

THE OFFICIAL HANDBOOK OF THE
West Aurora High School
Department of Bands
Celebrating over 100 Years of Performance Excellence

2023-2024



West Aurora School District 129
Aurora, Illinois

West Aurora High School Bands

Welcome to the West Aurora High School Department of Bands! Making music at West High since the fall of 1919, our program currently features 6 wind bands, 5 jazz bands, the Blackhawk Marching Band, and the Blackhawk Basketball Pep Bands. Our mission is to promote musical appreciation, knowledge, and participation through the study and performance of quality instrumental repertoire. The performance based classes and ensembles in our program feature unique content that offers unparalleled aesthetic experiences, rigorous performance demands, and are worthy of academic study. Participation in these courses and ensembles is the best and most direct way to experience the art of music making, one that will assist students in developing a greater understanding of themselves and humanity. The Band Faculty of West Aurora High School welcomes you to our family!

General Course Description for Concert Ensembles

Performance based instrumental music courses feature a collaborative learning environment where students study and learn performance (individual) skills, ensemble (group) skills, and musical (expressive/creative) skills. These skills teach students to become better individuals, better team players, and better at expressing themselves. The instrumental music courses are co-curricular classes, with some requirements for course completion met outside the school day. The events that occur outside the school day (i.e. concerts and contests) are required and failure to perform at these events will affect a student's grade as outlined below. Performance evaluations, written assignments and tests, and most of the requirements for the completion of these courses are completed during normal school hours.

Concert Ensembles

The Heart of West Aurora High School Department of Bands

The West Aurora High School Department of Bands offers six different concert ensemble courses. They are the Red Freshman Band, Blue Freshman Band, Concert Band, Symphonic Winds, Wind Ensemble, and Wind Symphony. These ensembles meet throughout the school year and perform a concert each quarter. **Students involved in both band and choir are required to audition for both areas.** Membership requirements and specific descriptions are as follows:

Freshman Bands (Red and Blue)

The Freshman Bands are available to all wind and percussion performers in grade 9 and are conducted by Mr. Greg Hensel. The Red Freshman Band meets 3rd hour and the Blue Freshman Band meets 2nd hour. Students audition during the first week of school for part and seat placement only, and every effort is made to develop two equal ensembles during the registration process. The Freshman Bands are the youngest performance classes and focus on fundamentals intended to develop and prepare these students for the upper level performance groups. The size and instrumentation of the Freshman Bands will vary from year to year contingent on elementary and middle school band program enrollment. The Freshman Bands will perform on the following dates:

Red Freshman Band

October 18, 2023 – 6:00 pm
December 14, 2023 – 7:00 pm
March 7, 2024 – 8:00 pm
May 15, 2024 – 6:30 pm

Blue Freshman Band

October 18, 2023 – 8:00 pm
December 13, 2023 – 7:00 pm
March 7, 2024 – 6:00 pm
May 15, 2024 – 6:30 pm

The following ensembles are open to students in grades 10-12:

Concert Band

The Concert Band, conducted by Mr. John Sierakowski, rehearses each day during 1st hour. Adhering to the principals of *music for all*, the Concert Band instills performance fundamentals while preparing two performances each semester in a less stressful atmosphere. Further, students with a desire to gain experience on a secondary instrument are encouraged to register for this ensemble. The Concert Band is open to students without an audition

as long as they have previous ensemble experience on a wind or percussion instrument. The Concert Band will perform on the following dates:

October 18, 2023 – 6:00 pm
December 13, 2023 – 7:00 pm
March 7, 2024 – 8:00 pm
May 15, 2024 – 6:30 pm

Symphonic Winds

The Symphonic Winds, conducted by Mr. John Sierakowski, is the third band at West High School with placement by audition only. This ensemble rehearses each day during 8th hour and is devoted to the study and performance of important wind band literature while continuing work in the development of instrumental craft. The Symphonic Winds perform on the following dates:

October 18, 2023 – 8:00 pm
December 14, 2023 – 7:00 pm
March 2, 2024 – Fine Arts Festival
March 7, 2024 – 6:00 pm
May 15, 2024 – 6:30 pm

Wind Ensemble

The Wind Ensemble is the second band at West High School and is conducted by Ms. Patty Sampson. Admission into the Wind Ensemble is by audition only and the ensemble rehearses 6th hour every day. This wind band's programs feature challenging and varied literature in preparation for two performances each semester. The performance schedule is as follows:

