

**Ferndale Golden Eagles Marching Band**

**New Parent**  
**Handbook**  
**(and Survival Guide)**



Prepared by the  
**Ferndale Schools Fine Arts Boosters**  
[www.fsfab.org](http://www.fsfab.org)

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## Welcome from the Directors

### ‘Golden Eagle’ Marching Band 2010

Welcome to the Ferndale High School Marching Band program. The ‘Golden Eagle’ 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 the 2004, 2005, 2006, 2007, AND 2009 Michigan Competing Bands Association (MCBA) ‘Flight III’ State Championships. We also earned a Third Place finish in 2003 and 2008. We are very proud of this, and we hope that our past achievements can lead us to continued and even greater success, but we cannot do that without the class of 2014!

The marching band is the Ferndale HS Music Department’s most high-profile organization. We are a competitive marching band, which means we travel around the state during the fall to compete at various invitational competitions, finishing the season at Ford Field for the MCBA State Championships (this year on November 6).

This year’s show is titled “Interstellar Suite”, and is an exploration of what one might see and experience in the night sky. The music this year is “Wild Nights” by John Adams, “Asphalt Cocktail” by John Mackey, and “Song for Lyndsay” by Andrew Boysen. Our design staff is already hard at work creating a unique and exciting musical and visual program for the band.

This will be the Marching Band’s 57<sup>th</sup> summer attending the world-famous Interlochen Music Camp (August 16-23). Since this is where we learn the vast majority of the drill to our show, attendance is mandatory for all members of the band. During June and August, we rehearse most Mondays and Wednesdays from 6-9 pm. In the fall, we rehearse every Monday and Wednesday from 6-9 pm. The band also performs at selected home football games, which usually take place Friday evenings. Most Saturdays during the fall are spent rehearsing or competing. A detailed rehearsal schedule for the remainder of this school year, summer rehearsal dates and the fall show schedule will be handed out at our mandatory **Parent/Student Meeting, Monday, May 17 at 6:30 pm in the FHS Media Center.**

The base fee to participate in the Marching Band program is \$415.00. This includes the cost of attending Interlochen Band Camp, transportation, room and board, instructional staff, most uniform costs (except a one-time new member fee of \$30), the cost of purchasing and writing the show, and other activities throughout the season. This can be paid in installments between now and Band Camp – more information will follow. Multiple fund-raising opportunities will be provided during the course of the year to off-set the cost of marching 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 Ferndale Schools Fine Arts Boosters (FAB), we boast an instructional staff of 16. There is an instructor for each wind section in the band, as well as a marching instructor, and multiple instructors for the guard and percussion sections. We also have a support team of volunteer parents who travel with us and chaperone the cabins at band camp (at least one parent in every cabin). This allows us to achieve a great deal of individual attention and keep all activities well-supervised (24 hours a day at Interlochen Band Camp).

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 insure they have ample opportunity to be successful in the band. It is the relationships that are 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 120 friends who all believe in you and your contribution to our “family”.***

Keep in mind also that while we certainly hope that most, if not all, students choose to participate in marching band, it is an extracurricular activity. It is possible to participate in our top-notch concert band program during the school day and not be in the marching band. Further, it is also possible to participate in fall sports AND marching band – we have a great relationship with the athletic department, and have many students do both every year (including football, cheerleading, boy’s soccer, girl’s volleyball, boy’s tennis, cross-country, and girl’s swimming). It does take a lot of time to do both and requires careful time management, but we find that students who take on the challenge gain much maturity from the experience.

Thank you for your continued interest and support of the music program in Ferndale. We believe that 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 us at FHS to discuss our program in detail. We are looking forward to working with your child. We all feel the class of 2014 will bring a new level of excellence to our performing ensembles at Ferndale High School.

Musically yours,

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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 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.

- **Go to the 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.
- **Network with other parents.** It will make your life much easier if you make ride sharing arrangements for practices and carpooling for competitions.
- **Attend Marching Band Committee Meetings!** You don't need to volunteer for anything, or even attend every meeting. 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 Ferndale Fine Arts Community.
- **Email is your 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 FAB posts a lot of valuable marching Band information on its website ([www.fsfab.org](http://www.fsfab.org)) including: Dates, times and maps for all competitions; downloadable copies of important forms and documents; fund raising information; and more.

## Competitions

- Wind and percussion students are required to wear black, calf-length socks with their uniforms. Please reinforce with you children that they need to be prepared so they are not on a frantic hunt for socks 10 minutes before the call time. Guard students will have different uniform requirements year to year, but also similarly unique!
- Competitions are held on weekends. There are usually several "sanctioned" competitions every weekend throughout the state. The director chooses which events Ferndale will attend (we will not compete in more than one event per day).

- If time permits, there is 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. Ferndale has made the state finals and finished in the top ten for the last nineteen years, but in the last several years, it's been a close fight for position, right up to the last competition.
- 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 8) with all the bands from a specific flight competing in one set.
- Get there 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 Ferndale'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).
- 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.

### **Maps and Directions:**

The Director will distribute schedules and directions usually 5-7 days before the event, and will have them available in the band room the day of the event. The schedule (with printable maps) is also available on the Boosters website ([www.fsfab.org](http://www.fsfab.org)). Carpooling with other band parents will save you gas money and give you a chance to "compare notes" as you drive to and from the competition.

