



**THE BANDS OF
J. W. MITCHELL**

Member Handbook

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Welcome!

Welcome to the J.W. Mitchell High School Band! You are now a part of a proud tradition of musical excellence. This program has established itself as an outstanding organization and it is now your responsibility to conduct yourself in a way that represents the values of our organization. The experience of performance is dependent on each person performing at a high level as an individual so that the group can succeed.

This handbook is designed to serve as a resource for parents and students. All members and parents are required to read the handbook carefully to understand the structure and procedures of our ensemble. All school and Pasco County rules apply to all students within our program. Please note that the band directors have the authority to amend any policy at any time in the best interest of the band program or individual student.

1. Music Department Objectives

1. Provide a high level musical experience for all members
2. Represent ourselves as an important part of our school and local community
3. Create a positive atmosphere where each member is expected to reach their highest potential as a musician and a person
4. Foster a culture of respect for our peers, school, community and families
5. Create well rounded musicians with skills to succeed in any pursuit after high school

2. Expectations for All Members

1. Be on time and prepared
2. Treat **everyone** with respect
3. Be responsible for your own actions and preparedness
4. Meet all challenges with a positive attitude
5. Represent yourself as a mature and productive individual in band, in school and online
6. Keep your instrument and work space in a professional and clean working order

3. Academic Expectations

All students are expected to be responsible student musicians. Music requires students to be well-organized and proactive in academic classes. All members **must maintain a 2.0 Grade Point Average** for full participation in band activities. Members must also represent themselves in a positive manner when dealing with teachers and administrators. Students may be withheld from any event for academic reasons or conduct at the directors' discretion. Those not meeting academic expectations at the beginning of the marching band season will not be offered a spot in the marching band production.

4. Performance Eligibility Guidelines

To maintain performance eligibility students must meet the personal expectations and academic expectations required for all members.

1. Students may be withheld from any performance in any case where basic member expectations and academic expectations are not met.
2. Co-curricular event eligibility (concerts, football games and evaluations) will be addressed by the band directors with the interest of the student's future success in mind.
3. Ineligible students will be assigned alternative assignments for full or partial class credit depending on the situation.
4. Students who are academically ineligible at the beginning of the marching band season will not be offered a drill spot in the marching band show. They will be offered a stands only spot on a case by case basis.
5. Students who miss an excessive amount of rehearsals may be removed from performances or the marching band production for the benefit of their peers.

5. Ensemble Membership

The music programs are open to all students who desire to be involved in music. Our instrumental programs require previous experience. Students are placed into appropriate courses, as determined by the director and the school. All participating students must enroll in a co-curricular full year course. Everyone has the opportunity to participate in music ensembles if they meet the membership expectations stated above. ***All ensembles at meet as co-curricular courses and require after school rehearsals and performances as a graded element of the course.***

Marching Mustangs

All members of the band programs participate as members of the Marching Mustangs. The Marching Mustangs perform on Friday nights at football games and at competitions each fall. Band members with **school sports** conflicts deemed unavoidable by the band directors may perform as stands only members of the marching band. These situations are rare and are evaluated on a case by case basis. This policy also applies to those who have medical limitations that would prevent them from marching in the halftime show.

Stands only members will be given other assignments for the points earned at marching rehearsals. These students are expected to perform in pregame and in the stands at home football games and in parades unless the medical or school sports conflict prevents this from occurring. Stands only members are responsible for the Fairshare fee and are considered full members of the band.

All members who are marching a spot in the halftime show are expected to attend band camp in July and August. Late registrations or move ins may be added to the marching show depending on their level of experience and ability to learn. This will be evaluated on a case by case basis.

Colorguard

Colorguard is an opportunity for those desiring to perform that do not play an instrument. This is a visual ensemble performs in the fall as a part of the marching band and in the spring as a member of the competitive winterguard. The ensemble focuses on dance, flag, rifle and sabre performance. Each member must be enrolled in the co-curricular Eurhythmics class. Members of the colorguard are considered members of the band and follow all guidelines that apply to band members. In extremely rare cases members who have pervious experience may be allowed to participate without class enrollment.

