

Welcome to the WSHS Marching Spartans! A Survival Guide

This information has been put together by a group of new parents who spent a large portion of their "rookie year" in various stages of confusion. In the many hours spent together watching practices and performances, waiting to pick up kids, attending football games and competitions, we asked lots of questions.

As novice band parents, of course we wanted to know what we should do. After all, the only people who were even more confused, and looking to us for answers, were our children. We wanted to share with the "upcoming rookie parents" some of the answers to these many questions before we too forget how it felt not knowing what was going on... (of course we still don't have all the answers)!

Being a member of the West Springfield High School (WSHS) Band Program will bring your children an interesting, and fulfilling educational experience. They will work hard and experience many triumphs, as well as downfalls; two things that will prepare them for the real world after high school.

We sincerely hope this guide will answer some important questions about time management, time commitment, band fees and how to pay for them, fundraising, and uniforms. We would also like to give you some "insider" information on what it takes to be a band student, and a band parent!

How Will My Child Have Time?

TIME MANAGEMENT

How will our children have the time to go to rehearsals after school, perform at ten to twelve Friday night football games, and compete on Saturdays five to six weekends? How will they have the time to do all of this, within a three-month period, and keep up their grades??

TIME MANAGEMENT will be the most important tool that your children will acquire when they become members of the WSHS band program.

The students quickly learn that they must use every minute of their day wisely. The time not spent in practice has to be spent doing schoolwork, there is no other choice and they know that. At any given time you will find students in the band room, out in the hallway, or in any other space available doing homework. This is taught to them when they first join the program and it is expected of them. Remember that most band members are Honors, AP, or Advanced Diploma students.

Your student will learn how to keep a schedule, how to be punctual, and how to set priorities.

A detailed monthly calendar is posted on the website www.wshsband.org. It lists every rehearsal, football game, and competition your student will be required to attend the next three months (well, almost every rehearsal). The schedule does

sometimes change, so checking the website every few days is recommended.

Your child will also become punctual. They will be taught the meaning of the phrase...

**“If you’re early, you’re on time;
if you’re on time; you’re late”.**

Finally, your child will learn how to set priorities. No longer will you see your children staring mindlessly at the television, or playing Xbox or Wii for hours upon hours. Band rehearsals and homework will now fill their free time. (If only the band program could teach them to make time to take out the garbage without being reminded 100 times!!!)

**“If you’re early, you’re on time;
If you’re on time; you’re late”!**

Scheduled rehearsal times are always a big question for those new to West Springfield. Our published rehearsal times are the times that we will be actively involved in rehearsing the band. For example, if the published rehearsal time says 6:00-9:00, that means that the band will be called to attention at 6:00 and the actual rehearsal will be over at 9:00. That means for a 6:00 rehearsal a student needs to be at the band room early enough to 1) take care of their set-up responsibilities and 2) get their instruments, equipment, and themselves to the rehearsal facility before 6:00. That usually means 15-20 minutes prior to the scheduled beginning of rehearsal would be a good time to arrive. The rehearsal facilities vary from day to day and are at various locations around the West Springfield campus. When the actual rehearsal is over it can take from 20-50 minutes to put away the equipment, make announcements, pass out forms, answer questions and get dismissed. Our band is a unit. We do everything together. So we all stay until everyone has completed their responsibilities for the rehearsal and everything is put away. The better the students work, the sooner they are dismissed.

What is the Time Commitment?

Without a doubt, band is a big time commitment. There are rehearsals at least three times a week, football games on Friday nights, plus competitions and on the weekends. There is the Summer Marching Band pre-season rehearsal which lasts three weeks, Tag Day, fundraising, practice, and maybe even private lessons. Wind Symphony and Symphonic Band members may also have after school rehearsals during marching season. As we discussed above, time management is the key to success.

What About The Pre-Season Marching Band Rehearsals?

YES, THE PRE-SEASON SUMMER MARCHING BAND REHEARSALS ARE REQUIRED. Plan ahead! There have been times when students and families did not realize that there was a pre-season rehearsal time (formerly known as “band camp”), or that it

is required. They are not allowed to leave campus during the sessions. The August/September Pre-Season rehearsals are mandatory. Your student must attend ALL sessions without interruption. Please arrange family vacations, doctor's visits, jobs and family time at a time other than during these rehearsals. Band is the ultimate group activity, and if one member is missing, it has an effect on the entire group. We count on your student to be there and to do their best.

What About Rehearsals Once School Begins?

DOES MY STUDENT REALLY HAVE TO BE THERE?

