

Norwalk High Marching Bears – Band Parent FAQs

Q Are July rehearsals mandatory?

A All rehearsals are mandatory; however, If your child is going to be away on vacation during any of the July rehearsals it is imperative that you let Mr. Rivera know in advance. There is no penalty for missing a July rehearsal due to a vacation. The students learn new music and new marching/choreography at every rehearsal. These rehearsals are at Norwalk High School. Please let Mr. Rivera know ASAP if your student will be away for any of the scheduled rehearsals, which can all be found on the online calendar, which you can access via www.nhsband.com.

Q What is “Band Camp”?

A Band camp is where the marching show is put together. While the show continues to evolve during the entire marching season (which runs from late August through mid-November), the two weeks of rehearsal before school begins are critical, since the kids begin performing publicly at the end of August. Your student will not be able to participate in these competitions without learning the music and routines, and since each day's practice builds on the prior day, it is critical that all band members be at band camp every day. Band camp is a wonderful experience. It sounds exhausting, and it can be, since they all put in long, hot days learning the music and the routines. But they also get to know each other, learn discipline and teamwork, and perhaps most importantly, develop strong bonds as a “band family”. Your incoming student will already know 150 kids across all grades by the time they walk through the NHS doors for the first time – how great is that? Please remember that band camp is **mandatory**. Again, all rehearsals and events, including band camp are posted on the calendar at www.nhsband.com.

Q What do I need to know about the schedule and logistics for band camp?

A Several things to know about band camp:

- Your student is expected to be at band camp, Monday-Friday, from August 12th through August 23rd, from 9:00 AM to 8:00 PM.
- The list of supplies is included in the welcome packet, along with other important information about what is expected, what is not allowed and etc. Sunscreen and water are especially critical!
- Most rehearsals are at Andrews Field (on County Street behind the County Mall on Westport Ave.), although that sometimes changes for some groups on some days and/or in the case of inclement weather. If something does change, Mr. Rivera or the sectional instructors will make it clear each day where the students are to report the following day.
- Students are expected to be on the field and ready to begin rehearsal at 9:00 AM, so please arrive at least 15 minutes or so early to warm up, get settled and be on the field promptly by 9:00 AM.
- Lunch is from 12:00 – 1:00 PM each day, and students can bring lunch, go home or out for lunch, have someone bring their lunch or order a deli lunch for delivery to the field. We've made arrangements for a local deli to take sandwich and drink orders each morning before rehearsal begins. Cash payment is expected upon order, so please be sure your student arrives early enough to place the deli order and still be ready to rehearse at 9:00 AM.
- Dinner is from 3:45 – 5:00 PM. For the first week of band camp, there is no on-field dinner delivery service, so students may bring dinner, have dinner dropped off or go home or out for dinner. During the second week of camp, parent volunteers from each graduating class host dinner Monday through Thursday, and parent from all classes work together to provide dinner on the last day.
- The last night of band camp (Friday, August 23rd) is “Spirit Night”, when the show is performed publicly for the first time. This is a really fun evening, with family and friends joined by school and city dignitaries. Please mark your calendars!
- You don't have to wait for Spirit Night to check out the show. The band does a “run through” each evening at the end of rehearsal, and parents, friends and families are

encouraged to come about ½ an hour before pickup to see the progression (it's amazing) and cheer them on!

- WE NEVER CANCEL REHEARSAL DUE TO RAIN!

Q What is the schedule after band camp?

A Again, please check the online calendar frequently for the most up to date information, but in general there are rehearsals several evenings per week and all day on Saturday during the marching competition season, which runs from late August through mid-November.

Q Please tell me about the competitions.

A Norwalk High competes in the Musical Arts Conference (MAC) and the New York State Field Band Conference (NYSFBC). We will be competing in the MAC championships in Bridgeport, CT and the NYSFBC championships in the Carrier Dome at Syracuse University (Syracuse, NY).

Competitions are usually on Saturday nights at one of the high schools in the conference or (in the case of championships), at Kennedy Stadium in Bridgeport.

On competition days, your student is not allowed to leave the field for dinner, so they can either bring it, order from the deli or you can drop it off. Directly after dinner they change into their travel gear and head off on the bus for the competition venue.

