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**25 Years on the ‘R.O.A.D.’:
Kansas City Ballet School’s
REACH OUT AND DANCE
Community Education Program Celebrates
a Quarter Century of Joy and Outreach—
Impacting Thousands**



Kansas City, MO. (Jan. 21, 2026) — Kansas City Ballet today announced a celebration of a quarter century of distinctive community engagement with the launch of the 2025-26 season’s **Reach Out And Dance Program (R.O.A.D.)**. Launched in 2000, the nationally recognized **R.O.A.D. Residency** program is taught by Kansas City Ballet School teaching artists and offered to third and fourth grade elementary school children during the academic year.

The R.O.A.D. Residency program teaches vibrant, creative classes in schools in the greater Kansas City bi-state area. In each school, Kansas City Ballet School staff members—an instructor and accompanist—teach engaging, age-specific movement classes in 50-minute sessions. R.O.A.D instructors work in partnership with classroom, music, art, and physical education instructors engaging students in STEAM-based learning through movement, integrating concepts of science, technology, engineering, arts, and mathematics into the creative process. At the close of each 12- or 24-week residency, students share an in-class demonstration for the school community and participating families during a R.O.A.D. Rally.

Educators from our partnership schools applaud the enduring impact of the R.O.A.D program. Principal Schneider of Gladstone Elementary shares “Our third graders learn so much: ROAD increases spatial awareness, auditory response, musical expressions, team spirit, physical exercise, body coordination, self-awareness, and mindfulness to name only a few.”

The program is popular among teachers and principals due to its diverse creative development, physical engagement and strategic educational outcomes. Among teachers surveyed after the completion of a R.O.A.D semester: 90% reported improvement in Math, 85% reported improvement in Language Arts, 85% reported improvement in Social Studies, 100% reported improvement in Music, and 100% reported improvement in Physical Education.



In addition to academic success, the R.O.A.D. program is committed to awakening students to their full potential, developing life skills including teamwork, respect, self-confidence, concentration, and a desire to achieve. Through the integrated units combining dance and academics, students participate in activities that give them the opportunity to work with their peers as well as perform for peers, teachers, faculty, and family.

Students deeply appreciate the program. Lance, a fifth grade student who joined Kansas City Ballet School through the R.O.A.D. Residency at his school, Turner Elementary, shares “I felt like I mattered,” he says. “Like I was part of something bigger.”



Teachers were asked whether specific areas of their students' conduct and behavior had benefited from the R.O.A.D. curriculum. The majority reported improvements, including concentration (96%), listening skills (90%), motivation to do their best (96%), respect for themselves and others (94%), teamwork skills (98%), and grades (78%).

Kansas City Ballet Artistic Director Devon Carney stated: "The Reach Out And Dance program is a heart-warming and highly effective community realization of the Kansas City Ballet's mission: To Inspire and Engage Through the Beauty, Power & Passion of Dance, and our vision: Outstanding Dance Experiences Accessible to All. The 25th anniversary of this remarkable program is worthy of celebration and reflection: Just imagine the thousands of students across our region who have been positively impacted by the R.O.A.D. program across the years. We look forward to a bright future of extending our impact."

This commitment to accessibility is reflected in the diversity of our instructors and accompanists who come from many backgrounds of training and life experiences. He continued: "Additionally, a well-developed and time-tested program like R.O.A.D. presents a meaningful fundraising opportunity, and we are eager to use our 25th anniversary to remind funders of the continuing efficacy of this vital program. With the right support, we can provide the boost needed to expand R.O.A.D.'s reach, bringing it to more schools and inspiring more students through the power of dance."

Funding is sought from diverse sources. John Fiske Elementary School in Kansas City, KS, for example, has been able to sustain its R.O.A.D. Residency program for 18 years through the support of a single, highly dedicated donor. That single donor joins a diverse group of R.O.A.D funders, including the Hall Family Foundation and H&R Block Foundation locally to the National Endowment for the Arts, among many others.



The R.O.A.D program involves diverse groups of children in dance who would not regularly have the opportunity for involvement. R.O.A.D. strengthens the school's curriculum by building self-discipline, focus, and motivation, skills that positively impact academic performance. Through this active involvement, the dance experience requires students to apply themselves to a task that involves both mental and physical challenges.

From R.O.A.D. to *The Nutcracker*

Last year, **Ahleah** (pictured right), a student who came to Kansas City Ballet School through the R.O.A.D. Residency program, successfully auditioned for a role in *The Nutcracker*, as many of the students who continue with the Academy get the opportunity to audition in Kansas City Ballet productions.

Hearing impaired since birth, Ahleah discovered her passion for ballet when a R.O.A.D. Residency program came to her school in 2022.

She quickly fell in love with the art form and is now a student at the Kansas City Ballet School. She performed in the 2024 production of *The Nutcracker* on stage at the Kauffman Center for the Performing Arts, as a baby mouse in Act 1 and a cherub in Act 2.



Media

Visit kcballet.org for a downloadable media kit about Kansas City Ballet. High-res rehearsal and past production photos and more can be found [here](#).

Social Media

Kansas City Ballet's website is mobile and ticket-purchase friendly. Join the KC Ballet [Facebook page](#), follow us at [@kc.ballet on Instagram](#), [LinkedIn at @kansas-city-ballet](#), and [TikTok at @kansascityballet](#). Watch videos at youtube.com/kansascityballet. Be sure to check out our blog at kcballet.org/blog.

About Kansas City Ballet

MISSION: To Inspire and Engage Through the Beauty, Power & Passion of Dance

VISION: Outstanding Dance Experiences Accessible to All

Founded in 1957, Kansas City Ballet is a 30+ member professional ballet company under the direction of Artistic Director Devon Carney and Executive Director David Gray. Kansas City Ballet is a resident company at the world-class Kauffman Center for the Performing Arts, and each season features an eclectic repertory including traditional classics and exciting contemporary dances. Our professional company, the second company (comprised of KCB II and Trainees), professional dance school, and partnership programs, seek to nurture and develop our artists, audiences, and students in the values inherent in the creativity, diversity, and joy of dance.

Kansas City Ballet reaches more than 20,000 students and adults each year through our many community partnerships and education programs for all ages. The Kansas City Ballet School offers professional dance training for the career-minded student as well as for those simply seeking a healthy lifestyle to over 2,000 students each year in two locations: the Todd Bolender Center for Dance & Creativity in downtown and our South Campus at Meadowbrook in Prairie Village, KS.

Visit kcballet.org for more info.

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