Concert Ensembles

JW Mitchell has 3 concert bands of varying ability levels. Each band is designed to serve musicians in different stages of their musical development. All placement is done via an evaluation process at the end of each school year, taking into account the band directors' discretion for the most beneficial placement for each student.

1. Wind Ensemble – The Wind Ensemble is the top auditioned concert ensemble in our program. Auditions are held at the end of each school year for the following school year. The number of musicians in the ensemble is restricted. This ensemble performs extremely advanced literature and requires several after school rehearsals in the Spring. It is extremely rare for first year members to audition into this ensemble. Students in this ensemble are required to participate in district Solo and Ensemble, and prepare the audition music for All State and All County Band. Members of Wind Ensemble are strongly encouraged to take private lessons.
2. Symphonic Winds – The Symphonic Winds are the intermediate auditioned concert ensemble. Auditions are held at the end of each school year for the following school year. The number of musicians in the ensemble is also restricted. This ensemble performs advanced literature and requires after school rehearsals in the Spring. Students in this ensemble are required to participate in district Solo and Ensemble and prepare the audition music for All County Band. Members of Symphonic Winds are strongly encouraged to take private lessons.
3. Concert Band – The Concert Band is the non-auditioned concert ensemble. The number of musicians in this ensemble is not restricted. This ensemble is designed for developing musicians, and those who cannot commit to the rigor of the auditioned ensembles. The focus of this ensemble is fundamental musicianship. This ensemble performs intermediate literature and requires some after school rehearsals in the Spring. Students in Concert Band are encouraged to take private lessons and participate in district Solo and Ensemble and prepare the music for All County Band.
4. Percussion Ensemble – Each member of the percussion program participates in the Spring as a member of the percussion ensemble. Percussion ensemble part assignments are made at the discretion of the director relative to the student's ability level. Percussion Ensemble members will participate in solo performance at district Solo and Ensemble and

5. Jazz Ensembles – Each member of the jazz ensembles must be enrolled in a traditional band class and in the co-curricular jazz course. Those in jazz ensemble will perform additional community performances including weekend and some travel performances.

6. Rehearsals and Rehearsal Expectations

All rehearsals are graded co-curricular elements of the band and colorguard classes. These rehearsals are an integral part of the learning experience of the class and allow for specific and whole group instruction on a level and setting that is not feasible during the school day.

Marching Mustangs

Marching Mustangs rehearsals are on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 4-7pm starting the week before school begins and running through the end of marching season (normally the 2nd week in November). To receive full credit for the rehearsal, each member must be on time, engaged, give full effort and have these items for each rehearsal:

1. Short sleeve uniform band dry-fit shirt or plain grey t-shirt
2. Plain all-black athletic shorts
3. Athletic shoes (flip flops, sandals or slip-ons are not allowed)
4. Insulated ½ gallon water cooler with water
5. Flip folder and lyre with appropriate music
6. Dot book and guard gloves (colorguard only)

Fall colorguard rehearsals are on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 4-7pm starting the week before school begins and running through the end of marching season (normally the 2nd week in November). The same items listed above are required to receive full credit for rehearsals with the exception of the flip folder and lyre.

Sectional rehearsals are held on Mondays and Wednesdays on a rotating schedule. Each student will have 2 sectionals per month. These times last from 3:00-4:30 and give students the opportunity to work on music and technique issues in small peer groups. These are scheduled in advance on Charms and are graded as a standard rehearsal.

Concert Bands

Concert band rehearsals are held weekly in the spring months. Most ensembles will rehearse once per week although the advanced ensembles may rehearse twice per week in the weeks leading up to concerts. These schedules are posted on Charms at least one month in advance. Concert band rehearsal times are generally from 3-5:30pm with the exception of rehearsals where clinicians will be attending. Advance notice will be given in the event of a rehearsal with a different time.

