

Black & Silver Brigade 2009

Dear Students and Parents,

We want to welcome you to another great year of band at Houston County High School! We are very excited about the 2009 marching season and want to get everyone involved as soon as possible. We know that both students and parents have many questions about our program and we want to provide you with as much information as early as we can. **Once the Intent form is received you and your future band member will receive several other mailings throughout the spring and summer INCLUDING MUSIC.** ****Please note that if your future HCHS student does not wish to participate in any band classes we still need to have an intent form returned to us as soon as possible.* This will aid us immensely in planning for the fall.

Time Lines

Several things will happen over the next few months as you prepare for your ninth grade year at HCHS. First of all, you will have to make a decision as to whether you wish to continue in band. **Of course we hope you do!** Several factors enter in to making this decision. First, students sometimes feel compelled to drop band because they are concerned about grades and study time. There is one fact that you need to have in mind when making this decision. Your study habits have pretty much already been established. Some students do work harder once they begin high school but most of us keep the same habits we already possess. We have found that being in band seems to add incentive to study habits because there is a reason to make good grades along with maintaining a good GPA.

Second, some of you have other interests. This is where scheduling might be a problem. Whatever you do at HCHS, you need to be committed to that program. With graduation requirements becoming more difficult, students are limited as to what they can do with their elective slots. You need to remember one thing, if you want to be in band for four years you can. We have a new schedule that will start next year which will allow you to take all the required classes and still remain in band. You may also have extra opportunities to take other classes if you stay on academically on track. A student can't be in band one semester, get out to do something else and then come back. We need to know who our personnel will be each year because we don't plan day to day; we plan four years in advance.

Third and most importantly, don't overload your boat! Don't make commitments to several activities that require you give 100% of your time. A number of students commit to two or three activities and all of a sudden these activities require that student be in two places at one time. This is not fair to the sponsoring teacher/coach or the other students involved when we have to make special allowances for people that overbooked themselves. And we should tell you at this point that we *will not* make special allowances. We do not want to lose a single 8th grader as they enter high school. Statistics show that if a student participates in marching activities their freshman year, he or she will usually stay in band throughout high school. Students that do not participate in anything other than band class have a harder time finding an identity. The marching band *IS* the social activity during the fall. However, we do realize that some of our students are involved in other fall activities such as cheerleading, football and softball. These commitments are just like marching band and we encourage our students to remain in these organizations if they are making a contribution. I still encourage you to participate in a band class even if you cannot march. Marching band is just one of many band experiences we offer at HCHS and our classes are geared toward *all* band students. I will offer some advice to my 8th graders. If you did not participate in these above mentioned activities in middle school it is going to be very difficult to become a starter at the 9th grade level. **ALL 9th graders start in band!** You have spent so much time learning how to play your instrument and now it is time to perform! Friday nights are different from afternoon 8th grade games. You will be playing for several thousand spectators at night as opposed to several hundred in the heat of the afternoon! It is truly an adrenalin rush!

Along with this letter, you will receive what we call an Intent form.

This is something that needs to be discussed with your parents before it is filled out. There are several questions on this sheet that we need answered either “yes” or “no”. There is not an “I don’t know” or “maybe” section. **Students need to know that they can participate in band class without being in the marching band.** We do encourage all students that are not committed to another fall activity to give marching band a shot. When you are old like Mr. Shaw (or younger like Mr. Wilson) and want to reminisce about your band career in high school (or college), you will have more fond memories about marching band and the activities that it involved than you will about just sitting in a band class. Remember, when you fill out this intent form it **must be signed by a parent.** In the past we have had students fill out the form and state they no longer wish to continue in band. We have found out later that students have made this decision without consulting their parents and it is not until the student receives their first schedule in the fall that these parents realize their student is no longer in band. Students, you MUST keep an open line of communication with your parents!

We encourage you read over the material about marching band carefully so you will understand what is going on. We have set aside two Saturdays that we call **New Member Camps** to help you decide what your intentions will be for next year. Once you see how easy things are your decision should be easy.

Two Marching Bands!!!

