

## **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.

1. Go to competitions and home football games. Watch the shows and marvel at the improvement as the season progresses. Your kid(s) will appreciate the fact that you take the time to come to the events (whether they will 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.
2. Network with other parents. It will make your life much easier if you make ride sharing arrangements for practices and carpooling for competitions.
3. Attend Booster 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). Mr. Smith and Mr. Jamison usually gives status reports at each meeting. You will also find out about what is happening with the rest of the Ferndale Schools fine arts community.

## **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 p.m., be there at 5:45 p.m. If you drop your performer off at 6 p.m., he or she will not reach the marching field with all required equipment until 6:15 p.m. Nothing frustrates the directors more than starting late.

Also, water bottles are highly recommended, especially for the Saturday mini camps and late summer practices. These kids work very hard and need to keep plenty of fluids in their systems.

## **Home Football Games**

The marching band performs at halftime at all the home football games. The band sits together 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.

The Boosters have a “booth” at each game where they sell various items, such as T-shirts, sweatshirts, hats, buttons, etc. The proceeds help to defray the marching band expenses.

Please stay for the entire game and support the football team. So many band parents come to the game that if we all left after the halftime show, the stands would be empty (or at least half empty).

## Competitions

*Students need white socks to wear with their uniforms. Be prepared... unless you enjoy the frantic hunt for socks ten minutes before call time.*

Competitions are held on weekends. There are usually several “sanctioned” competitions every weekend throughout the state. Mr. Smith 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, travels together on school busses.

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 twelve 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 by flights (see classifications below), 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 best to arrive before the Flight III competition begins. That way you can see the rest of the bands, and it’s always interesting to see the other shows. Plus, at the larger events there are hundreds (and sometimes thousands) of spectators. It’s easiest to get a good seat before a new flight starts. Most people think the best seats are on the 50-yard line, high up in the stands (where you can see the 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 a ranking but does give an exhibition performance.

### Maps/Directions

Mr. Smith will have maps and directions in the band room. The schedule (with printable maps) is also out on the Booster 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 between \$3 and \$5 for an adult. Mr. Smith often will have a few discounted tickets for a competition available on a first come, first served basis. The hosting band will have a concession stand where you can buy snacks and drinks. They will also have programs that can be purchased. In addition to listing all 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 that school.

### **Weather**

Bands do perform (and rehearse) in the sun, wind, rain, and snow. The experienced parents go to 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 bands may do a standstill performance on the track. Most bands want to avoid standstills because no points are given for marching in a standstill performance; the higher the points the better the score.

### **Band Classification & Judging**

(Taken from MCBA website: <http://www.michcompband.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. This year, Ferndale has been classified as a Flight III school.

#### **2003 MCBA Flights of Competition**

Flight I 1636 – higher

Flight II 1134 – 1635

Flight III 738 – 1133

Flight IV 737 – lower

### **Scoring**

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

General Effect Music Judge 1 *20 possible points*

General Effect Music Judge 2 *20 possible points*

General Effect Visual Judge *20 possible points*

Music Performance Individual Judge

Music Performance Ensemble Judge

*Averaged for a total of 20 possible points*

Visual Performance Individual Judge

Visual Performance Ensemble Judge

*Averaged for a total of 20 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 above, MCBA also hires other judges that have undergone training and testing, successfully completed field trialing, maintained their judging skills, and kept abreast of current knowledge and trends.

Some judges will observe from the press box; others will be on the field (and maybe will stop directly in front of your kid to hear if he/she is playing the music). You will see judges speaking into tape recorders.

Mr. Smith shares the judges' 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 Bob Darwood, and these tapes are also reviewed by all.

## **Awards**

Awards are based on total points.

At the end of the competition (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 for each band is announced (the lowest score announced first). Awards are presented to each band. In addition to the ranking, awards are also given for best marching, best music, and best 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 Flight III schools and see how Ferndale ranks throughout the season.

## **Spectator Etiquette**

Try to sit by other FHS parents. Wear your marching band t-shirt/sweatshirt and bucket hat (available for purchase at home football games). Yell, cheer, and clap at appropriate times during the show. Be loud. Ferndale is proud to have an outstanding support audience.

Do not exit/enter 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 kids in the other bands have worked just as hard as our own kids. 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 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 (at this point wipe the tear away).

## What does **THAT** mean??

**BATTERY (DRUM LINE):** These are the snare drums, bass 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 area. **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 at Interlochen.

**FIELD COMMANDER (aka 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.

**INSTRUCTORS:** These additional adults work with individual sections of the band at practices and/or sectionals. They are chosen for their outstanding accomplishments in their respective areas.

**MCBA (MICHIGAN COMPETING BANDS ASSOCIATION):** This organization sponsors competitions throughout the state. The end of the season finals (usually called "State") are often held at the Silverdome. A band must earn points in regional competitions in order to qualify to compete in these finals. Only ten bands from each flight are invited to "State."

**PIT:** The students in the pit play instruments that are stationary (often in 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 (aka Pit Pops, Pit Princesses, and Pit Pups):** These very important volunteers quickly assemble the field commander's stand, props, and pit equipment, and get them into place on the field. After the show, the pit crew quickly removes all these items. 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. If you would like to be a "Pit Participant" contact Jon Taisey (the Pit Boss) or any Booster officer.

**SECTION LEADER:** This is usually a senior from each instrument section. (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.

**WINDS:** These students play brass or woodwind instruments.