7. Equipment and Instruments

We are very lucky to have a large stock of school owned instruments. Any student who is loaned a school instrument must fill out a form and accept 100% responsibility for the care

and maintenance of the instrument. These instruments are loaned free of charge but lost, damaged, stolen or poorly maintained instruments are replaced or repaired at the borrowing student's expense. At any time the directors may ask for the loaned equipment to be returned within 3 days.

8. Uniforms and Inspection Guidelines

Wearing the uniform of the JW Mitchell Band is a privilege. It is a representation of our school and our organization. We will always present ourselves in a neat and professional manner. The cleaning of our uniforms is covered in the band fair share fee.

Marching Uniforms

1. The uniform is only to be worn with pride.
2. Each student is responsible for all uniform pieces in their possession.
3. Any lost or damaged items will be replaced at student expense.
4. At the conclusion of each performance the uniform is to be hung properly and neatly before leaving.
5. Pants and jackets are only to be sewn or altered by uniform coordinators. Please report any problems with fit to the coordinators.
6. Wind players must wear solid black gloves only.
7. The most updated grey dry-fit shirt, knee length black socks and all black shorts are required under the uniform for all performances.
8. Grey dry-fits are worn to school on game days and to all pep rallies.

Marching Inspections

To maintain our professional appearance as an ensemble, each student undergoes an inspection before performances. Part of the grade given for the performance includes passing inspection and having all necessary equipment for performance. Any student who does not pass inspection will be docked points for the performance, and in some cases will be withheld from performance. Being prepared is the most simple way to pass inspection. The guidelines are below.

1. Hair may not touch the collar of the marching uniform. Members with long hair must wear a ponytail or bun that can be put up into the marching band hat.
2. Hair colors must be natural tones for performances.
3. Ladies may wear a small amount of natural colored makeup. No bright colors are permitted.
4. Ladies may wear clear or light flesh colored nail polish. No colors are permitted during performance.
5. All performers should remove all jewelry including necklaces, bracelets, rings, and watches. Small gold or silver stud earrings may be worn.
6. Socks must be the long black dress style without patterns or text.
7. Each member must wear a clean dry-fit band shirt and black athletic shorts under their uniform.

8. Shoes should be clean and polished. Only the band issued Drillmaster shoes are permitted in marching performance.
9. Facial piercings must be covered or removed and ear gauges are not permitted.

Concert Uniforms

Our concert uniforms are worn at all concerts throughout the year. We always want to present a professional image. Please iron your clothes and use a garment bag if we are traveling for a concert performance. Please arrive dressed and stay dressed (unless otherwise instructed) until we have exited the performance venue.

Gentlemen in concert band and symphonic winds wear black dress pants and a white pleated tuxedo shirt with a black bow tie. Black dress shoes and socks must also be worn. Please do not wear suspenders, socks with patterns on them, shoes other than leather dress shoes. If a belt is being worn with the pants it must be a dress belt with a silver buckle. Depending on the ensemble, students may be issued tuxedo pants and jacket. In this case, all policies regarding marching uniforms apply. It is the responsibility of the student to have the uniform pants hemmed appropriately and cleaned.

Ladies should wear a black dress blouse that covers the shoulders and black dress pants. Flat-soled black dress shoes must also be worn. Please do not wear high heels, colored hair bows or ties, patterned pants, or sweaters. Ladies in some ensembles may be issued a concert dress. In this case, all policies regarding marching uniforms apply. It is the responsibility of the student to have the dress hemmed and cleaned.

Percussion students will wear a long sleeve black dress shirt or blouse and black dress pants with flat black dress shoes and socks. This applies for percussion ensemble performances and concert band performances.

9. Attendance Policies

“Communication is the key to success.”

The band as a whole counts on each member to be present for rehearsals and performances so we can perform at our best. Rehearsals are our study sessions and performances are our tests. **All band events including, but not limited to, concerts, performances, evaluations, parades, rehearsals and competitions are graded co-curricular extensions of the classroom.** These events are essential to the school music experience and the development of students as musicians. Please carefully read these guidelines relating to attendance.

