

WEST BLOOMFIELD HIGH SCHOOL MARCHING BAND HANDBOOK



Prepared by
Band Boosters Association of West Bloomfield
wbbands.info

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Welcome from the Director

Welcome to the West Bloomfield High School Marching Band program. The West Bloomfield High School Marching Band has a long and proud history of providing students with a wonderful opportunity to enrich their lives through participation in this activity. As you may know, we have had several recent accomplishments. The West Bloomfield Marching Band has qualified for MCBA Flight I State Finals for the last 23 years in a row, as well winning the Flight I State Championship in 2008. The band has also performed at the Bands of America (BOA) Grand National Championship and Regional Championships. We are very proud of this and we hope our past achievements will lead us to continued and even greater success.

We are a competitive marching band, which means we travel around the state, and sometimes out of state, during the fall to compete at various invitational competitions. The season culminates at Lucia Oil Stadium in Indianapolis for the Bands of American Grand National Championships.

We know the prospect of joining the marching band may be intimidating, BUT it has been our experience that while this is a demanding activity and schedule, the rewards are tremendous. Through the fantastic support of the Band Booster Association of West Bloomfield (BBAWB), we boast a large and highly qualified instructional staff. We have between 8 and 15 instructors at every rehearsal and hire a minimum of one instructor for every section of the band during August. We also have a support team of volunteer parents who travel with us to chaperone the cabins at band camp and all competitions throughout the season. This allows us to achieve a great deal of individual attention and keep all activities well supervised.

During August, we rehearse most weekdays from 9am-4pm at WBHS and then go to band camp at Camp Tamarack (located near Ortonville, MI). In the fall, we rehearse every Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday from 3:30-6:30pm. This year the band also performs at four home football games, which usually take place Friday evenings. Most Saturdays during the fall are spent rehearsing or competing. A detailed rehearsal and performance schedule is available on the "Calendar" page of the BBAWB website (wbbands.info).

Being involved in the marching band also makes the transition to high school easier. Our upperclassmen pride themselves on creating a safe and supportive environment throughout this new experience. They go out of their way to make new students feel at ease and to ensure they have ample opportunity to be successful in the band.

It is the relationships made between the members of the band that are most powerful, and what keeps students, parents, and staff coming back season after season. Being in the marching band gives you an instant 90 friends who all believe in you and your contribution to our "family".

Thank you for your continued interest and support of the music program in West Bloomfield. We believe the benefits of membership in the band or color guard far exceed the skills required to play an instrument or spin a flag. Please feel free to contact me at WBHS to discuss our program in detail. I am looking forward to working with your child.

Chad Mielens

West Bloomfield High School
Directors of Bands
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About This Handbook

Most parents have no clue what is involved with a competitive marching band until their child becomes involved. How shows are developed, how bands compete and how parents are involved in all of this is a complete mystery. This handbook contains information that we hope will answer many of the questions you may have regarding Marching Band over the course of the season.

Marching Band

Many students hold the opinion that of all of our ensembles, Marching Band is the most "fun." It is also the singular opportunity in our department for a student at any ability level to perform with the best students in the program. Marching band is intended for all high school students who have experience on wind or percussion instruments and are enrolled in a band class. Students who do not play an instrument but wish to pursue dance and movement may become a member of the Color Guard.

Concurrent enrollment in one of concert ensembles is highly recommended but can be waived with director approval and previous instrumental experience is helpful, however a student can be taught to play. This band will perform at all home football games, the Homecoming parade, Memorial Day parade, and several marching band competitions.

Color Guard

Any student who wants to march, spin a flag and dance. Some experience in dance is helpful but not required. Color Guard is a visual ensemble which plays an integral part of the Marching Band shows. It is a combination of flag spinning maneuvers, rifle spinning, sabre spinning, marching and dancing to the marching band music.

The Band Boosters Association of West Bloomfield (BBAWB)

The Band Boosters Association of West Bloomfield (BBAWB) seeks to support, encourage, and assist in the development, organization, and operations of the many aspects of the band program in the West Bloomfield School District. The BBAWB is an independent 501(c)3 organization which works closely with the band department and school administration. Funds raised by BBAWB are used to support and enhance all West Bloomfield Middle and High School band programs. The band programs depend on the financial support provided by the BBAWB, which is a direct reflection of enthusiastic parent involvement and participation.

