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Ballet & Books

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Mentee Spotlight



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You know that feeling when you're approaching a yellow light, and you're not sure whether you're close enough to speed through it or far enough to stop, and whichever you pick, you're pretty sure you were wrong? That's exactly how I feel as a parent all the time.

This is Gemma. She is our tenth and youngest kid. We are a foster/adoptive family and Gemma is our very first child without any identifiable developmental, emotional or learning disabilities. You'd think this might make things simpler, but in fact, it means we simply have no idea what to do with her. From the very beginning of her life, I've been filled with anxiety about failing her. What if she doesn't have access to the opportunities she needs to be successful? What if I miss out on connecting her to the thing she's meant to do in life?

This is where Ballet and Books comes in. I signed Gemma up at age 3 on a whim. It was free, and it was taking place at Southside Community Center, a local organization with a long, proud history of supporting black and brown children and families. Even if dance didn't turn out to be her thing, I figured, it can't hurt.

It turns out that dance is exactly Gemma's thing. Within her first few months of Ballet and Books, Gemma went from clinging to me at drop off to performing on a full professional stage in front of hundreds of people. She dances all the time—at home, in the store, at school. Her entire body and face lights up when she hears music.

Ballet and Books gave Gemma the chance to discover her passion in the most supportive way possible—in the company of amazing teachers and mentors and, most importantly, surrounded by other beautiful brown girls who are all discovering the magic of dance and reading together.

We are so proud and grateful to be a Ballet & Books family.

