

Blackshirt Band's New Direction for Marching Band

Frequently Asked Questions

Is there marching band at Waukesha South?

Yes. As part of a well rounded program, we offer an exciting multi-dimensional marching band.

What class should I sign up for?

This has not changed. Freshmen that want to be in marching band should sign up for Concert Band and Marching Band. Sophomores, Juniors, and Seniors only need to sign up for SWAP.

Where will the marching band be performing?

We are still in the process of finalizing the schedule, but we have many plans that are being explored/ developed.

- The Big 10 colleges offer High School Band days for the purpose of educating high school students about the opportunities available to them as members of a college marching band. Several thousand high school students play pep band music throughout a football game and watch the college half-time show, fifth quarter, etc.
- We are looking at a number of opportunities for stand-still performances
 - Homecoming Pep Rally
 - Navy Pier in Chicago during college fair weekend
 - Area Community Service Performance
- Possible Parade Appearances in:
 - Door County Fall Festival Parade
 - Waukesha Holiday Parade and Memorial Day Parade
 - State Fair Parade
- We are also planning to perform as a pep band at home football games The marching band will be involved at Marchfest

What will be the outside of class responsibilities?

- Summer Camp - 2 days in August. Afternoon and evening rehearsals. This is a reduction from our 7 day camp. We will still have the pool party and many team building activities
- Friday night at home football games and some special weekend performances
- Color guard and drum-line are likely to still meet one evening a week
- We have eliminated the weekly summer rehearsals and the Monday and Wednesday night rehearsals. We will not have any weekend rehearsals, only weekend performances.

Is this an unusual format for a marching band?

No. There are over 700 public and private high schools in Wisconsin and most years, fewer than 30 bands, which is less than 10%, choose to compete. In Waukesha County, the only schools that consistently have competitive marching bands are Waukesha and Sussex Hamilton. Other long standing competitive area bands are currently in a state of flux regarding their marching status for the coming year due to similar circumstances. Our new marching band format will be similar to the model to be found at most high quality Wisconsin High School Band programs.

What will students learn from these performance opportunities?

- An increased focus on music mastery
- Development of the ability to evaluate a performance based on authentic criteria using the WI Model Academic Standards for Music.
- Lessons unique to experiencing community service through musical performance
- That teamwork, self discipline, and a commitment to excellence will result in success

How were the new activities selected?

In our previous model of marching band, students learned hard-work, self-discipline, and how to travel as a group in a way that is respectful to those around them while working as part of a team, and performing music at an advanced level. All future activities will focus on and maintain these same learning objectives in addition to enhanced student exposure to a wider variety of musical performance outlets including insights to college band preparatory activities.

Our students' favorite memories from marching band always included travel, the time for social interactions, and the feeling of success from a quality performance. It was important for us to maintain these objectives as well.

Will there still be an overnight?

One of the new pillars driving all instruction at South High School is building positive relationships. We believe that the overnight has been one of our key team-building activities, so we will maintain this travel tradition. It would be somewhat unreasonable to ask a school to host us on their gym floor if we are not spending any money at their show, so we had to look for other opportunities. We have received a discount at the Kalahari so we are planning to partner this with our participation at UW Band Day.

Why isn't the band marching competitively anymore?

Due to issues outside of the South Band's control, we have seen a reduction in incoming enrollment numbers. Despite the yearly decline in the number of participating students and the resultant competitive disadvantages experienced, the Marching Blackshirts have always produced a first class competitive product. This hard earned marching reputation has come at great expense to the student membership in terms of financial accessibility, time management, and sacrifice of homework and physical recovery time. Each successive smaller class increases the time and financial burden on the remaining membership as we continually work to do more with less. Projections for a smaller incoming class again this year and even smaller next year, create circumstances that will not sustain a comprehensive competitive experience that is justifiable by any measure of a student centered band program.

Even though marching band is only the first six or seven weeks of the school year, the current structure has an adverse effect on our overall band program year-round. We found that over 75% of our freshmen opt not to continue on the usual curricular path as a direct result of their decision not to march. Overall in the program, more than 50% of the band is not marching. This creates a divisiveness between the marchers and the non-marchers that is unhealthy to our goal of being inclusive rather than exclusive and detracts from the "family" atmosphere which we feel is unique to the South Musical experience. By restructuring the time and financial burdens for students, more students will have the opportunity to participate in all aspects of our band program and we can be the band family we want to be. The band will be able to focus our resources on all of the aspects of our band program. We are especially excited about our upcoming trip to Australia!

Why not do a field show for football games and/or just a couple of competitions?

The resources required to support and perform a quality field show is the same regardless of how many times it is performed. Fewer performances of a field show will not break the cycle mentioned above, so we would continue to fail to meet the needs of the majority of our students. Students deserve to be proud of their performance accomplishments as they always have in the past. The new activities provide many of the rewards, but without the extreme demands.

Will the band ever return to competitive marching?

We will continue to evaluate the quality of every aspect of the music program in order to ensure the best possible educational experience for as many South music students as possible.

Feel free to contact us with additional questions or concerns.

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