

# Frequently Asked Questions

## About Norwalk High School Marching Band

### ***What is Band Camp?***

Band Camp is held for two weeks prior to the start of the school year. Its purpose is to teach marching skills to the students, and to learn and prepare the field show for the fall marching season. It is also a time that band members get to know one another and become a 'team' of musicians. Rehearsals are 9 a.m. – 12 noon and 1 p.m. – 3:30 p.m. and 5 p.m. – 8 p.m., students should arrive early in order to be prepared to begin on time.

### ***What should my child bring to Band Camp?***

Instrument	Music	Pencil & Coordinate Book (on a lanyard)
Socks & Sneakers	Hat	Sunscreen
Water	Medical forms	Valve oil (for horns)
Drumsticks (for drummers)		Reeds (for wind instruments)

### ***Where is Band Camp held?***

Band Camp is held at Norwalk High School in the music wing and at Andrew's Field (the parking lot behind the County Shopping Mall on Westport Avenue).

### ***What is a "sectional" and where are they held?***

Sectionals are groups of instruments that practice together outside of the regular rehearsals, usually held at Norwalk High or at Andrew's Field. They are most often "called" by section leaders, those students in leadership positions who oversee "sections" of the band: such as clarinets, saxophones, flutes and pit in September and October. The band is also divided into larger sections, such as Brass, Wind, Percussion – depending on the type of instrument played. Your child will understand all this from their Middle School experience.

### ***When are rehearsals?***

During marching season (September – November), rehearsals are usually held from 5:00 to 8:00 p.m. (Tuesday, Wednesday & Friday), Percussion and Guard (Thursday) and Saturdays (9:00-conclusion). On a competition day, they will rehearse: Saturdays, 9 a.m. – Competition. Rehearsals are held rain or shine, either at Andrew's Field (on County Street behind Bagel King) or at the High School.

### ***What are "basics"?***

Basics are the essential skills learned for marching. They include learning how to hold your instrument, movement techniques and how to follow instructions. These are taught at Band Camp.

### ***What is a coordinate book?***

A small (3 x 5) notebook hung around their neck to write drill positions (coordinates) on the field during a show.

### ***What is a Drum Major?***

The band has several Drum Majors, chosen for their leadership ability and musical skill. They direct the band during performances, offering tempo and leadership for the intricate movements that take place all over the field. They are chosen by Mr. Smith following "try-outs" held in June. All students are welcome to "try out."

***When can I see my child?***

Parents are invited to observe Band rehearsal each night. A “run through” of the show is usually done around 7:45 p.m. It is amazing to see how the students have progressed, and you are able to see what positions your child moves on the field. (Once they are in uniform at a competition, it is often hard to spot them – they all look alike!) Of course, band competitions (which charge a \$7 admission fee for MAC, higher for BOA) are prime times to watch the band. They will often perform at pre-game or halftime during home NHS football games. Students travel to competitions on buses with parent chaperones (chosen by Mr. Smith). Following competitions, parents may meet with their child after “The Circle.” The “Circle” is held at the conclusion of the competition. Always check InfoLine for pick-up times.

***What is a Field Show?***

Field Shows are musical performances that take place on a football field/stadium in which a marching band plays a variety of musical pieces while moving in a variety of formations, to creatively tell a story. In addition to musicians, a Color Guard interprets the music through dance, colorful flag work and the tossing, catching and twirling of specialized ‘sabers’ and ‘rifles’ (and sometimes other pieces of equipment).

***What is a competition?***

Bands host other bands to come to their stadiums/football fields to perform their musical programs. They are judged for music, artistic ability, precision, and marching techniques, with each band receiving a score and various awards given at the end of the evening. Most competitions begin between 5-6:pm. It is usually a major fundraiser for the host band and allows students to see and learn from one another. Norwalk High’s hosted competition is *The Cavalcade of Bands*, held in November each year. Parents are encouraged to attend competitions – to support all the bands and cheer on their own children.

***What is MAC?***

*Musical Arts Conference* is the local “circuit” of bands in the New England area that Norwalk High School participates in. Learn more about them at [www.musicalartsconference.org](http://www.musicalartsconference.org)

***What is Cavalcade?***

*The Cavalcade of Bands* is the MAC band competition hosted by Norwalk High and held at our football stadium. It is the major fundraiser of the band program and calls for the help of all parents to volunteer in a variety of tasks. It is one of the high points of the band season for NHS students and hosts 15-20 bands.

