

**TOPEKA WEST
CHARGER BAND**

**2014-2015
Handbook**

STRUCTURE

Philosophy

It is the philosophy of the Topeka West Band Department to provide a quality and well-rounded music education for any student who is interested in being a part of the program.

Music is as basic to your high school education as any other course that you will take. It has long been a part of the essential education of young students since the days of the early Roman Empire and was included in the Quadrivium of Boethius in medieval times.

Each student is different and has special needs and abilities; therefore, every effort will be made to instruct students both on a group and a personal level. The instructors will do their very best to reach each student and to help them gain the fullest understanding of music possible. Every student plays an important part of each group, and no single person is more important than another.

The students, however, also have a responsibility to the program and its instructors. A person must want to learn in order to be taught. Therefore, the students will be expected to be mature, disciplined and dedicated to the improvement of their own musical skills, as well as the quality of the ensemble they are in. Being a member of a musical group is a team effort and each person must do their part, to the best of their ability, in order to achieve the level of excellence that will be expected of all ensembles.

The Topeka West Charger Band's reputation is based on excellence. Through hard work, cooperation, and team spirit, the program will educate its students in musical understanding and will represent its school, instructors, and members in the most positive way.

Attendance

Each performance a group gives is equivalent to a final test for that given period of preparation. Therefore, your attendance is mandatory. Excused absences from a performance will be granted, after discussion with the director, for the following reasons only:

- A death in the family
- If the student is absent from the school the day of the performance
- Religious holiday observation
- Approved school activity (Talk to Mr. Evans)

An unexcused absence will result in the lowering of the quarter grade one complete grade level (A to B, B to C). Students having an excused absence for a performance will need to make up the performance in a form of a written essay of five pages about a composer of their choice. This report must be typed, double-spaced and submitted one week after the performance date. **Work, vacations, reunions, dates, and birthday parties etc. are not excuses to miss a performance or rehearsal.**

Please make sure to contact Mr. Evans or Mr. Harry, not your section leader, before one of these excused absence occur. Allow ample time (more than two weeks) to notify the directors. Obviously in some instances, students are not able to give a two-week notice.

Grading Policy

The grades for each class will be based on many criteria. Performances carry the most weight, worth one full letter grade per performance. Playing tests, memorization tests for marching band, written tests, attendance, daily preparation, class participation, promptness, attitude and behavior are additional examples of what will be included in assigning grades.

Playing tests and memorization tests will be done consistently and will represent the student's output as closely as possible. **Work, vacations, reunions, dates, and birthday parties etc. are not excuses to miss a performance or rehearsal.** You are given performance dates well in advance so you can schedule accordingly.

Not having an instrument is the same as not having homework completed and a student's grade will reflect that. It will result in the lowering of the student's daily participation grade.

Students **excused** by Mr. Evans from a performance will write an essay of five pages about a composer of their choice. The paper shall be typed, double-spaced and turned in no later than one week after the performance. Topics will be assigned by Mr. Evans.

Tardiness

Being tardy to class, and/or rehearsals will result in a 30 min detention to be served the next school day or a lap around the marching field during marching season. If more than four tardies occur in quarter, the student will be “benched” for a performance, and it will result in a loss of one letter grade. School tardy policy will also be following on a daily basis.

Unexcused Absences

If a student is unexcused or “skips” a class or rehearsal, including 7 a.m. rehearsals, the student will be assigned a one-hour detention and will be “benched” for one performance. Every unexcused absence occurs during a quarter will result in a loss of a letter grade.

KSHSAA and Topeka West Eligibility Guidelines:

The Kansas State High School Activities Association has an eligibility policy that the Topeka West music department follows for all performing groups. Students are eligible if they have passed five credited classes the previous semester. Topeka West High School takes eligibility a step further. Grades are checked every Tuesday morning and if a student is flunking more than one class, that student is ineligible for a one-week period starting on Wednesday thru the next grade check. This includes all band performances. The music department does have one forgiven performance per nine weeks (tentative). The directors will help students keep on top of their grades. Missing/ineligible students will severely hurt any performance.

Drug and Alcohol Policy

This policy is very clear-cut and will be strictly enforced. The policy from the “Student Handbook” states:

“Possession, consumption, sale or being under the influence of drugs or alcoholic beverages at a school sponsored activity involving that performance group will result in a short-term suspension from school and probationary status in the performance related class. The student will not be allowed to participate in or at competition for the next fifteen school days beginning with the first day of the short term suspension.”

If this policy is violated at a school-sponsored function, the student will be turned over to the administration, which will call the parents to come pick up the student and take them home. The policy is the same for the use of all tobacco products.

