

SHAWNEE MISSION WEST BAND DEPARTMENT HANDBOOK

Academic Year 2026–2027

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Social Media Platforms	Facebook: Shawnee Mission West Marching Band Instagram: @smwestbands YouTube: @shawneemissionwestprideband

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All Those Bands!

Concert Bands – The Foundation of Our Program

Concert Band: The Concert Band performs at school concerts, frequently combining with members of the Symphonic Band. Members are fully eligible to participate in the Basketball Pep Band, Musical Pit Orchestra, and Solo/Small Ensemble Festival.

Symphonic Band: Students in grades 9–12 are selected for this ensemble through the audition process in October. This group performs at all school concerts, the annual Pasta Dinner or Pancake Breakfast in February, and the State Large Group Festival in April.

Wind Ensemble: This premier selected group is determined by audition in October. All band students in grades 9–12 who participate in marching band are eligible. The ensemble performs at all school concerts, the February Pasta Dinner or Pancake Breakfast the SMSD Band Festival, and the State Large Group Festival in April.

Athletic Bands – The Most Visible of Our Bands

Marching Band (Grades 10–12; Grade 9 by Audition): Performing at football games, community parades, and competitive marching festivals, this group is the most visible music ensemble at West. It brings immense pride to our school and community. Participation requires occasional rehearsals outside of standard school hours and weekend performances. Following the conclusion of the football season, the marching band transitions into our concert ensembles.

Pep Band: Open to all band students in grades 9–12. During football season, we occasionally travel to away games to support our team. In the winter, the Pep Bands perform at several home boys and girls basketball games. Rehearsal and performance schedules are posted in late October as the basketball season approaches.

Jazz Bands – Our Uniquely American Musical Art Form

Overland Express (OE): Our premier performing jazz ensemble. Students are selected by audition the previous spring, and enrollment is limited. Overland Express represents West High School at numerous community and school events throughout the year.

Jazz Lab Ensemble: This band serves as a training group for less advanced players wanting to gain an understanding of jazz styles, articulations, and performance techniques. This group will perform at all home concerts and occasional outside of school performances when possible. Participating in this ensemble provides a solid foundation for students to possibly move into OE when there are openings.

Other Ensembles to possibly be involved with – Pit Orchestra (musical), Full Orchestra, Percussion Ensemble

Percussion Ensemble: Mandatory for all marching percussion students in grades 9–12 during the fall. Rehearsals are held on **Tuesday evenings from 6:00 PM to 9:00 PM**. After marching season, rehearsals shift to **Monday evenings from 6:00 PM to 8:00 PM** as the group explores world drumming, novelty percussion, and standard percussion literature, culminating in a full-length community concert in the spring.

Other Performance Opportunities

Honor Bands

We encourage students to pursue local honor ensembles, which offer exceptional growth opportunities:

- **KMEA District & All-State Honor Groups:** Open to all band students. Auditions occur in November, followed by a clinic and performance in December. Accepted students are eligible to audition for the All-State KMEA Honor Band or Jazz Ensemble, which performs in Wichita in late February. Audition requirements are available on the KMEA and NEKSMEA [official websites](#).
- **John Philip Sousa Honor Band (Freshmen Only):** Hosted in Lawrence, KS. Audition materials are published in August, recorded submissions are due in early October, and the performance takes place in late January.
- **Local Ensembles:** The KC Youth Orchestra, KC Youth Jazz Orchestras, Kansas City Youth Brass Band, and Fountain City Youth Brass Ensembles accept applications early in the year. Spring college-sponsored honor bands (at KU, K-State, UMKC, and Baker University) are also available for interested upperclassmen.

Solos and Ensembles

Participating in the spring Solo and Small Ensemble Festival is a natural extension of private lesson study and is open to all students in grades 9–12.

- **Preparation:** Solo selection should be finalized before Winter Break. Students are responsible for securing their own piano accompanists; the directors are happy to assist with recommendations. In compliance with copyright laws, **no photocopied music is permitted**. Both performers and judges must use original, purchased scores.
- **Ensembles:** Small groups of 2 to 24 players (most commonly trios, quartets, or quintets) are a fantastic way to perform chamber music with friends. The directors can assist in forming groups and sourcing appropriate literature.
- **Exhibition & State Advancement:** West hosts a local recital night prior to the regional

festival. Students earning a "I" (Excellent) rating at regionals advance to the state festival. Detailed registration information is distributed in November.