Football Band

Any student wishing to participate in marching band can be in the football band. The name “Football Band” is synonymous with where this band performs. The primary function of this band is to perform at football games. There is no audition and rehearsals are very limited. Football band will require about two to two and one-half hours of your time per week. The amount of time each week for rehearsal may decrease after the entire show is on the field and being performed to the director’s satisfaction. There is a very strict attendance policy that we must adhere to because of the limited rehearsal time. This band will play easy music and march easy drill. We do this for several reasons. First, the largest number of students in this band is 9th graders and this group has the least experience. We need an activity where these band students can learn what to do without the pressure of having to march and play perfectly. Second, if we use easy music and easy drill, we can change up the show and vary the music we perform at the ballgames. We will still expect a high performance level because football band will still be our Public Relations group. More people in the community will see this group than any other instrumental group we have. You need to experience the rush of playing in front of 4 or 5 thousand people at least once. Rehearsals are Tuesday and Thursday after school for 1 hour and are required for participation.

Competitive Band

During the fall football season we have a band that will compete with other bands throughout the Southeast at marching contests. A large number of our students really like participating with this group. Competitive band will be chosen through an audition process that will be explained later. Not all students will want to be in competitive band because of the high degree of proficiency we expect out of this group. Competitive band members must participate in the football band. In other words, if you are in competitive band, then you are in football band. I cannot take my best marchers and players out of the football band because my base group of leaders will be gone. The fun thing about being in both bands is the opportunity to switch instruments from one band to another. Baritone players may play tuba, trumpet players may play baritone and woodwind players may play a brass instrument. *Supply and demand will dictate what we do.* The competitive band will compete at three marching contests during the month of October (possibly late September). There is a possibility that the competitive band may perform at one or two away games as well. There are three qualifications that we will require of students wanting to participate in competitive band. Basic marching skill, basic playing skill and a good attitude will determine a student’s position. If a student is not selected as a member of the competitive band, he or she is still in the football band and will

be considered an alternate for competitive band. Music and drill for this group is custom arranged by professionals for a specific number of students.

The Audition (Competitive Band)

Wind players will audition by marching the “Basics Block”. Ninth graders, don’t worry because we will have **New Member Camp** to teach this to you. Please make an effort to attend the first new member camp if you are interested in competitive band. You will receive a schedule of when this will take place. It is fairly easy, even Mr. Shaw can march it...sort of. “Basics Block” will show us if you have the potential to handle what we throw at you with competitive band.

****New 9th Graders****

Please note that we will be coming to listen to you play in May for placement in a band class at HCHS. We can use this for your Competition band audition.

This IS NOT a stressful audition....so R-E-L-A-X!

Percussion: We have drum line camps on the New Member calendar set aside for you! Most of you are already playing the audition because of what you do in class; we just need to put it together. You must come to the percussion camps in order to receive consideration for the Drum line (includes Front Ensemble – mallet instruments, percussion instruments, and sound effects). Please contact us if there is a conflict and we will try to assist you if possible.

Flag Corps clinics and auditions are in mid April. Every year the guard instructor visits each school and speaks to interested individuals about the guard. We have a core group of students that will definitely march competitively with the remaining students performing with football band. This core group of students can increase in number as their experience and ability improve.

New Member Camps

What makes most 9th grade band students apprehensive about marching band? They never have done it before. Most of you were not apprehensive about band in the 6th grade and you had really never done that before! We have set aside two Saturdays in the spring to meet with you so you can learn how to march. May 9th and May 16th from 9 until 12 noon we will teach how to march. Percussion we will also meet from 1:30-4:30 on the 16th to finalize the section. Mr. James Christiansen is one of our marching techs and has a very user-friendly method of teaching marching fundamentals. If you are not sure whether or not you are interested in marching band come to one of these camps and see. Don’t try to make a decision about something before you experience it. If you are interested in competitive band we strongly encourage you to attend at least two sessions. Bottom line, if you can walk you probably can march.

Camp Dates and Rehearsal Schedules

Once we receive your intent form we will mail you and your parents a packet that contains a rehearsal schedule and other information.

See the new member Calendar attached for some of the summer dates.

It is very important that we receive your intent form with ALL information completed so we can send you more information and your MUSIC.

ONE LAST THING...

BAND

IS

FUN!