



# Parents Guide to Marching Band

Greetings and welcome to Pickens High School - Home of the Pride of Pickens Band. I hope that this information will provide answers to many questions that band members and band parents may have. If you cannot find the answer to your question please do not hesitate to contact me either by phone, fax, e-mail or snail mail.

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You will find a copy of the 2008-09 events calendar on the web site. Please refer to it often. We will publish and e-mail monthly copies and updates as necessary.

**[www.prideofpickens.org](http://www.prideofpickens.org)**

## What is the parents' role in marching band?

Parental support is vital to our success! Please support our efforts to provide the best possible educational opportunity by:

- Encouraging active participation in all marching band activities
- Encouraging practice
- Supporting (through words and actions) the marching band leadership of staff, students, and volunteers
- Making sure students are "where they need to be." Follow the schedule closely to make sure your student attends all rehearsals and performances. Look through the entire schedule before the season begins and communicate any conflicts with Mr. Gallagher immediately.
- Providing financial resources by participating in fundraisers and/or paying all fees on time.
- Communicating any questions, concerns, conflicts or problems with Mr. Gallagher as soon as they happen. The staff cannot correct problems which are not brought to their attention in a timely manner. Positive comments are also encouraged if you feel that some aspect of the program is going particularly well.
- Attending as many performances as your schedule permits. Teenagers sometimes say they don't want you there, but the truth is that your presence means a lot to them. In a few years they will not remember their scores or placements but they will always remember that you were there for them.
- Signing up for the email lists which provide the timeliest information about upcoming marching band activities.
- Guiding students to manage their time wisely and complete all school assignments in a timely and professional manner.
- VOLUNTEERING to help with dinners, fundraisers, sewing flags, fitting uniforms, moving equipment, building props, organizing carpools, chaperoning, etc. For those who choose to become involved, the band becomes like a second family. We want everyone to be part of our family!

## Do students have to attend all of the summer rehearsals?

Students are expected to attend all summer rehearsals with the exception of those that occur during previously scheduled vacations or camps. Summer rehearsals are held only a few times, so students should arrange their work schedules to accommodate marching band rehearsals. Advance notice of absence is required.

## Do students have to attend all of band camp?

Yes. Students must attend all of band camp. This is a group activity which requires everyone's participation. Unlike athletic teams, there are no substitute players. If students miss a rehearsal or performance, there is no one to cover their parts. The majority of music and drill are learned during band camp. If students miss band camp, they create more work for themselves, staff members and other students, in order to help then learn the material they missed. The calendar for band camp has been published well in advance to allow families to arrange their summer plans around it. If there is an unavoidable conflict, speak to Mr. Gallagher ASAP.

## Why is band camp so long?

The hours for band camp may seem long but they are necessary in order to learn the show. Our hope is that the majority of the show will be learned over the summer before students have home work and other school responsibilities. The daily schedule has been created to allow time for rest and re-hydration between our rehearsal sets. The three time blocks are usually divided as follows.

## What if my child joins but later wants to quit?

Students are strongly encouraged to stick with it, once they have made the commitment to marching band. Based on the membership commitments, we hire music arrangers and drill writers to design the show. By mid-May, this process is already well under way. If a student later quits, it causes major problems. (See below for details.)

Marching band is a very challenging activity. It is normal for students, especially new members, to feel frustrated at times because there is so much to learn. As they push through their frustration, they learn valuable lessons about perseverance, teamwork and the value of honoring a commitment. They also experience a sense of pride at accomplishing things they never thought possible. These are the life lessons that marching band is designed to teach. **If your student is talking about quitting, please contact Mr. Gallagher to work through the situation. There may be a way to help him/her feel better about participating.**

## What happens if a student quits after making the commitment?

If a student quits after making the initial commitment, it causes some serious problems for the staff and other members of the program. Here are a few issues that arise when someone quits:

