

## Introduction

The following document presents the findings of a select committee which was formed to describe a band program at the Middle School level that represents policies, procedures, and fundamentals that can be defined as **Best Practices** in Florida school band programs. A primary goal of the committee was to base its findings not only on what would represent the best practices, but also, what would incorporate common practice, wherever possible. In this sense, the findings represent a realistic model of what a middle school band in Florida should look like. These findings should serve as a model against which band programs can measure their own policies, practices, and fundamentals.

The committee fully realizes that each band program in Florida is unique, and must respond to the many variables that are in effect in its own community. **It therefore, cautions readers of this document to NOT use these findings as mandates.** Instead, the committee presents the individuals who are in charge of a middle school band program in Florida with “goals” for which they can strive. In this regard, the committee hopes that the findings presented herein may help band directors, administrators, and parents to achieve a comprehensive and well balanced band program that places its emphasis on student learning within a structure of carefully planned performance activities. Above all else, an intelligent and purposeful use of **student time** must guide the activities of any successful band program. And so, these guidelines should serve as benchmarks for middle school bands to use as they plan their courses of study and performance activities.

The findings presented in the following sections describe the “ideal” middle school band program. Some of the items may not apply to each and every middle school band program in Florida, but serve as an indicator of what the complete band program looks like, and how it engages in the business of educating its students.

## Findings

### Overall Band Program

The middle school band program in Florida that engages in Best Practices will:

- Be part of a comprehensive MUSIC program which should also include chorus, orchestra, and general music; and, depending on adequate funding and facilities, could include, piano/keyboard classes, guitar classes, music technology, music theory, music appreciation and a fine arts wheel.
- Be comprehensive and balanced, and will include Concert Band at the advanced level, Concert Band at the intermediate level, Beginning Band, Jazz Band, Chamber Music instruction (solo and ensemble), private and small group instruction, instruction in music theory, music history, and conducting.

- Recruit students through a planned schedule of practices which include: articulation with elementary feeders; communication with elementary parents throughout the year via personal and written means; performances at the elementary schools; attending and assisting at elementary schools events; creating professional relationships with elementary teachers; and, using the wheel as a recruiting tool.
- Maintain close communication and a working relationship with the High School program it feeds, via the following practices: articulation with the high school directors; communication with parents via personal and written means; participating in joint events including, but not limited to, middle school/high school football night, joint concerts, social interactions, and side-by-side rehearsals; student mentoring by high school students; inviting high school directors to be guest conductors.
- Be led by a full-time, certified band director.
- Have a second certified band director to assist, at least on a part-time basis, with the instruction of the students if more than 200 students are enrolled in the band program. The assistant director would be full-time if there are 300 students enrolled in the program.
- Have a third certified band director to assist with the instruction of the students if more than 400 students are enrolled in the band program.
- Receive funding from the School District that is sufficient to accomplish its **instructional**\* goals.

*\*All materials, equipment, and services needed to provide quality instruction in all facets of the band program (e.g. music, instruments, repairs, recordings, method books, classroom equipment, etc.)*

- Receive additional funding for its **co-curricular**\* activities from school internal sources, the PTA, school foundation, School Improvement Committee, and special School District allocations. If the band is involved in supporting athletic events, the athletic department contributes funding to the band program in return.

*\*Activities which are part of the instructional goals of the band program, but which take place outside of the regular school day. Also includes events and activities in which the band is expected or required to participate. For example: football games, evening concerts, Music Performance Evaluations, performances for the community, educational workshops and festivals, Honor Band events, All-State participation by students, etc.*

- Receive supplemental funding for its **extra-curricular**\* activities from: student fees, student fund-raising, parent fund-raising, donations, sponsors, and other self-generated funding.