October 18, 2023 – 6:00 pm
December 13, 2023 – 7:00 pm
March 2, 2024 – Fine Arts Festival (*tentative*)
March 7, 2024 – 6:00 pm
May 10, 2024 – Theme Concert Rehearsal 6:00 pm
May 11, 2024 – Theme Concert with Wind Symphony – 2:00 pm
May 19, 2024 – Graduation Ceremony at Northern Illinois University (sophomores and juniors only)

Wind Symphony

The Wind Symphony, conducted by Miss Patty Sampson is the top concert ensemble with admission by audition only. The Wind Symphony performs the finest repertoire for wind band including both contemporary and classic works, as well as transcriptions and marches. This ensemble has a long and rich history of performance excellence and is exclusively an Honors course. Information regarding the Honors component will be shared in the first two weeks of each semester. The ensemble rehearses every day during 5th hour. The Wind Symphony concert schedule is as follows:

October 18, 2023 – 8:00 pm
November 9 – Veteran's Day Assembly
December 5, 2023 – Winter Concert Rehearsal – 6:00 pm
December 7, 2023 – Winter Concert (with the Choirs and Jazz Ensemble) – 7:00 pm
December 8, 2023 – Winter Concert Assemblies
December 14, 2023 – 7:00 pm
March 2, 2024 – Fine Arts Festival (with combined 7th grade bands)
March 7, 2024 – 8:00 pm
May 10, 2024 – Theme Concert Rehearsal 6:00 pm
May 11, 2024 – Theme Concert with Wind Symphony – 2:00 pm
May 19, 2024 – Graduation Ceremony at Northern Illinois University (sophomores and juniors only)
****The Illinois State University Concert Band Festival is the same weekend as our musical. Additionally, University of Illinois Superstate Festival is the same date as prom. We will decide, as an ensemble, what festivals we would like to apply to perform.**

Auditions and Ensemble Placement

An audition via Google Folders is required of all students enrolled in a concert ensemble at West Aurora High School. This graded assignment will consist of instrument-specific etudes and scales and will be sent to outside adjudicators for evaluation and placement. These recorded auditions produce a baseline of knowledge from which the conductors make ensemble placements. Students involved in concert bands, jazz bands, and choir are required to submit audition for both areas due to potential scheduling conflicts. Students who do not submit an audition file will be placed in either Symphonic Winds or Concert Band and will receive a "0" for this significant assignment.

There are other considerations in ensemble placement including instrumentation within a given ensemble, citizenship in both the bands and at West High, positive musical contributions throughout the school year, preparedness, attitude, and the ability to work well with others. The bands at West Aurora High School have a proud history of musical achievement accomplished through the hard work of our students, leadership from legendary band directors from years gone by, and the support of our parents, Band Boosters, and district administration. Conduct detrimental to the program may have an impact on ensemble placement. *Once rosters are posted, all decisions are final.* There is no entitlement in the West High program.

Concert Performance Attire

Wind Symphony and Wind Ensemble

Men: An all-black, short coat tuxedo supplied by the Department of Bands for a nominal fee of **\$25** for the school year. Each member will have the opportunity to purchase a package at the beginning of the year that includes a black bow tie, black cummerbund and a white tuxedo shirt for \$40, if necessary. Additionally, the tuxedo should be accessorized with black dress shoes and black dress socks. *NO ankle socks.*

Women: A set of concert attire featuring black Palazzo pants and a black top for a nominal fee of **\$25**. Black dress shoes and black hose or black dress socks are required to accompany this set. NO open-toed shoes or boots are allowed. *It is your responsibility to look professional and elegant.* Any infraction of this dress code could result in removal from that particular performance and will significantly impact your grade. *Your appearance is very much a part of your performance and must not be a distraction to the music.*

Symphonic Winds

Men: All black attire: plain black dress pants, black dress shirt, black dress shoes and socks (no ankle socks), and a black belt. If you have these items from last year, you do not need to purchase a new one. If you need a new shirt, fittings will take place during a band class. There will also be an alternate evening date.

Women: All black attire: plain black dress pants, black dress shirt, black dress shoes and socks (no ankle socks), and a black belt. If you have these items from last year, you do not need to purchase a new one. If you need a new shirt, fittings will take place during a band class. There will also be an alternate evening date.

Concert Band and Freshman Bands

Men: All black attire: plain black dress pants, black dress shirt, black dress shoes and socks (no ankle socks), and a black belt. If you have these items from last year, you do not need to purchase a new one. If you need a new shirt, fittings will take place during a band class. There will also be an alternate evening date.