Uniform

The wearing of the uniform is a very important area of concern. It is to be exactly that: uniform! Therefore, when wearing the uniform, **it must be worn in its entirety, unless otherwise designated by a director.** The complete uniform consists of:

- Black gloves (marching only)
- Uniform pants, Uniform coat
- Overlay/cape, sash, gauntlets, hat and plume (marching only)
- Band shirt
- Purple, black, or grey long (mid thigh or knee length) shorts.
- Black band shoes and black socks

It will often be hot at performances. **Only when a director designates, may you be allowed to open or take your coat off.** You must have on your band shirt under your coat so that we will still be uniform. Each student will purchase a band shirt at the beginning of the year. Appropriate clothing should be worn under the uniform pants according to the weather. Shorts should be worn at all times. Long johns may be substituted in cold weather. **Absolutely no jeans or other type of denim will be allowed, as this tears down the fabric.**

Uniforms will be sized at the beginning of the year. Once they are fitted, please do not make attempts to make adjustments to the suspenders, hat straps, or in the length of the pants. **All students must have their hair pulled up so it is not over the collar. Jewelry cannot be worn, including earrings, or any other piercing (please plan ahead). Girls should not wear any makeup on their necks as this stains the uniform collar.**

Topeka West will store and take care of all cleaning and maintenance of the uniforms. During the year, you may take the uniforms to be cleaned. However, please take all of the front buttons off and the cleaning will have to be at your expense.

Uniforms will be passed out and turned back in for each performance and the students should hand them back in the exact way they were given: Hung neatly on the hanger. The reasoning behind this procedure is that uniforms are very expensive, costing about \$375 each. They are designed to last 10 years with correct usage. Please take care of the uniform and treat it with respect. A band’s appearance is an extremely important factor in its success and makes the first impression on the audience and judges.

Extra Costs

There are a few items that the students will be asked to buy. The band shirt will be the standard uniform for pep band performances and to wear underneath the uniform as mentioned earlier. The cost for the band shirt is \$13. Also, each student will be asked to buy a pair of gloves to wear with the uniform. These are long gloves with grips. The cost of the gloves is \$3.

Each new student that has not marched before will be asked to buy band shoes. These are ordered at the beginning of the marching season and can be worn through the end of the student's high school career. If the shoes are in good condition after graduating, the shoes may be sold to an incoming band member. The shoes are leather and will be a comfortable shoe to wear for long period of time. The shoes cost \$37. If a student would like lyres and flip folders, they may be purchased from local music stores for about \$4.50

The band also has a \$35 transportation fee to pay for the band's transportation to and from marching contests and concert band festivals. All students will be required to pay this fee.

Percussionists will be asked to buy their own sticks. If drumheads or mallets are broken, the students will be required to pay for new heads for the drum or mallets. This includes all marching and concert percussion.

Reed and double reed instruments are required to purchase their own reeds from any local music store. If students do not have their reeds, it will be considered not having an instrument and appropriate actions will result as stated earlier.

Instrument Loans and Usage

Instruments are available for student use and can be attained through Mr. Evans. There is a \$25 usage fee (one \$25 per person, no matter how many instruments they use) to use the school-owned instruments, **including percussion**. Once the student signs the Usage Agreement, it is the student's responsibility to care for the instrument. Damage caused by misuse, as well as reed replacement, will be at the student's expense.

Fund raising

All students will be asked to participate in fund raising activities. The district grants us an amount of money to operate on; however this is not enough to do the things to make this a well-rounded program. The purpose of fund raising is to provide a means to help out the department to cover expenses and to buy needed equipment. Fees for contest and solo contest are also taken from this account.

Band Letter System

All students, grades 9-12, will be eligible to earn the school's letter in band if they meet the designated criteria set forth in the lettering system. The outline of the system will be given to the students at the beginning of the year and are responsible for keeping track of their progress. Letter credit will be given for such things as:

- Basketball Pep Bands,
- District Band auditions
- State Band auditions
- Solo/Ensemble participation
- Extra concert attendance
- Student leadership
- Performance at Church
- Committee members (Uniform and Library)

The Band Letter System is designed so that those students who go the extra mile and put forth effort above and beyond the call of duty will receive a letter.

BAND CURRICULUM

Symphonic Band

All students are either a part of this ensemble or the wind ensemble. Each student will need to audition for chair placement. Decisions are made based on numbers as to how many instruments will be needed for each ensemble. The Symphonic Band meets for the last quarter in the first semester and the entire second semester. Besides rehearsing music, composers, musical styles, historical aspects of music and music theory will be covered during the semesters. Students will be encouraged to participate in solos and ensembles during contest season. The group will perform one concert in the fall and two concerts in the spring, play for graduation and participate in the state music contest. Grades will be based on playing and written tests as well as daily preparation, participation and performances.

