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MJP  
ACADEMY

of Irish Dance



**PARENT** and **STUDENT HANDBOOK**

*For the 2022 – 2023 school year*

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## WELCOME

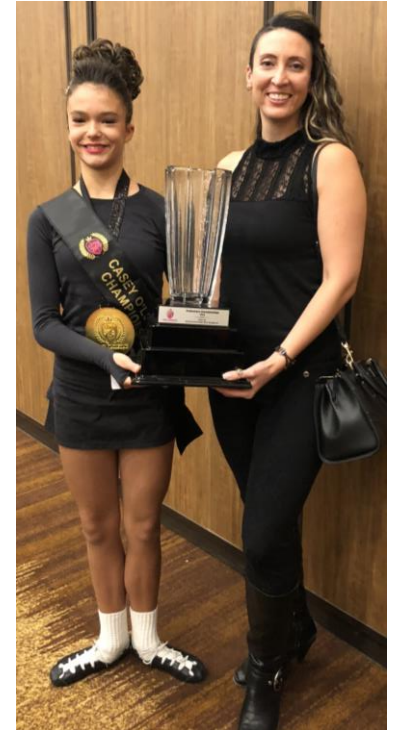
On behalf of our staff and parent committee, it is my pleasure to welcome you to MJP Academy of Irish Dance. We look forward to meeting and working with you.

This handbook has been created for both new and existing dancers and their families. It contains important policies that all parents and dancers are expected to familiarize themselves with each year. If you have additional questions that are not addressed within this handbook, please contact myself or one of our volunteers using the information below.

Our website contains many resources and is updated frequently. Please visit us at [mjpacademy.com](http://mjpacademy.com)

Sincerely,

Miss. Joelle (Joelle Anderson, B.G.S., M.A., T.C.R.G., A.D.C.R.G.)  
Creative Director & Head Instructor



## CONTACT INFORMATION

MJP Academy of Irish Dance      [mjpacademy@hotmail.com](mailto:mjpacademy@hotmail.com)

MJP Secretary (Joe Sheppard)      (403) 271.0696

Administrative Assistant      [mjp.askme@hotmail.com](mailto:mjp.askme@hotmail.com) Rae Bailey (403) 471.8003

MJP Accounting      [mjpacctreceivable@hotmail.com](mailto:mjpacctreceivable@hotmail.com)

MJPIDA (parent association)      [mjpida2007@gmail.com](mailto:mjpida2007@gmail.com)

Costume Coordinator      [mjp.dress@gmail.com](mailto:mjp.dress@gmail.com)

Used Shoe/Dress Exchange      [mjpshoes@hotmail.com](mailto:mjpshoes@hotmail.com)

MJP fundraising Coordinator      [mjpidafundraising@hotmail.com](mailto:mjpidafundraising@hotmail.com)

## STUDIO LOCATIONS

SOUTH      Bonavista Studio: #14, 1215 Lake Sylvan Dr SE, Calgary, AB

NORTH      Highwood Community Centre: 16 Harlow Avenue NW, Calgary, AB

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## MJP PHILOSOPHY

At MJP Academy, we strive to provide a fun, safe environment for kids and adults to reach their goals, meet new friends and learn about fitness. We wish to create the opportunity for every student to reach his or her full potential.

Our world class instructors provide students with skills that have applications extending far beyond the dance studio. Through dance, our students develop social skills, discipline, and strong characters. They become self-motivated and confident. Our structured dance classes help students to develop time management and goal-setting skills, creativity, and a sense of personal achievement.

Dance training is life training, and the skills developed through dance can be applied throughout your life.

Students of MJP have the option of focusing their dance careers towards competition, show dancing (for example: Riverdance), team dancing, or fitness. MJP also offers a comprehensive teacher training program for students interested in assistant teaching or becoming certified teachers.

MJP provides a structured environment where kids can learn while having fun!

