

What does Berest Dance Center mean to students?

Annie Krivin. Graduating Senior 2026

Berest has been my eye of the hurricane and my quiet when I am surrounded by noise—not just the pressures and hardships of life, but the good parts, too. The overwhelmed mind of a teenager doesn't just contain the bad but also positive life experiences, the ever-flowing and always spiraling thoughts that can make it so hard to focus on the everyday. The studio is a total block from everything that crowds my mind, anything that makes me think too hard about my insecurities or something that didn't go the way I expected it to, like a complex conversation with a friend or a tough class.

Ailyn Coronel. Age 14

Ultimately, being a part of "Dance for Joy for the past several years has represented so much more than just financial aid or money. Because of the generous support of many, I have been able to dance alongside my second family at Berest. Words cannot truly express how thankful I am for this help, which has provided the stability I need to keep growing as both a dancer and as a person. I do not know who I would be without dancing, it truly is an enormous part of my life; from dreaming as a little girl to truly being able to live my dream as a dancer. Thank you so much for helping me be the dancer I have dreamed of for years.

Sofia Garcia-Age 10

I've taken ballet, hip-hop, and tap dancing at Berest, and each style has taught me something different. Ballet has helped me sharpen my skills in soccer, how to control the ball, focus on my passing, and movement without the ball. Tap dancing has taught me how to stand ready on my tippy toes to receive and control the soccer ball before making my next decision on the field. But my favorite is hip-hop because it connects all the movements of ballet, tap, along with hip-hop together to help me performed on the field and on stage. I love how my body moves freely in space to own my movements.

James Bushing -Age 15

Ever since I was a little kid, I loved music, dancing, and moving my body, so I was constantly running around the house trying new tricks. Seeing this energy and passion in me, and having the opportunity for me to take classes at my baba's studio, my mom enrolled my brother and I to be in the holiday show with our cousin. I absolutely loved these classes where I was able to move my body while also spending time with my brother and my cousin.

As I got a little bit older, the classes got more specialized, and I started learning both hip-hop and tap, but I always liked hip-hop more and eventually dropped tap to focus on hip-hop. During this time things also got harder and I started facing challenges, but thanks to my amazing friends and teachers, this did not hold me back and I gradually got over my fear of messing up or not getting everything on the first try. It was times like these when I struggled that really started to build my character and resilience.

A few years ago, both my brother and cousins dropped out of dance, and I was left to fend for myself when joining the intermediate hip-hop class. However, it was only then after joining a harder class that I could really start to push myself and fall in love with both hip-hop and performing. It was at this point where I started to get more fluid and have more style in my movements, and also when I started to look forward to Mondays and they became my favorite day of the week.

In the past two years, both hip-hop and the community at Berest became more than just a passion, but a home to me where I can freely express myself and know that everyone is inviting and accepting of me. My skills have truly leveled up and yet every time I get a new combination it always feels too fast initially, but the feeling of nailing those skills and adding swag to them is better every time I'm there. It is a positive feedback loop of drive and improvement. I get a difficult combination which drives me to practice it until I improve, and then I'm ready for a harder combo and the cycle repeats.

Over the years, Berest has had a huge impact on my life in so many ways. It has built my character, given me a great community where I can be inspired by and inspire others through dance, and given me something to look forward to to start off my week. Berest has had a huge impact on me, and I hope you can find something like that too.

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Christian Hill- Alumna

I think about Berest all of the time. Lance is truly one of, if not the most, inspiring humans I have ever been blessed to spend time around. His teachings and guidance have continued to propel me through my life. I too will never forget either of you and the impact that the studio had on my life. We are family!

What does Berest hope to teach from outside of training and performance skills

by Allison Berest - Licensed Mental Health Counselor and Faculty Member at the Berest Dance Center

Every dance school teaches the fundamentals of dance technique and the performance skills necessary to share the art of dance with an audience. What we hope and strive for as the

faculty and staff of The Berest Dance Center is that our students will come away from their dance education with skills and experience that reach far beyond the realms of performance art. Our desire and intention is that studying at Berest contributes to the healthy development of the whole person including sense of identity, emotion regulation, social skills, confidence, perseverance and resilience, to name a few.

In a world where outcome and appearance are often valued at the expense of mental and physical health, the Berest school operates from a foundation of developmentally appropriate and supportive concepts such as playfulness, creativity, cooperation among age groups, mutual respect between students and teachers, progress over perfection and connection over competition. and respect for the process of learning over immediate gratification. Berest seeks to provide a safe environment where young dancers can learn, make mistakes, increase in skill and increase in compassion for self and others along the way. These elements foster a respect for the process of learning; an essential concept in a society that capitalizes on the human desire for immediate satisfaction and the sense of failure that follows when one cannot achieve it.

On a personal note, as one who grew up in the Berest Dance Center, I can reflect on the ways in which my years in the studio continue to impact me as a wife, mother, and mental health professional. Although I did not pursue a dance career, my dance education is a gift that helps me be a present, embodied human being that can ground myself, be playful, connect to others and commune with God. For this gift, I am truly grateful!

What makes Berest Dance Center Different

by Lance Theobald Jr- dance, choreographer, actor and faculty member of Berest 'Dance Center for 15 years

What separates Berest Dance School from every other dance school is that it doesn't just teach dance, it builds character, through a family style atmosphere with world class teachers .

From the moment a child walks through the doors at three years old, they are taught respect: respect for themselves, respect for their teachers, respect for their fellow dancers, and, most importantly, respect for the art of dance itself.

Having worked at other studios, I can honestly say that this level of respect for both the teacher and the art form is rare. Whether it's ballet, jazz, modern, tap, African, or hip-hop, every style is treated with honor, purpose, and professionalism.

Another defining strength of Berest is its extraordinary faculty. It has assembled one of the most talented teaching staffs anywhere—artists who are not only exceptional performers and choreographers, but educators who genuinely love their craft and know how to bring out the very best in every dancer.

And it all starts with leadership. As Berest celebrates its 50th anniversary, Olga has poured her heart and soul into building a legacy that has transformed generations of dancers. Today, alongside, her daughter Heather Berest a former principal dancer at the Paul Taylor Dance Company and now educator—they continue that family tradition with the same passion and commitment.

Berest Dance School is more than a dance studio. It's a family. Its legacy, it's a culture where growth occurs. It's a place where young people don't just become outstanding dancers, they become disciplined, confident, respectful, and extraordinary human beings.

Lancelot

by Aleah Tishler- Alumni

Many people will say they grew up at home and/or school, I grew up at Berest. Dancing there every week (and for the last few years, every day of every week!) was one of the best parts of my childhood. No where else was I challenged so rewardingly while also given the freedom to be so creative and joyful :) And as proud as I was of my switch leaps and side straddles (thank you Floryn), when I think back on my time at Berest, the thing that sticks out the most is how it was one of the places I felt most like myself. <3 One of my favorite memories is assistant teaching Karen's middle school hip hop class. We always had so much fun and sharing my love for dance with the younger girls was so so special. Dance has always been a part of me and it always will be, and that's thanks to Berest. I'm even still dancing to this day! Just a few months ago my choreographer referred to me as a "firecracker", it made me tear up a bit because I earned that very same nickname at Berest. Knowing that spark has stayed with me all these years is really the best gift dance has given me. Much love to Olga, Heather, Karen, Sharon, Jess, Floryn, Lance and everyone in the Berest family <3 - Aleah