

Things I Wish I knew as a Freshman Marching Band Parent

1. If your child is not generally active, make sure they walk a lot this summer, or even start running (I highly recommend couch to 5K). Otherwise, they will have a very hard time once band camp starts. It is an intensive boot camp, but necessary to prepare them for the rigors of marching with an instrument.
2. Before band camp, make sure your child has plenty of athletic (breathable) clothing. They will be outside a lot during band camp, and many afternoons once school starts. They will definitely get plenty of use out of them. You can get good prices at Target and Old Navy.
3. Make sure to purchase an insulated drinking cooler (at least a half gallon) before Band Camp. A bottle of water won't cut it when it's above 80 degrees out and you have 8 hours of camp. They need to be hydrated to avoid heat related illnesses.
4. Do not make plans to go out of town for Fall Break—there will be at least one day of Band Camp and possibly a football game as well.
5. While you're at it, don't make any plans to be out of town on Saturdays during September and October. There will be a band competition almost every Saturday, and it will take all day, because they will practice in the morning. Depending on the location, sometimes they will not get home until around midnight. Make sure to check the band calendar and sync it with yours. (There will be at least one weekend off, but until the calendar is finalized, you have to wait).
6. When school starts, they will have practice after school 3-4 times a week, usually scheduled until 6 or 7 pm. That does not mean your child is ready to get in the car at 6 or 7 pm. There is a lot of equipment to put away, and the work is distributed among all students. Many times, they are there a half hour later than what is scheduled.
7. The "show" (the routine they learn) is fluid throughout the season. It will look very different from the parent night at the end of band camp all the way up until the final competition. Each week they will add new things or take away some things depending in judges' feedback at the prior week's competition. They have a parent showcase at the end of the last practice of the week—it's a lot of fun to watch the show unfold in a different way each week, so make sure to attend.
8. When they are at a competition, they will be fed by the band boosters. It's like feeding a small army, and it is organized very well. You will be asked for donations throughout the season (drinks, snacks, etc), and if you are able to volunteer your time, it is very appreciated. However, when they have a morning practice before a competition, they will need to bring a lunch (or go out to get one) before they load up (they usually get an hour break).
9. Although it sounds like a lot of sacrifice (it is), your child will enjoy marching band more than you ever thought possible, and will make close friends very quickly. It's a great transition from middle school to high school, as they will have many friends before school even starts, many of them upperclassmen!
10. I highly encourage you to jump in and get involved by volunteering with the marching band. Our directors bring out the best in these kids, and it is a delight to get to know them!

If you ever have a question about how marching band operates, feel free to contact me at 266-0004 (no texting please) or at kjar4collins@gmail.com

Kimberly Collins, parent of a freshman and junior 2014-15 school year and Uniform chair