1. All the music and drill must be re-written to cover that student's parts. This is a very painstaking and time-consuming process and means that drill and music which should be completely learned over the summer would not be ready to be taught until well into September or even October. At that point in the season, students have homework and other responsibilities. It puts a real burden on them to be re-learning parts when they should be just perfecting them.
2. The other members of the marching band feel very frustrated when their valuable time is wasted by other students who fail to follow through on their commitments. The marching band members take it very seriously that they depend on one another and try not to let each other down.
3. The music program may have to pay additional fees to writers and arrangers to fix the empty spaces left by students who quit.
4. At time injuries or other unavoidable personal situations mean that a student who intended to participate is no longer able to. This is unfortunate for them and for our program because we really want every student to be able to participate fully. At the same time, it has been our experience that many students who talk about quitting have never been in a situation where they truly have to work hard and persevere through an experience as challenging as marching band. **Please encourage your student to stick with it. Honoring a commitment is one of the most valuable lessons we can teach our young people. What does it teach our young people when they are permitted to quit an activity as soon as it becomes challenging?**

## Why is there a marching band fee?

The marching band fee gives us some guaranteed income to begin preparing for the season. In the past we did not have a fee, but we were unable to cover the full cost of the marching program through fundraisers alone. When used in combination, the fee and the fundraisers will generate enough income to provide for the needs of the marching band. The fee is not meant to prevent anyone from participating. **If this fee would tip the scales toward non-participation, please contact Mr. Gallagher to work through the situation.**

## Why do we still have fundraisers?

All members are expected to participate in fundraisers in addition to the marching band participation fee. Although many people believe that the marching band fee (\$175 for the 2008 season) is enough of a financial contribution to cover the costs of marching band, this is simply not true. The fee generates approximately 1/3 of the overall marching band budget. We operate on a budget of nearly \$35,000 which must cover: transportation (equipment trucks, and drivers), staff salaries, wind arrangements, percussion arrangements, copyright permissions, drill design and consultation, color guard design and equipment, , uniform maintenance, member t-shirts, water, occasional meals, contest fees, and other miscellaneous expenses that arise throughout the season.

Could we field a marching band for less? Sure. But we would not be able to offer a full competitive schedule or challenge our students with the high level of music, drill, and guard design that they deserve. The educational value of marching band is diminished if the music is too easy, the visual design fails to excite, and the students aren't inspired to reach their fullest potential. **Please support our efforts by participating in fundraisers! If we don't raise enough money through fundraising, we will be forced to make cuts to the marching program and/or increase the fee!**

In case you are thinking that the high cost of marching band comes from exorbitant staff salaries, please understand that our staff members are paid very little (far below minimum wage) for the time, effort, and expertise they offer to our students. They teach marching band because they love the activity, not to get rich!

## Should students have to be enrolled in a music/dance class?

Yes. If students are enrolled in a curricular performing ensemble (band, dance) it will contribute to their success.

## What equipment/supplies will they need?

For all rehearsals, students need their instrument, water, binder, towel, sunscreen, and a pencil. Color guard members should bring their guard gloves, and percussionists should bring any sticks or mallets they use during the show. Students should wear comfortable clothing that allows for freedom of movement. Acceptable clothing includes tennis shoes with socks, t-shirts, shorts, sweats, and athletic pants. Please do not wear sandals, jeans, high-top sneakers, dress shoes or any other clothing that restricts movement. All students should also bring water and a hat. Dress for the weather. Summer rehearsals will be seasonal, and rehearsals in November will be cold.

## **It's raining/snowing outside. Does that mean rehearsal/performance is cancelled?**

No. Rehearsals and performances are not cancelled unless there is an announcement made by Mr. Gallagher. Students should be prepared to practice and perform outside in all types of weather. If the forecast is calling for inclement weather, bring a raincoat and/or winter weather gear to rehearsal. For competitions, football games, and parades bring the appropriate cold weather gear to wear under the uniform.

### **Guidelines for cold weather wear...**

- Anything worn underneath the uniform must not be seen by the audience or restrict marching and maneuvering, or spinning.
- (Black) Turtlenecks are acceptable (Under Armour ColdWear is exceptional!)
- Students are allowed to warm-up in their band jackets.
- Students are allowed to wear the pride wear winter caps.
- Color Guard is allowed to warm-up in their sweat pants/sweatshirts.
- Foot warmers and glove-size hand warmers are acceptable (available at sporting goods stores).
  - If you have a second pair of gloves slightly bigger than the first, you can slip the hand warmer in between the two pairs to hold them in place and keep the heat from direct contact with the skin. These typically last for up to 8 hours.