Wind Ensemble

This group meets for the last quarter in the first semester and the entire second semester. All students who are enrolled in band are eligible to be a part of the Wind Ensemble. When Auditions are held during the fall the top select chairs of each section will be automatically put into the Wind Ensemble. This group will consistently perform music of a higher grade level (professional level). Besides rehearsing music, composers, musical styles, historical aspects of music and music theory will be covered during the semesters. Students will be encouraged to participate in solos and ensembles during contest season. The group will perform one concert in the fall and two concerts in the spring, play for graduation and participate in the state music contest. Grades will be based on playing and written tests as well as daily preparation, participation and performances.

Marching Band

The Charger Band class is available to all band students in all grades. This is a group with high visibility and may very well be the signature group of the program. The group will perform at all home football games and at selected away games (playoffs). Other performances include homecoming festivities, Blue Springs Marching Invitational, WU Marching Festival, UCM Marching Festival and others contest and performances scheduled on a year-to-year basis.

The group will rehearse during marching season at 7 a.m. each morning before school. Punctuality will be imperative and tardiness will affect the quarter grade. These are REQUIRED rehearsals for each member. The Charger Band is a very important aspect of not only the Band program, but also the entire school environment. One of its main purposes is to represent Topeka West High School at school and community functions. It is also a major spirit group for athletic events and adds a great deal to the climate of the contest. Grades are based on:

- Marching and playing abilities
- Memorization and playing tests
- Attendance and punctuality
- Attitude
- Performances

The key to a smoothly run organization is a structure chain of command in which everyone knows their duties and is competent to fulfill their job responsibilities. The following is a chart describing the chain. Please look it over and find your position in the system.

Mr. Evans Mr. Harry Mrs. Harry
Other staff members
Drum Majors
Section Leaders
Section Members

Basketball Pep Bands

Pep bands will perform on a divided schedule. All members will be required to perform in half of the home basketball games. The band will be divided up into two separate bands (a Purple Band and a White Band) and will trade off games. Any student is welcome to participate at all games. Performing in pep bands other than the assigned will add additional credit to your band letter. Rehearsals will be necessary and will occur right before basketball season begins and may be before school. Periodic rehearsals may be called to rehearse new tunes or to maintain performance levels. Mr. Evans and Mr. Harry will divide the games in half and direct the bands. Both directors will use the same system so that there will not be any digression of style. Band shirts are the required uniform. A schedule will be given to the student at the beginning of the season.

The band will play before the game, during time outs, at halftime and after the game. The band will stay throughout the entire game. During the first six minutes on the clock of the third quarter of the game, the students will be allowed to go to the restroom and to get food and drinks. The band plays a major role in the support for the basketball teams, so it is important to have as much spirit and enthusiasm as possible.

Knights Jazz Ensemble

The Knights Jazz Ensemble is the performing jazz band at Topeka West. This band performs at school concerts, community functions, and jazz festivals. The goal of this class is to achieve a high level of playing ability and understanding of jazz style. The class will cover jazz improvisational techniques and the structure, theory, and history of jazz. Concurrent enrollment in band is required for wind and percussion players.

Charger Guard

Topeka West Charger Guard is a group that meets during the time allotted for marching band, and may have two or three rehearsals in the evenings. The Charger Guard only meets during marching season. The group is open to any person, grades 9-12 that auditions after the Charger Guard clinics. Ms. Stacey Harry is the director.

Percussion Ensemble

The Percussion Ensemble is the performing percussion class at Topeka West. This group performs at school concerts, community functions, and regional and state small ensemble festivals. The goal of this class is to achieve a high level of playing ability and understanding of all percussion instruments. The class will cover percussion techniques on mallet and battery instruments. Concurrent enrollment in band is required. Mr. Harry is the director.

COMMON SENSE RULES - REMEMBER, BE "INTUNE"

Instill pride and excellence in ALL of your actions. All district and school rules and policies apply anytime we are together as the Topeka West Charger Band. It takes years to build a good reputation and seconds to destroy it.

NO TALKING, INDIVIDUAL PLAYING OR CELL PHONE USE INCLUDING MP3 DEVICES WHEN THE CONDUCTOR IS ON THE PODIUM. This is out of respect for the director and the musicians around you.

The attention command from a director or drum major equals the band is silent. During concert band, the band becomes silent when the director takes the podium to begin rehearsal. Be respectful!

Use respectful actions and language at all times toward students and staff. No students are allowed in the band office without permission. No food (including gum), drinks (other than water), or wearing hats are allowed in the band room.

Never use someone else's instrument without permission. Only percussionists should play drum equipment and only color guard should handle their equipment. This includes walking to and from the practice field.

Each day, be prepared for band with all your music, pencil, coordinates, supplies and equipment. You are expected to be ready to play with your equipment assembled two minutes after the class bell.