All freshmen will need to purchase the black shirt.

Women: All black attire: plain black dress pants, black dress shirt, black dress shoes and socks (no ankle socks), and a black belt. If you have these items from last year, you do not need to purchase a new one. If you need a new shirt, fittings will take place during a band class. There will also be an alternate evening date.

All freshmen will need to purchase the black shirt.

It is your responsibility to look professional and elegant. Any infraction of this dress code could result in removal from that particular performance and will significantly impact your grade. *Your appearance is very much a part of your performance and must not be a distraction to the music.*

Concert Tickets

Tickets are sold for two performances during the school year. Reserved tickets for the **Winter Concert** are \$5 each and due to the popularity of this concert throughout the community, NO complimentary tickets will be issued. Tickets can be purchased at: www.sd129tickets.org. All other concerts are free and open to the public. Tickets for the Theme Concert will also be \$5. Information regarding this concert will be forthcoming.

West Aurora Bands Grading and Evaluation Policy

Band students enrolled in any ensemble are evaluated and graded each quarter during the school year. All students, regardless of their playing ability, have an equal opportunity to earn a grade of an "A," provided they follow the policies of the ensemble, make positive musical contributions, and put forth effort to improve themselves as musicians. Students are graded on a point system consisting of the components listed below. The following is offered as a general guideline for grading:

Daily Participation – 60%: Attendance, promptness, attitude, participation, individual preparation, conduct, and maintaining an instrument in good playing condition with the required accessories and equipment. Semester playing exams and written assignments are also included in this portion of a student's grade.

Musical Performances – 40%: All performances outside the school day. **

** - Missing a performance will substantially affect a student's overall grade in his/her concert ensemble.

Alternative or Make-Up Assignments: It is important to remember that our classes (ensembles) have an ultimate goal of performance after weeks of preparation. Make-up assignments are offered to students who must miss a performance with an unexcused absence for a maximum of 70% of the possible concert points for that performance. Students with an excused absence recognized by West High School are offered make-up assignments for full credit. ***It is the responsibility of the student to secure a make-up assignment for a missed concert.***

Discipline Policies

The discipline policies within the band facilities apply to all students at all times both during the school day and at after-school rehearsals and performances. The best policy is to discipline yourself so others will not have to discipline you. Disruptions during the rehearsal will not be tolerated, and students who cause disruptions or engage in inappropriate behavior are subject to the following procedures:

1st Offense:

Verbal warning by director, either during the rehearsal or immediately following

2nd Offense:

Student conference with the director after rehearsal

3rd Offense:

Student conference with the director after rehearsal, parent contacted

4th Offense:

Referral and dean intervention

5th Offense:

Referral and dean intervention, administrative conference with parent and director, possible removal from class

In regard to conduct outside of the band facilities, it is critically important to remember that even outside of rehearsal and performance, ***you are a representative of the West Aurora High School Bands.*** Individuals in our community and beyond develop opinions about our program based on your conduct in public, so it is always

important to remember that as an ambassador for the bands of School District 129, you conduct yourself in a manner that will positively reflect on our program. Obviously, this becomes infinitely more important when you are in uniform, wearing anything that identifies you as a West High Bands student, or traveling with one of our ensembles. ***It takes many years to develop an outstanding reputation but only seconds to ruin it.***

West Aurora High School discipline policies and procedures apply to all ensembles under the umbrella of the Department of Bands. School discipline protocol will be followed by the band faculty.

Participation Policy

Participation is recorded daily and is part of every student's overall concert ensemble grade. Lack of participation during the daily rehearsals will result in a low participation grade, thus lowering the student's overall concert ensemble grade. **It is the student's responsibility that he/she has all music and his/her instrument in good playing condition with necessary accessories and equipment, ready to go at the beginning of rehearsal.**

Instruments in ill repair, not having one's music, forgetting one's mouthpiece, etc., are not acceptable excuses and will result in daily participation grades of zero. You must prepare to be successful - failing to prepare is preparing to fail.

Rehearsal Policies

The concert ensembles at West High are primarily performance-based with a majority of work done during daily rehearsals. Therefore, students are expected to participate in daily rehearsals in order for improvement to be made and outside sectional rehearsals are strongly encouraged. The West High ensembles strive for excellence in performance and accomplish this through a professional-style rehearsal atmosphere.