## **Football Information**

### **What is the marching band's responsibility during football games?**

The marching band plays an important role in entertaining the crowd and cheering for our team. We perform a pre-game concert that includes the National Anthem, fight song and other crowd pleasers. We play pep tunes and cheer for our team during the game and perform our field show at half-time.

### **Half-time is over. Can my student leave the game now?**

No. All students are expected to attend the entire game. Football games are part of the commitment that all members make to the marching band.

### **Why do axillaries have to be there? They don't play instruments.**

The auxiliaries are an important part of our marching band family. Although they don't play instruments, they can still participate by cheering for the team. Also, the auxiliaries may sometimes use the game time for extra practices or to repair equipment, so that they don't have to stay late after rehearsals.

### **Where does the marching band sit? Do the parents sit together?**

Facing the field, the marching band sits to the right of the press box. Marching band parents usually sit in a group beside the band. You can often identify them because they are wearing "Pride Wear". We hope parents will come to the games and enjoy socializing with each other, watching the game and listening to the band.

## **Competition Information**

### **Where and when are the competitions?**

Marching competitions are held on Saturdays beginning in mid-September and ending in November. Any school can host a competition (usually called a "show"). Pride of Pickens will generally compete at the closest shows, although there may be times when there are no competitions nearby and we must travel a bit farther.

### **How do we get to the show?**

All marching band members and chaperones will travel to and from each show on the bus unless prior arrangements have been made in writing with Mr. Gallagher. Parents and fans must provide their own transportation. Directions will be made available during the week prior to each show or you are welcome to follow the busses. NOTE: If you choose to follow the busses, you will not arrive at the show until after it has already begun. You may also need to park in a separate area from the busses. There are usually signs or volunteers directing traffic once you arrive at the show.

### **Do we need tickets for the show?**

Marching Band members get in free, but there is an admission fee of approximately \$5-\$10 for spectators. Tickets can be purchased at the gate.

### **What is a typical show like?**

Shows usually begin with the smallest bands (Group I) and end with the largest bands. Due to our size, Pride of Pickens will generally perform toward the middle of the show. Each band has approximately 15 minutes to set up, perform and clean up the field. You may see judges walking around on the field during the show, watching and listening for particular elements. There are also judges in the announcer's booth, who watch for the overall effect of the performance. The stadium will be filled with fans and the performing bands, while areas of the parking lots and athletic fields will be filled with bands warming up. It can be fun to walk around and listen to the groups warming up. It is also nice to support the other performers by watching them from the stands.

## How do we get the best seats?

The best seats are as close to the 50 yard line and as high up in the stands as possible. Naturally, these are the first to go. If you want to have the best seats, arrive before the show begins and stake out your spot. (REMEMBER: If you opt to follow the busses, you will not arrive at the show until after it has begun.) Wear your "Pride Wear" and look for other Pride of Pickens fans so everyone can sit together. This is a great opportunity to see other bands perform and support their hard work. There are some very talented marching bands in our area and it can be a real treat to see them perform. If you don't care about seating, your other option is to arrive late at the show just to watch Pride of Pickens and/or the bands in our group.

## Is there any special etiquette to being a marching band fan?

Yes! Here are a few things to remember:

1. Please do not enter or exit the stands while a band is performing. If you need to enter or exit, do so while the band is setting up their equipment or exiting the field.
2. Show your support by applauding and cheering all the students, regardless of school. All of the students have worked hard and are excited to perform for an audience that appreciates what they do. Please refrain from making any disparaging remarks about other schools, students, or performances. (This seems obvious, but you'd be surprised how even the most well-intentioned people can get caught up in the heat of competition and make hurtful remarks!)
3. Noisemakers (ex. Cow bells, shakers) are fine before and after a performance, but please do not use them during the performance. They may distract the performers and could even affect a band's score if the judge is unable to hear the music. Please NO AIRHORNS at any time. Cheering and applause are fine during a performance and may be especially appropriate after a solo or when the band or color guard achieves a particularly striking effect.
4. Please do not talk during performances. Turn cell phones to a silent setting. You would be upset if you missed your child's performance because the people sitting nearby were chatting, answering cell phones or otherwise making distracting noises. Please be respectful of others' desire to see their child perform. Hopefully they will be respectful of you, too!
5. Keep in mind that marching band is about putting forth your best performance. It is not about beating another band, winning a trophy or getting a certain score. It's ok to be excited if the band improves their score or wins a certain award; but ultimately we hope the students feel a sense of accomplishment that comes from the heart, not from a trophy.

