



Director: Shalimar Blanchard
LRAD, ARAD, RAD RTS
phone: 604 892 5500
web: www.howesounddance.com
email: howesounddance@gmail.com
Location: 150-39002 Discovery Way Squamish

HOWE SOUND DANCE ACADEMY STUDENT ASSISTANTS

HSDA students, age 11 years and older, have the opportunity to be a Student Assistant Teacher. Assistant Teachers volunteer to help out in our Creative Dance, Stepping Stones Jazz, Pre Primary Ballet and Primary Ballet & Jazz classes to aid HSDA teachers in class through preparation, organization and demonstration. This position is a full year commitment and requires the volunteer to attend their assigned class once a week and help out at the end of the year during our recital week, both behind the scenes and on stage. We have several students apply to student assist each year, unfortunately not all can be taken. Please fill in an application form and submit to Miss Blanchard at your registration. Being invited to assist a teacher in classes is a great honor. It usually means that teachers have observed characteristics like your dedication to dance, your willingness and cooperation in class, and perhaps your caring or compassionate nature. Perhaps, in you, your instructor may see the spirit of a future teacher and would like to cultivate and nurture these qualities. As does "great power," great honor comes with "great responsibilities."*

Volunteering as an Assistant Student Teacher has many benefits:

- Assistants will develop a close relationship with other assistant teachers and HSDA faculty through mentoring throughout the dance season
- Assistants will gain experience working with small children
- Assistants will get the opportunity to mentor young children
- Assistants will learn the proper structure of a dance class
- Assistants will learn how to break down steps and teach basic technique
- Assistants will learn about musicality
- Assistants can use these volunteer hours towards their high school graduation hours

Responsibilities

The responsibilities and tasks left to assistants may differ from teacher to teacher. However, the following are some general duties that you might expect or that may fall to you should you take on the role of an assistant in a dance class.

- **Dress neatly and appropriately for class. This includes your hair.**
- **Arrive at least 10 minutes early for any pre class discussion with the HSDA instructor**
- **Lead student upstairs for class and downstairs when class is over where applicable**

- **Assist students up and/or downstairs when student needs to use the toilet where applicable**
- **Know the children's names & make eye contact with each student in the class**
- **Help with attendance/roll-taking**
- **Walk among the students as your teacher leads the class,**
 1. making corrections,
 2. assisting a struggling dancer, or
 3. correcting students who are misbehaving or not following instructions.
- **Lead certain warm-ups or exercises while your teacher**
 1. handles the above tasks
 2. steps out for a moment
 3. handles a more severe discipline issue
 4. observes you in order to give some tips
- **Help children during shoe changes, bathroom or water breaks**
- **Hand out props or set up items to be used in class**
- **Keep an eye out for potential hazards like untied shoe laces or poor spacing/awareness while children are dancing**
- **Be a source of positive and enthusiastic energy in the class**
- **Keep students on task and focused**
- **Offer encouragement to dance students during the class**
- **Help to line up students and to keep them in line**
- **Lead or participate in choreography/recital dances**
- **Answer basic questions that parents may have**
- **Work seamlessly with your teacher by *anticipating* his/her needs so that together you can provide a fun and supportive learning environment for younger dancers**

Tips

As you can see being a teacher's assistant involves a lot more than just showing up for classes. Your role as an extra pair of eyes, ears, arms, and legs for your teacher is an important one! Here are some pointers on how to be effective in this role and in relationship to the responsibilities above.

- **Don't wait to be asked** *especially* when you've been assigned small tasks that are done for each lesson (like taking roll or handing out stickers at the end of class). This is what it means to anticipate. Developing this awareness is important if you want to be a great assistant.
- **Be unobtrusive.** When you see a student that needs your help or correction, address or pull them aside quietly so that you don't distract other class members.
- **Don't be a distraction.** Follow the lead of your teacher. If he/she is trying to get the class to pay attention, that is your job too. Unless you are leading or teaching, you are there to help keep the students' attention on your teacher or on what they are doing (not to pull focus to yourself).

- **“Sandwich” your corrections** between two good things. For instance say something like “Anna, you are pointing your toes nicely, try to keep your knee straight when you tendu. You are being a great listener today!”
- **Offer positive reinforcement** instead of yelling or complaining about bad behavior. In fact, some of the techniques in [this post about teaching tots](#) can help you interact with the kids (tots or not).
- **Be prepared and on time.** Being prepared can be anything from having the proper clothes or shoes with you to knowing the exercises or dances that you are supposed to lead.
- **Ask questions, give suggestions, and save the silliness until after class whenever possible.** Your teacher is counting on being able to focus on her class of students without worrying about you (or your behavior) at the same time. You will be the focus when it’s your turn in class.
- **Show your enthusiasm without being silly.** Use a bright tone of voice (think of sort of making your voice slightly higher) when you talk to the children, use a lot of energy when you demonstrate, and smile a lot. This will show your enthusiasm and still keep the kids focused and paying attention. You can have fun as long as you are not distracting the students from what they are doing.
- **Be ready for the unexpected and try to handle things maturely when they do.** If you work with very young children you must be prepared for the occasional “accident” and its aftermath. You can also expect that sometimes kids will say some pretty funny or strange things. Again, watch your teacher for how to respond in an appropriate, kind, and respectful manner.
- **Know when to refer a parent to your teacher.** If you are approached by a parent with a question and are not sure how to answer, don’t make it up. If it seems the parent is upset it is not your job to deal with the problem. If a parent wants you to know why or why not things are being done the way they are, it is best to let your teacher address this. If you are uncomfortable in any way with the question, it is okay to pass it on to the teacher!
- **Give corrections and discipline with confidence.** Admittedly, it can be kind of strange to suddenly be “in charge” when you are normally a pupil yourself. But even though the children in your class probably look up to you, they are not likely to listen to you if you don’t speak clearly and firmly. Sandwiching corrections and being positive may help you to feel like you are not being mean or yelling. Try to avoid making requests in the form of a question (For ex: “Are you ready to put the props away?”). This gives the impression that they have an option to say no. (Instead try “Alright, it’s time to put the props away!” in a way that sounds as if *you* are excited to be moving on to the next activity as well).
- **Communicate clearly with your teacher.** If you have a question, ask at an appropriate time. If you are not sure what is expected of you, don’t be afraid to ask or find out how you can improve.
- **Get some sleep.** You are probably a busy teen or pre-teen with homework, dance classes, and other activities in which you are involved. If you are well rested you will be more useful to your teacher and be more energetic in your classes (all of them). If you are missing sleep to fit everything in, maybe you should discuss this with your parents and teacher. Adding an apprenticeship to your activities may not be in your best interest right now.