

Sanderson Marching Band 101

<https://www.sandersonband.com/>

The intent of this summary is to provide a brief overview of the Sanderson Band program aimed at those families that are “new to band”. There is more to it than playing at a football game half-time! It is a big leap coming from middle-school band to a high-school Marching Band program. Here are some of the key items that I wish I knew as an incoming band parent.

- The overall Sanderson Band program includes more than Marching Band. There are also two band classes, concert band and wind ensemble, as well as winter percussion and winter guard. **This document focuses on the Marching Band element for the fall semester.** Marching Band includes students that play instruments as well as Color Guard.
- The Sanderson Marching Band is an extracurricular competition band program. Essentially, the students are working towards going to competitions, performing, and being formally judged against other high school bands of similar size.
- The Sanderson Marching Band is a big commitment, but members will make memories, build friendships, enhance musical talents, and develop discipline, team work, and leadership skills needed to produce a quality competition show.

Band Class: To be in Marching Band (with the exception of color guard), your student is required to be enrolled in band class – either concert band or wind ensemble. These classes will also have students that are not in the Marching Band program, but who perform in the school band concerts.

Fall Competitions: the Sanderson Marching Band (our team) travels to other high schools to perform our “show” which changes every year. We sign up for four of these competitions throughout the fall semester. Typically, these occur on a Saturday, but can be at varying times depending on where and how we sign up. These are long, but fun, days for your student. A typical day is for our band to meet at Sanderson in the morning, practice for a few hours, load up and travel to wherever we compete, unload, get dressed in uniform, practice some more, perform, watch others perform, get awards, travel home, unload equipment into Sanderson Band room, and then head home. These days can go from 10am to midnight AND, we HOST one of these too. More on that later. Oh, and did you know these are precisely timed events? Our band has a certain amount of time to get on the field, perform, and get off the field. Who knew?

For these competitions, parent volunteers are critical. However, at a minimum, I encourage you to go to the competition, sit in the stands, and watch other bands and Sanderson perform.

Pro Tip: don't make any noise or walk around while bands are performing. Just a bit of band etiquette.

What's on the field: During a performance, there are multiple elements on the field. There will be the various instrument “sections” — brass, winds, drumline — all of which typically move around the field (called drill) during the performance. There is also the Pit. These are the non-marching percussion instruments such as marimba, bells, gong, keyboard, etc. The Color Guard is made up of the students that perform with flags, rifles, and batons. And last, there are typically some “props” which we (band

parents and students), more often than not, build ourselves. All of this is part of the performance and judging. Take a look at some of our YouTube videos!

Staff: Mitchell Townley is the band director, but there are multiple people hired to help out in various ways. There are instrument section coaches, color guard coaches, as well as people that develop the drill positions and actually compose the musical pieces that we are playing.

Key Steps along the way: It doesn't happen overnight and your student puts in a lot of effort. Weeniehersal (a rehearsal where hot dogs are also served) is an introduction to the program. Band Camp is an intense, multi-week effort over the summer to learn the music and the positions. After school and Saturday practices occur during the school year. Friday night football games are essentially dress rehearsals for the competitions. Yes, we play in the stands as a pep band, but the half-time performance is our "practice" for the competitions. It is really fun to see the growth from the start of the summer to the last competition.

Fair Share: The band program costs money and is financially supported by band boosters, not the school. The fancy term for our "dues" is Fair Share. Basically, each student has the same amount required for their fair share. There are multiple ways to pay off your fair share. One is to simply pay it outright, either in one payment or multiple. However, most families don't do that. There are many different fundraising opportunities to "credit" your account and pay off the fair share. Some are volunteer opportunities where you give of your time, such as working concessions at a concert venue, and others are more traditional, like selling coupon books or fruit. This money is used to buy instruments, fund repairs, pay staff mentioned earlier, purchase and clean uniforms, fund competition registration, pay travel costs, etc. There are PLENTY of ways to completely fund your Fair Share through fundraising.

EXPO: Capital City Band Expo (Expo) is the name of the Sanderson hosted competition, typically in October. Our band does not compete at this one, but will perform as an exhibition. We, all the parents, host this competition. We coordinate the judges, prepare the field, sell concessions and other goodies, organize getting bands on and off the field...all of it. When you go to the other band competitions to watch us perform, look around at the folks "working"... those are band parents just like you at that school. This is by far the biggest fundraising event that we have. Not only can you personally volunteer to have credit against your Fair Share, but the overall funds raised during this event help keep everyone's Fair Share amounts as low as they are. This is another long day, heads up! Please mark your calendar!

Other Cool Stuff:

- We march at the Raleigh Christmas Parade
- Spring trips every other year
- Winter percussion – this is another competition band that performs in the spring semester
- Winter guard – similarly, another competition
- Concert bands perform every quarter

Boosters / Volunteers: As an extracurricular activity, volunteers are critical to a successful program. Sit in on a booster meeting, chaperone during practice, help build props or adjust uniforms, load up a truck for competition days, help keep water and snacks in the band room...there are lots of ways to make the program successful and many hands make light work. The band program needs not only talented, hardworking student musicians but also dedicated, willing parents to support their students' endeavors!