



**CREATE • MOVE • INSPIRE**

Toddler dance classes.

Some people love them.

Others think they are waste of time and money.

I mean, let's face it, a one or two-year-old is not going to be able to master "technique" as such.

I started both of my children in toddler dance classes at a young age (obviously this is not a surprise as I run a studio); however, for me, this was a decision that was about much more than actually "learning to dance".

It was about *learning to move* and *coordinating movement*.

Yes! Jumping in and out of hoops and walking in a straight line are not easy for most 1 and 2 year olds!

I wanted my kids to learn to *follow instructions* (especially when given to them by someone other than myself).

I wanted them to be able to *learn to concentrate* for an extended period of time.

I wanted to *immerse them in a literature rich environment* where stories, songs and make-believe were celebrated and skills were built upon.

Did I care if they could actually dance?

No.

But I did want them to be able to gradually learn to take directions and to be able to follow actions or to play an instrument in time with the music, hence learning basic rhythm skills.

It's not unusual for a parent to try their child in a toddler class and then say, "I think I'll wait until they are a bit older as they weren't really participating properly."

I encourage you to persist beyond this.

When my daughter started "Baby & Me" classes she was 2 years old and she had weeks where she would barely follow one instruction and spent most of her time clinging to me.

12 months later and she is a different child.

She sings along, does the actions, follows instructions and is fairly consistent with her participation each week, whereas, six months earlier, her attentiveness and participation levels varied dramatically from week to week.

My son is one-year old and also does Baby & Me classes.

He basically just smiled along (or screamed!) until recently when he started doing one or two of the actions in one of the songs we were dancing to.

He now even helps pack up the props with the other kids and will play musical instruments and point at pictures during the story-time section of the class.

Does he participate in everything each week?

No.

Is he taking it all in and learning new skills?

Yes.

Some weeks will still feel like a backward step with little ones but it's important to give them plenty of time to learn and develop their new skills.

Celebrating your child's small achievements at this special age is so fulfilling and is particularly special when you can share these with a class of other parents, grandparents and children who you have gotten to know along the way.

The real dancing will come later.

In the meantime, I know I am setting my kids up to learn skills that will set them up well regardless of whether dance ends up being something they continue with or not past their toddler years.

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