## INSTRUCTORS

**JOELLE ANDERSON (Miss. Joelle) B.G.S., M.A., T.C.R.G., A.D.C.R.G.**  
Creative Director & Head Instructor



Joelle started dancing at the age of 5 in Calgary and continued to dance and compete until the age of 22.

During her dance career, Joelle achieved open status and attended many local and international competitions including Nationals, Worlds, and Oireachtasí in both Western Canada and Ireland. She holds a Master of Arts Degree in Irish Dance Performance from the University of Limerick, Ireland as well as her T.C.R.G. certification. This certification along with yearly registration with the Irish Dancing Commission (An Coimisiun le Rinci Gaelacha - CLRG) grants the students of MJP eligibility to register and compete in local, regional, national, and international Irish dance competitions.

Joelle opened MJP Academy of Irish Dance in February of 2007. By 2010 the school had grown to include over 100 students and continues to be successful today

In September 2017, Joelle completed and passed her A.D.C.R.G. exam and is now an accredited adjudicator with CLRG, allowing her to judge (adjudicate) at CLRG Irish dance competitions.

**MONIQUE BLESSING (Miss. Monique)**



Monique is a beautiful dancer. She has reached the highest level in competitive dancing and is a strong show dancer with MJP; dancing a leading role in our regular performances. She competed at the North American Championships in solos in 2019 and qualified for the 2020 competition.

Monique strives to make her classes both fun and challenging. Her students can see that she is passionate about her own dancing which makes her a wonderful role model and positive influence on every dancer she encounters in the studio. Monique has diverse hobbies including horse jumping, gymnastics and aerial silks.

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## ANYA JOHNSTON (Miss. Anya)



A very talented and driven dancer, Anya inspires her students to work hard and reach their goals. She loves to see her students progress and grow into strong dancers.

Anya started tap and ballet classes at the age of 3. She began Irish dancing at the age of 14 and in just 5 years, achieved the highest level in competition. Anya has participated in 5 Western Canadian World Qualifiers, placing as high as 8th place and has competed at the North American Championships, placing 32nd.

Anya began teaching her first class at MJP in the fall of 2017. She loves to help others and has stated that her favorite things about being at MJP are teaching her own students, and mentoring some of the older dancers at MJP.

## LEORA VICZKO (Miss. Leora)



Leora started dancing with MJP at the young age of 5. She has always been a big supporter of MJP from the start, attending almost every show and competition.

Despite suffering two broken ankles in her career, Leora achieved the top competitive level (open Championships) in 2019. Leora is a natural teacher and leader. She began student teaching with MJP at the age of 11 years old and is still teaching with us now.

Her students admire her and are inspired by her passion for dance. Leora is working her way through her grade exams with the goal of completing her TCRG in the future.

Leora qualified to dance at the North American championships in 2019 and again in 2020. We are proud of all of Leora's achievements and are grateful to have her as a part of the MJP teaching team.

## COMMUNICATION

Email is our number one mode of communication. Please ensure you supply us with a current, valid email address that you check regularly. Our Instructors are focused on maximizing their time in class with students and are unavailable to address questions during class time. Questions and concerns can be emailed to:

[mjpacademy@hotmail.com](mailto:mjpacademy@hotmail.com) OR [mjp.askme@hotmail.com](mailto:mjp.askme@hotmail.com)

Other resources:

- Website - [www.mjpacademy.com](http://www.mjpacademy.com) contains class schedules, competition information and more.
- Parent Committee Meetings are held throughout the year and are a great way to stay up to date.

**While it is our responsibility to ensure we provide accurate, up to date information to you, it is your responsibility to seek assistance with any questions that you have and access and read the provided information.**

## IMPORTANT DATES

\*\*Please refer to the interactive calendar on our website at [www.mjpacademy.com](http://www.mjpacademy.com) to ensure you don't miss any important competitions, performances, or meetings. If you subscribe to our Google calendar you will get automatic reminders and notifications.

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## DANCER CHECKLIST

**First year dancers**, bring your dance shoes and a water bottle to each class. No glass bottles please!

**Second year dancers and up**, please bring both pairs of dance shoes and please wear white socks. You should also bring: A journal (see below for details), skipping rope, yoga mat, yoga blocks (2 preferably), exercise bands (mini loops/theraband).