1. Students are expected to arrive to every daily rehearsal with their instrument in good playing condition, with extra reeds, oil, mutes, etc., arrange their music in the proper order, and warm up quietly. Percussionists are expected to set up the appropriate instruments and mallets for the rehearsal and are also expected to warm up.
2. When the director, guest conductor, administrator, or any other authority steps on the podium, all playing and talking ceases **immediately!** Full attention must be given to the podium.
3. Every concert ensemble rehearsal begins with an organized warm up.
4. There is no gum chewing, eating, drinking, or playing other students' instruments in the band room at any time. This includes playing on percussion instruments. (Jazz bands that meet during the school day will eat lunch in the jazz room.)
5. Once the rehearsal begins, there is no individual playing between selections. Also, there is no talking once the rehearsal begins. Once the conductor takes the podium, this indicates that he/she is ready to begin working or about to give instructions.
6. At the end of rehearsal, instruments and music must be returned to their proper place. The band room is occupied during every period throughout the day, and anything left out is subject to theft. Lost music will be replaced at the student's expense. Percussionists are expected to cover the large instruments and return their music to the percussion slots.

*It is absolutely imperative that each student understand the IMPORTANCE and SANCTITY of our rehearsals. Rehearsal time is sacred and distractions of any kind **will not be tolerated**, for they waste the ensemble's time. Please respect this approach to rehearsal; it is valuable time that cannot be replaced.*

Attendance & Tardiness Policies

As a member of the West Aurora music program, student attendance at all performances and rehearsals is expected and mandatory. Absences and tardiness detract from the effectiveness of the entire band.

Successful members **never** have unexcused absences or tardiness. Attendance is taken at every rehearsal and performance. The West Aurora policy is as follows:

Excused Absences

Concert ensembles are classes at West Aurora High School and excused absences are the same as those that excuse the student from school. The directors must be made aware **prior** to the absence by a written note from the student's parent/guardian. Illness, family emergency, and death are considered excused absences. Work and/or homework are not reasons for an excused absence.

Unexcused Absences

An unexcused absence from a performance will affect the student's grade significantly. Performances are requirements for completion of the class. Grade loss can also result from lack of proper notification to directors. Excessive absences will jeopardize the student's membership in the music program.

See the Grading and Evaluation Policy for specifics regarding make-up assignments. Conductors reserve the right to withhold the privilege of performing with the student's ensemble based on attendance, quality of participation, and/or level of preparedness.

Lockers

The bands facilities feature instrument lockers available to all WAHS band students. These lockers are designed for instruments and music only and cannot withstand heavy backpacks and/or numerous text books. Further, food and drink are **not** allowed in lockers as it attracts insects and rodents. Locks will be issued for each locker and some lockers are shared by more than one student. It is important to remember your combination. *It is the responsibility of the locker's inhabitants to keep the locker clean!* Students will clean out their locker and check-out with one of the band faculty during Finals Week in the second semester.

Extra-Curricular Bands

Extensions of the Concert Ensemble Experience

Jazz Bands

The Jazz program at West Aurora consists of four auditioned jazz bands; the Jazz Ensemble, the Jazz Band, Stage Band, and the Jazz Lab Band. These groups meet both during the school day and outside the school day for the entire school year. In addition to these four ensembles there is an Early Bird Jazz Band. Participation in the Jazz Program is not mandatory, but in order to participate in the jazz band you must be in a concert ensemble. The only exceptions made are those who play piano, bass or guitar. Lack of participation in the Jazz Band does not affect the student's concert ensemble grade. Membership requirements and specific descriptions for these groups are as follows:

Jazz Ensemble

Jazz Ensemble is the top jazz group at West and is directed by Miss Sampson. Additionally, small jazz combos are created from members of this ensemble. Membership in the Jazz Ensemble is open to all students who are enrolled in one of the concert ensembles at West Aurora. Auditions take place during the spring prior for placement the following year. The Jazz Ensemble performs at many school district functions, as well as community performances and festivals.

*Note: Extra rehearsals may be added throughout the year. Monday after-school rehearsals begin at the conclusion of the marching band season.

Jazz Band

Jazz Band is our second jazz band and is directed by Miss Sampson. Depending on interest, small jazz combos may be formed from members of this ensemble. Membership in the Jazz Band is open to all students who are enrolled in one of the concert ensembles at West Aurora. Auditions take place during the spring prior for placement for the following year. *Note: Extra rehearsals may be added throughout the year. Monday after-school rehearsals begin at the conclusion of the marching band season.