## I see my child warming up in the parking lot. Is this a good time to say hello?

Sorry, but no. Students have specific instructions about what to do when they arrive at the show, and your arrival may put them into conflict with those instructions. It puts the students in an awkward position if their instructor is telling them one thing and then their parent arrives and tells them to do something different. The staff asks that you respect the following guidelines:

1. Please do not try to talk to your child until after the performance unless you have a very serious situation that absolutely cannot wait. If this is the case, please approach the director or staff person first so that they can help you to work through this situation with your child.
2. Don't worry too much about finding your child after the performance. They usually have an uncanny ability to find you when they need money for the concession stand! If you wear your "Pride Wear" and sit with other PHS fans, it will make it even easier for them to find you. You can also designate a particular meeting area, such as the concession stand, for after the performance.
3. Please do not interrupt the warm up unless you have an emergency. The students and staff need to focus. If you have specific, non-emergency concerns and need to speak to Mr. Gallagher or a staff member, this is not the best time. They would be happy to speak with you after the performance or arrange an alternate meeting.
4. The best thing you can do before the show is find a seat and cheer!

## What happens at the end of the show?

After the last performance, the drum majors and selected members from each band will line up on the field. This is called "Retreat." Scores and awards will be presented and students will return to the bus.

## The bus just got back to school. Why can't my child leave yet?

Students are responsible for unloading and properly storing all equipment, even if they do not personally use it. If we work together this process won't take long and everyone can go home.

## How are the bands scored?

Each contest has its own approved scoring system, but in general the judges are looking for proficiency in music, visual and overall effect. Judges are assigned to critique Individual Music performance, Ensemble Music performance, Visual Effect, Overall Effect of Music, and Overall Effect of Visual. Within each of these categories, judges are assessing the show design, musical composition, difficulty level, quality of technique, musicianship, and how effectively the performers portray the show concept through their playing, marching and guard work. The best shows are those that are both challenging and well performed. Each circuit has its own formula for adding up scores in the various categories to assign an overall score out of 100.

## Is it better to perform an easy show perfectly or a difficult show pretty well?

Different contests have different philosophies about this. What you actually do correctly will earn more credit than something that you attempt but fail to achieve. So in theory, an easy, clean show would be scored higher than a difficult, dirty show. However, the bands that achieve very difficult skills will earn more points than bands that achieve easy ones. So by the end of the year, when all the bands have had time to clean and perfect their shows, you will start to see that the groups with more difficult music, drill, and guard work are rising to the top of the standings over the groups with easier shows. (Keep in mind it's a subjective activity, so there is some gray area here!)

## Why don't they give credit for attempting difficult skills even if they aren't done perfectly?

Many times they do give credit, but they can't give full credit to something that is imperfectly performed. The job of the staff is to design a show that is both challenging and achievable for their students. The closer they are to achieving it perfectly, the more credit they will receive. It does happen sometimes that a band will be out there trying to perform work that is just too difficult for them.

## What are caption awards?

The host has the option of presenting awards to the best performers in various categories (called captions), such as best music or visual performance, best color guard, best percussion, etc. The performances of the color guard, percussion section, drum major and other captions affect the overall visual and musical scores, but there are also separate judges who look at these areas completely apart from the overall band's performance. The scores given by these judges are used to decide who wins a caption award and may not factor into the band's overall score.