Marching Band (9–12)

Marching season begins mid-summer. Please monitor the BAW website and check your summer director's letters for specific Marching Camp dates and times.

Rehearsals and Practices

- **Morning Rehearsals:** During marching season, full band rehearsals begin promptly at **7:00 AM** on First Block days (usually MWF) and run through the end of the block.
- **Tuesday Evening Rehearsals:** Full marching band rehearsals run from **6:00 PM to 8:00 PM** every Tuesday during the season (percussionists continue until **9:00 PM**). Attendance is mandatory and may only be excused directly by Dr. Thomas.
- **Percussion Sectionals:** Batterie and pit percussion students are expected to attend all scheduled Tuesday night rehearsals. Consistent attendance is vital to show coordination; unexcused absences will impact grading and field placement. Post-season, these rehearsals become optional but highly encouraged, and open to freshmen.
- **Seminar:** School seminar periods must be dedicated to your primary academic obligations first. Once academic needs are met, seminar may be utilized for practice or sectionals, provided a director is present to supervise.

Sectionals

Sectionals are focused rehearsals called by section leaders or directors to refine section unity, memory, dynamics, and pitch.

- All section members are required to attend; there are 3 to 4 mandatory sectionals scheduled throughout the season, for which grade points are awarded.
- Section leaders are responsible for coordinating schedules to establish a regular, productive rehearsal routine.

Marching Band Uniform Information

The uniform represents our collective identity; wearing the complete uniform properly is a required component of your performance grade.

Uniforms are fitted and issued during Marching Camp. A complete uniform consists of: a band jacket, black bibber pants, a garment bag, and a shako (hat). *Note: The tuba section is issued black berets in place of shakos.*

Required Student Purchases: All marchers must purchase black marching shoes (\$43.00) and black gloves (\$7.00 for band; \$20.00 for guard) during camp using the [Simple Raise](#)

[website](#). These accessories can be paid for directly via credit card through [Simple Raise](#) (Cut Time). Students must also provide **black, over-the-ankle socks**. For hot-weather performances, simple black shorts may be worn with the band T-shirt without a uniform.

Uniform Management Protocols:

1. **Undergarments:** You must wear lightweight athletic shorts (no denim, heavy rivets, or rough fabrics) and your band T-shirt under your uniform. Because we travel and dress in shared spaces, wearing these undergarments to school on performance days is highly recommended.
2. **Neck Bands:** Ensure your assigned neck band is securely snapped in place during performances and return it to your section leader immediately afterward.
3. **Hair Standards:** To maintain a uniform appearance, all hair must be pinned or tied securely inside the shako. If students choose to temporarily color their hair for school spirit days, please ensure the dye is entirely sweat-proof. Running dye can permanently ruin our \$400+ custom uniform jackets, and students will be held financially responsible for any permanent damage to their assigned uniform.
4. **Uniform Care:** Guard your uniform against stains. Do not eat or drink (except water) while wearing your uniform jacket. You will be shown on how to properly fold and protect your jacket when not being worn.
5. **Repairs:** If your uniform requires attention (stains, loose modifications, or snaps), fill out a repair tag and hang the uniform in the designated repair location. Emergency sewing kits are kept on-site at all events—see a volunteer uniform parent for assistance.
6. **Storage:** After every performance, properly hang your uniform to prevent wrinkling and return it to the designated section rack. Section leaders inspect uniforms post-performance; improper storage will result in a performance grade deduction.
7. **Forgotten Items:** If you forget your required black socks or gloves, replacement pairs may be purchased at the event for \$5.00. A forgotten band T-shirt will require a \$10.00 replacement charge. If you wash and return the items, you will not be charged. Standard invoices are issued at the end of the season for any auxiliary items purchased.
8. **Our Volunteers:** Our uniform parents work tirelessly to keep our operations running smoothly. Please treat them with the utmost kindness, respect, and gratitude.

Care and Cleaning of Uniforms

Our custom marching uniforms cost \$800.00 each and are designed to last for several seasons. General maintenance is a shared responsibility. A portion of your student band fee directly covers regular professional dry cleaning. If a uniform becomes soiled, please immediately notify a director or the BAW Uniform Chair.

Band T-Shirt

Every student is issued a designated band T-shirt. This shirt is worn as a hot-weather performance uniform, under the marching uniform to protect the fabric, and as our official Pep Band attire. Please care for this shirt; replacements must be purchased at the student's expense. Students who report for Pep Band without their band T-shirt will not be permitted to perform.

