



## **Step by Step Guide to Educate Dance Studios About What the Research on Hypersexualization Shows**

Time and time again we hear from concerned parents, grandparents, dancers, educators and community leaders asking what they can do to raise education and awareness around the harmful effects of adult costumes, choreography and music for children. While many of you have probably seen children's dance that disturbs you, perhaps you didn't know what you could do about it. This Step by Step Guide to Educate Dance Studios focuses on providing a solution to this challenge with the hope that you'll join us in educating dance studio owners and instructors about the harm hypersexualized dance imposes on children.

Now, we want to empower you to make a change at your local level by sharing more about our resources. It's information that we have created to help you educate dance studios/owners about why the hypersexualization of young dancers is not a road to travel. You may think that a dance studio should know this information. However, many don't. They're caught up in the objectified cultural tide like many people are. Often, they seem oblivious to the issue. That's why the hypersexualization of young children is rampant in dance as well as a multitude of other arenas. Sometimes either parents or teachers think that this style of dance is appropriate. But it isn't. Actually, it's a trend that all of us need to be informed about and all of us on the DA:NCE Team need to share with others. So how do you go about the task of educating yourself and sharing research information with a dance studio owner? Follow this step by step process. It works.

## Step 1: Educate Yourself

First educate yourself on this topic. Here are some great resources:

- Watch our video, “[Healthy or Harmful Dance: What do the Experts Say?](#)”
- Read ‘[Recital Revelations: When it Comes to the Over-Sexualization of Young Girls, We Are the Problem](#)’
- Read the [APA report on the sexualization of girls](#)

Next, view the sample videos below highlighting choreography, music and costumes that hypersexualize children and demonstrate why education and awareness around this issue is critically needed. Note: This content may be unsuitable for some viewers.

- [Group dance video](#)
- [Solo dance video](#)

We all need to reflect on the following question: **Do these videos and others like it demonstrate a healthy view of both the art of dance AND what is good for young children?** The answer is no.

## Step 2: Start a Local Dance Petition

What is a local dance petition? It’s simply signatures from other people that want to stop the hypersexualization of children in dance. In addition to you, the signed names will show a dance studio owner that many people are concerned about this issue and want it changed. The last two pages of this document include petition pages you can print and use to collect signatures in your community.

On the next page, we outline some helpful tips for collecting signatures in your community and then how you can best present them to a local dance studio. Remember, change in the dance studio will not happen until parents and concerned adults like you demand it.

### Step 3: Collect Signatures and Meet with a Dance Studio Teacher

When collecting signatures, here are some ideas you can use to best leverage the petition in your community:

- Discuss the local petition with several other interested adults; try to involve at least two parents whose children attend a local dance studio. Make sure everyone reads the petition and the accompanying research outlined in Step 1 carefully. *Set a tone of respect and education as you pursue involving others in this petition. Reactive communication does not produce positive change.*
- Try to get at least five signatures before you present the petition to a dance studio owner. Call the owner and set up a specific appointment time to talk about this petition. Tell them that you want to meet with them to share a concern you have about the hypersexualization of children in dance *based on research*. Offer to share articles and videos on [danceawareness.com](http://danceawareness.com) ahead of time.
- If the dance studio owner does not have the time or the interest to read this material prior to the appointment, bring some printed material to the meeting. During the appointment time:
  - Start out the conversation with positive comments about the art of dance and appreciation for the dance studio that you are targeting.
  - Ask the studio owner if they have read the materials about hypersexualized dance that you are concerned about. If the answer is no, give them time to read them. If the answer is yes, ask them what they think about the articles and the research.
  - Engage in a personal conversation with them and ask if they would consider making sure that they do not allow children under 12 to present dances in adult costumes, music and choreography. Present the signed petition to them showing that others in the community support your effort. Refer them to the information on [danceawareness.com](http://danceawareness.com).
    - Whether or not they agree with your viewpoint, listen to what they have to say. If they are not sure about what you have communicated or if they articulate a negative response, *give them the time to reflect*. Pursue a follow up meeting to answer questions. Sometimes all someone needs is time and education to change their mind.

#### **Step 4: Letter to the Editor**

Contact your local newspaper and ask them to write an article about the hypersexualization of children in dance; include the petition, the research on this issue, and the [danceawareness.com](http://danceawareness.com) website so that others can be educated on this issue. Make sure that the local article directs the readers' attention to the dance studios that agree with the petition. If it is hard to get a response from a reporter, submit a letter to the editor sharing this information.

#### **Step 5: Let Us Know About Your Efforts**

We are a community and we want to know about what is happening in your city. Let us know by emailing Mary Bawden at [mary@soultosolechoreography.org](mailto:mary@soultosolechoreography.org). Sign up for the [Dance Newsletter](#) to receive free updates about the hypersexualization of children in dance. Together, we can make a difference! Let's put an end to the creation of adult, sexual choreography, lyrics and costumes for children under 12.

As a final thought, remember this: When dance educators use age-appropriate skills, the [research](#) shows that children's dance affects motor, brain and creative development with incredibly positive results.

## Dance studios: Stop adult, sexual choreography and costumes for children under 12



At an early age, young children are often being taught how to approach relationships and how to approach intimacy in the wrong way. The art of dance should not be used to divert young girls from healthy sexual development. We need to carefully evaluate the cultural choices that entice young children to be viewed as adults. We need to produce healthy boundaries in dance so that little girls are protected relationally. Then, when they experience the beauty of dance, they can move as young children, not as adults. Let's make a difference by signing this petition. Your signature can help us raise awareness and give a voice to end the sexualization of young girls through choreography and costumes.

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