

MJP ACADEMY OF IRISH DANCE



Parent & Student
Handbook
2011/2012

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WELCOME

It is my pleasure to welcome you to MJP Academy of Irish Dance. I hope that you will have a successful year of fun and learning. Whether you are a parent, new or experienced dancer, our goal is to foster a positive environment in which everyone contributes to and benefits from MJP Academy's success.

This handbook was designed for the "new comer" to the Irish dancing community, however it contains important policies that all parents and students who participate in our classes and our dance school are expected to become familiar with. **Please sign off on the last page of this book as an acknowledgement of having read the handbook and return it to the instructor on the first day of class.**

The aim is that this handbook will answer many of the questions that you have now, and as the year progresses. If you have a question that is not answered in this handbook, please feel free to contact me, an MJP Academy instructor (when we are not teaching, of course), or our MJPIDA President.

In addition, there are many resources available on our website <http://www.mjpacademy.com> specifically designed for MJP Academy parents and students. We encourage you to visit the website often as it contains answers to many frequently asked questions.

On behalf of the instructors and the parent committee, MJP Academy is looking forward to meeting and working with all of you in 2011/2012!

Sincerely,

Joelle Sheppard, B.G.S, M.A., T.C.R.G.
Owner, Director, Lead Instructor
Email: mjpacademy@hotmail.com

Kate Jacobsen, Leona Furrow & Heather Inman, Assistant Instructors

Tim Braden, MJPIDA Parent Committee President
Email: mjpida@hotmail.com

PHILOSOPHY

MJP Academy of Irish Dance will endeavor to provide each dancer with the opportunity to reach their full potential by teaching important developmental skills such as motor, physical fitness, coordination, and teamwork. Students of MJP Academy have the opportunity not only to compete in dance competitions, but to also perform on stage in front of an audience. We believe this will enable students to form a healthy and competitive outlook as well as an understanding of the art of stage presence. MJP Academy encourages all of its dancers and members to demonstrate *DEDICATION, HARD WORK, and a POSITIVE ATTITUDE.*

INSTRUCTOR BIOS

Joelle Sheppard, B.G.S, M.A., T.C.R.G. – Owner and Head Instructor



Academy of Irish Dance has been operating in Calgary since February 2007 and is registered with An Coimisiún le Rincí Gaelacha (The Irish Dancing Commission). Miss. Joelle earned her T.C.R.G (Teastas Coimisiún le Rincí Gaelacha) certification in Ireland in 2006. This certification grants the students of her school eligibility to participate in local, regional, national, and international competitions.

Joelle started Irish dancing at age 5 with the Regent Academy of Irish Dance in Calgary and continued to dance and compete until the age of 22. Reaching Open Championship level, Joelle competed at the Western Canadian Oireachtas, Munsters Oireachtas (Ireland), North American Championships, and the World Championships of Irish dancing.

Joelle began student teaching at the age of 12. Four years later, she obtained her first job teaching Irish dance. Six years later, she attended the University of Limerick, Ireland and obtained a Master of Arts degree in Irish Dance Performance. Soon after, she obtained formal certification as a T.C.R.G. under the tuition of her mentor Orfhlaith Nibhriain and the added help of Michael Ryan.

After returning home from Ireland in December of 2006, MJP Academy was created and had its first official class on February 6th, 2007.



Kate Jacobsen - Assistant Instructor

Kate excels at everything she does. From top grades in school to her progress with her dancing. After two years of student teaching, Kate has a very promising career as an Irish dance teacher. She is a natural teacher and has a way of bringing out the best in her students.

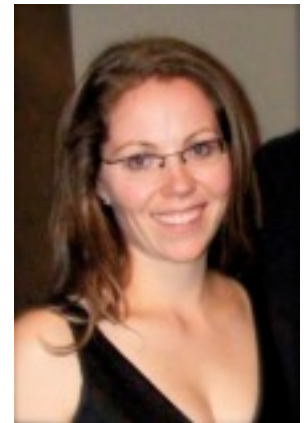
After having Irish danced for only a short number of years, Kate has already achieved some impressive results in competition and also performed in the Irish dance show [Celtic Echoes](#) in May 2011.

Leona Furrow- Assistant Instructor

Leona started dancing with the Regent School of Irish Dancing in Calgary at age 7. She reached Open Championship level in many of her dances and competed at the Nationals.

After a few years off, her Irish heritage combined with a love of Irish dance and music brought her back to dance classes as an adult dancer in 2004.