Please label **all** items that your dancer brings to class so that we can return it if/when it is left behind.

## DANCER JOURNALS

If you are in your second year of dance and up, please bring a small notebook (journal) to every class with you. This journal should be used **ONLY** for Irish Dance.

Students will get the most out of their classes by writing down teacher corrections, exercises and stretches received in every class. Journals can then be used to practice at home. Dancers can also keep a record of each day they practice at home and what corrections they worked on. If you are a competitive dancer, you can keep a log of adjudicator comments from each feis.

**First year dancers are encouraged (but not required) to use journals.**

## CLASS ATTIRE

Students in all class levels are required to come to class wearing proper attire as this allows instructors to see and correct body placement.

Proper attire consists of:

- Leggings or shorts (optional skirt over shorts). Shorts and skirts must be above the knee. Tights should be worn underneath shorts that are excessively short.
- A well-fitting T-shirt or tank top
- Tights and a body suit (skirts are optional), black bodysuits are recommended as they can also be used for performances
- Clean, white socks or poodle socks (for 2<sup>nd</sup> year dancers and up)
- Hair pulled back and out of your face (i.e. Ponytail)
- A proper supportive sports bra for older dancers
- Dance shoes (PLEASE LABEL YOUR SHOES WITH YOUR NAME)

**Jeans, long pants with loose bottoms or long skirts are a tripping hazard and are NOT PERMITTED.**

### Personal Hygiene

It is strongly recommended that all dancers over the age of 10 consider their personal hygiene when attending dance class. This may include the use of deodorant or antiperspirant.

## SHOES

Irish dancers wear two types of shoes: hard-shoes, and soft-shoes.

**Soft shoes (or Ghillies)** For new dancers, black ballet slippers are acceptable. Boys can wear black jazz shoes. Ballet slippers and jazz shoes can be found **NEW** at [City Dancewear](#) and [Bodythings](#). They can also be found **USED** at [Once Upon A Child](#).



If you would prefer to purchase Irish dance soft shoes you may do so locally at [Steele Celtic Dancewear](#). NOTE: This is the **ONLY** place in Calgary to purchase new Irish dance shoes! The other dance stores sell HIGHLAND Ghillies, which differ from what is required.

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**Hard-shoes (or heavy-shoes)** have fiberglass tips on the toes and heels that produce the tapping sound that Irish dancers are known for. Beginners dancers usually need at least 1 year of experience in soft-shoes before they possess the technique and ankle strength required to progress into hard-shoes. As they are expensive, please check with your child's instructor to confirm that they are ready for hard shoes before purchase.



Irish dance shoes can be purchased locally from various vendors at a feis or, from Steele Celtic Dancewear (403) 686-3514 in Calgary, Brogs (780)235-2764 in Edmonton or from various online suppliers.

Dance shoes can also be rented yearly from MJPIDA, eliminating the expense of new shoes while your child's shoe size is changing rapidly.

Please refer to the '**Shoe Guide**' located in the 'Members Only' section of the website for further information on purchasing and fitting your first pair of Irish dance shoes.

## ATTENDANCE POLICY

At MJP we encourage our dancers to strive for a record of perfect attendance. This dedication improves student rapport and promotes responsibility for their roles in group dances. In addition, consistent attendance allows dancers the class time needed to prepare for the next class level. Attending every class builds strong, lasting relationships with peers and teachers, and helps to develop self-confidence.

If you will miss more than one class in a row, please email [mjpacademy@hotmail.com](mailto:mjpacademy@hotmail.com).

## ABSENCES

- MJP does not refund or credit for missed classes.
- Students are encouraged to make-up any classes they have missed.
- Students can make-up in any age and level appropriate class. Ask your instructor to confirm an appropriate class/time
- Missed classes need to be made up within eight weeks.
- More than 5 absences per eight-week attendance period are considered excessive.

