



Parents' Introduction to Marching Band Competitions

What can you expect on Marching Band Competition Day?

Typically, the band will rehearse in the morning at MPHS before boarding the bus to travel to the competition. The exact schedule depends on what parts of the program the band needs to work on, travel time to the event, and even when the band is scheduled to perform during the event.

The final schedule for each competition day will be distributed a few days before the competition. It will also be posted on our website – usually along with a map and directions to the competition site.

Important – For planning purposes, students should expect a marching band competition to be an **all-day commitment** which will last until late in the evening. Parents who just want to attend the competition do not need to follow the student's schedule. They should plan to arrive at the competition site at least an hour before the band is scheduled to perform in order to ensure adequate time to find parking, walk to the stadium, pay admission (typically \$5 for adults), and find their seats before the band competes.

Spectators are asked not to enter the stadium during a band performance. If you arrive while a band is performing you should wait until a break before finding your seat. In fact, at many competitions there will be ushers who will indicate when to wait, and when you may enter the stands. We strongly recommend that parents plan their time at the competition so they can observe as many bands as possible – not just our band.

What does the band do during all that that time?

Close to 100 MPHS students, parents and staff are involved when we participate in a marching band competition. Travel time varies. After arrival at the competition site, it typically takes about two hours to set up, assemble instruments, get in uniform, and warm up. Warm-up activities occur away from the stadium to minimize interference with the bands that are performing at the same time. A typical marching band competition involves more than a dozen bands. The events are typically spread out over a large site (most competition sites are on football fields.)

Transportation

Students always travel TO and FROM marching band competitions as a group. Exceptions to this rule, if any, will be extremely rare, and only at the discretion of the Band Director. Preparation and transport to these events is already hectic enough and dealing with even one late or lost student could compromise the event for the rest of the band. Sometimes there are last minute changes which are discussed during the ride to the show. Sometime the order or scheduled performance times change. This makes it essential for the students to travel and arrive at the event together.

Parents are encouraged to carpool to these events. This provides a natural way to meet other band parents, and many lasting friendships between parents have resulted from carpooling and/or volunteering at band events.

Finding Your Student

Finding and visiting your student at a marching band competition can be very challenging. Cell phones can help, but there is no guarantee your phone will work in some locations, and often it's too noisy for you (or your student) to hear the phone. Having an advance plan can help.

Parents are allowed in the band staging area, which can be almost as amazing as the competition itself. Finding the staging area for our band may be a challenge though typically, when you arrive at the school, you will see bands warming up on the front lawns. Look for our bus and/or truck, but you may not find the band there. Before the performance they will likely be practicing at some far-off part of the site. After the performance they will return to the staging area to change out of uniforms and eat dinner. After dinner they will return to the stadium to watch other bands perform and wait for the awards ceremony, HOWEVER, bands who have competed must sit in the "visitors" seating on the other side of the stadium, as the stands on the "Home" side are filled with spectators to the event.

Finding Other Parents and Where To Sit

Finding other MPHS parents is much easier than finding your own student. We try to sit together, and you can usually find us by looking for Myers Park Green shirts in the crowd. At most competitions, parents and spectators (paying customers) sit on the “Home” side of the stadium. Performers (our students) are often required to sit on the “visitor” side of the stadium, or on the hill in the grass beside the stadium.

Food

Food is typically available for purchase at every competition. Make sure to provide money for your student, as they will likely eat after their performance. We do provide water to all students, staff and event volunteers at each competition.

Weather

Inclement weather does not automatically cancel a marching band competition. In most cases, the competition will continue even if it is raining. We strongly recommend you bring additional clothing to deal with both cold and wet conditions. Competitions often extend into the evening, and it can get very cold, and sometimes it gets very wet. Most stadiums have metal seating which will suck every trace of heat from your body if you don't also bring something soft and insulated to sit on.

What to Bring With You

- Money – for admission to the competition and for purchasing food and beverages. Admission is typically \$5 – 10 for adults, sometimes less for children. (Performers do not pay, but support staff and volunteers usually do have to pay.)
- Warm Clothes
- Wet weather gear
- More warm clothes
- Warm blanket to put over you
- Another warm blanket or Stadium seat
- Water to drink

Competition Schedule

There are usually around 16 or more bands at a competition. The bands are assigned to classes based on the size of the band. There are typically as many as five classes of bands at a competition. Classification is based on TOTAL number of performers (drum major, marching players and color guard) and ranges from 5A to 1 A.

The schedule at a given competition usually starts with the smallest class (1A) and moves up to toward the largest class (5A). After the final band performs there is a break for score calculation. During this time the host band often performs an exhibition (host bands are not allowed to compete). Then the awards ceremony begins.

Our band is typically in 2A or 3A (depending upon the competition) which means that we will tend to compete later in the day. We will usually know our approximate performance time in advance, but schedules can and do change during the competition. Planning to arrive “just in time” to hear our band can be very risky. Awards ceremonies can go late into the evening, typically ending around 9:00 PM

Heading Home

After the awards ceremony students return to the staging area to load the buses for their return trip home. Any remaining items (instruments, equipment, etc) need to be loaded onto the truck before we leave. Once the buses and truck return to the school a number of items must be unloaded and put away. All students are expected to stay and unload the bus and the equipment truck. By the end of a long marching band competition day we are all very tired and anxious to go home but students need to stay until the unloading and clean-up is complete.

More Questions:

Additional questions should be directed to Deb Borkey (debborkey@hotmail.com) or Carrie Baartmans (cbaartmans@carolina.rr.com).

