

Best Practices for Marching Bands

The Florida Bandmasters Association (FBA) believes that music plays an integral role in the complete education of Florida's school children. As members of the FBA, we must clearly understand our duties and obligations as professional music educators in order to perpetuate the dignity and honor of our profession. The FBA promotes collegiality, cooperation, and communication among band directors, their school administration, faculty, staff and community. The Florida Bandmasters Association is at its heart an advocate for the inclusion of all students in our effort to provide a band at every school. Nothing we do should hinder any student from receiving the very best music education we can offer.

The marching band, while very visible and valuable at many schools, is only one component of a balanced band program, of which the primary focus must be the concert band. The FBA Marching Music Performance Assessment is the standard of evaluation for high school marching bands within our association. As members of FBA, our marching band calendar should revolve around our District Marching Music Performance Assessment. Other marching events should be scheduled in deference to that date. It is common practice for high school marching bands to participate at home football games as well as away games within reasonable travel time and expense. Other traditional community performances (parades, celebrations, etc.) are also common expectations for marching bands. Any additional marching band performances should be weighed against a careful cost / benefit analysis.

At the forefront of every decision regarding additional marching band performances should be the question, "What is best for my students?". Exposing students to bands from other areas or helping students to prepare for their performance at the FBA Marching Music Performance Assessment are among the acceptable reasons for scheduling an additional marching band performance. When scheduling any additional marching events and the subsequent required rehearsals, we must recognize the importance of the total educational process and remain sensitive to each student's needs in terms of academic pursuits, family life, and extracurricular activities. We should allow for the possibility of students who work and attend academic classes outside of our schools. We must carefully weigh the burdens of time and expense that these additional requirements place on the students, their families, and the community as a whole.

Participation in our band programs should not be hindered because of excessive requirements for membership. Examples of such hindrances include, but are not limited to the following:

- Excessive hours of after-school rehearsals, including weekends
- Excessive rehearsal hours during the summer
- Excessive fees required to participate in band
- Excessive number of events (rehearsals, festivals, contests)

(The interpretation of *excessive* will be left to the band director's professional opinion, but every effort must be made to make our band programs accessible to ALL students.)

Due to the physiological and musical development of middle school students, marching is not included in the middle school curriculum. However, community expectations may occasionally necessitate a marching band type of performance (i.e. parade, stand-still outdoor performance), but no attempt should be made to have a marching band at our middle schools.

Marching band can be a valuable tool when incorporated into the overall scope of a band program. It should not, however, be the primary focus of our music education curriculum and it should never be allowed to hinder student participation because of the demands involved in participation. As members of the FBA, it is our professional obligation to maintain the highest standards in every aspect of our program. We are music educators first and foremost. When used as an integral part of a balanced program, marching band can be a fantastic opportunity for us to attract, keep, nurture and ultimately transform our students into lifelong consumers of quality music.