We understand that from time to time a class may be missed, but students who miss excessive amounts of time may be asked to withdraw from the class or move down a level. **Please note: in order to participate in the year end recital, students must have attended at least 80% of their classes during the year.**

## PUNCTUALITY

- Lateness for class may be counted an absence and will be included in your absence summary. Communicating with your teacher ahead of time may excuse your tardiness from being recorded.
- Students arriving after warm-up may be asked to sit and observe the class. Participation without proper warm-up may result in injury.

## PERFECT ATTENDANCE AWARD

Perfect attendance displays amazing dedication. This is a goal that can be met by every dancer at MJP Academy. Dancers who have achieved no "lates" or "absences" for the duration of an entire dance year will receive the **MJP Attendance Award** at the year end show. This award can be earned by any dancer at any level and can be earned an unlimited number of times.

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## ATTENDING SHOWS / PERFORMANCES

Performances are an exciting way to share the talents of our school. If you commit to a performance, it is expected that you attend. Dancers must arrive at the venue at least 15 minutes before the scheduled rehearsal time for every show (Rehearsals usually take place 45 minutes prior to the show start time). Most of our performance numbers are group dances and will appear chaotic or unprofessional when dancers are forced to improvise at the last minute due to missing members. Not only does this project a poor image of our school, but is also unfair to the dancers who followed through on their commitment to attend.

Dancers arriving late to a scheduled performance, or arriving after the other dancers have finished a rehearsal will not be permitted to dance in the show. Any dancers arriving after the rehearsal of a dance will not be permitted to dance in that particular number at the show. **NO EXCEPTIONS.** Dancers who are repeatedly late, or cancel at the last minute may not be asked to participate in future performances.

Dancers are expected to arrive at the venue in **FULL HAIR AND MAKE UP.** Costumes and shoes can be put on after arrival but please avoid unnecessary delay by having hair and make-up finished before leaving the house.

## STORM CLOSURE

If it becomes necessary to cancel classes due to weather conditions, they will not be rescheduled. Students may request to attend a make-up class if an appropriate level is available.

If more than three classes are cancelled due to weather, extra classes will be scheduled at no extra charge to the students. Please listen to local radio stations for snow cancellations.

You will be notified of any cancellations by email as soon as possible. Cancellations will also be posted on our social media.

## CLASS CONDUCT

- **Cell phones or other electronic devices are not permitted** with the exception of use for music with approval for use by the instructor.
- No eating or chewing gum. Dancers attending multiple classes or classes longer than 1 hour may eat during designated breaks.
- Water only. No pop, sugary, caffeinated or energy drinks. (Unless required medically)
- No running, yelling or screaming.
- Please start warming up as soon as you arrive.
- Be respectful of your instructors and fellow students. This includes not interrupting during classes, not being disruptive, and not talking while the instructor is speaking.
- With the exception of designated breaks, students should be working on their dancing at all times.

## ANTI- BULLYING/ABUSE STATEMENT

Bullying, abuse and unkindness, whether physical or emotional, are entirely unacceptable at MJP Academy of Irish Dance. It conflicts sharply with the school's principles and will always be treated seriously.

Bullying or abuse is behavior by an individual or a group, repeated over time, which intentionally hurts another individual or group, either physically or emotionally. Bullying and abuse can take many forms including via text messages or the internet.

If you feel that you or someone else is being bullied or abused, please do not hesitate to come forward and contact Joelle Anderson.

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## DISCIPLINE POLICY

The goal of MJP Academy is to make dance class a fun, positive learning experience. We 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, and deserve to be treated.

In a situation where a dancer's behavior or conduct is not appropriate, discipline will be enforced that is appropriate to the age and development level of the dancer involved. Younger dancers may be asked to sit down for a short time out, older students will be given a warning and then may be asked to leave the studio for the remainder of the class. If a student continues to be disruptive, for all age groups, parental involvement will be requested.

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

If parental involvement is requested, discipline will progress as follows:

**1st Offence-** Parent(s) notified as soon as possible and the student will be required to provide a verbal apology to the classmate(s) and/or instructor in order to return to class.