Meals & Food Allergies

Your student band fee covers several group meals during the season, including home game tailgates, competitions, and picture days. To keep our students safe, **parents please provide any food allergies (such as lactose intolerance or peanut allergies) via the digital forms distributed at the start of the school year or [HERE](#).** If you have immediate concerns, please contact Dr. Thomas or our Tailgate Chair.

Color Guard

The Color Guard adds vital visual color and artistry to our fall marching production. Selected by spring audition, members perform alongside the marching band in the fall.

The program is led by our West Dance Team Coach, who brings extensive background in dance, drum corps, winter guard, and marching band choreography. In addition to the standard band fee, guard members are responsible for individual personal gear (shoes, gloves, and basic accessories) which they retain.

Concert Bands

Wind Ensemble & Symphonic Band Placement

To accommodate our large program, the band divides into two concert ensembles following the marching season. Both groups meet during Block 1. Concert Band students will automatically transition into the Symphonic Band.

Placement auditions for the Wind Ensemble and Symphonic Band are held live in early October. Audition material includes scales, a selected Wind Ensemble excerpt, and portions of the KMEA District Honor Band music.

Concert Band Attire (All Concert Ensembles)

We maintain a formal, uniform appearance on stage to ensure the audience's focus remains entirely on our musical presentation. Concert attire is strictly formal; casual pants, short skirts, revealing necklines, and casual footwear (such as flip-flops or athletic shoes) are not permitted. To accommodate our students, concert clothing requirements are organized into two streamlined options:

- **Option A (Tuxedo Jacket, pants, & shirt):**

- **Provided by School:** A formal black tuxedo jacket (stored in numerical order in the uniform room and returned immediately following each performance).
- **Provided by Student:** Black dress pants, a long-sleeve black dress shirt, black dress shoes, and black dress socks.

- **Option B (All-Black Dress):**

- **Provided by Student:** A long black dress, a long black skirt paired with a black top, or formal black dress pants paired with a black top. All dresses and skirts must be mid-calf length or longer (no more than 2 to 4 inches from the floor). Tops must have sleeves. Thin straps or strapless necklines are not permitted (shrugs or cardigans must be worn over these options). Black formal dress shoes are required.



Note: The final spring concert of the year traditionally features "spring formal" attire rather than standard concert black.

If a student reports for a concert dressed inappropriately, they will not be permitted to perform and will receive a grade of "0" for the performance. **If your family needs assistance securing formal concert attire, please contact a director privately several weeks in advance.** We are happy to help, provided we have time to make arrangements.

Percussion Ensemble Attire

For select percussion performances, students will wear formal all-black attire consisting of a black polo or long-sleeve black dress shirt, black dress pants, and black dress shoes (no athletic wear, t-shirts, or shorts).

Jazz Ensembles

Our jazz program, **Overland Express**, is a select, audition-only ensemble that serves as a key ambassador for West High School. Because members are held to professional standards, reliability and responsibility are paramount. **Jazz Lab Ensemble** is our entry-level jazz band helping students learn to play various styles and techniques utilized in typical jazz performances.

Many players study privately to develop their improvisation skills. Performance fees earned by the ensemble are placed in a dedicated account to sponsor professional clinicians and program travel. Overland Express and Jazz Lab band hosts the annual "Jazz on the Bridge" festival in March and participates in regional spring jazz festivals. The Overland Express ensemble embarks on national educational travel every three years to study the historical roots of jazz.

Important General Information

Co-Curricular Participation

Yes, you can participate in both band and other West activities! We intentionally design our competitive calendar to allow students to remain highly involved in football, soccer, cross-country, volleyball, debate, theater, choir, and more.

Aside from our early morning marching rehearsals, your school day is highly flexible. We maintain an excellent working relationship with our athletic coaches; for example, football players in the band routinely perform with us at halftime and rejoin their team for the game.

Students are expected to attend all band performances and rehearsals unless a direct conflict arises with another official school activity. We are proud to count multiple All-State athletes, student leaders, and All-State musicians among our band membership.

Academics

Band is an elective, academic class. Academic success remains your primary responsibility at Shawnee Mission West.

Your grade is determined by performance participation, technical growth, and comprehension of music theory and history. The band community offers an incredibly supportive network to help you succeed; however, you must budget your time to ensure proper preparation for both your academic classes and your instrument.