Parents, when your child is a part of any of the West Bloomfield bands, you are automatically a member of the BBAWB. There are no membership dues, just an open invitation for you to participate and help out in the support of the programs whenever you can. As the saying goes, "many hands make light work" and this is very true of the BBAWB. The more participation we have from parents and supporters, the easier it is for everyone AND the better the experience for our children. Success for a high-caliber program like ours depends on the active involvement of our band families. Many band parents find their involvement to be one of their most rewarding experiences while their children are in school. We invite you to check it out! *More information at wbbands.info/band-boosters/*

What We've Learned as Marching Band Parents

Marching Band is Different

It is different from any other activity that your student may have been involved with. It's a world unto itself, with its own language, rules and etiquette. As first-time Marching Band parents, we had no idea what to expect. Now as "veteran" band parents, we have a few suggestions and pointers to pass on to other parents.

Attend Competitions and Home Football Games

Watch the shows and marvel at the improvement as the season progresses. Your students will appreciate the fact that you take the time to come to the events (whether they admit it or not). You will also discover how many thousands of other students and parents are involved in this thing called Competitive Marching Band.

Networking

It will make your life much easier if you make ride sharing arrangements for practices and carpooling for competitions

Attend the monthly BBAWB Parent Meetings

If you come to meetings, you will discover things that your student has never mentioned (like upcoming fundraisers that help you pay for camp and trips). The Directors usually give status reports at each meeting. You will also find out about what is happening with the rest of the West Bloomfield High School Band Department. *More information at wbbands.info/band-boosters/bbawb-meetings/.*

Email – Your Next Best Friend

Make sure your child turns in their Marching Band Roster form and make sure it includes your email address. Each year, the Marching Band compiles a Band email list which is used to send out all kinds of information on the Marching Band including: Details about each competition, fundraiser information, copies of all flyers the Directors give the students (most of which never seem to make it home) and more.

When in Doubt, Check the Website

The BBAWB posts a lot of valuable marching band information on its website (www.wbbands.info) including: dates, times and maps for all competitions; downloadable copies of important forms and documents, fund-raising information, up-to-date interactive calendar, and more.

CHARMS

The BBAWB and the directors are now utilizing CHARMS Office Assistant. This is a web based data system which tracks all your students important information i.e. address, phone number parent information, uniform assigned, and student account balances. You should have already been sent information on how to access your account but if you didn't the information is available on our website. Please check in often and make necessary changes as quickly as possible. *More information at charmsoffice.com or wbbands.info (click the blue "Charms" box on front page)*

Practices

Rule Number One: BE EARLY!

“To be early is to be on time...To be on time is to be late...To be late is a sin”!

15 Minute Rule

If a practice starts at 9:00 a.m., students should be there at 8:45 a.m. If you drop your student off at 9:00 a.m., he/she will not reach the marching field with all required equipment until 9:15 a.m. Nothing frustrates the directors and instructors more than starting late. Some members may need to arrive more than 15 minutes early if they have an instrument or equipment that take more time to setup.

Water Bottles

Every student MUST bring a water bottle to all rehearsals. This is especially important on Saturday and late summer practices. These students work very hard and need to keep plenty of fluids in their body.

Perfect Attendance

Every single member of a competitive marching band is in the starting lineup, and contributes equally to the band’s success. Every member of the ensemble also relies on the member next to them to be able to clean their drill, balance their sound, get their flags in sync and much more. One absence has a ripple effect on what the members around him/her are able to accomplish in that rehearsal.

Absences

All absences must be approved more than 24 hours in advance (most absences are communicated months in advance as the marching band schedule is posted on the website in May). Students absent from school for illness must still communicate that absence, but it is automatically approved. You must email Mr. Mielens at chad.mielens@wbsd.org to get an absence approved. All unexcused absences, and those that are late to rehearsal, must make up the missed rehearsal time with an instructor or section leader outside of our normal rehearsal time. This usually means coming to rehearsal early and working with an instructor or section leader.

