

## Teaching Andrea Bailey to dance

Andrea Bailey has been a student at Atelier Ballet since she was five years old. She is now ten, and has progressed tremendously since she began. We have made no special concessions for her, but have expected her to understand both the discipline and creativity of dancing — which she has done, along with her classmates. At the Atelier, we teach creative dance for young children, and then, classical ballet when they are more mature, hoping to help them realize their fullest human potential. Ballet is

a rich cultural experience, involving music, movement, drama and a sense of beauty that is highly individual while being shared by all. We have produced some professional dancers, and many (hopefully) more fulfilled young people, with a sense of aesthetic, discipline and the ability to express themselves physically. Hopefully also, they are all physically fit and equipped to maintain their level of fitness.

all of the above applies to any student of ballet. Andrea, along with her classmates

has improved, specifically  
and in order of her own progress:

- physical fitness + coordination
- musicality
- discipline at working with others
- sequential thinking, it remembering  
and executing a given order of steps
- self-expression, both in creating  
her own dances, and in playing  
a character in a group dance/  
drama presentation.

I feel, along with the  
other two Atleui instructors  
who have worked with Andee,  
that it is tremendously impor-  
tant that she be allowed to  
progress at her own rate, along

with the gentle guidance that any student requires. She has never, at any time, been a discipline problem, nor has she ever been unwilling to try a new step or sequence. In this, she <sup>surpasses</sup> ~~exceeds~~ ~~that~~ the majority of her classmates, and this has been the key to teaching her. Positive reinforcement and more positive reinforcement for a person who has never shown a sign of negativity is the only sensible approach.

Andrea will be ready to join a new level next year;

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This means that she will be joining her own age group. Her soft musculature may prevent her from attaining the much coveted "pointe" shoes for some time, but her progress to date has been such that the sky is the limit.

It is important however, for all parents to realize that ballet, like a musical instrument, reaches a certain level where it is supremely challenging for anybody with many moments of frustration and disappointment.

I hope to keep the challenge

within each student's capability and concentrate on what he or she can do. This is where parents are always terribly important — in being there to talk about frustrating difficulties which arise — and how to overcome them. Andrea has overcome many, as have ~~her~~ her fellow students.