## I thought the students did a great job. Why wasn't their score higher?

The students probably did do a great job. The most important thing is that they feel good about their performance and know that they did their best. The judges are professionally trained to look for specific skills that an untrained spectator may not even notice. Tiny discrepancies in marching technique, difficulty level and musical proficiency can make a big difference in score, but might be totally unnoticed by the fans. Judging is fairly subjective, too. Sometimes a judge may simply prefer a different style. Please remember that the most important thing is that our students push themselves to reach their highest potential. **In the end, a score is just a number and a trophy is just a piece of plastic. Both are soon forgotten, but hard work, perseverance and pride of accomplishment are lessons for a lifetime!**

## What are the judges looking for exactly?

They are looking for all sorts of things! Here's a summary of what the judges in different categories are looking for:

### Musically

- Is it in tune all the time?
- Are individuals playing their parts or faking it?
- Are they playing in the correct style with correct technique?
- Are the notes articulated correctly?
- Dynamics- are the changes in loud and soft appropriate and played with control?
- Are rhythms played accurately?
- Is the timing right? Are the parts lined up together?
- Is it played musically and with expression?
- Balance- Can you hear all the instruments in balance or are a few sticking out? Is one section overpowering the others?
- Is there a variety of styles, sounds & dynamic contrasts or is does everything sound the same?
- Do they play with confidence, intensity and showmanship?
- Does the music coordinate well with the visual?
- Does the band have the stamina to perform all the music perfectly all the way through the show?

## Visually

- Are they marching in step? (All the left feet move together, etc.)
  - Do they have good posture?
  - Are they using the same marching technique? They should be “walking” the same way, with toes pointed upwards and feet striking the ground at the same angle.
  - Do they use a variety of step sizes? Do they march at a variety of tempos?
  - How clean is the drill? Are they locking into recognizable lines and forms or do they never quite get there?
  - When they are moving at high speeds are they able to maintain strong posture & technique?
  - Do they move with confidence and control?
  - Does the visual design enhance the music? Does it create a variety of emotions and evoke a reaction from the audience?
  - Do the drill, guard work and music fit together?
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- Is the show imaginative?
  - Does the guard use a variety of equipment, techniques and styles?
  - Do the flags and costumes fit the theme and add to the visual effect?
  - Does the guard show uniform technique? Are they spinning together?
  - Are the performers focused? Do they maintain intensity and stay “in character” the whole time?

## How important are the Percussion and Color Guard? Why do they receive separate scores?

The entire percussion section and color guard are extremely important. On its own, the wind section can achieve some wonderful musical and visual moments, but adding percussion and color guard helps to push these moments to the max. Percussion and color guard do factor into the overall scores. They may also receive separate scores mostly for bragging rights and because the skills associated with these sections are specialized and different from what the rest of the band is doing.

## GLOSSARY

**Auxiliary:** also known as the color guard and majorette, this group creates much of the visual expression of the show through dance and the use of equipment such as flags, rifles, batons and sabers.

**Battery:** refers to the marching percussion, including snare, tenor and bass drums.

**Caption Head:** the staff member responsible for a particular aspect of the band. There are caption heads for percussion, color guard, music, and visual.

**Clean:** means that the students make few mistakes in their marching, playing, or spinning during the show. For example, if ten snare drummers are playing their parts cleanly, it should sound as if just one person is playing.

**Dirty:** means that the basic elements of the show are present, but the students have not practiced enough to perform them with the precision that is needed. For example, if ten snare drummers are playing the same dirty part, it means that you will be able to hear each individual player and know that the notes are not totally in sync with each other.

**Drill:** refers to the positions of the band and color guard on the field and the steps that they take to create visual designs.

**Pit/Front Ensemble:** refers to the grounded percussion in front of the marching band, and includes instruments such as timpani, gongs, and keyboard instruments (marimba, vibraphone, xylophone, bells, and chimes).

**Pit Crew:** Parent volunteers who help load and transport percussion equipment. They also have the important job of moving this equipment on and off the field for performances.

**Retreat:** at the end of the competition, the bands or drum majors take the field to accept awards.

**Shako:** refers to the style of head gear that is worn by the PHS marching band. It is not called a hat.

**Show:** refers to either the theme or performance of a particular band or to a competition.

**Spinning:** this term describes the use of color guard equipment, such as flags, rifles, and sabers.

**Techs:** Staff members who assist with percussion, color guard, music and visual aspects of the show.