Students ride with the band to and from competitions. There are generally 5 buses, and students travel with their group (e.g., brass, color guard, percussion etc.). Each bus is chaperoned by parent volunteers who ensure that the students are organized, safe, provided with any authorized medication and (importantly!) fed on the way home after the competition. Bus chaperones generally ask for weekly donations of drinks, chips, baked goods and etc. Food for championships is generally heartier and more festive.

Parents and families are encouraged to attend the competitions and cheer for the Marching Bears. Please visit the MAC website for information about locations and ticket prices.

Arrival time back at Andrews Field varies depending on the distance traveled, the timing of the awards ceremony, traffic and so forth. If you attend the competitions or not, please call the band info line (203.838.4481 x 13278) for information about the band's expected arrival back at the field each week.

Equipment (instruments, uniforms etc.) is trucked separately, and volunteers are always welcome to help unload the trucks at the end of the night. The trucks usually get back to the field a few minutes before the buses do, and every parent/sibling who can help unload just helps everyone to get home!

Q What is "MAC"?

A MAC is short for "Musical Arts Conference", which is the marching band division the Bears normally compete within. For more information about MAC, including scheduled competitions (with locations and directions), please visit www.musicalartsconference.com and click on events. Please note, the Marching Bears are not automatically competing in all listed events this season, so please be sure to check the online band calendar frequently (www.nhsband.com).

Q What is "MBI"?

A MBI is the Marching Bears Inc. non-profit organization that helps fund the band year round. Several things to know about MBI:

- Fundraising is the most important thing MBI does, and there are many individual and ongoing fundraisers throughout the year. Ongoing activities include our monthly can and bottle drive, sales of gift cards to various area grocery stores and restaurants, and important annual events include the Norwalk Boat Show, the Oyster Festival and Cavalcade, our own MAC home show competition.

- Volunteering is the most important thing each and every one of us can do to help the band and help make this the best experience possible for your student and all the members of the band. Volunteering generally helps raise money, and all money raised goes directly to the program – funding instruments, instruction, scholarships, etc. There are many ways to get involved – your donations of time (for the boat show, oyster festival, can & bottle drive etc.) are always valued and appreciated, and your donations of food/beverages for events hosted at NHS are also very valuable, since all money raised selling these items goes directly back to the band.
- Our goal is to see every family contributing a few dishes or a few hours to each event, in which case all of us would have a very light load to carry – and siblings and students are needed as well as parents. Remember, many hands make light work! Please, please attend the parent meetings to see how you can contribute.

Q I've heard about assessments – what is that all about?

A While MBI and other fund raising activities such as raffle ticket sales, ad sales for the Cavalcade program book and more do contribute significantly to the cost of running the band each year. However, it is usually necessary for each family to contribute something to the cost of their student's participation in the band. The amount of each family's expected contribution will be determined as soon as possible (usually within the first few weeks of September). An installment payment schedule will be provided with the notice, but if your family needs extra time or extra help with these payments, please contact Mr. Rivera to speak in complete confidence to discuss the options (riverac@norwalkps.org or 203.838.4481 x 13275). It is the goal of the band that no student is ever turned away on the basis of financial need.

Q Are there other expenses I need to worry about?

A Your student will receive an order form for their band jacket and band wear. Your student will need to have the appropriate items by the end of band camp in order to compete, and orders are generally accepted with payment during the second week of band camp.

Keep in mind that these items are purchased once (unless outgrown or misplaced). Again, please speak with Mr. Rivera in confidence about any necessary financial arrangements.

Q Where do I get more information? How can I get more involved?

A There are several ways to stay informed during the summer, band camp and all year long:

- Visit the online band calendar often (www.nhsband.com).
- Sign up for band email notices. Contact the MBI secretary (correspondingsecretarymbi@gmail.com) to make sure your email address is on our mailing list. Your student can sign up as well.
- Talk to your student. Mr. Rivera and the other instructors tell the students everything that is online or in the email notices.
- Attend parent meetings! Parent meetings are held on the second Tuesday of every month at 7:00 PM in the band room (in the music wing at the high school). This is a wonderful way to stay informed, get to know the other parents, have a voice and participate in keeping the band running smoothly!