*\*Activities which are extra enhancements to the instructional program. Examples include: music related trips, concert band and/or jazz band festivals and competitions, extra staffing needed to accomplish extra-curricular activities, etc.*

- Students participate in 0 to 2 fund raising events during the school year.
- Distribute funding received (*total band budget*) in the following manner:
  - 70% for instructional purposes
  - 20% for co-curricular purposes
  - 10% for extra-curricular purposes
- Allocate funding in the following manner for the instructional areas:
  - 25% for music and method books
  - 25% for instruments and equipment
  - 10% for MPA fees
  - 10% for repairs and maintenance
  - 10% for transportation
  - 10% for awards, recognition projects, and social events
  - 5% for clinicians
  - 5% for supplies
- Engage in a band trip at the discretion of the band director. In general, instructionally based trips are 2 days and 1 night, and “reward” trips are for only 1 day.
- Limit the amount of time students spend in out-of-school rehearsals. Time spent in out-of-school instruction should not exceed a 5 to 1 ratio for any single student across all classes. (*i.e. 5 minutes of in-school instruction for every 1 minute of out-of-school instruction; e.g. 5 hours of in-school instruction per week would generate one hour of out- of-school instruction per week, per student*)
- Defer marching band activities to the high school level. Eighth grade students do not receive basic marching band training as part of the middle school band program.
- Carefully supervise booster organizations. A parent support group, if present, follows all School District and State guidelines, submits all plans to the school principal, and follows all policies as set by the band director. The group exists only to assist the band director in achieving the goals of the overall program.

- Provide for a band uniform, so that the students are dressed uniformly for public performances. Uniforms are either school-owned, or student purchased. Uniforms are made available to students who cannot afford them.
- Provide the opportunity to perform a variety of musical styles during the course of the school year. Students should perform 2 to 4 complete concert programs each school year, representing a wide variety of selections and styles.

### **Beginning Band**

The middle school band program in Florida that engages in Best Practices will observe the following in regards to its Beginning Band:

- Students are scheduled in either heterogeneous or homogeneous classes, depending on director's schedule and instructional strategies. Percussionists are scheduled homogeneously.
- Beginning band classes meet for a regular academic class period, 5 days per week, throughout the school year, beginning in the 6<sup>th</sup> grade.
- A full year of 6<sup>th</sup> grade beginning band should be made available to all students. If a fine arts wheel is part of the school curriculum, the exposure to each subject should be as short as possible to allow students to choose and begin full-time band instruction as soon as possible
- The average number of students in each beginning band class is 35-45 students (except for percussion class). When a class exceeds 45 students, a new class should be scheduled.
- Instrumentation across all classes is carefully planned. In general, the following percentages are observed:
  - 12% flutes
  - 2% oboes
  - 4% bassoons
  - 24% clarinets
  - 9% saxophones
  - 12% trumpets
  - 8% horns
  - 10% trombones
  - 4% baritones
  - 9% tubas
  - 6% percussion

*\*Low reeds are moved over to those instruments in the 2<sup>nd</sup> year*

*\*\*Percentages will fluctuate slightly from year to year, based on the needs of the high school band programs*

- Basic instruction for beginners is accomplished by using the following methods: Beginning Band method books, recordings that accompany method books, supplemental published material, director produced supplemental materials, audio and video recordings, guest clinicians, and live musical performances.
- Individual practice by beginning band students is monitored by one or more of the following: self-reporting on home practice forms signed by parents, homework assignments that are recorded and submitted, homework assignments that are checked off in band class through playoffs.
- On average, the band director hears each student play individually in class at least 3 times per week.
- A performance assessment system is used in each beginning band class. Teachers may have students play before and/or after school as well.
- Students who do not exhibit sufficient progress on one instrument are allowed to switch to another instrument within the beginning band class, at the discretion of the band director.
- The beginning band classes present 2 to 4 public performances during the school year, either individually or combined.
- Beginning band students are encouraged to prepare and perform a solo and/or ensemble for the FBA District Solo and Ensemble MPA.
- At the end of the first year of playing an instrument, students are placed in the second year band based on results of individual performance assessments.

### **Intermediate Level Concert Band**

The middle school band program in Florida that engages in Best Practices will observe the following in regards to its Intermediate Level Concert Band:

- Students are required to perform a formal performance assessment in order to be placed in the Intermediate Level Concert Band.
- Students are required to perform a formal audition, or performance assessment, for seating placement in the Intermediate Level Concert Band.
- Students in the Intermediate Level Concert Band are given the opportunity to reseat for a higher chair within their sections.