Acceptable Absence Reasons

Acceptable reasons for absences include, but are not limited to:

- Death in the family
- Illness that keeps you out of school
- Medical emergency in family

Unacceptable Absence Reasons

Unacceptable reasons for absences include, but are not limited to:

- Homework
- After school club meeting
- Birthday party
- Any absence not communicated according to the attendance policy

Marching Band Pre-Band Camp

Pre-Band Camp held at the high school during the month of August (except for the week of Band Camp) to start learning the performance program. Rehearsals are typically from 9am-4pm, Monday – Friday. All marching band members must attend, however practice times vary by section.

Marching Band Camp

Band Camp is a very important aspect of the Marching Band Program and is required for each Marching Band member. Time is spent under intensive instruction and supervision laying the foundation of the performance program.

Band camp is typically held the third week in August. Band Camp is an overnight camp, and runs Monday to Friday. Students will take a school bus to camp and will be picked up by parents on the last day of camp after the show. Parents are encouraged to come watch the show, if unable to attend or send a representative it is the parent's responsibility to find a ride for the student and provide the directors or band camp coordinator with written permission.

The current location for Band Camp is Camp Tamarack in Ortonville, Michigan.

More information at wbbands.info/band-camp

Uniforms

Marching Band

Each student will be issued: shako (hat) and plume, jacket, black bibber pants, black gloves, gauntlets and garment bag. Students will have to purchase Dinkles (marching band shoes) at an approximate cost of \$35. The jacket, pants, gauntlets, gloves and shoes **MUST** be kept in the garment bag in the band room. The shako (hat) **MUST** be kept in a shako box in the band room and the plume **MUST** be returned to the plume box in the band room.

BLACK SOCKS: Students are required to wear black, calf-length socks with their uniforms. It is very important that they are solid black socks, and do not have writing on them. Please reinforce with your children that they need to be prepared so they are not on a frantic hunt for socks 10 minutes before the call time. It is recommended that an extra pair of socks be tucked in with their uniform in their garment bag.

Color Guard

The costume is determined by the show for the season. The final decision for the costume is made by the Marching Band Director. The student must buy guard shoes and guard gloves that cost \$52. Each student must provide, dance socks or hose, make-up, and hair accessories. In addition depending on the costume the student may need to provide their own leotard. Accessories and flags for the Color Guard will be purchased by the Band Boosters.

Students will not be allowed to march unless in complete uniform!

*****No food or drinks (except water) may be consumed while in uniform!!***

Students should dress under their uniforms according to the weather. In warm weather, students wear shorts and their Marching Band Pride T-shirt under their uniform. In cooler weather, students may wear long underwear (and thick socks) under their uniforms to stay warm. Jeans, sweatpants or other bulky clothes are not permitted.

Typical Uniform Issues

- student forgets their black socks
- student wears blue jeans under their marching band pants which make the uniform look sloppy
- student forgets to pin up their hair so that it is not sticking out of their shako
- student didn't hang their marching band uniform up properly so it is wrinkled
- student lost a gauntlet and has to **buy** a new one. Any student that loses a part of their marching band uniform must pay for its replacement cost.

Football Games

The Marching Band usually performs at all home football games, during halftime. The band sits and plays in the stands for both the first and second half of the game. With the exception of the Homecoming game, students will not practice on game days, students may stay after school to practice individually or with their section. Students are responsible for eating on their own. The Marching Band Director will announce any changes to the schedule in advance.

Before the game begins (around 6:00 p.m.), the student must be in full uniform, get their instruments ready, and assemble outside in block formation for warm up and be ready to march onto the football field. Full uniform, except gloves and hat, must be kept on throughout the entire football game unless specifically directed by a Band Director. The band will sit at the far end of the "home" bleacher section (closest to the scoreboard) during the game. Students may not leave the bleacher section without permission from a Band Director.

The marching band plays the school fight song as the football players run onto the field before each home game. They perform a half-time show. The band marches off the field in block formation at the end of the game, usually around 10:00 p.m.

****No food or drink (except water) may be consumed while in uniform.***

Please stay for the entire football game and support the marching band and football team. So many band parents come to the game that if we all leave after the halftime show, the stands will be empty (or at least half empty).

