

## What are the therapeutic benefits of Ballet For All Kids?

<b>Traits of Children with Special Needs</b>	<b>Benefits of Ballet For All Kids</b>
<p>Children with Special Needs tend to have problems with long chains of verbal information. Children with Special Needs may have issues with remembering sequences of information and staying focused on a task for any length of time.</p>	<p>Ballet For All Kids uses The Schlachte Method™ that is taught through a visual means and the sequences are repeated every single class. Ballet For All Kids is taught from a set curriculum that does not change. Once a child learns how to complete one movement, that movement is built upon to learn the next movement. The sequences are taught methodically and slowly thus behaviors mastered are built upon like adding links to chained repertoires. Overall there are benefits in sequential memory and recall, focus and staying on task, increased self-discipline, and extended visual, physical, and mental attention.</p>
<p>Brain circuits called mirror areas are normally activated when a person sees another person hurt or in pain. Mirror circuits are less active in some children with Special Needs (esp. Autism) when compared to neuro-typical people.</p>	<p>Studies have shown that Ballet dancers develop the “mirror system” in their brains through the repetition of ballet movements. The mirror system becomes so strong that an injured dancer can just look at a video of a ballet and be able to maintain their skill while injured. Taking ballet classes may enhance a part of the brain that needs development in children that have Special Needs.</p>

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<p>Children with Special Needs need to be taught what it is like to be in someone else’s shoes in a very concrete way. Teaching a person with Special Needs social graces is like coaching an actor for a play. Every step needs to be planned.</p>	<p>Ballets are based on the works of Shakespeare and classic myths and fairytales. Ballet dancers need to express emotions such as anger, fear, jealousy, joy, and sadness. Hence, ballet dancers are taught to express emotions through their bodies and facial expressions. In Ballet For All Kids, every interaction is choreographed and taught in the ballet classroom (ex. in the pre-ballet class – the first of the ballet classes – children are taught to act like an angry enchantress). Children in ballet class learn how to imitate and recognize facial expressions. The first step in basic emotional intelligence is recognition of the basic emotions and the differences in those emotions.</p>
<p>Children with Special Needs may have difficulty generalizing. So, children with Special Needs tend to learn better using visual task analysis by breaking down all the steps of an activity. Children with Special Needs need specific concrete steps to complete tasks. One of the most common and proven interventions for teaching children with Special Needs is through Discrete Trial Training.</p>	<p>All ballet movements are based on a set “vocabulary”. Each ballet movement is broken down into its discrete elements; so each dance/movement has a visual task analysis (ex., dancers are taught grand battements – which are kicks high into the air – by first learning every individual component of the entire movement). The Schlachte Method™ teaches all ballet technique using visual task analysis (through visual schedules and a DVD), each ballet movement is taught in the same way regardless of class and year taken. Ballet movements are always broken down into small concrete visual steps.</p>

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## Benefits of Ballet For All Kids

Vigorous exercise often helps children with special needs become more balanced – either lowering or increasing their energy levels.  
Vigorous aerobic exercise has been shown to reduce SIB and aggression in Children with Special Needs.

Ballet is physical exercise and exercises the entire body evenly. In each ballet class, there is a portion in which dancers practice allegro movements (brisk, lively, and fast movements). These movements are very vigorous but at the same time very fun for children to do. The Schlachte Method™ uses images based on Fairy Tales so many of our exercises the children are focusing on “pretending” to be the leprechaun or a Jack-in-the-box and do not realize how hard they are exercising.

It has been shown that sensory-based information is the most powerful sensation humans have. Sensory information is what the brain uses to naturally learn, as well as regulate. The most powerful input in terms of activating the brain is in movement and whole body involvement. Therefore, children with Special Needs learn best in settings where they are able to utilize their whole body in movement to learn a task.

Participating in ballet class, gives children the ability to activate their brain naturally through whole body movement. The whole body is what creates ballet. Every movement in ballet utilizes the student’s entire body (from their toes to their legs to their hips, torso, head, all the way to the tips of their fingers). The Schlachte Method™ ensures that the student is being taught through every means of learning: kinetically, visually, auditory, and verbally.

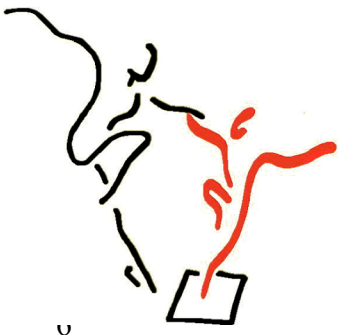
Children with Special Needs may need to see their hands and feet to know where they are – they have poor body awareness and proprioceptive skills.

Every ballet class utilizes the mirror as a main teaching tool. Children look at themselves throughout the class to adjust their movements or see where their bodies are in the space. Over time, the repetition of doing movement in front of the mirror strengthens the child’s body awareness. The Schlachte Method™ also utilizes squares on the floor so that the children can learn personal space boundaries and internalize that skill over time. There are overall benefits to hand-eye coordination, physical strength, and balance.