Stage Band

Membership in the Stage Band is open to all students who are enrolled in one of the concert ensembles at West Aurora and/or play a rhythm section instrument (piano, bass, and guitar). Auditions take place during the spring prior for placement for the following year. The instrumentation for Stage Band is the same as Jazz Ensemble, depending upon personnel availability.

Jazz Lab Band

Membership in the Jazz Lab Band is open to all students who are enrolled in one of the concert ensembles at West Aurora and/or play a rhythm section instrument (piano, bass, and guitar). Auditions take place during the spring prior for placement for the following year. The instrumentation for Jazz Lab Band is the same as Jazz Ensemble, depending upon personnel availability.

Early Bird Jazz Band

The Early Bird Jazz Band is open to all band students interested in learning jazz. This group rehearses two mornings per week from 6:45 – 7:20 a.m., generally on Tuesdays and Thursdays. The instrumentation varies depending upon the number of students on each instrument and students are encouraged to study a secondary instrument in this setting. Freshman and Upperclassmen are all welcome to join. There will be a sign up for these groups in late October and rehearsals being after marching season ends.

It is important to note that auditions for jazz ensembles follow the same guidelines as concert ensembles. In order to participate in an auditioned jazz band, students must also audition for placement in a concert ensemble.

Athletic Bands

Blackhawk Marching Band

The Blackhawk Marching Band is the largest student activity organization at West Aurora High School and is a spirited and energetic extra-curricular band focused on entertaining fans and supporting Blackhawk Football. It is open to all band students who are enrolled in one of the seven concert ensembles (grades 9-12). Opting not to participate in the marching band will not affect a student's concert ensemble grade. However, a student must be enrolled in a concert ensemble in order to participate in the Blackhawk Marching Band. Marching band is an extra-curricular activity and students must meet eligibility requirements. Our noncompetitive band performs at all West High home football games as well as several parades and other events throughout the year. The marching band rehearses two days per week outside the school day:

Mondays and Thursdays: 6:30 - 9:00 p.m. (Full Band)

Detailed policies, procedures, and guidelines for the Blackhawk Marching Band can be found in the marching band handbook available to all Blackhawk Band members on the bands website. The information above is only a cursory overview.

Bands Travel & Trips

Whenever an ensemble from West High travels, it does so via school provided transportation. No personal vehicles are allowed unless a written notice from a parent/guardian is provided **prior** to departure. Due to issues with liability, students may not travel together in personal vehicles. All members must also fill out a Medical Release & Parent Permission Forms for legal purposes.

In addition, the Blackhawk Marching Band annually travels out-of-state to participate in festivals and other events throughout the country. Trips may be scheduled at virtually any time throughout the calendar year. Students are responsible for the cost of the trip and fundraisers will be made available for students to help defray this cost. Information on marching band trips is provided as soon as travel details and plans are secured.

Every student is expected to attend all rehearsals and performances of the fall marching band season in order to maintain their spot on the trip. Conflicts may be resolved with the directors on an individual basis. Excused absences may include sickness, family emergency, or the passing of a family member. However, **work, social outings, and**

homework are not considered an excused absence. Excessive tardiness, absences, questionable behavior, or missing performances can result in a student being removed from the trip without refund.

Basketball Pep Bands

The basketball pep bands at West Aurora High School are also extra-curricular bands. These groups perform at all West High pep assemblies, all boy's home basketball games, select school functions, and select girl's home basketball games. There are two basketball bands (Red and Blue) that will be assigned to half of the boys and girls games but members are welcomed and encouraged to participate in as many games as they wish. The band faculty will determine the number of games each student will need to attend in order to earn a basketball pep band patch. The basketball band plays a variety of music and games often feature a fun theme. Registration will be completed in the fall semester in a similar fashion to marching band and more information will be available in late October. Seniors will also be allowed to sign up to conduct pep band at one basketball game. If there are spots still available, seniors may sign up for a second game. ***There is only one mandatory rehearsal for this ensemble for all participating students – attendance is mandatory – no exceptions! It is tentatively scheduled for Monday, November 27 from 6:00 pm -8:00 pm.***

*** Directors reserve the right to replace or remove any student from the basketball pep band for cause. *
Students must pick up their basketball pep band patch prior to the end of the academic year. No patches will be given in future years for previous participation.**

The West Aurora High School Band Boosters

The West Aurora Band Boosters lends support to the Department of Bands by supplying volunteers when needed and by financing items and special events outside the general school budget. We welcome and ***strongly*** encourage ALL parents and members of the community interested in supporting the West Aurora Bands to not only become a member, but also get involved in the organization in a volunteer capacity.