- Students in the Intermediate Level Concert Band earn their grades based on more than just participation/attendance. Criteria used in assigning grades include *individual performance assessment, group performance assessment, student self-assessment, and written tests.*
- The Intermediate Level Concert Band participates in the FBA District Concert Band MPA each year. Participation may be for “comments only” based on the judgment of the band director.
- On average, the Intermediate Level Concert Band performs 2 to 4 formal public concerts during the regular school year (*excluding FBA MPA and festival/competitions*).
- The Advanced Level Concert Band participates in community events when the band director deems the situation is appropriate.
- On average, the Intermediate Level Concert Band might participate in 0 to 1 non-FBA sponsored festival/competitions each year.
- Students in the Intermediate Level Concert Band are encouraged to participate in the FBA District Solo and Ensemble MPA each year.
- All students in the Intermediate Level Concert Band are encouraged to take private lessons from professional teachers who are specialists on the students’ instruments.
- Percussionists in the Intermediate Level Concert Band are scheduled in the same class period as the rest of the band, at the discretion of the band director, and based on scheduling demands.

### **Advanced Band**

The middle school band program in Florida that engages in Best Practices will observe the following in regards to its Advanced Level Concert Band:

- Students are required to perform a formal audition, or assessment, in order to be placed in the Advanced Level Concert band.
- Students are required to perform a formal audition, or assessment, for seating placement in the Advanced Level Concert Band.

- Students in the Advanced Level Concert Band are given the opportunity to reseat for a higher chair within their sections.
- Students in the Advanced Level Concert Band earn their grades based on more than just participation/attendance. Criteria used in assigning grades include *individual performance assessment, group performance assessment, student self-assessment, and written tests.*
- The Advanced Level Concert Band participates in the FBA District Concert Band MPA each year.
- On average, the Advanced Level Concert Band performs 2 to 4 formal public concerts during the regular school year (*excluding FBA MPA and festival/competitions*).
- The Advanced Level Concert Band participates in community events when the band director deems the situation is appropriate.
- On average, the Advanced Level Concert Band might participate in 0 to 1 non-FBA sponsored festival/competitions each year.
- Approximately 90% of the students in the Advanced Level Concert Band participate in the FBA District Solo and Ensemble MPA each year.
- All students in the Advanced Level Concert Band are encouraged to take private lessons from professional teachers who are specialists on the students' instruments.
- Percussionists in the Advanced Level Concert Band are scheduled in the same class period as the rest of the band.

### **Jazz Band**

The middle school band program in Florida that engages in Best Practices will observe the following in regards to its Jazz Band:

- If numbers allow, there are two or more Jazz Bands in the band program.
- The top Jazz Band is scheduled during the regular school day.
- When possible, the other Jazz Bands are also scheduled during the regular school day, but not at the exclusion of other course offerings.
- Students are required to perform a formal audition in order to be placed in the top Jazz Band.

- Students are required to perform a formal audition for seating placement within the top Jazz Band.
- Students in the Jazz Bands earn their grades based on more than just participation/attendance. Criteria used in assigning grades include *individual performance assessment, group performance assessment, student self-assessment, and written tests.*
- The top Jazz Band participates in the FBA District Jazz Band MPA each year.
- On average, the top Jazz Band performs from 2 to 4 formal public concerts during the regular school year (*excluding FBA MPA and festival/competitions*).
- On average, the top Jazz Band performs in no more than 5 community events each year, excluding recruiting events and/or school related performances.
- On average, the top Jazz Band participates in 0 to 1 non-FBA sponsored festival/competitions.
- All students in the Jazz Bands are encouraged to take private lessons from professional teachers who specialize in Jazz, and are specialists on the students' instruments. This is highly recommended for students in the rhythm section. Jazz lessons are not to replace traditional private lessons, but rather, serve as a supplement to them.
- Improvisation is taught in the Jazz Bands through use of method books, instructional recordings, instruction and modeling by the teacher, guest clinicians, private lessons, live performances, student mentoring, and guided listening to professional recordings.

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