

## **MARCHING BAND PHILOSOPHY STATEMENT**

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The marching band is an organization of students, parents, and staff who pride themselves on excellence in the areas of personal performance, the band's performance, and in the way they represent themselves and the school. The road to excellence is not always easy; but in marching band, students learn the discipline and teamwork that it takes in order to be truly excellent in everything they do. For music educators, it is easy to lose sight of the importance of having a marching band in their school programs because it does not necessarily force students to focus on music alone. Instead, students who join marching band often find themselves concerned more with other qualities like athletics, friendships, competition, and school spirit. Even though these qualities are not necessarily musical, music educators need to be reminded of why we have music education in schools in the first place in order to fully understand the benefits of these qualities. Music education exists in schools primarily for the extramusical benefits that it brings, including the social benefits, physicality and development of coordination, development of leadership skills, increased accountability, fostering of emotional development, creative thinking, improvement in general cognition skills, and learning self-discipline. If we take this away and focus on only fostering skilled musicians, then we are doing a disservice to our students and preventing them from becoming the best human beings that they can be. Marching band is an activity that capitalizes on all of these extramusical qualities that are crucial to student experiences.

The personal development that students build in their time with the marching band is notable in that it is transferrable to other school activities and to life outside of school as well. Firstly, students learn the value of a strong work ethic as they come together to form a rewarding product, which happens in competition and in rallying school spirit during athletic functions.

This work ethic is fostered by the teamwork that band members share when they strive to be excellent and work together towards common goals. In marching band, students learn that they cannot be truly successful without the help of their band mates, and that each individual plays an integral role in making the end product come to life. In this way, students learn to appreciate others and develop a greater sense of self-worth. By understanding that they can each make or break the performance through their individual actions, students learn to be leaders by becoming accountable for their actions and also by helping to support each other in taking on that responsibility for themselves. These interactions help to form bonds and support friendships among the members of the band, leading to an overall sense of community in which students can feel safe and have a sense of belonging within their school. With the nature of marching band being the support system for other school functions like football games and pep rallies, this sense of community is uniquely expanded to those outside of the marching band program as well. In a sense, the marching band promotes a sense of community to its audience members because of the strong focus on school spirit and commitment to representing the school well. Out of all the school ensembles, marching band has the opportunity to reach the largest audience through football games and community functions. In these unique situations where music programs would normally not receive the spotlight, we have the opportunity to present our music programs to those who would not normally be involved, and can develop a stronger sense of support from the community by showing our support for them.

Aside from the extramusical benefits that marching band provides, it is important to give credit to this organization for its role in strengthening the entire music program of the school in its musical demands. It is important for music educators to realize that marching band is an educational tool that offers a strong foundation in the basic principles of playing music. For

example, tone quality is developed best through marching band because the physical demands of running around a football field forces students to use proper breathing, posture, and embouchure stability. Rhythmic accuracy is perfected through marching band because the physical act of marching creates synchronicity between the musicians, offering a unique opportunity for students to develop a more acute sense of pulse by marching in time with each other. Students also become more aware of intonation and blend when they march on a field because they face the ultimate challenge of dealing with constantly changing positions and horn angles, and must figure out how to produce a homogenous sound pleasant to the ear in such a wide, open space. Musicality is also influenced by marching band, because students must emphasize everything they would normally do in the practice room in order for musical intentions to be clear and heard outdoors and on a large football field. By exploring all of these musical qualities, students receive the opportunity to make themselves into better musicians overall, which greatly affects the success and outcome of every other musical ensemble in the school.

By focusing on both the musical and extramusical benefits of marching band, students have the opportunity to become strong individuals in every aspect of their lives. The school itself greatly benefits from having a marching band because those involved prove to be better students overall. Further, marching band is the glue that holds together the larger community of school departments, students, and staff, and promotes social bonds in the most unlikely places. With all of this taken into consideration, marching band should be the top priority of any music educator in order to fully offer the best foundation to build a great music program and to provide a great life for their students as well.