

I'm a band parent: now what?

Congratulations to you and your student on the choice to be a member of the Topeka West Charger Band. You are now part of an award-winning program – a proud tradition. The TW band program is recognized throughout the Midwest (and even nationally!) for its excellence in marching, concert band performance, jazz band performance, and, just as important, its reputation for character.

As a parent of a new Charger Band or Charger Guard member, you are bound to be full of questions about what you've gotten yourself into! You've already discovered that band at Topeka West is a BIG commitment – and we've only begun. As a parent who has watched her sons grow in this program over the last five years, I'd like to share some information and perspectives that are designed to help you understand the program. More importantly, those of us who have been around a while want you to feel at home quickly and find a place in the Charger Band family.

A little history...

Topeka West has had a rich history of good music and performance. But, approximately 25 years ago, Mr. Evans challenged the program to grow. Rather than settle for easy-to accomplish goals that did not stretch students musically or educationally, he began to challenge them to continually build their skill and performance. TWCB staff is committed to providing a program that challenges each student to:

- Stretch beyond their comfort zone to reach their musical potential;
- Learn the value of hard work as part of a larger team that depends on each member to succeed.
- Develop the self-control and personal discipline required to perform difficult and demanding program under pressure.
- Develop a cooperative spirit.
- Display a respect for authority/
- Demonstrate leadership in very tangible ways;
- Bring a healthy sense of pride to the entire community.

This is a program that values excellence in achievement ... first in individual character and second, in musical performance.

The hours your children are spending in practice are not about winning trophies and bragging rights. They are about learning valuable life lessons that contribute to the holistic education of your child. Along the way, they will earn many awards. You can view past records of success on the band website www.twcb.org Clearly, performance at this level requires a great deal of commitment. You should recognize that a choice to join TWCB requires a commitment to be part of a team that depends on every member. Unlike football or basketball teams that can pull substitutes off the bench, band requires that every member know his/her part and perform it well every time. So that you may better understand what's ahead, I've posed and answered several major questions below.

Q: Why do our students have to come early practices?

A: The level of competition we encounter simply demands it. Marching at this level requires lots of practice. We compete against schools that have as many as 4,000 students and only march the best of the best. Some of these programs have as many as 500 in band. They march only the best of their students and practice year-round – early mornings and Saturdays included. While we accept the limitations of a smaller program and even choose not to follow their lead in many ways, we understand that truly reaching a level of excellence requires effort.

Q: What is a festival like?

A: Good marching festivals have competitive structure and high-quality judging. Bands compete for rankings and are judged by specialists in musical performance, marching performance, general effect, and visual arts.

Some judges evaluate the overall effect by watching from press boxes above the field, while others work their way around the field judging individual marching and playing.

The festivals (depending on their size) generally begin in the morning with a round of preliminary competition that extends through the afternoon. Typically, smaller bands (or bands competing in small-class competition) go early in the day while larger and/or traditionally stronger programs perform later. At the end of the afternoon, results from prelims are announced and the top bands move on to a finals round in the evening. Each band performs its program again in the evening with either a new set of judges or judges that have rotated to different assignments for that round of competition. Overall placements are awarded at the end of competition along with awards for special categories (e.g., best brass, best woodwinds, best drum majors, general effect, best visual, etc.)

Q: How do our kids get to games and festivals and how/when do they return?

A: We take buses for most of our trips. In some cases, we are back before midnight but in others it can be as late as 1-2 a.m. when we return. Students are required to ride the bus except in specific cases such as sport conflicts or other items approved by Mr. Evans

Q: What do our kids wear on the trip?

A: When not in uniform, your child will be told a dress code to follow by Mr. Evans. Typically, they wear their uniform or band shirt and jeans. When it is cold (as it often is ... especially at night), they should have coats, gloves, blankets etc., to stay warm. They need to wear some lightweight shorts, t-shirts, (modest boxers, sports bras, etc.) under their clothes so that they can change on the bus from their casual clothes into uniforms. If it is very cold, they may want something long under their uniforms, i.e. long underwear, close-fitting jogging pants, etc. Whatever is worn must **not** be bulky and must **not** show out from under sleeves, pants legs, etc.