### **Cost to Attend a Competition:**

The usual admission price for a marching band competition is \$6 for an adult. The Director will often have a few discounted \$5 tickets available on a first come, first serve basis. 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.

### **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. If the field conditions are poor, the band may do a standstill performance on the track. Most bands want to avoid standstills because no points are given for the visual aspect of the show in a standstill performance; the higher the points the better the score.

## Band Classification and Judging

(Taken from MCBA website <http://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 several years, Ferndale is currently classified as a Flight III school.

### 2010 MCBA Flights of Competition

Flight I	1687 & Higher
Flight II	1147 – 1686
Flight III	740 – 1146
Flight IV	739 & Lower

### Scoring:

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

General Effect Music Judge 1	(12.5 Possible Points)
General Effect Music Judge 2	(12.5 Possible Points)
General Effect Visual Judge	(20 Possible Points)
Music Performance Field Judge	(15 Possible Points)
Music Performance Ensemble Judge	(15 Possible Points)
Visual Performance Field Judge	(10 Possible Points)
Visual Performance Ensemble Judge	(15 Possible Points)

**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

In addition to judges from organizations such as those listed on page 7, MCBA also hires other judges that have undergone training and testing, successfully completed field training, maintaining their 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 digital audio 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, competition performances are videotaped by an independent individual and these tapes are also shared with the students.

**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 procession. The score and ranking of each band is announced (beginning with the lowest score first). Awards are presented to each band. In addition to the ranking, awards are also given for Best Marching (based on highest combined score of Visual Field and Visual Ensemble), Best Music (based on highest combined score of Music Field and Music Ensemble) and Best General Effect (based on the highest combined score of Music Effect and Visual Effect).

The scores from all the competitions are posted on the MCBA website each week. If you really get into this, you can track the other bands in Ferndale's flight and see how the Golden Eagles rank throughout the season.

**Spectator Etiquette:**

When attending competitions, try to sit with other FHS parents. Wear your marching band t-shirt/sweatshirt if you have one. Yell, cheer and clap at appropriate times during the show. Be loud. Ferndale 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 judges' decisions, bite your tongue! Every parent and every band member performing feels their band should be number one. Remember, every marching band member in every band is participating in an activity that is teaching them teamwork, respect and pride in what they do. There are no losers in this activity.

## **Practices and Home Football Game Performances**

**Practices:**

- Rule Number One for Marching Band Practices: BE EARLY! "To be early is to be on time...To be on time is to be late...To be late is a sin"!
- If a practice starts at 6:00 p.m., students should be there at 5:45 p.m. If you drop your student off at 6:00 p.m., he/she will not reach the marching field with all required equipment until 6:15 p.m. Nothing is more counterproductive than starting late.
- Water bottles are highly recommended, especially for the Saturday mini-camps and late summer practices. These students work very hard and need to keep plenty of fluids in their body.
- Ankle and knee braces are recommended for those individuals who have joint problems. 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. Each year, the Marching Band Committee also hosts a "Dessert Night" during one of the evening practices. Parents are encouraged to come enjoy refreshments and get to know each other. The evening concludes with everyone watching the final run-through of the Band's show.

## Football Games:

- The Marching Band usually performs at all home football games, during halftime. The band sits and plays in the stands during the first half of the game. After their halftime performance, they march back to the school and the Boosters usually supply drinks and a snack. The students are then free to leave or return to the field to watch the rest of the game. The Pep Band stays for the entire game and will sometimes travel to local away games to support the team.
- The Boosters have a “Booth” at each game where they sell various sweatshirts, hats, buttons, etc. The proceeds help defray the marching band expenses.
- Please stay for the entire football game and support the 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).

## 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.

**Battery (Drum Line):** These are the snare drums, tenor drums (sometimes called quads or quints), and bass drums that are carried and played while marching.

**Color Guard (Guard):** These students move with the music, often display flags or colorful props, adding 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 according to captions (categories) laid out on page 7. **Be warned: What may appeal to the spectators may not impress the judges.**

**Competitive Band:** This is a band that participates in competitions and marches “corps-style” (like DCI Drum Corps), as opposed to a southern style “Show” band or a Big 10 style “half-time” band.

**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 at Interlochen.

**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. Ferndale 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.

**General Effect:** A judging term (commonly mis-understood) that refers, in lay-men’s terms to the “wow” factor of a show. How the visual and musical elements interact to entertain the judges and the audience creates “General Effect”.

**Impact:** A moment in the show that is a climactic or “wow” moment. “Impacts” generate much of the General Effect score in a show, and get a lot of rehearsal attention to get them to work exactly the way the design staff intends. Impacts ideally happen in the show every 45-60 seconds to keep the audience engaged.

**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.

**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 percussion instruments and/or keyboards.

**Pit Crew:** Also referred to as “Pit Pops”, “Pit Princesses” and, for our youngest helpers, “Pit Pups”. These are the very important volunteers that quickly assemble the field commander’s stand, 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 often 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.

**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.

**State Finals:** The MCBA end-of-the-season championship competition, usually held at Ford Field. A band must earn points in regional competitions in order to qualify to compete in these finals. Only eleven 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 2-hour shift for this event, which usually takes place the Saturday and Sunday after the Band returns from Interlochen band camp.

**Winds:** These students play brass or woodwind instruments. This includes everyone but the Guard, Pit and Battery.