Youth 7-10								
Youth Ballet		Tues 6-7		Hip Hop	Wed 8-9			
		Thurs 6-7		Jazz	Thurs 6-7			
Youth Tap		Tues 7-8	Acro					
Youth Jazz		Wed 6-7	X	Beg/Int	Wed 5-6			
Youth Hip Hop		Wed 7-8		Advanced	Wed 7-8			
Youth Lyrical must also take ballet		Thurs 7-8						

[Win/Share] Shifting Mindset

We are working on our fall schedule. We've always had a class for 2-3 year olds in the evenings that is the first to fill. But the kids are always terrible because they're so tired from a long day. This year it's been particularly bad and my poor teacher is ready to be done.

Instead of chalking it up to this year's classes just being a little more tough, I've decided I'm making a change and no longer offering evening classes for our youngest dancers. Instead we are doubling our Saturday morning offerings for working parents (on top of our full schedule on weekday mornings). We all know littles do better in the mornings. I'm removing friction and ensuring the students that come to class are the happiest and most successful they can be (which means their parents will be happier). I'll probably lose a few students, but the ones that stay will have a better experience and therefore, hopefully, stick around longer! Not to mention my staff will be happier.

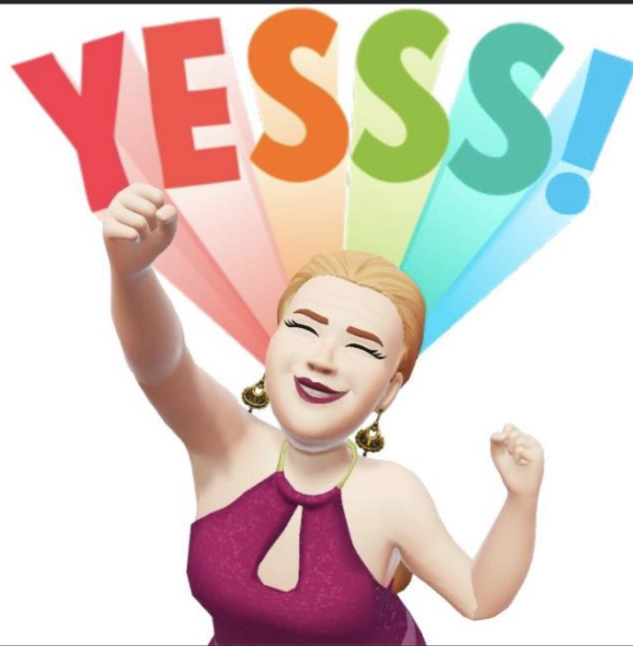
In the past I would have thought there was no way I could steer away from my most popular class times. But I am creating the business I want! And miserable 2 year olds (and their mommies) on a Thursday evening is not what I want, even if I know the class would be full.

Counter-intuitive is not always wrong! I'm learning to create the business I want, not the business I think I have to have. Thought I would share in case any of you are feeling trapped in things you don't actually want to be doing. ❤️



11 comments

WIN! I sent an email to our hip hop mini class about adding the ballet class that immediately follows their hip hop class. Within minutes I got 2 replies - 1 No and 1 YES! It's a big class so I'm hoping there will be a few more yes. But even if it's only 1, that's a minimum of another \$400 in tuition alone for the season.



<WIN> 435 registrations (class spaces filled) in the first 24 hours of Priority Registration for next school year. All have paid at least first month's tuition. Some have even paid in full for next school year.

How we do it:

a.) we have a lot of type A parents who live and breathe for their childrens' extracurriculars so if that is not your demographic, I can't help you there 🤷

b.) Student evals/class placement letters - every teacher in our leveled program writes a personalized eval (at least 2 things they are particularly strong in, 2 they need to keep working on, other feedback) and what level they should sign up for next year as well as additional class recommendations. So they know exactly what to sign up for, have been encouraged to add specific additional classes in a personalized way, are feeling positive about their classes bc they just got told what they do well, as well as motivated to improve bc they were told what they need to work on. (I know we tell them that in class every single week but there's something about having it in writing...)