When she is not Irish Dancing, she is a designated HR professional in the coffee industry, enjoys gardening, yoga, cooking, reading, music, and time with her husband, two young children and the Pugs.



Heather Inman- Assistant Instructor

Heather Inman started Irish dancing at the age of 9 with the Mary Bryan School of Irish Dance in St. Catharines, Ontario. She competed in two Oireachtasáí in both Figures and Solo Dancing. Her favorite dance is the Treble Reel.



After a dancing related ankle injury, she took some time off, but her love of this dance didn't keep her away for long. She has since returned to competitive dancing at MJP Academy of Irish Dance.

Heather is excited to pass on her passion and enthusiasm for Irish Dancing. She encourages all people, young and young at heart, to try Irish Dancing.

When she is not reeling and jigging, Heather works for an international Energy company, and enjoys spending time with her husband and two Staffordshire Bull Terrier dogs, Nitro and Nara.

CONTACT INFORMATION & CLASS LOCATIONS

MJP Academy of Irish Dance
Miss. Joelle
(403) 271-0696

mjpacademy@hotmail.com

MJP Irish Dance Association
President: Tim Braden

mjpidahotmail.com

Costume Coordinator

mjpdress@hotmail.com

Feis Coordinator

mjpfaisal.com

MJP Accounting

mjpacctsreceivable@hotmail.com

Monday & Thursday Classes (SOUTH):

MidSun Community Centre
50 Midpark Rise S.E.
Calgary, Alberta

Tuesday Classes (NORTH):

Highwood Community Centre
16 Harlow Avenue N.W.
Calgary, Alberta

Wednesday Classes (NORTH):

Highland Park Community Centre
3716 2nd Street N.W.
Calgary, Alberta

IMPORTANT DATES

***Don't forget to refer to the interactive 'Calendar' section of the MJP Academy website. It lists the dates of workshops, competitions, and upcoming performances.*

First Class	Mondays: September 12, 2011 Tuesdays: September 06, 2011 Wednesdays: September 07, 2011 Thursdays: September 08, 2011
Thanksgiving - NO CLASS	Monday, October 10, 2011
Christmas Break - NO CLASS	Mondays December 19, 26 Tuesdays: December 20, 27 Wednesdays: December 21, 28 Thursdays: December 22, 29
Classes resume after Christmas	Monday January 2, 2012
Family Day - NO CLASS	Monday, February 20, 2012
Spring Break - NO CLASS	Mondays: March 26, April 9th Tuesdays: March 27, April 10 Wednesdays: March 28, April 11 Thursdays: March 29, April 12
Cancelled class- hall is not available	Wednesday April 24
Victoria Day- NO CLASS	Monday, May 21, 2012

MJPIDA (MJP IRISH DANCE ASSOCIATION)

MJP Irish Dance Association (MJPIDA) is a not-for-profit association composed of parent volunteers and dancers of MJP. Their main goal is to support and encourage involvement in the fun, social and energetic activity that is Irish Dance.

This group raises funds for dancers of MJP to be used for items such as: Costumes, Competitions, Flooring or whatever the committee sees fit. To accomplish this goal, MJPIDA works hard throughout the year creating and completing interesting and unique fundraisers. In addition, the MJPIDA organizes the 'Used Shoe Exchange' program within our dance school.

All family members of MJP dancers or MJP dancers over the age of 18 are automatically part of MJPIDA. Everyone is invited and encouraged to attend MJPIDA meetings which are held frequently throughout the dance year.

MJPIDA has a 'members only' website where you can access and post photos, ask questions, and buy and sell used shoes and other dance related items. <http://mjpida.blogspot.com/>

CLASS LEVELS & DESCRIPTIONS

Beginner Classes: New dancers with little or no Irish (or other) dance experience should enrol in the Derry or Waterford level corresponding with their age.

DERRY	Beginner, for dancers age 4 – 6
WATERFORD	Beginner, for dancers age 7 and up
CORK	2 nd year dancers between the ages of 5 -7

Advanced/Competitive Classes are intended as a second class for students taking two classes a week. Students must be enrolled in two or more classes a week in order to enter competitions.

LIMERICK	2 nd and 3 rd year dancers, age 6 and up
BELFAST	Advanced Beginner and Novice, age 8 and up
DUBLIN	Novice and Prizewinner dancers
GALWAY	Preliminary and Open Championship dancers

Adult Classes are for fun, exercise, and a night out! Adult dancers are not required to compete, but some of them do.