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<p>Children with Special Needs tend to think visually (photographically specific images). Children with Special Needs tend to excel at visual spatial skills and have problems learning things or skills that cannot be thought about in pictures.</p>	<p>Children must learn Ballet by watching ballet dancers' dance. No child can learn ballet by reading a book or being verbally told how to execute a move. Ballet dancers learn by watching others and themselves (via the mirror).</p>
<p>Children with Special Needs often need highly structured teaching. Set routines, times, and rituals help the child bring order to their chaotic inner world. The highly structured classroom can reduce fear in some children with Special Needs.</p>	<p>Ballet (as taught in class) is a very structured art form with very specific techniques and rules for each ballet movement. Each ballet class has a set curriculum that is followed for every single class. Even the general context of the class is ritualized (each class begins with putting on your ballet clothing/shoes, warming up, barre work, floor work, enchainement, etc.). Again, The Schlachte Method™ uses visual schedules and always does the class in sequence of the DVD so children understand the structure of the class and what is expected lessening anxiety and thus they are able to focus more on the actual learning of the craft.</p>
<p>Spatial words may have no meaning until shown in a visual context.</p>	<p>Ballet demonstrates through a visual means of movement through space. The Schlachte Method™ uses props and demonstration to show students how to move correctly through space. Thus, Ballet For All Kids benefits children's ability to abstractly process information and assists with motor planning and coordination.</p>

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<p>Children with Special Needs have a hard time with transitions they cannot visualize. Visual communication systems can be useful in teaching and informing individuals about what is planned and what is expected of them.</p>	<p>All ballet movements are based on a few basic movements. Ballet classes build upon these basic movements in a slow ritualized way. (ex., first learning to flex your feet and point them, before learning the basic tendu.) New movements are taught on the foundations already known to the student. The Schlachte Method™ gives the children a means through visual schedules and the DVD curriculum of what to expect and thus they can learn to plan and anticipate.</p>
<p>Children with Special Needs tend to respond very positively to music. Children’s musical/visual memories reside in the lower primary visual and auditory cortex that seems to be a part of the brain unaffected by certain developmental issues such as Autism.</p>	<p>Ballet and music go hand in hand. All ballet movement and mime is done to classical music. Music is the backbone to all ballet movement. The Schlachte Method™ has had all music composed specifically to assist the child to reap the full emotional and physical benefits of ballet.</p>
<p>Music has been a proven therapy to help children with Special Needs socially interact with others (i.e. music is playing and the child must pass the ball to other children in time to the music)</p>	<p>Ballet teaches children how to dance/work together, and touch each other in a way that will be less threatening to children due to the fact it all happens in a structured way to music. “Does it matter whether a child plays or walks rhythmically as long as he or she is having fun? Yes, indeed it <i>does</i> matter whether a child walks or plays rhythmically, can discriminate pitch and timbre variables, recognize a familiar melody and organize movement with rhythm. Music for 'connection' is only the tip of the iceberg. It is in the process of doing something <i>purposefully, accurately and in a variety of manners</i> that the intervention ultimately leads to the brain developing the capacity to repattern and retain new sensory information perpetuating functional adaptation.” (Berger, Dorita S., <u>Music Therapy, Sensory Integration and the Autistic Child</u>, 2002, pp. 131-32).</p>

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<p>In Children with Special Needs, music increases attention span, motivation and emotional engagement during activities involving music. Teaching dance to music may help create organizational structures that can be used to build language.</p>	<p>Again, all ballet is done to music. In ballet classes the children are taught how to interpret the music through rhythm and emotionality. In class, the exercises slowly build from very short pieces of music/movement to much larger ones that gradually increase the length of the child's attention span.</p>
<p>Children with Special Needs can pick up nuances in music that they cannot in other forms (i.e. children with Special Needs can tell which music is "happy/sad" but they cannot distinguish between facial expressions of "happy/sad").</p>	<p>Ballet is an interpretation of music. Ballet may tell a story, express a mood, or simply reflect the music. Ballet dancers are taught from the very first class how to interpret the mood of the music and/or story of that music. Children will be taught how to physically affect certain emotions through facial/body mime.</p>
<p>Many children with Special Needs are excluded from participating in the arts due to their disabilities and thus cannot reap the social and emotional benefits of a classical dance education.</p>	<p>Ballet For All Kids offers children the experience of a classical dance education. Ballet For All Kids runs all the classes like traditional dance classes – we just offer extra support through visual schedules, DVD, behavior modification, props, and other cues. Thus the children reap the benefits of improvements to their self-confidence and self-esteem by learning a culturally valuable skill. By participating in dance classes, not only does the child gain the immediate benefits of dance but facilitates potentially new opportunities for socialization and connection within the community.</p>



Ballet For All Kids

805-524-5503

[www.balletforallkids.com](http://www.balletforallkids.com)