Instrument Rental

- **School Instruments:** The school district maintains an inventory of specialized instruments available for student rental at a rate of **\$60.00 per year** (and \$30.00 for summer use). A signed district rental contract is required.
- **Student Responsibility:** Students are responsible for the daily care of rented instruments, and any damage resulting from misuse must be repaired at the student's expense. All percussionists pay the standard \$60.00 annual fee to cover school instrument usage. Students who play auxiliary matching instruments (such as Mellophone for marching and French Horn for concert season) are only assessed a single fee.
- **Payment:** All instrument rental checks must be made payable to the **Shawnee Mission School District**.

Band Fees

- **Marching Band Fee:** \$75.00
- **Concert Band (Only) Fee:** \$35.00
- These fees directly support program operations, including the student band T-shirt, travel meals, competitive entry fees, uniform dry cleaning, and district transportation.
- **Locker Locks:** Combination locks are provided for all band lockers. Lost locks must be replaced at a student cost of \$10.00.
- **Payment:** Band fees are due on the first day of classes. Checks must be made payable to **SMW Band**, or paid digitally via credit card through Cut Time.

Financial assistance and flexible payment plans are readily available to ensure every student can participate. Please contact Dr. Thomas directly to discuss confidential accommodations.

Uniform Accessories

New marching members must purchase basic uniform accessories (shoes, gloves). Fittings are held during camp, and orders are placed on your behalf. These purchases may be managed directly through the Cut Time online portal. If a student requires replacement shoes or gloves due to growth or loss, please consult our uniform volunteers during camp, or a director.

Fundraising

Fundraising is vital to keeping our program accessible and highly competitive. While some regional programs require student fees of \$600.00 or more, our annual fee remains just \$75.00 because our families actively support our collective fundraising efforts.

Our primary annual fundraisers include the **Mega Car Wash**, and the **BAW Pasta Dinner or Pancake Breakfast**. We also occasionally host online donation drives. We ask that families help by selling event tickets to neighbors, colleagues, and friends so that our parents are not solely responsible for funding our activities. We also have an active Corporate Sponsorship program soliciting donations from local businesses.

Travel Opportunities

During years featuring major travel (such as our London trip), we offer targeted individual fundraising opportunities, including trash bag and flower sales, and local restaurant dining nights.

For major events like the Mega Car Wash and Red Wheel sales, we utilize a **70/30 profit-sharing model**: 70% of the profit goes directly into the individual student's travel account, while 30% supports the general band fund. Students may use their individual earnings to cover their annual band fees.

As mentioned above, we actively solicit corporate sponsorships. Many regional employers offer matching grants for parent volunteer hours. In recent history, our corporate partnership drive has raised anywhere from \$12,000- \$18,000. If you own a business or would like to discuss corporate sponsorship opportunities, please contact Dr. Thomas.

Grading Policies

As a performance-based academic course, performances carry significant weight in grade determination. Every performance represents weeks of collective preparation, and we rely on every member of the ensemble. Missed performances are only excused under extraordinary circumstances. **Non-school activities (such as work or club sports) are not considered excused absences.** In the event of an emergency, a parent must contact a director prior to the performance start time.

Quarterly grades are calculated using the categories outlined below:

Evaluation Category	Grading Value	Evaluation Criteria
Daily Rehearsal Participation (F)	5 points per rehearsal	Students must arrive on time, with all necessary materials, and contribute positively to the ensemble.
Sectionals (F)	20 points per sectional	Active, prepared participation is required.
Performances (S)	100 points per performance	Students must report on time, in full uniform, and properly manage their uniform care.
Assessments (F or S)	Variable	Periodic playing or written evaluations.

All grades are categorized in Skyward as **Formative (40%)** and **Summative (60%)**.

Tardy Policy

To be considered "on time," a student must be in their assigned seat or parade block with their instrument, music, and pencil ready by the designated start time.

- Late arrival results in the loss of daily participation points and is subject to the school's academic tardy policy.
- Upon the third tardy, parents will be notified. Continued tardiness will result in detention, loss of performance points, and referral to the administration.
- Students may resolve tardy infractions through designated band service hours as approved by the directors.

Does the Band Have Rules?

To maintain a safe, productive, and positive environment, the following guidelines apply to all band members:

1. All Shawnee Mission School District and high school conduct policies apply to all band events, rehearsals, and travel.
2. Respect and care for all school facilities, instruments, lockers, and uniforms.

3. The band office is reserved for staff operations. Please do not use the office for personal storage, refrigeration, or personal copying.
4. The band room is reserved for active band students only. Non-band friends should wait in the common hallways.
5. If an action detracts from another student's experience or compromises the group's performance quality, do not do it. Always exercise mature judgment.

