

The A P P L E Principle (ballroom dance)

The scenario described below is not new to the ballroom industry. Many life changes, many conflicts, many failures have taken place over the years as financial “games” are constantly played between student and studio. Because money is involved and becomes more the focus than the quality of instruction or dancing, there are major challenges between adults, parents, studios, event organizers, and organizations. Our intent is to clarify the process and move forward in a positive light for all concerned.

I have asked **Linda Trieu & Gilad Dagan** if they would comment on recent experiences by answering the following questions of “The APPLE Principle.” Please respect their professionalism as they will not be disclosing individual names or studios of those involved whether past, current, or future. We are all hoping for positive resolution to aid families, adults, and students in their pursuit and performance of ballroom dance worldwide. We are also eager for dance professionals to know we recognize this is a career and income for them.

As in other lines of business, who is controlling the qualifications and education of those teaching? Whether a doctor, mechanic, or building contractor, we ask for credentials and experience, a line-item invoice, and honesty in the business transaction. Yes, ballroom is considered a leisure sport, but the reality is that a service is being provided, and as a customer, the student/parents deserve to know what they’re paying for.

Let’s listen to **Linda and Gilad (parents of Maya and Eden)**; see if you identify with any of their experiences:

Attitude – What is your attitude? That means parents/children, teenagers, or adults. Eager to know your actual talent level? What do you want and are you open for the discipline and work to get it?

Response -

Eden and Maya Dagan are currently dancing at pre-bronze and bronze beginner levels for International Latin individually. Although we are not professional dancers ourselves, we have been told by experts and

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professionals in the industry that both children have a tremendous amount of talent even at their young age. Maya has been dancing and competing since she was 3 years old and Eden just began in August of 2022 and is 7 years old. Eden's intent to dance is always to be able to support his sisters dance career and be able to provide her a partnership so that they can compete in the juvenile level of dance in both Latin and Standard. The children have begun training together in Latin and competing in Latin with the hope by end of 2023 they will be able to do all 10 dances and compete as 10 dance dancers. Eden and Maya train 5 days a week currently with a studio in Latin and independent instructors for Standard. Dance is their life as of current so Maya and Eden do enjoy going to their lessons every day and focused on preparing for their competitions.

Plans – Have you researched? Do you know the best instructors/studios to get you where you want to go?

Response -

I think research is really the core of the issue and why we are where we are today. We began our ballroom journey in June of 2021 when Maya was 2 years old at her dance school. The owner of the studio was a “ballroom dancer” according to what we were told. At the time we knew very little about ballroom other than to be spectators. We thought after a commercial competition in April of 2021 that maybe Maya could start some ballroom classes with her instructor to see if she would take to it. At the time she was only in baby tap and ballet. By October 2021 she was entered into her first local ballroom competition. Words like ProAm, Latin, Standard, Rhythm, or Smooth meant nothing to us at the time as we were completely unaware. We were just consumed as most parents or adults with the joy of watching their little baby dancing in cute heels and a pretty dress or in the glamour and class of the ballroom world.

Unfortunately, it took a better part of 20 or more months, over 12 competitions across the U.S., and over \$100,000 spent on instructors, privates, travel, competitions, dresses, and more to realize that we should have done much more research prior to beginning this journey. We would

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have made very different decisions if we were more knowledgeable at the time.

Today, we are more resolute as to what we want for our kids and what is realistic and the correct path we should be taking as a ballroom family. I believe that we expected far more instruction and advice from our then studio regarding this path regarding the level of involvement parents will go through to support a ballroom student. That scope ranges from our time to finances needed to be successful according to what our designated goals would be.

The studio was uneducated in the juvenile ballroom dance world. Based on a commercial ballroom franchise system the studio owner treats the children and their parents as if they were adult ProAm students ranging from training to pricing for competitions. The core of this system is based on adult entertainment and experience which is the conflict in this “Apple Principle”. Without tremendous details to everything that transpired in the past 20 months we have learned what the focus should be for our kids and are in the position now to remedy the issue.

We have aligned ourselves with amazing professionals in the industry who have helped guide us to many aspects of a potential professional ballroom career for both children. It is much clearer today the level of credentials our coaches should have as well as what the realistic cost and expense for juvenile ballroom training and competitions.

Purpose – Are the students and parents ready to commit, budget, and stay the course?

Response -

We very much wish we looked at this question prior to starting the ballroom journey. We would like to have had an idea of the time and money commitment a family has to make before we started this journey with Maya.

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At this point we have invested well over \$100,000 in the past 18-20 months; there is no going back for us now. We realize our children love to dance and have a special gift, but we need to find the right training to get them to the next level and really explore their talents.

