

West Bloomfield High School Marching Band

New Parent Handbook
(And Survival Guide)



Prepared by the
Band Booster Association of West Bloomfield
www.bbawb.org
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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, our most recent achievements include 5th Place in Flight I at Michigan Competing Bands Association (MCBA) State Championship in 2006, 3rd place in Flight I at MCBA's State Championship in 2007 and 1st Place in Flight I at MCBA's State Championship in 2008. We also finished in 17th place at Bands of America's (BOA) Grand National Championship in 2008. We are very proud of this and we hope our past achievements will lead us to continued and even greater success, but we cannot do it without our 2009 marching band rookies!

The marching band is the West Bloomfield High School Band Department's most high-profile organization. We are a competitive marching band, which means we travel around the state and to Indiana during the fall to compete at various invitational competitions. The season culminates at Ford Field for the MCBA State Championships (this year on November 7) and then at Lucas Oil Stadium for the BOA Grand National Championship (this year on November 12-14).

This year's show is titled "Tommy" and features music from the Rock Opera "Tommy". This year's music includes "Introduction", "We've Won", "Nineteen Twenty One", "See Me, Hear Me, Feel Me", "Pinball Wizard" and "Listening To You" all by Peter Townsend. Our design staff is hard at work creating a unique and exciting musical and visual program for the band.

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 10 and 20 instructors at every rehearsal and start the season with a minimum of one instructor for every section of the band. 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 Copneconic from August 24-28. In the fall, we rehearse every Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday from 3-6 pm. 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 (www.bbawb.org).

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 125 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.

Arthur Ebert

West Bloomfield High School

Director 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.

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 BBAWB 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 Director usually gives 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.

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, fund raiser information, copies of all flyers the Director gives 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.bbawb.org) 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.

Competitions

Importance of 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.

Competition Uniform

Our marching band uniform consists of black bibber pants, green/silver/black jacket, black/silver/black gauntlets, black shako (hat), black plume, black gloves, black socks and black marching shoes. The black shoes MUST be the marching shoes that we sell to the students at registration. The jacket, pants, gauntlets, gloves, shoes and socks MUST all be kept in a garment bag in the band room. The shako MUST be kept in a shako box in the band room. The plume MUST be returned to the plume box in the band room.

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 gantlet and has to buy a new one. Any student that loses a part of their marching band uniform must pay for its replacement cost.

Weekends Were Made for Competitions

There are usually several "sanctioned" competitions every weekend throughout the state. The Director chooses 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 five for the last three 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 6) 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 bands 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 bands 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.

Schedule & Directions

A detailed schedule with the address of the competition is posted on Booster Website (www.bbawb.org) 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.

Competition Costs

The usual admission price for a marching band competition is \$6 for adults and \$4 for students. 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 MCBA's website each week. 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 parade by the stands after their performance. 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.

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 director 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. Ebert at eberta@westbloomfield.k12.mi.us 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.

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

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!

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.

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).

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.

2009 MCBA Flights of Competition

- Flight I: 1783 – higher
- Flight II: 1266 – 1782
- Flight III: 782 – 1265
- Flight IV: 781 – lower

Scoring

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

- | | |
|--|---------|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> General Effect Music Judge 1 | 20 pts |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> General Effect Music Judge 2 | 20 pts |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> General Effect Visual Judge | 20 pts |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Music Performance (average of following two judges) | 20pts |
| <input type="radio"/> Music Performance Individual Judge | |
| <input type="radio"/> Music Performance Ensemble Judge | |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Visual Performance (average of following two judges) | 20 pts |
| <input type="radio"/> Visual Performance Individual Judge | |
| <input type="radio"/> Visual Performance Ensemble Judge | |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Total Possible | 100 pts |

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.

Common Terms and What They Mean

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

- ❖ **BOA: Bands Of America** is the organization that sponsors regional and national competitions throughout the country. We are competing at 2 BOA sanctioned events this year: EMU Regional held at Rynearson Stadium in Ypsilanti, MI and Grand National Championship held at Lucas Oil Stadium in Indianapolis, IN.
- ❖ **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.
- ❖ **Field Commander (a.k.a. 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 (one senior and one junior). 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.
- ❖ **Grand National Championship (Nationals):** BOA hosts the marching band Grand National Championship at Lucas Oil Stadium in Indianapolis, IN. Over 90 bands compete in prelims during Thursday and Friday. The top 30 bands are then invited to perform in semifinals Saturday morning. The top 12 bands after semifinals then perform Saturday evening in finals. 25,000+ spectators are in attendance for finals, and tickets start at \$24.
- ❖ **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 6 MCBA sanctioned events this year, which are held at: Troy Athens HS, Novi HS, Livonia Franklin HS, West Bloomfield HS, Lakeland HS and Ford Field (Detroit).
- ❖ **The 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".
- ❖ **Regional Championship (Regional):** BOA hosts several regional competitions throughout the country. The Regional that we attend at EMU is composed of bands from throughout the Midwest.

All bands perform during prelims in the morning, and then the top ten are invited to perform in finals in the evening.

- ❖ **Section Leader:** This is usually a senior 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 field commander and director 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 Tommy) 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 ten 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.