1. Rehearsals and performances are required, graded elements of the class in which you are enrolled.
2. Unexcused absences will result in a loss of points for the grading category and date.
3. Unexcused absences can result in temporary or permanent performance ineligibility
4. Absences can be excused if the reason falls under the excused absence category and **communication is made with at least one month advance notice**

5. 2 unexcused absences will result in the lowering of at least one letter grade for the grading period
6. An unexcused performance will result in the lowering of one letter grades for the grading period
7. Make-ups assignments are not given for unexcused performance grades

Excused Absences

Absences are not always avoidable. These events are granted as excused absences if communication is made with the band director WELL BEFORE the event to be missed. Missing an event even for these reasons will not be excused if communication is not made from a parent to the band director.

1. Death in the family (obviously this is not a foreseeable situation but please communicate whenever possible if this affects you)
2. Extreme personal illness – An email from the parent/guardian before the event missed is expected in this case (The student is expected to show a doctor's note and/or the parent should contact the band director in advance)
3. A wedding in which the student is participating as a member of the wedding party (Directors must be notified at least one month in advance)
4. Participating in a game for a school competitive sport (This does not apply to major concerts, festivals or competitions)

Unexcused Absences

One of our basic expectations from our members is responsibility. These items do not count as excused absences because they are all avoidable with proper communication and planning. Solutions are listed beneath each point.

1. Forgetting a rehearsal or performance. (Keep a paper or electronic planner or calendar. The Charms calendar can sync directly to your phone or computer.)
2. Not having transportation. (There are 240 families in our organization and most are available to help. Communicate with a section leader and we will help you get a ride.)
3. Going out of town, birthday parties, doctor/dentist appointments. (We have a very limited number of performances each year and rehearse 2 times per week. The schedule is given out in June so please plan to be here.)
4. Assuming rehearsal was cancelled due to weather. (We have large indoor spaces to rehearse when it rains. We have never cancelled due to weather.)
5. Missing for work or jobs. (Even during our busiest times you will have 3-4 days per week available for work. Communicate with your employer in advance.)
6. Parents withholding a student from participation. (Please realize this punishes the group and not your student. This will negatively affect your student's grade.)
7. Sports, clubs and activities that are not school affiliated. (Consider our rehearsal schedule before committing to other activities with busy practice schedules.)

Tardies

Students are expected to be on time for all events. On time means in the rehearsal location, ready to begin at the stated time. Any student arriving more than 20 minutes late will forfeit half of the rehearsal points. 3 rehearsal tardies is equal to one unexcused absence.

School Athletics and Clubs

Our students are encouraged to participate in sports, clubs and JROTC. We have great relationships with these programs. **Please realize that communication on your part is the key to success.** Practices or meetings may not take precedence over any band performance. In the event there is a performance and game at the same time communicate with the director in advance and we will talk directly with the coaches to reach a solution. Please do not sign up for any optional events that will conflict with our major events. Students who commit to jazz ensemble or the top concert ensemble will be expected to make that their top priority regarding after school rehearsals and events.

10. Grading

Specific grading categories are published in each class syllabus. All students are expected to make progress in their area of study throughout the duration of the course. Performance exams and quizzes are given to evaluate progress over time. The following guidelines apply to all classes in the JW Mitchell music and color guard programs.

1. Grades are earned on individual progress and daily demonstration in the ensemble; students are never graded based on innate ability.
2. **Rehearsals and performances are required, graded elements of the class in which you are enrolled.**
3. Unexcused absences from rehearsals and performances will result in a loss of points for the grading category and date.
4. Absences can be excused if the reason falls under the excused absence category and **communication is made well in advance.**
5. 2 unexcused rehearsal absences will result in the lowering of at least one letter grade for the grading period
6. An unexcused performance will result in the lowering of one letter grades for the grading period
7. Make-ups assignments are not given for unexcused performance grades

11. Finances and Fees

The band program collects a Fairshare fee for all members of the band and guard. The fee covers costs for music, entry fees, instrument maintenance for school instruments, additional staff, flags, uniform use and cleanings, and local travel. The Fairshare fee can be paid in payments outlined on the Fairshare contract or fundraised. Fundraising opportunities are available throughout the year. Students are not excluded for financial reasons but the JWMHS administration requires that students who are not able to pay out of pocket fundraise or apply for scholarships to cover their fees. Band trips are a separate fee and are optional based on academic eligibility.