***What is BOA?***

*Bands of America* is a national organization that holds competitions throughout the United States, highlighting some of the most skilled and precise High School marching bands. “Regionals” are held throughout the US, and final championships are held at the Indianapolis RCA Dome in November of each year. See [www.boa.com](http://www.boa.com)

***What is “Hofstra”?***

Hofstra (University) is one of the locations of the Regional competitions for Bands of America. It is located on Long Island. It is a full day of competition in which the bands compete in preliminaries and finals (twice). It is not to be missed and is a highpoint of competition for the students. Carpool with other band parents and sit in the stands together, cheering our students on!

***What is “Indianapolis”?***

The RCA Dome in Indianapolis is the host site for the *Grand National Championships of Bands of America*. It takes place over several days with dozens of bands competing, first in preliminaries, then semi-finals, and the top in finals on the last evening. It is a spectacular event with the best high school marching bands in the USA. Tickets must be purchased in advance. Parents often plan a trip together, taking advantage of group rates. Don't pass up these opportunities – you may regret it as the date draws near.

***How much will all this cost me?***

Having a marching band program is not cheap. The Norwalk Board of Education funds the Band Director's salary and partially pays for school bus transportation to competitions; all other expenses, such as instructor fees, props, and instruments are paid for by fundraisers run by Marching Bears Inc. (MBInc.) The only requirement of each student to purchase is:

- Personal uniform needs (often a one-time purchase) – see below items listed
- Selling \$225 in Ads (advertisements) for the Cavalcade program book (from local merchants). This is a major source of revenue and is where students are asking the greater Norwalk community to support the Band program.
- Participating in the “Band Marathon” in August (collecting \$25 in pledges)

***What do we have to buy?***

- Drillmasters – special black marching shoes - \$30
- Black gloves - \$4 (except for those who play percussion instruments)
- Black spandex shorts – to wear under the uniform - \$7
- NHS windpants - \$15
- Band Jacket – usually \$75

***What are drillmasters?***

Drillmasters are special marching shoes that are ordered through the Quartermasters (those volunteer parents who oversee the fitting of uniforms on band members). These are fitted, ordered and purchased in August.

***What about Guard members?***

Guard members have a different costume each year, as well as the other equipment band members are expected to purchase.

***How do I keep track of all this? How do I know when to pick up my child after a competition?***

*InfoLine* (454-6383) is kept updated regularly. Following a band competition, scores are announced and the time buses are expected back at NHS. Other information is also shared regularly through *InfoLine*.

***When does my child have time for homework?***

Believe it or not, most parents will state that their children have the best grades during marching season! They learn to work on a schedule and prioritize their needs and studies. Mr. Smith oversees how students are doing in their class work, reviewing each of their interim & report cards. Many band students tutor each other if needed. A majority of the band/guard receive honors & high honors and are part of the National Honor Society.

***What do we have to do as parents?***

There is no requirement of parents, besides signing permission slips! However, every child enjoys having a parent support them and present at the end of rehearsals and at competitions, cheering them on. Marching Bears Inc. also needs the support of parents to help accomplish its goals in providing financial assistance to the Band. This takes the form of volunteer at various fundraisers.

***What is MBI?***

*Marching Bears Inc.* (MBI) is the parent organization, a non-profit, 501(c)(3). Its sole purpose is to fundraise in order to support the band program. Every parent/guardian of a band/guard member is a member of the organization. Through paying \$10 dues, a family is considered a member-in-good standing and may participate as the chair of a committee, vote in elections and be elected to office (President, Vice-President, Treasurer, Recording Secretary & Corresponding Secretary). A Parent Handbook is distributed at the beginning of every school year that contains information about the Band program and MBI By-Laws. A newsletter is published monthly (of which dues helps cover the cost) and a monthly General Meeting is held.

***What is a General Meeting?***

The monthly meeting of MBI that reviews the fundraising and volunteer needs to support the band program. Mr. Smith also gives a report regarding student activities, Band competitions and music department news. It is usually held the first Monday of the month at 7:30pm at Norwalk High School in the band room.

***What can parents do?***

Parents can volunteer in many ways. Each parent/guardian is needed to volunteer their time at a shift at the Oyster Festival every September due to the size and nature of this task. Other on-going fundraisers that always need volunteers are: Golf Tournament, Bingo, Bingo Kitchen, Boat Show, Tag Sales, plant sales, auctions. When parents volunteer at special functions, it often taps into the greater Norwalk community for financial support, lessening the burden on each of us!

***Why are there so many fundraisers?***

The Board of Education provides funds for the Band director's salary and school bus transportation to local competitions. Funds are needed for additional instructors, equipment (flags, props, instruments), and other bus transportation. Expenditures and income are discussed at General Band meetings. Without the fundraising activities of MBI, the band program could not function.