Show, Performance and Figure classes: These classes are for dancers of any age entering their second year of Irish dance. Dancers enrolled in these classes will learn the show numbers that are similar to choreography used in "[Celtic Echoes](#)" and by "[Dara Irish Dance Troupe](#)". Dancers in these classes will also learn figure dances which are the traditional group dances used by Irish step dancers in competitions and in shows.

WORKSHOPS

In addition to weekly classes, workshops are where dancers will learn new steps, practice performance routines, and learn choreography. Some workshops are optional and others are required depending on the age and level of commitment of the dancer.

Workshop Registration forms can be found on the 'Registration' section of the MJP website, www.mjpacademy.com.

'Choreography' Workshops- Required for 2nd year dancers

Cost: \$40 each per dancer

Workshop #1: October 15 and 16, 2011 | Workshop#2: January 28 and 29, 2012

Dancers in their 2nd year and up should attend these workshops to ensure they don't fall behind in class. The objective of these workshops is to learn new choreography and dance steps.

'Monthly' Workshops- Optional for all dancers

Cost: \$120 per dancer for all 6 workshops

For dancers interested in increasing their flexibility, endurance and improving their tricks, this is for you! There will be six "monthly" workshops on Saturdays in addition to the choreography workshops. The focus of these workshops will be increasing strength, stretching, drills and technique. Some workshops will include information for dancers on nutrition, practice tips and habits, and Irish music (to help dancers with timing and counting in).

Workshop Dates: September 17, December 10, January 14, February 11, April 21, May 26

'Oireachtas' Workshops- Required for those competing at the Oireachtas

Cost: Solo Workshop: \$30 per dancer for all 3 Saturdays,

Figures Workshop: \$30 per dancer for all 3 Saturdays

OR \$60 for dancers in both figure and solos

Dancers who will be competing at the Oireachtas (Worlds Qualifiers) in November in either solo or figure (team) dances are required to attend these workshops.

Workshop Dates (Figures and Solos):

Saturdays October 1, 22, and 29th (1 hour each day)

FEES AND PAYMENT POLICY

Class Fees

Fees for Irish Dance classes are *per dancer* and correspond with the number of classes attended per week.

One class (45 min- 1 hour) a week:	\$50.00 /month
1.5 hours a week:	\$70.00 /month
Two classes (2 hours) a week:	\$90.00 / month
2.5 hours a week:	\$110.00/ month
Three classes (3 hours)a week:	\$125.00/ month
Four classes (4 hours) a week:	\$155.00/ month
Unlimited Classes:	\$175.00/ month

Family Pricing

For families with more than one child enrolled in dance classes the fee structure is as follows:

One class a week each:	\$45.00/ month per dancer
One and a half hours a week each:	\$65.00/ month/dancer
Two classes (2 hours) a week each:	\$85.00/ month per dancer
Two and a half hours a week each:	\$100.00/month/dancer

Payment Policy

Payment is accepted in the form cheques or cash.

Payment by Cheque

- Post dated cheques for the 1st of each month (September to June) are required at the time of registration.
- Please make cheques payable to: **JOELLE SHEPPARD**
- ****First and last months fees are due at the time of registration and are non-refundable.****
- Cheques returned NSF will be subject to a \$25 fee.
After 2 NSF cheques, the fees remaining for the balance of the year will be required in cash.

Payment in Cash

- If you choose to pay in cash, you must remit fees in 2 payments (monthly payments in cash are not accepted).
- Payment #1- Monthly fees for September, October, November and December, plus June (5 months)
- Payment #2- Monthly fees for January, February, March, April, and May (5 months)

WITHDRAWAL POLICY

Students wishing to withdraw from MJP Academy of Irish Dance must provide written notice prior to the 1st day of the following month. Non-attendance is not considered proper notice. First and last month's fees are non-refundable.

REFUND POLICY

First and last months fees are non-refundable. Refunds will not be given for days missed, due to absences, holidays, or weather-related closings. Credit may be given in the event of a medical emergency. Situations such as this will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

IRISH DANCES AND SHOES

Soft Shoes (Ghillies or Pumps)

Beginning dancers (children and adults alike) start with soft shoe dances before they progress to hard shoes. This is important in order to learn the proper technique and to build strength and endurance. Most dancers will begin to learn hard shoe dances in December of their second year.

Immediately, a beginner dancer will learn the “threes and sevens”. These steps are the foundation of all Irish dancing steps and mastery of the technique and timing of these critical components will be the focus of new dancers.