Competitions

Weekends Were Made for Competitions

There are usually several "sanctioned" competitions every weekend throughout the state. The Directors choose which events West Bloomfield will attend (we will not compete in more than one event per day). There is usually practice before a competition. The students will generally spend the entire day (and many times into the evening) with the band on competition days. The band, along with the chaperones, travel together on school buses.

Competitions are a Big Deal

The scores from competitions during the season determine which bands will go on to compete in the state finals. West Bloomfield has made the state finals and finished in the top twelve for the last 23 years.

How Many Bands Compete?

The size of the competition can range from just a few bands to events where dozens of bands compete. Bands compete in flights (see page 11) with all the bands from a specific flight competing in one set.

Arrive at Competitions Early

It takes time to find a parking place and get through the gates. It's a real bummer to go through all the trouble of getting to an event and then miss the band's performance. It's also fun to evaluate the bands in West Bloomfield's flight to see how your ratings compare to the judges. Plus, at the larger events, there are hundreds (and sometimes thousands) of spectators. It's easiest to get a good seat before the flight starts. Some parents think the best seats are on the 50-yard line, higher in the stands (where you can see the band's formations).

Who Hosts the Local Competitions?

Each competition is hosted by a school and is usually held at the school's football field. The hosting band does not compete with the other schools for ranking but does give an exhibition performance. Students can purchase advance tickets for friends and family from designated Band Boosters. Programs are available for purchase at each Invitational. Many students like to collect them, and they are handy for keeping scores. Entry to the viewing stands is only allowed in between performances. The band will be centered at the 50 yard line, facing the "home" stands. The Invitational is called off only for thunder and lightning. Fall weather in Michigan means cold temperatures and frequent down pours. Rain gear and warm clothing is recommended (no umbrellas).

Rides

All marching band students ride designated school buses with the group to and from competitions. Chaperones are provided by the Band Boosters. The parent or legal guardian of any student not riding the bus home from any competition must contact the director at chad.mielens@wbsd.org prior to the event day. The student and parent must also check out with the head chaperone before leaving the event.

Schedule & Directions

A detailed schedule with the address of the competition is posted on the West Bloomfield Bands website (www.wbbands.info) one to two weeks before the competition. The detailed schedule cannot be posted before that, because we do not get performance time information more than two weeks before a competition. The most common situation is a rehearsal starting at 9AM at WBHS and then a performance time in the late afternoon or evening.

Importance of Saturday Schedules

Our typical Saturday rehearsal and competition schedule lasts from 9am until 10pm. Fortunately, most students find Saturday's to be very fun and rewarding, but please do not schedule them for other appointments or events on competitions days.

Meals

Lunch or dinner will be the responsibility of each student. Competition days are long and unpredictable. *Always* pack a sack meal, depending on the days schedule 1 meal will be provided by the boosters before we leave. Students are not allowed to eat in uniform so do not plan for them to eat while we are at a competition. *Always* bring a large water bottle. Students need to drink large amounts of water to avoid becoming dehydrated. *Plan ahead!*

Snacks

Students are encouraged to bring snacks, but keep in mind they may not be consumed on the bus or while in uniform.

Competition Costs

The usual admission price for a marching band competition is \$7-8 for per person. Tickets can be purchased from BBAWB before the event, but we usually only get 25 presale tickets per event (the profit from all ticket sales goes to the school hosting the competition NOT to BBAWB). The hosting band will have a concession stand where you can purchase snacks and drinks. They will also provide a program for spectators to purchase. In addition to listing the bands in the competition, the program generally will provide a little information on each of the bands and their shows. You can also track the judging scores and it makes a great souvenir. The dollars you spend help to support the marching band at the school. Admission to watch the Regional, State Finals and Nationals is significantly more.

Competition Weather

Bands do perform (and rehearse) in the sun, wind, rain and snow. The experienced parents go to the competitions prepared to sit through unpleasant weather and cheer for all the bands. Rain gear and ponchos are better than umbrellas (which tend to block the view of the shows and cause rivers of rain to run on the laps of people behind you) . If it rains during a competition, the bands may still need to march in the mud (although most of our competitions are on artificial turf). If the field conditions are poor, the band may do a standstill performance on the track or in the gym.