OPPORTUNITIES

All-District and All-State Honor Band

These ensembles are by audition only. After a rigorous district audition the first weekend of November, two concert bands and a jazz ensemble are formed from the finest players in the northeast Kansas area. To make these ensembles is a real honor for any student. These district groups practice with a regionally acclaimed director the first Saturday in December and perform a memorable concert in Kansas City. If you perform in this concert, you earn the right to audition for the State Concert or Jazz Band. Making it into a State ensemble is the highest goal a Kansas high school musician can achieve. Those who make one of the state ensembles will practice for three days with one of the best conductors in the country and then perform a concert at the Kansas Music Educators Conference in Wichita before a massive audience of music teachers and family members. This is a wonderful experience! The music to audition for these ensembles can be purchased at local music stores. (This is the same music we use to audition for our Topeka West concert ensembles.) To find out the exact excerpt of the music you need to play, talk to Mr. Evans or Mr. Harry. Only sophomores - seniors are eligible for the district and state honor bands.

Other Special Ensembles

There are other special ensembles that students may audition or apply for. Some of them include:

Topeka Youth Wind Ensemble: This ensemble is open to all students of the band. The Washburn University band staff facilitates auditions. There are usually four or five after school rehearsals, and then a full day Friday rehearsal and Friday night concert. This ensemble occurs during January. We have had great representation in this ensemble for many years.

Topeka Youth Jazz Workshop: This ensemble is open to all members of the Knight Jazz Ensemble. The Topeka Jazz Workshop members facilitate auditions. There are usually four or five after school evening rehearsals, and then night concert. This ensemble occurs during January/February. We have had great representation in this ensemble for many years.

Topeka Youth Symphony: This ensemble is open to all students of the band. The Washburn University orchestra and band staff facilitates auditions. There are nine weekly after school rehearsals, and then one Sunday concert each semester.

Topeka West Pit Orchestra: Students that want to be a part of the Topeka West musical, but don't want to be on stage can participate in the pit orchestra. Auditions are by Mrs. Voth. Rehearsal occurs after school during January, and February.

Regional and State Solo and Small Ensemble Festivals

Many students will choose to participate in the Regional Solo and Ensemble Festival held in early April. This is a rewarding activity for the most motivated musicians who prepare a solo with piano accompaniment or perform with an ensemble of three or more people. First, you will go to regional competition and perform before a judge and often a small but interested audience. If you earn a "1", you qualify to perform at State Festival. Again, you perform before a judge. The standards are higher since everyone who performs at State earned a "1" at their regional level. Judge's comments will be given to all performers. A certificate of achievement will be given for a "2" rating and a medal will be given for a "1" rating at both the Regional and State Festivals. This program is a terrific way for a musician to express himself/herself as an individual plus a chance to be recognized for his/her talent. When purchasing music, make sure that you have an original copy of the music for the judge and one for you. No copies are allowed for judge or performer(s). Even if you borrow a solo from the high school library, you must still purchase an original copy of it for the judge to use.

Special Tips on Preparation of Solos and Small Ensembles

Solos: When you perform a solo, you are actually performing a duet with your piano accompanist. Therefore, it is essential that you line up a competent pianist as early as possible. I would suggest getting your piano player as soon as you decide you will be performing a solo, months ahead of the performance! Get the music to the pianist as soon as it is available. Plan to pay your pianist for his or her effort. This assures a commitment of time and quality from them. Plan adequate rehearsal time with your pianist. Include a few times when your pianist, private teacher, and yourself can all be present. When choosing music, be careful, select a work that shows off your talents yet is technically and musically attainable. Look at the piano part too (better yet, have your pianist look at it). Is it going to cause any special problems? Your private teacher should have plenty of input. There is a five-minute limit on solos that includes tuning. You may make cuts to the solo and judges will stop you if you go over time. This doesn't affect your rating, but it is not fun, especially when you have spent hours working out that last page and then don't get to play it.

Ensembles: The best tip is to plan regular rehearsals. Start months ahead so that your group can really work out ensemble balance, intonation, phrasing, etc. Even though in a contest you can only perform one five-minute work, this should not limit you to rehearsing only one piece. The best small ensembles have a number of works they can perform. Being a part of a regularly practicing small ensemble can be one of the most enjoyable playing outlets you can get involved in, and it is a great way to develop your musicianship.

TOPEKA WEST CHARGER BAND

BAND HANDBOOK POLICY AGREEMENT

**I / WE, MEMBERS AND PARENTS/GUARDIANS OF THE
TOPEKA WEST CHARGER BAND HAVE READ OVER THE
OFFICIAL BAND HANDBOOK AND DO UNDERSTAND ALL
OF THE POLICIES AND RULES SET FORTH IN THE
TOPEKA WEST CHARGER BAND HANDBOOK.**

**IF ANY QUESTIONS BEFORE SIGNING, PLEASE CONTACT
MR. EVANS: bevans@topeka.k12.ks.us or 785-438-4045**

STUDENT SIGNATURE _____

DATE _____

PARENTAL SIGNATURE _____

DATE _____