



What is WHS Marching Band?

Marching band has evolved from simple entertainment into a very serious sport and art form. It makes use of musicians and dancers, where the final product is a combination of music, athletics and choreography in a competitive arena. Students perform a 6-9 minute show of music that is totally memorized with over 50 pages of movement unique to each band member. The 'major league' of competitive marching band is called DCI (Drum Corps International) and many videos are available online where you can check out the highest level of competitive marching band. Many bands in Maryland and Carroll County participate in the competitive marching band activity, but there are numerous different levels and 'leagues' of marching band. Westminster has enjoyed participating in the different levels of high school competitive marching band in the past and looks to continue that proud tradition in the future.

Who can join Marching Band? Anyone who has a desire to excel in music and movement and who wants to work to improve can be in the marching band. You need not have any experience to be a part of the marching band. Students who participate in marching band tend to develop better musicianship skills, hand-eye coordination, and get a great workout every rehearsal. Keep in mind that marching band is NOT just musicians. We have a Colorguard made up of non-instrumentalists who would rather dance and spin and toss flags, mock rifles, or other equipment. We encourage all our musicians to take a music class during the school day to further improve their music education, but it is not a requirement of the marching band. Marching is always more fun with friends, so feel free to bring as many along as possible.

What is the time commitment for marching band? The time commitment for marching band is a few rehearsals in the Spring and early Summer, two weeks of summer camp and two nights a week during the fall season (late August through the beginning of November). In addition to rehearsal time, the marching band has performances most weekends – football games, parades, and competitions occur throughout the fall season.

How much money will this cost? There are many expenses associated with competitive marching band. There is a staff of college and professional musicians who assist the directors with rehearsals and performances. Music and drill (field movements) need to be purchased. Uniforms need to be maintained. Specialized equipment for percussion and colorguard needs to be purchased. Specific shoes for marching need to be purchased. There are many costs for competitive marching band. To offset these costs, marching band members will have a student fee. A cost breakdown and list of expenses will be made available at the start of the season. The fee is usually around \$400 for the season with possible additional fees for seasons with extended and long-distance travel. There are a number of fundraisers throughout the year that can help to defray the cost of being in marching band – some of the fundraisers are ongoing at all times and only require an easy click of the mouse when shopping online! The Instrumental Music Boosters have scholarship money available to help as well! If these costs are in any way a financial hardship, or would tip the scales toward non-participation, please contact the director.

What if my child has to miss a marching band activity? When a marching band member needs to miss practice, they need to notify the director and student leader in their section at LEAST one week prior to the absence so that plans can be adjusted as necessary. If a marching band member needs to miss a performance, they need to notify the director as soon as possible in person.

What is “Kill Drill”? There is a rehearsal event each year called “Kill Drill” where band members rehearse a portion of the show until it is determined to be ‘perfect’ by the director and staff. While this event is taking place on the practice field, there is a parent meet and greet activity for all marching band parents to get to know each other while watching their student rehearse. This is a great chance for parents to experience what a marching band rehearsal is like.

What is “Preview Show”? At the conclusion of the summer camp rehearsals, the marching band will perform a preview show to show off what that they have learned during the summer camp.

What is “Home Show”? The Home Show is a marching band competition hosted by IMB at our high school. It is a great opportunity for the community, friends, and family to come and see your student perform in the show they worked so hard to produce. It is the largest fundraiser of the year, and the assistance of all boosters is essential -- and it’s fun too!

How far away are the competitions? Generally, competitions are no more than a 90 minute drive from the school. However, generally every 2-3 years, students and chaperones can expect to pack their bags for overnight travel to a major competition or special event.

What sort of involvement is expected of the parents when a student joins the marching band? Parents are encouraged to help support in any way they can. Beyond simply assisting with fundraisers and transporting students to and from rehearsal there are many opportunities to help:

- Chaperoning a trip – riding the bus, taking attendance, giving students water, helping with injuries
- Pit Crew – attending performances and helping to move (and sometimes repair) equipment
- Prop Crew – helping with building and painting field props during rehearsals (and possibly performances)
- Uniform Help – fitting students, ordering and distributing shoes and gloves, small sewing
- Donate supplies – cases of water, snacks for trips, special event needs
- Event volunteers – many jobs helping at marching band events (picnic, banquet, home show, etc)

Interested parents should email president@owlband.org or call the instrumental music office at (410) 751-3630.

What does a marching band member need for practices?

- Students may NOT wear blue jeans, sandals, or flip flops to practice. They should wear comfortable clothes and athletic shoes – plus hats and sunscreen.
- Students should bring a large thermos (1/2 gal.) of water to each practice.
- Students need a 3-ring binder with dividers and plenty of sheet protectors – this will be their music binder
- Students need a small (3x5 card) spiral notebook (called a “dot book”) which fits in their pocket.
- Students (winds only) need a lyre and flip folder for parade music and rehearsals.
- Students should arrive 15 minutes early to practice and be ready to play at the start time. If your student plays in the front pit, he/she will need to arrive 25 minutes early to set up.

How do performances work?

- There are three categories of performance:
 - 1) Competitions (usually 4-6 per season)
 - 2) Home football games (usually 3-5 per season)
 - 3) Parades (usually 2-3 per season)
- Tickets are available for some competitions at a discount – those tickets will be available from the boosters.
- Remember to plan for optional expenses such as programs, pictures and food.
- At home football games, parents sit near the band by the press box. At away competitions, parents try to sit together near the 50-yard line. Look for familiar faces, spirit shirts and buttons.
- Most shows are held at outside arenas. During the late fall, it gets very cold. Come prepared! Foot and hand warmers (the small chemical packs), seat cushions and blankets are a must. Under Armour, while expensive, is very popular with the students. It keeps them warm and fits nicely under their uniform.
- After competitions, parents usually line up at the band door at WHS to welcome the band home.
- Chaperones travel with the band and remain with the band during the competition. Other parents make their own travel arrangements.

Your key source of information: www.owlband.org

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More questions, email: president@owlband.org