Awards

Awards are based on total points. At the end of a performance (or at the end of an individual flight, depending on size of the competition) the drum majors and color guard captains from the competing bands enter the field in a processional. The score and ranking of each band is announced (beginning with the lowest score). Awards are presented to each band. In addition to the ranking, awards are also given for best marching, best music and best general effect. The scores from all the competitions are posted on [Michigan Competing Bands Association/MCBA's](http://www.themcba.org) website each week (www.themcba.org). If you really get into this, you can track the other bands in West Bloomfield's flight and see how the Lakers rank throughout the season.

Spectator Etiquette

When attending competitions, try to sit with other WBHS parents. Wear your marching band t - shirt/sweatshirt if you have one. Yell, cheer and clap at appropriate times during the show (no cowbells or air horns). Be loud, but respectful to other bands. West Bloomfield is proud to have an outstanding, supportive audience. Do not enter/exit the stands during anyone's performance. Do not talk during any show (remember, you may be sitting next to another parent whose child is performing). Stand and applaud every band as they leave the field. Remember, the students in the other bands have worked just as hard as our own students. They deserve our respect and applause. Regardless of how you may feel about the judge's decision, bite your tongue! Every parent and every band member performing feels his or her band should be number one. Remember, every marching band member in every band is participating in an activity that teaches him or her teamwork, respect and pride in what they do. There are no losers in this activity.

Ankle and Knee Braces

Because students are marching almost every day, it is recommended for those individuals who have joint problems to wear ankle/knee braces where appropriate. Even if your student is healthy, these are a cheap insurance policy to prevent joint injuries.

*****Parents are invited to stay during the practices to see how they are run!*****

Band Classification and Judging

Taken from MCBA website www.themcba.org

In November of each year, MCBA member bands are divided into four equal flights of competition based upon school size (total number of students), not band size. For the last 20+ years, West Bloomfield has been classified as a Flight I school.

2015 MCBA Flights of Competition

- Flight I 1704 – higher
- Flight II 1123 – 1703
- Flight III 680 – 1122
- Flight IV 679 - lower

Scoring

MCBA currently utilizes the Bands of America judging system, which uses seven adjudicators and has the following scoring system:

- Music Field Judge – 10% of the total score
- Music Ensemble Judge – 20% of the total score
- Visual Field Judge – 10% of the total score
- Visual Ensemble Judge – 20% of the total score
- Music General Effect Judge – 20% of the total score
- Visual General Effect Judge – 20% of the total score

Total possible points - 100

Judges

MCBA hires judges from throughout the United States and Canada. It hires people who have had extensive training as judges and who are affiliated with nationally known judging organizations such as:

- Drum Corps International
- Bands of America
- Winter Guard International

MCBA also hires other judges that have undergone training and testing, successfully completed field training, maintained judging skills, and kept abreast of current knowledge and trends. Some judges will observe from the press box at competitions and others will be on the field while the band performs.

Some judges may stop directly in front of your child to hear if he/she is playing the music. You will observe the judges speaking into tape recorders during the performance.

The director of the band shares the judge's remarks with the students for them to better understand what areas of the show need to be improved or changed. In addition, most performances are videotaped by an independent individual and these tapes are also shared with the students.

June 2015

West Bloomfield Marching Band Invitational/Field Day

The West Bloomfield Invitational/Field Day is held on the West Bloomfield football field. This is one of our largest fundraisers of the year. Every year, we expect to host anywhere from 12-30 marching bands at our Invitational. That translates to 5,000+ students and spectators! It is generally scheduled on a Saturday and may be an afternoon or evening event. Students and parents begin major preparation the night before and complete the preparation early Saturday morning.

All parents of marching band students are expected to help with the Invitational! It takes many hands to run this event. There are a number of jobs from which you may choose. Students are also expected to assist with the preparation and clean up.

Committees

Committee formation begins in the spring. Committees include:

- advertisement, publicity
- ad sales for programs
- admissions
- band guide
- program printing
- food sales
- program sales, ticket sales
- money and judge runners
- parking
- directional signs for distant schools
- setup and clean up
- band check in
- pit crew
- gate control
- raffle

There is an admission fee at the field. Entry to the viewing stand is only allowed in between performances. The West Bloomfield Invitational is called off only for thunder and lightning. Fall weather in Michigan means cold temperatures and frequent down pours. Rain gear and warm clothing is recommended.