The soft shoe dances are the *Reel*, *Light Jig*, *Single Jig* and *Slip Jig*. The *Reel* is a fast dance done in 4/4 time and traditionally is done in soft shoes. The *Light Jig* and *Single Jig* are some of the dances that beginners will learn in their first year of dance. These are done in soft shoes in 6/8 time. The *Slip Jig* is a dance that only ladies perform and is commonly referred to as the ‘ballet’ of Irish dancing because of the high leaps and graceful motions. The *Slip Jig* is done in 9/8 time and requires an increased amount of endurance because it is played at a slower tempo.

Hard Shoes

Also called ‘heavy shoes’ and have fiberglass tips on the toes and heels which produce the tapping sound that they are known for. Hard shoe dances are typically learned in a dancers 2nd to 3rd year of dance as they are increasingly difficult to master as compared to the ‘soft shoe’ dances.

The dances performed in hard shoes are the *Hornpipe*, *Treble Jig*, *Treble Reel*, and *Traditional Set Dance*.

The *Hornpipe* is a traditional dance done in 2/4 or 4/4 time. The *Treble Jig* in 6/8 time, and the *Treble Reel* in 4/4 time, usually to the same music of the *Reel*. *Traditional Set Dances* are hard shoe dances that are danced to music with either of *Hornpipe* or *Treble Jig* timing, but are danced to a tune of the same name as the dance and use choreography that has been passed down, with minimal changes for many years.



Figures or Figure Dances are dances that contain 2 or more people. The 2-hand, 4-hand, 6-hand, and 8-hand are some of the common figure dances and are done in soft shoes.

Irish Dance Shoes can be purchased used from the 'Shoe Exchange' coordinator or from Bob Steele at Steele Celtic Dancewear (403) 686-3514.

For brand new dancers, black ballet slippers found in popular department stores are acceptable. If you purchase shoes at one of the local dance supply stores in Calgary, please ensure that you do not buy Highland dance shoes, as they differ greatly from what is required.

AT HOME PRACTICE

MJP Students are encouraged to practice at home whenever possible. Even a few minutes each day can transform the technique of new and experienced dancers. To facilitate this, the website has been updated to include practice sheets for dancers to track their efforts, as well as written copies of the 'steps' and some sample music. Look under the 'Parent/Student Resources' section of the website and click on 'Practice Tips' to get started.

ATTENDANCE POLICY

It is imperative that students attend class regularly as it not only improves his/her dancing ability and teaches responsibility, but is key when they are performing in group dances when others are depending on their attendance.

- MJP Academy students must maintain an acceptable attendance rate to participate in shows and performances.
- If you plan on missing more than one class in a row, please contact an MJP Academy instructor.
- Please do not come to class if you are sick.

CLASS ATTIRE AND CONDUCT

Students at all levels of dance are required to come to class prepared to dance in proper attire which consists of:

- Shorts and a close fitting t-shirt or tank top, OR
- Tights and a body suit (skirts are permitted), black is recommended so they can also be used for performance
- White socks, or poodle socks
- Hair pulled back and out of your face
- A proper sports bra for older dancers

**Shorts MUST be above the knee so that corrections can be made to position and placement. If they are shorter than 4-5 inches, tights must be worn underneath.

Dancers are not permitted to wear jeans/long pants/long skirts of ANY kind as they can get caught on their shoes and cause them to trip and fall.

While in class, student expectations are as follows:

- No gum, or eating is permitted while in class.
- No running.
- Start stretching and warming up as soon as you arrive
- Respect the instructor and your fellow dancers. .
- Work on your dance steps at all times during class time with the exception of designated break times. Sitting or standing around chatting is not a productive use of time and is distracting to the other students.
- Cell phones or any other electronic devices are not permitted (with the exception of music players with earphones for older dancers to practice with when authorized by the instructor).
- Food is not permitted in classes that are one hour (or less) in duration.
- Absolutely no pop, or energy drinks. Water in a sealable container is allowed in the dance studio.

Other:

- Please bring a dance bag (labeled with their name) for shoes, extra hair elastics and a bottle of water
- Don't forget to label all dance shoes with a name and telephone number

DISCIPLINE POLICY

The goal of MJP Academy Instructors is to make dance class a fun, positive process that is supportive of individual and group learning. We seriously hope that we won't ever have to enforce this policy. Our expectation is that every dancer will treat others as they would like to be treated

and comply with the guidelines in the 'Conduct' section above.