**2nd Offence-** Parent(s) notified and the student will receive a 2-week suspension from class and dance activities.

**3rd Offence-** Parent(s) notified and the student will be dismissed permanently from the studio.

## CONDUCT AT THE FEIS & EVENTS

Our behavior at a feis or show (parents, teachers and students) is a reflection on our school, especially when dancers are wearing the MJP costume. At MJP, we value sportsmanlike behavior; Please do not speak negatively of any dancers, adjudicators, teachers or other schools. You never know if someone's family member or teacher is sitting right behind or in front of you so, always speak as if they are! Please refrain from making negative comments about our own dancers and school, as well as other dancers and schools, when attending any feiseanna or event. If you have a valid complaint, please bring it to Miss Jelle or another teacher so that it can become constructive criticism.

Feel free to speak positively about MJP! Be careful not to put down any other schools in the process. You could speak positively about them as well!

Dancers attending a feis or a dance performance are expected to be **properly attired**. A sports bra and bloomers are not acceptable for a public event. Although the Irish dance community is a small one, competitions and shows are public events so please be weary of who might be in attendance. Proper attire when not wearing your costume can consist of sweatpants or shorts and team jackets or hoodies. Being properly dressed helps to represent yourself and your school in a professional manner.

### PARENT QUICK TIP

While it can be tempting to tell your dancer to go and get first place as a pep talk, please resist. If the competition becomes all about achieving results, your dancer might equate results to personal self-worth.

**Results are something your dancer has no control over.** So if the competition becomes about winning first or if they are pressured to achieve results then your dancer can perform poorly. We cannot control how the other dancers will perform or which dancer the judge will like best. The only thing your dancer can control is how they dance. So, if your dancer focuses on dancing the best they can and stays focused on having fun and completing a strong performance, your dancer will perform better and will have a more positive experience.

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## AT HOME PRACTICE

MJP Academy students are encouraged to practice at home as often as possible. Even a few minutes each day can contribute to the noticeable improvement of both new and experienced dancers. Don't forget to use your dance journals. Our website's "member's only" section includes a number of at home practice resources to help your child with this task.

As parents are sometimes unclear of their role in assisting with at home practice, we ask that you help your child find the time and space to practice and leave the rest up to them. If your child is young, you can read their journal notes aloud for them, but please do not try to coach or teach your child as far as steps and technique are concerned, as this can un-train things we have been working with your child to do and can confuse them. As well, coaching your child runs the risk of your dancer equating how they perform with how you feel about them as a person. This will only serve to put more pressure and stress on your child. Teaching your child to dance is the teacher's job. We are professionals and will do our very best to ensure your child is prepared mentally and physically for the next class, performance or feis.

## PRACTICE MUSIC

Since timing is the most important thing when a dancer is performing, it is important that dancers have Irish dance music at home to practice with. The more time our dancers spend practicing counting and dancing to their music, the better dancers they will become. We have links to some of our favorite artists on the "Members only" page of the MJP website.

***Feis the App*** and ***Beat-Irish Dance Feis Music App*** are two specifically Irish dance music apps offering practice music for dancers at all levels. Beginner music is free on both apps. Music for higher levels requires monthly subscriptions. Both are available for download on the App Store and the Google Play Store.

## PRACTICE VIDEOS

Our YouTube channel ([MJP Academy](#)) contains **practice videos** where beginners can practice their dances along with us at different speeds, **how-to videos** for exercises and stretches and general dance tips and tricks. We also have videos of how to dance the **Traditional Sets**.

## PARENT VIEWING

MJP Academy classes are 'closed door' as our dancers are easily distracted by onlookers, especially our younger dancers. During late November, parents (and other fans!) are invited into class to watch some of the dance steps and skills that students have learned. Confirmed dates will be communicated via email and are on the calendar on the MJP website.