Common Terms and What They Mean

Listening to marching band staff, students and parents talk can sometimes feel like you are listening to a foreign language. Below is our attempt to define some of the commonly used terms.

- **Battery (Drum Line):** These are the snare drums, base drums, etc. that are carried and played while marching.
- **Color Guard (Guard):** These students move with the music, often display flags or colorful props, add visual excitement to the total presentation. In some shows, they enact the stories and may be dressed to fit the roles.
- **Competition (Invitational):** This is an event where bands are judged and ranked in groups called flights. Specific areas are being judged. The printed programs explain the specifics of judging and the points awarded to each. Be warned: What may appeal to the spectators may not impress the judges. Only one band in each flight will be awarded first place.
- **Competitive Band:** This is a band that participates in competitions.
- **Drill:** This refers to the formations the band makes and the movement from one form to another. It's the MARCHING part of the program. Changes are made to the drill throughout the season. The drill in the final show will be very different from the drill that was learned in August.
- **Drum Major:** This student (or students) is second in command (behind the director). This person directs the band for the show and is given authority to make many decisions. All band members are expected to follow his/her leadership. West Bloomfield has two drum majors. Drum Major auditions are held each spring to select a replacement for the graduating senior.
- **Flight:** This is the term used in competition to group bands. Groupings are determined by school size, NOT band size. West Bloomfield is in Flight I.
- **Instructors:** These additional adults work with individual sections of the band at practices and/or sectionals, and at competitions. They are chosen for their outstanding accomplishments in their respective areas.
- **MCBA:** The Michigan Competing Bands Association is the organization that sponsors competitions throughout the state. We are competing at 5 MCBA sanctioned events this year, which are held at: West Bloomfield High School, Plymouth-Canton, Clarkston High School, Lakeland High School and Ford Field in Detroit.
- **The Front Ensemble (Pit):** The students in the pit play instruments that are stationary (often in the front of the band or toward the sideline). They may be on raised platforms or even movable platforms. The pit often includes marimba, vibraphone, drum set, rack percussion, synthesizer, guitar, and bass guitar.
- **Pit Crew:** These are the very important volunteers that quickly assemble the drum major's podium, props and pit instruments for every performance. After the show, the pit crew is responsible for quickly removing all these items from the field. The show is timed and the pit crew plays a vital part with their speed and accuracy to help the band avoid penalty points. Each band has four minutes to set up and only three minutes to exit the field. The Pit Crew also plays a large role in the construction of any props that are used during the show. If you would like to be a member of the "Pit Crew", contact the director or any Booster Officer. They'd be happy to introduce you to the "Pit Boss".

- **Section Leader:** This is usually an upperclassman from each instrument section of the band. In the guard, this position is called the captain. This person makes sure his/her section is following instructions and is achieving what the drum majors and directors expect. This is a position of authority and requires maturity and strong leadership skills.
- **Sectionals:** These are practice sessions with members of the same instrument group.
- **Shako:** This is the hat that the marching band members wear.
- **Show:** This is the performance that the marching band does for competition. It usually is based around a theme, a composer, a type of music or a story. We perform, perfect and add to the same show all season.
- **Show Shirt:** This is a shirt that is sold by BBAWB that has our show theme on the front (this year it is "Rise and Fall") and our competition schedule on the back. Most parents wear their show shirt to competitions to show their support of the band.
- **State Finals:** The MCBA end-of-the-season championship competition usually held at Ford Field. A band must earn points in local competitions in order to qualify to compete in these finals. Only twelve bands from each flight are invited to "State Finals".
- **Tag Day:** One of the Marching Band's biggest annual fund raisers. Band members stand in front of local businesses and solicit donations for the band. Each band student is expected to work at least one 3-hour shift for this event, which usually takes place the Friday, Saturday and Sunday before band camp.
- **Winds:** These students play brass or woodwind instruments. This includes everyone but the Guard, Pit, Battery and Drum Majors.