Q: What/how do the kids eat?

A: Each trip is different depending on the time of day we leave, return, etc. Typically, we will leave in the morning and they will need to bring a sack lunch on the bus. They will be fed at least one good meal a day by the band parent organization. Most of the time, that meal will be served between prelims and finals. We keep water jugs near the busses to make sure they have water throughout the day. They will not starve if they don't bring extra, but a little is recommended. On longer trips, we provide more meals.

Q: Do parents go to the festivals?

A: Absolutely! We have had as many as 100+ parents and family members in the stands. Our kids love hearing the cheers as they come on the field and seeing the purple and white sections in the stands. **We strongly encourage you to take in as many festivals as you can fit into your schedule.** Fan support lifts the spirits of the kids as they come onto the field and allows you to be closely involved in a very important part of your child's life. Mr. Evans posts directions to each festival on the website so you will be able to find it.

Q: Is there any festival protocol that we should know?

A: Yes. There is protocol for the band and for the fans. Good festivals have a tradition of enthusiastic but polite crowds. Many of them will not allow audience members to enter or exit the stadium during a performance. We encourage you to cheer loudly for the entire band as they come onto the field, following highpoints their program, and after they finish ... but never to detract from the on field performance or concentration that is needed. So, for example, while we cheer at particularly strong parts of the program, we refrain from cheering or yelling out specific names during the quiet moments just before the performance starts. We encourage cheering and clapping, signs and pompoms ... discourage noisemakers. We encourage you to wear Topeka West colors (purple/white) to make it easy for the band to see us in the stands.

The band will be required to follow very strict protocol on the field. They will be ushered in by festival organizers and given signals when they may begin. Taking the field early brings penalties to their score. The entire performance is timed and any violation of time limits brings additional penalties. Drum majors are told when they may start the performance. At the end, the band and any support crew must exit the field in a timely fashion. You can be sure that the program has been carefully designed to adhere to these limits.

Most of the festivals we attend will adhere to guidelines that are common throughout the BOA (Bands of America) organization. They define length of shows, guidelines for scoring, etc. Although the quality of judging will vary from one to another, the general pattern of emphasis will be fairly consistent.

Q: Can the parents be involved with their child during the day?

A: When the band is not warming up, practicing, marching or in an assigned group setting, you are welcome to stop by to say hi. We do not provide food for families so, unless you are part of the food crew, you should plan to go out to eat as needed. Many of us have become great friends by pairing up with other parents for trips, meals, etc.

Q: Can my child travel with me instead of on the bus?

A: Unless prior arrangements have been made with Mr. Evans, your child must travel to and from the festivals with the band and stay with the band as long as they are competing. That is the only way we can ensure that all students are accounted for.

Q: Is it ever acceptable to miss practice or a festival?

A: Students must follow school policy regarding practice. Other than health reasons, there are very few excused absences. Every person is a vital part of this program. If even one is gone, spacing is thrown off and others around them have a harder time being in the right place at the right time. Again, this is not like a sport where subs can be sent in. We need them all!

Q: What should I expect out of Mr. Evans?

A: You should expect a very firm but consistently fair man who wants the very best for your child. He's challenging them to grow to the best of their ability while teaching them lessons for a lifetime. I've heard student after student say that he taught them more about life than any other teacher in their entire educational history. This program teaches dedication, hard work, self-discipline, teamwork, respect, leadership, commitment, ... and so much more. As you and your child adjust to the admittedly heavy demands of the program, keep these benefits in mind.

Q: Why does it cost so much?

A: Some of the answer to that is self-evident by now. Making multiple trips, chartering buses, feeding a large group, paying entry fees, etc., all take money. Even before the trips start, we pay professionals to choreograph the moves and arrange the music for the show. While we enjoy winning, the real reason those dollars are spent is so that your child can benefit from the educational experience of competition at this level.