Band Lettering System

Earning a varsity letter in band is a highly respected achievement. The formal requirements are outlined on the BAW website.

Students can track their progress throughout the year via their shared Google Sheet. Lettering points are finalized with directors in late April. Generally, points are awarded for voluntary service that extends beyond standard class requirements, such as working multiple shifts at the pasta dinner, participating in Solo and Ensemble Festival, taking private lessons, or meeting minimum attendance requirements for Basketball Pep Band, and more.

Social Media Policy

Our program expects all band members and families to post positively when representing Shawnee Mission West, the West Pride Marching Band, or our affiliate organizations. Even seemingly harmless posts can be misinterpreted or shared widely, creating unnecessary issues. This policy extends to private group chats and closed platforms like the Band App.

Please keep the following standards in mind:

- Members should never post negatively about Shawnee Mission West, our ensembles, or other school organizations.
- Do not post images depicting inappropriate attire, obscene language, or references to illegal substances/alcohol.
- Be aware that colleges, employers, and scholarship committees routinely review social media histories during their selection processes.
- Students will be held accountable for any policy violations found or reported on their social media accounts, including "private" profiles.

Violations are managed case-by-case in consultation with school administration, and consequences may range from game/competition suspension to removal from the band program.

Individual Improvement

While band is designed to be a rewarding social and creative experience, performing at a high level of excellence makes it even more fun. To maintain our national reputation and secure major international performance invitations, we must strive for individual mastery.

Students can achieve this in three primary ways:

1. **Home Practice:** Just as academic classes require homework, instrumental music requires focused home practice. Setting aside one to two hours per week to master difficult measures is expected of all members.
2. **Private Lessons:** Studying privately with an instrumental specialist is the fastest way to accelerate technical growth. Private lessons are essential for students seeking placement in district and state honor bands, top ratings at festivals, and lucrative college music scholarships. Our directors are happy to assist in connecting you with local private instructors.
3. **Summer Music Camps:** Attending regional summer camps (such as those hosted by KU or UMKC) provides intensive, high-level instruction and fosters lifelong friendships. BAW proudly sponsors several student camp scholarships each year.
4. **Honor Ensemble Participation:** Participating in ensembles as mentioned earlier in this handbook such as the KMEA District and All-State Honor Bands, KC Youth Symphony, Fountain City Youth Brass Ensemble, John Philip Sousa Honor Band, and others.

Band-Aides West (BAW) Booster Club

Band-Aides West (BAW) is our official parent booster organization. This outstanding volunteer group provides chaperones, logistical coordination, and vital financial aid to our students. Every band parent is strongly encouraged to join. Annual family membership is \$15.00. BAW sponsors our annual Back-to-School ice cream social, the winter Pasta Dinner/Pancake Breakfast, and our spring Awards Banquet. Meetings are typically held on the **first Tuesday of each month at 7:00 PM in the band room** (unless otherwise noted).

Camp & Trip Scholarships

BAW awards five educational scholarships annually, alongside expanded travel scholarships during major trip years. **To be eligible to apply, families must be registered, paid members of BAW.**

Band Ice Cream Social

All band students, grades 9-12, are encouraged to attend the Fall Ice Cream Social with their families. This is a great opportunity to relax with family and friends AND welcome the incoming freshmen and their families to the West Band Program!

Web Site & Band Communication

Bookmark it, check it often. Our band parents do a fantastic job of keeping us all aware of upcoming band events. Information on the web site includes schedules, report times, driving

directions to performance venues, and much more! For any questions you have, check the web site first. The answer is probably found somewhere on the site.

www.bandaides.org

Like us on.  @ Shawnee Mission West Marching Band

Follow us on Instagram  @smwestbands.  @shawneemissionwestprideband

Cut Time

Our communication infrastructure relies on two primary digital platforms:

- **Cut Time:** This text-based program manages student records, instrument inventory checkout, financial statements, and administrative forms. **Instead of passwords**, users receive a personalized "Magic Link" via text or email that accesses their secure dashboard. *Note: If the school district implements new communication platforms this year, we will update you on any changes to our Cut Time utilization.*

Closing Thoughts

"The strength of each wolf is the pack, and the strength of the pack is each wolf."

The West Pride Band enjoys a rich legacy of performance excellence, parent support, and staff leadership. We are strongest when we work together. Our staff has a bold vision for the future, and we look forward to working alongside you to provide our students with incredible memories, outstanding musical experiences, and regional and national acclaim.

Let the music begin!