Essential for us is to have the right instructors who are not only well trained in both Latin and Standard styles of dance but also able to guide us on how to navigate through the juvenile dance world with the right opportunities to be successful.

The ballroom world at first is very overwhelming and intimidating. There is so much information in all realms and to the novice or the parent to a dancer who is not from this world, it can prove to be difficult to navigate. Having the right instructors and support for any student, adult or child is essential to the success of any dancer. Having all the information be transparent and clear greatly affects not only the dance experience but the long-term success of any dancer. Ballroom can be a very fulfilling and glamorous world to be a part of. This holds true for adults and children, but this experience can go south very easily as the depth of information necessary and the transparency of people in the industry is not always prevalent.

Learn – Is everyone involved in the plan ready to keep up with current education and development in the ballroom industry?

Response -

We are very comfortable with our current training plan for International Standard and Latin. Today we are looking at credentials and joint long-term goals from our instructors to be essential in the dance plan.

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Express – Do you respect and trust each other (students, parents, partners, instructors and studio managers)? Is your communication an expression of joy or burden, focus or fight, fact or fluff?

Response -

We are currently gaining ground in this area. As we outlined previously the experience or journey has been long and hard but we definitely feel we are at a much better place with our new trainers in regards to the training for the kids. I cannot say that this was always the case and because we are talking about children trust is so much more crucial because it is so delicate. I would say that once upon a time the trust was definitely not there and communication was toxic. There have been moments where we wanted to give up feeling defeated by what was happening in communication and the level of training for the money.

We hope that this will help parents and adult students really think truly and hard about how much research and work they need to invest in before beginning this journey as it can greatly affect the dance experience in a very negative way. Although there are many issues with our previous dance studio we are beyond thankful we started somewhere and maybe we would have not learned so much if all of this didn't happen in this fashion. We definitely feel that with our knowledge today we won't make the same mistakes and will always be much more cautious about all information we receive regarding dance.

Ballroom dancing is rewarding and fun! So many receive pleasure from it whether observing, social dancing, performing or competing. And after a long hard lesson, instructing is at peak satisfaction when the light comes on and the student finally gets it! Let's do everything within our power to keep this positive energy flowing . . .

Note: For everyday practical budgeting, please see the attached note with charts to use if you consider helpful.

The Cycle of Dance

Do you have a dance plan? If you have just started your dance experience you trust your instructor and studio to provide some direction for your selection of dance types, participation in social or show experiences, and your instruction. As an amateur couple you respect your partner's preference or skill and choose the primary dance styles to pursue. As a professional couple you do the same. As a pro-am partnership the professional tends to take the lead, but respect needs to be expressed to the amateur student (and/or parents) since they are providing monetary backing for the plan to occur. In the whole scheme of existence there is a life cycle. There is one in dance, too. It is a journey with possible detours and change of direction. You think you know where you want to go and choose your dances. You begin to build a foundation, identify your preferences and skills, experience and learn by your mistakes, then continue to mature and grow as you cycle through the process again and again. The concern is that with the excitement and emotional intensity of the dancing, students tend to forget that the money is a driving force to keep the cycle in motion and moving forward.

To studio directors, instructors, and coaches:

1. Success is measured in time and repetition. If you want the student to return and be a happy customer with continuous financial investment, you need to be honest regarding cost for lessons and events.
2. Teach them about long range planning in the dance community detailing options about a) what is available, b) what it will cost, and c) what is best for them relative to budget and skill.

To the student (and parents), amateur, and professional:

1. Know your objectives, know your budget, and know where you want your cycle to travel. If for a year, for 5 years, or for a career, plan accordingly.
2. Be **honest** with yourself; get **trusted** input from an experienced professional regarding your skills and the best options in or outside your area.

Attached is a working chart which has been useful and effective to me over 25 years of dance. Students and Professionals, remember: Honesty is the best policy. The hidden eventually comes to light, causing interruption or destruction in the cycle. Keep the path clear and moving in a positive direction.

May your dance cycle be a happy and continuous one!

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Cycle of Dance Charts

Item	My Cost	Instructor Cost	Item Total	Due
Lessons (how many?) studio instructor				
Special coaching (external instructor)				
Dancewear (tux, suit, gown, shoes)				
Accessories (tie, hat, gloves, jewelry)				
Hair & Make-up				
Instructor's Fee				
Instructor's Hotel, Travel cost, Food, Tips				
Event Registration				
Heats (# entered and rate of each)				
Challenges, Scholarships, Show dances				
Student Hotel				
Student Food				
Travel (car, air, etc.)				
Tips and Miscellaneous				
Subtotals	\$	\$	\$	
		Grand Total	\$	

Other Events to be Considered for Year _____: Local, Regional, National			
Event	Date	Location	Estimated Cost