Q: What is the band parent organization and why should I be involved?

A: The Topeka West Charger Band Pride is our band parent organization. Every parent of a Topeka West Charger Band member is automatically a member of the TWCB Pride.

This group has several purposes: first, to help the band (and its directors) to operate more efficiently. Second, to help increase the number of people involved with the band program. Third, and most important of all, to support the Topeka West Charger Band. There is no membership fee and no requirements, but parent involvement is important to the success of the band program, so we encourage you to **get involved!**

Q: Are we required to do fundraisers?

Yes!!!! If you wonder why- see above question

Q: How do I sign-up to help?

Sign-up sheet will be at August cookout, or contact committee chairperson directly.

Q: What do we do with our students uniform?

To keep our uniforms clean and looking good, Mr. Evans has them kept at school in the uniform room. The students dress before performances in the band room and then undress after performances in the band room. This allows the uniforms to be kept track of, kept hung up properly, keep them cleaner, and will help them last longer. Mr. Evans has horror stories of former band members keeping their uniform waded up in the truck of a car or on the floor of a closet. Though our students would never do that, this is just a way to help the situation. Uniforms are professionally dry cleaned at least once a year.

Q: What do they need to wear under their uniform?

Students should wear their band shirt, a pair of shorts and black socks. Everyone must have black socks. Mr. Evans has been known to paint feet and/or socks with black spray paint. In colder weather students can wear running pants or long underwear, but **never** jeans. The denim in jeans wears out the uniform very quickly.

Q: How do football game nights work?

Football nights are stressful. But if a you follow a couple of easy things, the level of stress can be greatly diminished.

- 4:00 Students eat a good dinner at home
- 4:15 Uniform committee arrives to dress and get ready for the onslaught of band members.
- 4:30 Full Band arrives and dresses - make sure to have black socks, black band shoes and band shirt on when they arrive
- 5:00 Band heads out to practice field to warm up and stretch
- 5:30 Band loads buses and trailer with equipment
- 5:45 Head to Hummer sports Park
- 5:55 Band arrives next to Hummer and finishes warming up and tuning
- 6:15 Band lines up and marches in under the stadium.
- 6:20 Band heads to scoreboard end zone to line up for pregame
- 6:30 Pregame
- 6:45 Pregame over - go to stands and play for game. Students will sit with the band the entire first half. If they need a drink the band will have water.
- 7:45ish Halftime show
- 8:00 3rd Quarter- the band has this time to go and use the bathroom and get snacks and drinks.
- 8:30 4th Quarter- the band is back in their seats at 2 min left in 3rd Quarter. Plays till end of the game.
- 9:15 Game over- play one last song then load the buses and head back to TW
- 9:30-10:00 Band members unload, clean buses, put uniforms away, and clean band room and heads home.

Please pick up your child at Topeka West after the game if they are not driving. We have had instance of Mr. Evans and Mr. Harry staying 2 hours after the game was over to wait for parents. Students can call you as soon as they get back to the band room.

Q: Who do I contact if I have a question not covered here?

Direct Band questions - Mr. Evans Cell: 785-633-8922
Office 438-4045
Email: bevens@tps501.org
bevanstwcb@sbcglobal.net

Mr. Harry Home: 266-2878
Office: 438-4045
Email: kharry@tps501.org

Q: Who should my Band Student contact if they have a question?

1st: Their Section Leader(s) (Upper classman, auditioned in the previous spring)

2nd: Drum Majors (Upper classman, auditioned in the previous spring)

3rd: Mr. Evans, Mr. Harry, or Mrs. Harry, if on Color Guard

Q: What if my student is ill and has to miss school, practice or a performance?

Other than the traditional calling into your student's division for absences, please also contact the band office so they know what is going on with your student. Band office phone #438-4045- Leave voicemail if not answered.

Again, welcome to the Best Band in the Land - the Topeka West Charger Band!

Alan Rice
PRIDE President 2010-2011