In a situation where this expectation is not adhered to, discipline appropriate to the age group of the dancer(s) involved will be enforced. For the little ones, they will be asked to sit down in a short time out. Older students will be given one warning and if an offense is repeated following a warning, they may be sent out of the studio for the remainder of the class. For students who continue to disrupt the class, parental involvement will be called upon.

Disciplinary action is applicable to cases of profanity, verbal or physical altercations, or where continued disregard and disrespect toward an instructor or classmate is evident.

Should a student commit one of these offenses during a class or at any dance related activity, the following measures will be taken.

1st Offense: Parents notified as soon as reasonably practicable and student will be required to provide a verbal apology to classmates and instructor.

2nd Offense: Parent notification and two week suspension from class and related dance activities.

3rd Offense: Parent notification and student will be dismissed from the studio.

PARENT VIEWING

All classes taught by MJP Academy of Irish Dance are 'closed door'. Many of our young dancers are easily distracted when their parents/ siblings arrive, so we ask that before and after class times, please wait outside of the studio until the instructor opens the door. During the last week of November, we will invite the parents (and other adoring fans!) to watch as we demonstrate some of the dance steps and skills that have been learned so far. Stay tuned to our email newsletter which will provide the dates designated for 'Parent Viewing'.

EMAILS, NEWSLETTERS, AND COMMUNICATION

Due to limited interaction between parents and instructors between classes, we have implemented several communication initiatives to ensure that you are well informed throughout the dance year. Please note that the following systems, services and contacts are in place for your reference and use and we ask each family to supply us with a frequently checked email address at the beginning of the year for this purpose.

- **Website** – www.mjpacademy.com contains class schedules, feis information, and more!
- **Newsletter** – A monthly newsletter is sent out via email containing important dates and events.

- **E-Mail** – The school’s electronic address is mjpacademy@hotmail.com. Our number one method of communication and your direct link to the instructors and parent committee members. Please see page 6 for other email addresses that may be useful.
- **Telephone** – The phone number is (403) 271-0696.
- **Parent Committee Meetings** are held throughout the year and are a great way to stay up to date with the happenings of the dance school. In addition, you’ll get a chance to connect with other parents. Everyone is welcome.

Please note that it is our responsibility to do everything that we reasonably can to ensure that all critical information is made available to you. It will be your responsibility to access and read the information and seek assistance with any questions you may have.

IRISH DANCE COMPETITION

A local Irish Dancing competition is called a ‘Fèis’ (pronounced *fesh*). This is a gaelic term referring to the festival of activities that traditionally take place at a fèis. In addition to dance, there is often art and music.

The ‘Oireachtas’ (pronounced *oh-rok-tus*) is the qualifying event for the World Irish Dance Championship competition and takes place in Western Canada this November.

Any dancer who practices under a T.C.R.G. certified teacher is eligible to be registered to compete in the fèis. As dancers from near and far attend the fèis, they are typically held in large venues such as hotels or conference centers. You know that you have made it to the fèis because there are countless numbers of girls in their trademark ‘dancing wigs’.

Typically, dancers can start to compete from their second year of dancing and beyond. The decision to compete is made between the dance instructor, the dancer and their family. Students of MJP Academy are eligible to compete and encouraged to do so.

For more information, you are encouraged to visit the ‘Fèis Info’ guide available on MJP Academy’s website www.mjpacademy.com, under the ‘Parent/Student Resources’ tab.



A link to the 2011/2012 Parent & Student Handbook can be found on the www.mjpgacademy.com homepage

MJP ACADEMY OF IRISH DANCE

2011/ 2012 PARENT & STUDENT HANDBOOK ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

*Each family is required to sign and return one copy of this Acknowledgement to an MJP Academy instructor on their first day of class (only one per family is required). **Participation in class is not permitted until this form has been returned.** Should you require additional clarification about the policies laid out in this handbook, please speak to an MJP Instructor at your earliest opportunity.*

I confirm that I have read and understand the policies and information contained in the 2011/2012 MJP Academy of Irish Dance Parent & Student Handbook.

I also confirm that I have supplied a current and valid email address to the dance school for purposes of communication related to my and/or my child's enrolment in Irish Dance classes and that this email address is checked on a regular basis.

I understand that the first and last months fees for dance class are non-refundable and that any returned cheques are subject to a \$25 fee. I am aware that in order to withdraw from classes, I must provide written/email notice prior to the 1st of the following month.

Dancers Names:

Name of Parent/Guardian (if under 18):

Please Print

Signed:

Date:

_____/_____/_____
YYYY MM DD