Rehearsals during Marching Band season are mandatory. One absent member will disrupt rehearsal for all members of the band. To be able to put the best possible musical product on the field, the staff and director need for all members of the band to be present during all scheduled rehearsals. Please see the Band Handbook for the consequences of missed rehearsals. Your membership depends on consistent participation. Management of a band this size is a monumental task and it becomes next to impossible if members of the band are absent. Please help your student make every effort to be there.

What are the "work crews"?

WHY WILL MY STUDENT BE ASSIGNED TO A WORK CREW?

Our band is a cohesive unit. We function as one body. All members of that body have different functions as musicians and performers, but also as supporting members to the rest of the body. When students are given real responsibility, real growth and learning occurs. Our students are given real responsibility and are held accountable for their given tasks. There is a student leadership structure, beginning with the Band Manager and Crew Chiefs which extends to every band student. They are responsible for almost all of the logistical and administrative tasks necessary to run our program. "If a student can do it, a student should do it" is the general rule. Tasks like driving the equipment truck, fitting uniforms, chaperone duties, and organizing fundraisers are generally reserved for the parents. We need students involved in the administration of the band because in the involvement comes ownership, growth, pride, and responsibility. If you have never seen this student-led band in operation, you are in for a real surprise. Try to get involved with one of our performance events and watch how our young adults handle themselves as functioning members of a team. We are about the "WE" getting bigger and the "me" getting smaller.

How Do Parents Get Involved?

PARENT INVOLVEMENT = A SUCCESSFUL BAND PROGRAM

Getting involved in the band program will give you the opportunity to share with your child the last four years of their education, these years that go so fast and are rarely enjoyed by many parents. Your child might say they'd rather not have you around, but most parents actually learn that in reality they appreciate your involvement and will thank you in the future. WSHS is fortunate to have a great instructional staff. The band parents are needed to support the director, and help

with the details of fundraising, transporting, feeding and watering an organization this size. The band needs parents to be able to function; it is for this reason that we urge you to get involved. Join one of the many committees; we need your help. Grandparents, siblings, or any member of your family can get involved and make a difference. Join the Band Boosters; it is a great way to meet the parents and the kids your student will be spending much of their time with for the next few months. The easiest way to volunteer is by attending the monthly Band Booster meetings where you will learn more about the program and where it needs your help. Don't just sit in the car, get out and ask, "How can I help?" It is fun, and you meet the other parents with the same interests as yours. As a guideline, it is recommended that every family contributes at least 20 hours to the Band Program.

How Do We Keep Informed?

You will need to check the Band website often, not only to keep informed but also to view the most recent pictures of the band's activities. It is here that you will find the latest information on upcoming events and fundraising opportunities. Make sure to visit our web site at www.wshsband.org. You will find rehearsal times, schedules, handbooks, forms, calendar, and all parent contact information.

How Do We Pay For This?

There are many questions about the economic impact of the Band Program. While your middle school programs traditionally did not have fees, the high school band program is very different. When we hear the bottom line, we sometimes wonder how we are going to be able to raise the funds needed for our children to be able to continue the pursuit of their musical interest. We do not want the economic factor to keep any student from participating in band. Throughout the year there are many opportunities to earn band fees. There have been families that did not pay anything out of pocket for their student to be in band, due to their successful fundraising. We have a fundraising team, dedicated to provide many opportunities to earn band fees. Some of the most successful are the Virginia Diner Sales, People Power, Holiday Greens, spring candy and flowers sales, and other ideas that may come up throughout the year.

The fee schedule is listed on the website. Money is placed in a student's account only as a direct result of that student's participation in a Band Booster sanctioned fundraiser. The best way to learn about these fundraising opportunities is by keeping informed; and the best way to keep informed is by visiting the Band web site and attending the Band Booster meetings that take place all year long. Due dates are not flexible; however, unique circumstances can always be discussed with the band director or band booster president.

Uniforms, Uniforms – What Do They Wear?

Summer Marching Band & Rehearsals

Wear comfortable shoes, closed toe, no flip flops. A light colored t-shirt and shorts are appropriate. Students may want an extra t-shirt in case of a sudden rain

shower. A towel to do warm ups in the parking lot is great. A hat and sunscreen are also recommended. A thermos of water is essential.

Football Games

For home games students wear the dress uniforms with their band t-shirt and white boxers underneath. For away games they usually wear jeans and a WSHS hooded sweatshirt.

Uniform parts consist of:

- White marching band shoes – These are special marching band shoes that clean up well with shoe polish. Look for passed down shoes (during uniform issue) or pay about \$30 for new. All students must wear the same shoes, as it is part of the uniform.
- Band t-shirt (band t-shirt will be distributed prior to the first football game)
- White boxer shorts or “Umbro” type shorts to be worn under pants for group changes.
- White socks. We suggest having several pairs exactly alike. (Dryers love to eat socks.)
- Gloves- The first pair is provided free of charge. We suggest buying a back up pair for rehearsals so performance gloves stay new and white. Gloves can be purchased from the band uniform room for \$2.

