

SAVE SQUARE DANCING

The Social Square Dancing Program (SSD) - by Callers Jerry Story & Deborah Carroll-Jones

For Square Dancing to ever thrive again, we have three known FACTS that must be addressed:

1. Having only ONE class each year does not work very well anymore.
2. Plain Vanilla Standard Application to EVERY Level does not work.
3. Compared to the rest of the world, American dancers are a bit sloppy.

Clubs, Dancers, Dancer Associations and Callers ALL want the same thing! **We all want this very special activity to continue, to grow and to thrive.** We are all on the same side and we must work together if we are going to bear witness to this goal. That means things as we have always known them or done them HAVE TO change.

FACT #1 - Having only ONE class a year.

If today's people are having fun they certainly do not want to wait an entire year to invite their friends! THIS MUST CHANGE!

Today's people will bring us plenty of dancers with 2 or 3 starts each year. Square Dancing has always been built strong by "friends bring friends bring friends". Our current structure makes it difficult for new dancers to excite their friends about taking lessons a whole year later. It just takes too long. SSD 50 Calls Standard Application (SA) with 2 or 3 starts each year is much more suited for success. This will reinstate our most powerful marketing tool – "friends bring friends".

FACT #2 - Plain Vanilla Standard Application to EVERY Level does not work.

This takes the integrity out of the Programs and destroys the recruitment base ruining our best marketing tool "friends bring friends". Without a little variety or maybe some symmetry, it makes it way too easy to move on up and leave your friends behind even when they're really not ready to move on themselves.

Instead, how about just getting the new dancers out of teach mode and into DANCE mode for awhile? This is what we need! SSD accomplishes this goal. Without this educational threshold creates a rush to the next program. When NEW dancers are rushing to the next program the last thing on their mind is bringing in new people!!

So, how do we start to reverse our current (unintentionally) destructive trend, before it's past the point of no return, and before our clubs are completely dead?

Answer: Clubs make a two or three-year pledge to use current class resources and help create 50-Call Standard Application SSD Clubs within their existing clubs. No Plus classes until they have made SSD a success. If Monday night is the club's class night, turn it into an EVERY-Monday-night-never-stop-year-round SSD Multiple Classes/Club night. This is the Most Important Part of the every other Saturday Night Plus Club!

There IS something in it for the Plus clubs in due time. This requires PATIENCE as well as FORESIGHT! Fight the temptation to move new dancers to Plus too soon. Just Let Them DANCE!

FACT #3 - Sloppy dancers.

After making SSD successful (might take 2 or 3 years) then and only then does the club offer a ONE start each year for Plus Class. This 9 to 12 month class would include the rest of the Basic and Mainstream calls, maybe a little variety and symmetry training and of course the Plus calls.

NOW, from this point forward, EVERY YEAR thereafter, new dancers will begin trickling into Plus clubs! Retention rate will be near 100%.

Mainstream dancers will have choices. They either learn the rest of the Plus calls or be happy DANCING SSD and helping build the club strong.

The neatest thing is: these new dancers will know how to dance!!! We all know the effort it takes to keep new dancers' confidence up as they learn where and how to maneuver. By giving them MORE TIME to learn, dance and assimilate the 50 calls, they naturally become more proficient.

Part of our new wave criteria would be to EMPHASIZE Team Dancing, doing the same steps and flourishes all together. Grand Square will eventually be 32 steps once again!! We want smooth flowing, well timed choreography with no more "stop and go" dancing. It's all about the FLOW! CALLERLAB and the new SSD Committee will be there every step of the way helping callers achieve these goals.

The greatest thing will be the high rate of retention due to this new structure. It would be entirely probable for the retention rate for existing clubs to shoot up to nearly 100%. The last great benefit is the "user friendly," positive marketing transfer we will create. Square Dancing will now be available and served in the doses today's people like it served to them, instead of in the doses that we have insisted it be served to them.

Many may be wondering if we have any proof that this new system will work in practice. It is! In little old Fairfield, Iowa - Jerry Story's home town. There are others in Wisconsin, Chicago, Western PA, Dallas Tx, as well as in several other states, who are not afraid to step out of the OLD and into the NEW, and are successfully building SSD Clubs!

It has even taken root in California - a place where 99% Plus groups exist. Ask the world famous Kip Garvey. The Jackson Claim Jumpers are really jumping. This program will help areas like California rebuild the activity the correct way for a sustainable and Social Square Dancing future.

The SSD Teaching Guide is out and has some suggested flow modules consisting of variety and symmetry. More information will be forthcoming on both these techniques. Also the SSD FAQ document will be coming soon and its full of valuable information.

Hear this interesting statistic: **after six 12 week rotations in Fairfield, they had built their SSD group to nearly 100 new dancers!** Out of this group of nearly 100, and after dancing SSD for another year, 30 chose to go on to Plus.

The 70 that did not choose to go on, but rather stay where they are for now, plan to bring their friends to the next NEW CLASS starting in just a few short weeks. It all just makes too much sense. These 70 new dancers who chose not to go on, would have been our current structure's DISCARDS! These would be the dancers who today we throw away. Ironically, this same 70% figure is very close to our average national dropout rate. **There are brighter days ahead for our wonderful activity.**

Some have mentioned that it takes 2 nights a week to make this initiative work and that they just don't have the time. We say, please re-evaluate your current situation and try again to join us. In other words: if need be, give up that one square in your A group or fold up that dying Plus club with 5 couples in it, and join our winning team. It only takes ONE night a week to operate a SSD Program. One & 1/2 or 2 hours class followed by one & 1/2 or 2 hours SSD Club Dance.

Generally speaking today, to go through to Mainstream/Plus, requires 2 nights a week - club on one night, class on the other. SSD likes class and club on the same night, once a week. Then SSD focuses on FUN & FELLOWSHIP!

We hope your priorities lead to the CALLERLAB APPROVED Social Square Dance Initiative. Dancers now have choices! They can dance 50 calls Standard Application and never know they are not dancing Mainstream. Or, they can help the SSD program become a huge success to insure their Plus club stays alive and well.

We like options with no hurry to go to Plus! Patience is a virtue! If clubs have patience, we can use their help and they will reap the benefit.

Contact CALLERLAB at callerlab@aol.com and join the SSD Committee to keep up with this exciting new venture. The basic goal: adhere to the SSD suggestion, "**Make SSD successful before even thinking about Plus**". Simple, really, and IT WORKS by resetting the activity on a sustainable path. It's a brand new day!!