1. All students pay the same Fairshare fee. This fee is only a portion of the overall band budget. The rest is fundraised by the booster club.
2. Fairshare may be paid or fundraised, but is expected to be paid by the end of each season
3. Students must pay any outstanding fees before being able to check out as a senior, and walk at graduation per JWMHS administration
4. Students with outstanding fees may be excluded from additional activities (trips, festivals, banquets, etc)
5. Students must be in good financial standing to apply for leadership and additional opportunities
6. Regarding band trip payments, all fees must be paid before the start of the trip
7. Any fees collected by the band for Fairshare are non-refundable should the student leave the program for any reason
8. Upon graduation any additional funds in Fairshare accounts can be donated to an underclassmen if the band directors/treasurer are notified by June 1st. Any non-specified funds will be donated to the general fund.

12. Travel Expectations and Guidelines

When traveling with the J.W. Mitchell High School Band, all school and district policies apply at all times. Students are expected to represent the school and band in a positive manner. Any issues with behavior will be handled according to school and district code of conduct.

When traveling on busses, members will depart and return with the band. The exception to this rule is only when written notice is provided by a parent or guardian at least 24 hours in advance. The person picking up the student must be 21 years of age and the name of the person picking up the student must be included in the written notice. For safety and accountability reasons, when traveling with the marching band to games, parades and competitions we are not able to check students out regardless of the situation.

In the case that we have an outside event during school where transportation is not provided, students are not permitted to drive other students, even with parent/guardian permission. Licensed drivers may drive themselves to events with permission from a parent.

13. Awards and Honors

John Philip Sousa Award (Guard and Band)- This award is presented by the directors to the student who has exemplified themselves as the most outstanding member of the band program. Students receiving this award must be outstanding players and role models for future generations of band students. This is the most prestigious award given by the JW Mitchell Band.

Tom Damato Jazz Award (Jazz Ensemble Students Only)- This award is presented to an upperclassmen who has shown outstanding ability and dedication in the areas of jazz musicianship and performance.

Most Improved Member (Guard and Band)- This award is presented to a student who has made outstanding personal progress, worked to better their ensemble and displayed hard work and determination.

Rookie of the Year (Guard and Band)- This award is given to a first year member of the band that made a determined effort to improve the morale, ability, and musicality of themselves and others.

Outstanding Bandsmen (Band only)- This award is presented to a student in each grade who goes above and beyond the call of duty, does more than is expected, and makes a positive impact on their peers. All students in the program are eligible to receive this award.

Outstanding Colorguard Member (Guard only)- This award is presented to a student who goes above and beyond the call of duty, does more than is expected, and makes a positive impact on their peers. All members of the fall and winter colorguard are eligible to receive this award.

Section of the Year (Marching Band) – This award is presented to the section of the band that shows outstanding dedication and musicianship. This section demonstrates continuous progress and development while serving as an example for other sections in the ensemble. This is a section that provides a positive social environment for all members.

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Parents and Students,

Please sign this form to acknowledge that you have read, understand, and agree to all policies and responsibilities including attendance, fees, grading, participation and student expectations. These policies provide clear guidelines for the band and help us to operate smoothly. Furthermore I have reviewed the calendar for the year, and understand that rehearsals and performances are graded activities.

I (parent/guardian) _____ have read, understand and agree to all of the policies set forth by the J.W. Mitchell High School Band Handbook. I understand that my student's membership in band is a privilege.

I (student) _____ have read, understand and agree to all of the policies set forth by the J.W. Mitchell High School Band Handbook. I understand that my membership in band is a privilege.

Parent/ Guardian: _____ Date: _____

Student: _____ Date: _____