## MJPIDA (MJP IRISH DANCE ASSOCIATION)

MJPIDA is a registered non-profit society formed to provide fundraising and volunteer support for dancers of MJP Academy of Irish Dance. For example, MJPIDA provides subsidies that offset the cost of studio rental fees and workshop costs. In turn, this reduces tuition and workshop fees for dancers.

The business of the society is conducted by an elected Board, under the overall direction of members who meet bi-monthly from September to June. MJPIDA exists and operates separately from MJP Academy of Irish Dance. Meetings are open to everyone and are a great way to meet other members and have a say in MJPIDA operations.

With the exception of **TINY TOES**, parents/guardians of dancers and/or dancers who have reached age of majority are required to join and participate in the MJPIDA.

MJPIDA supports **all** MJP dancers and their families. For more details about MJPIDA, please contact them at [mjpida2007@gmail.com](mailto:mjpida2007@gmail.com) or read the MJPIDA Handbook.

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## IRISH DANCE COMPETITIONS (FEISEANNA)

Irish Dance competitions are called **FEISEANNA** (pronounced fesh-onna); one competition is a **FEIS** (fesh). Feis is a Gaelic word meaning “festival”. Feiseanna also hold music and art competitions as well.

Choosing to compete is a big commitment! While our classes are designed to prepare dancers for competition, at MJP competing is entirely optional. It is the choice of a dancer and their family whether they wish to do so. Please refer to the ‘Feis Guide’ located in the ‘Members Only’ section of the MJP website for more information on costumes, hair, makeup, day of the feis tips and many other things feis related!

In order to compete at any feis, a dancer must practice under and be registered through a teacher certified through the Irish Dancing Commission (An Coimisiún le Rincí Gaelacha), holding a T.C.R.G. credential.

## GRADE EXAMS

Grade exams are a great way for dancers to gain more experience onstage and receive feedback from an adjudicator without the pressure of a competition. If a dancer would like to be an Irish Dance teacher, they are required to have completed all of their grade exams (grades 1-12) in order to take their T.C.R.G. (Teaching Certificate of Irish Dance) exam.

These exams are offered a few times a year, often in conjunction with a feis. Grades 11 and 12 are only offered at national competitions. For more details on Grade Exams, you can visit the CLRG website: [CLRG Grade Exams](#) or see our grade exam guide on our website: [MJP Grade exam Guide](#)

## FEES & PAYMENT POLICIES

Fees for Irish Dance classes at MJP are per dancer and correspond with the number of class hours attended per week. Please see our “Class Fees” document on our website for details.

**WITHDRAWAL POLICY** Hopefully, you will remain with the studio for the full dance year, and then again annually, thereafter. However, should you find it necessary to withdraw, you must cancel your subscription AND notify the studio in writing prior to the 1st day of the month. Non-attendance is not considered proper notice. If you do not give written notice, your account will continue to be charged until formal notice has been received.

**REFUND POLICY** First month’s fees and June’s 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.

**NON-PAYMENT POLICY** Dancers with outstanding balances will not be allowed into class and will not be permitted back into the classroom until payment has been made for that dancer. This includes: insufficient funds, bounce backs, and card expirations. If you know before-hand that your monthly payment will not be processed correctly, **please let us know as soon as possible**. To update an expired credit card, log into your Acuity account.

**DELAYED PAYMENT OF FEES** Delayed payments will result in additional charges to your account. Any payment not received on time will be subject to a 10% surcharge. If after an additional two (2) weeks, payment has still not been made, an additional 10% fee will be attached to the new balance. Further delays will be charged at a weekly rate of 5%.

**NSF /CHARGEBACKS** \$25.00 will be charged for all NSFs or charge backs. After two NSF charges or charge backs in one dance year (September 1 to August 31), the remaining balance for the year must be paid in cash.

**CLASS CANCELTION** In a case of low enrollment, a class may need to be cancelled. Dancers from a cancelled class will be combined with another existing class. If a dancer cannot make any other class times, we will attempt to continue to run the class for the remainder of the existing month and fees will be refunded for the remainder of the year from the first day of the following month (excluding non-refundable June fees).

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