The marching band uniform is issued prior to each game and competition from the uniform room. It is worn during marching season, it never goes home with students, and they must hang it up properly after each performance.

- Pants (just touching the top of the shoes)
- Jacket – The jacket is always to be hung up or worn, it should never just be thrown on the ground. Band members will be sized for uniforms during pre-season rehearsals.
- Shako (special marching band hat- stored in a box)

Tips to remember while in uniform:

- No hair showing
- No jewelry or odd hair accessories
- No nail polish
- No make up (Guard is the exception, it is part of the uniform)
- Colored drinks, condiments, and any other messy or greasy food are not to be eaten while in uniform. Clear liquids only.

Are There Really Inspections?

Inspections are held before games in the warm-up arc. Students should be in place no later than the time they were told to report. Your student and their instrument (even the inside of the instrument) will be inspected as they stand at attention by sections. Students should be sure to not have jewelry or hair showing from under

the shako. No make up should be worn when in uniform. Demerits will be given here. (We aren't quite sure what this means yet, except that it's bad and it involves cleaning something.)

Helpful Hints to Save You Time and Grief:

- Make your child responsible for being prepared. The first time they forget something will be the last!!! They learn to be resourceful when they have to be.
- At the end of each practice session there are usually announcements – listen up. This is your best opportunity to find out who, what, where, and when things are going on.
- Network – This is how we meet each other. It is also one of the best ways to get helpful hints on band parenting from others.
- Carpool to competitions when parent buses aren't available.
- Be prepared to cheer! The band loves it when they have their own cheering section.
- Don't put uniform items away in the closet or drawers when cleaned. Keep all items (socks, shoes, band shirt, gloves, etc.) in a bag. These tips will save time spent hunting for them each time they are needed.
- Keep extra gloves, socks, needle & thread, etc. in your car or purse just in case.
- Check the band website to stay informed.
- Make sure we have your correct email address for rapid notification.

Terms and Phrases:

- **“Band practice is at 6 o'clock.” “If you are early, you're on time; if you're on time, you're late.”**

When you drop your child off at 5:30, there will be students already there, ready to play. At this point, the anxiety level for being late dramatically increases. The band actually takes the practice field for warm-ups around 5:45. This is when your child will be sweating bullets. Beware of the train. Always allow extra time. There are no excuses.

- **“Where are your pages in sheet protectors or dot books?”**

These are laminated cards that students wear around their necks during band camp that tell them exactly where they stand for different setups, like Opener 6. A good place to keep these is in their band binder or music folder.

- **“Where's my dot?” or “Do we line up on the hash?”**

This does not refer to insects or food. These terms indicate how the practice field is marked off. Students use their coordinate cards to answer these questions.

- **“Play to the box!”**

This means that instruments should be directed toward the tower on the practice field, where the powers-that-be live and flourish.

- **“Oh, just sit where band parents sit.”**

The area just outside of the band room is where parents who will be chaperoning meet and the pit or equipment trucks are loaded. After inspection (see more under uniforms), the band will warm up in two large circles. When it is time, the band will march by two's into the stadium. The band enters the stadium and goes to their

seating area. No food or drinks are allowed while in dress uniform, except when on break. When they are marching in, they are not allowed to move anything except their feet, not even a smile, so don't distract them! A lot of band parents sit just left of the band (facing the field), which is in the area of the 30-yard line.

• **“Are you working the Pit?”**

The pit is not something bad. It's a group of percussion instruments that travel on a trailer and are stationary during performances. Parents in the Pit Crew work feverishly to set up and take down the pit in record time, before and after a performance (and you think race pit crews are fast!!)

• **“Last Time”**

This can mean one more time, a few more times, it can mean you're beginning to approach the road to the last time, or it can mean we'll keep doing it until you get it right!

You Know You are A Band Parent When. . . .

- You make three more trips than expected to drop off you child with everything they need.
- You carry spare white gloves, needle and thread, safety pins, and duct tape in your pocketbook.
- Your weekends revolve around the Band.
- You can't pick your child out of the crowd because they all look alike.
- You no longer speak of your child as a fourteen-year-old daughter/son, but as a “freshman trumpet, freshman flute,” etc.
- You prominently display a band calendar in the kitchen, have band dates marked on the calendar in your purse, and have wshsband.org bookmarked on your computer.
- You know that you will be wearing something blue and/or orange every Friday night and on Saturdays.
- On time is late and early is on time.
- You are cheering with other band parents. (Cowbells make lots of noise, especially in the hands of enthusiastic band parents!)

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