

# Frequently Asked Questions About NCHS Bands

## ***I'm not a very strong player. Am I good enough to play in high school band?***

We have bands suited to every level, from students who have only played for a year or so, to students who will become music majors in college. We even have several students who switch to other instruments. We only “exclude” those who are true beginners, and even they are not “excluded” - we simply ask that those students seek private instruction for at least a year before joining the NCHS band program.

Freshman wind players can audition for placement in Wind Symphony (our second band: mostly sophomores through seniors), Symphonic Band (our third band: mostly sophomores) or simply register for Concert Band (our fourth band: mostly freshmen). These groups perform literature appropriate to the students' abilities. Most freshmen begin in Concert Band, where they progressively build skills on all areas of their instrument(s), as well as rehearsing as an ensemble. The top curricular band, Wind Ensemble is open only to sophomores, juniors, and seniors. Very rarely will a freshman be placed in Wind Ensemble.

## ***Doesn't band take a lot of time?***

Our curricular bands receive a full credit (just like any other elective), and the grades apply fully to your grade point average. The bands are classes that meet every day for 50 minutes (with no “pull-out” lessons). Students are assessed on individual improvement every quarter. The only outside-of-school commitments for Concert or Symphonic Band members are four concerts and four community service performances. Wind Symphony and Wind Ensemble perform more frequently and also participate in various festivals and/or trips, scheduled later in the year. Personal practice time is left up to the individual and involves as much time as is needed to play the assigned music at an acceptable level. That's it! Additional participation in small ensembles, private lessons, jazz, and/or marching band is purely voluntary, and has absolutely no bearing on grades in the curricular band classes!

Freshmen said while they were still in 8<sup>th</sup> grade, they thought high school band would be too big of a commitment with homework, athletics, honors classes, etc. However, now they agree their perceptions were wrong about time commitment. All are thankful to have chosen band. They say throughout the day, it takes their mind off of things, gives them something to look forward to, and eases tension from the school day. The atmosphere in rehearsal is focused and the improvement of the ensembles is something they all enjoy very much.

## ***Don't I have to have a study hall?***

The *majority* of students at NCHS do not have a study hall because they find it largely unnecessary. At the high school, lunch periods are a full period (50 minutes), which allows plenty of time to eat and do homework. Academic teachers are not usually available during study halls, as they are busy teaching other classes (in other words, it's not like junior high 'supervised study'). Other study hall periods are spread throughout the day (and are sometimes populated by students who do not use the time wisely). Because of the nature of band, music students are found to manage their time well and be detail oriented. Also, in preparation for college, many classes are “lecture style” or “hands-on,” thus reducing the amount of take-home work. High school classes are not as time consuming as many would have you believe. Your teachers want you to be a well rounded person, too.

### ***Will I have trouble keeping my other grades up, if I'm in band?***

The facts speak for themselves:

1. The vast majority of band students make the honor roll every semester.
2. Whereas band students presently account for only 8% of the total NCHS population, band students make up nearly a third of the National Honor Society!
3. A third of the students selected as National Merit Scholars are band students!
4. Music students average in the 80<sup>th</sup> percentile or higher on both the ACT and SAT tests.

Conclusion: smart kids take music, but more importantly: music makes kids smart! Study after study indicates that the skills developed in music carry over into both mathematics and language skills!

### ***Don't I have to take four years of foreign language in order to get into college?***

Knowing a foreign language is a wonderful and important skill. We certainly recommend that *all* students (whether college-bound or not) take one of these highly enriching foreign language classes (though this is not a graduation requirement). Most students do not need four years of a foreign language.

There are few universities in the nation that require four years of foreign language study. In fact, the *only* colleges in Illinois that have any foreign language requirement whatsoever are Northwestern and University of Illinois, who both require only two years. Students who truly desire to go beyond two years (in order to develop literacy in that language or to improve their chances of doing well on the A.P. exam) should certainly do so. However, students have more electives (and more flexibility) their junior and senior years, allowing them more time to take the foreign language they choose. You do not have to trade band for foreign language as a freshman or sophomore.

Consider this: one of the first things that college recruiters look for when accepting or rejecting students is participation in music. This is because they know that music students are generally dependable (good attendance), organized (able to handle a full schedule), detail oriented (by the nature of music, it has to be perfect), and social (work well with others toward a common goal). These qualities are highly valued at any institution, and in any occupation. In other words, colleges will look at how focused you are in your intended major, but will *also* look at how *well-rounded* you are as an individual – because they are looking for students who will add to their school's *total* community.

### ***What if none of my friends are in band? Isn't band considered kind of "uncool"? Do I have to wear a uniform?***

You are about to enter a phase of life that includes more change and choices than any other time. It is a scary and exciting time! Some of the kids who are your friends now will remain friends for life, but many will develop other interests and make other choices. By the time you're a sophomore, your group of friends from junior high will probably change a lot (your best friend now may become someone you just wave to in the hall). But the activities you choose in high school will introduce you to many new friends. (Marching Band students have the advantage of making 130 new friends at band camp, making that first week of school a lot less scary!) Your good friends from junior high will continue being your friends whether they're in music or not.

Despite what the media and pop culture would have you believe, band (at least in District 203) is very cool. You have only to attend a home football game and see the standing ovation at halftime to know that! The NCHS drumline performed at a recent assembly and received a standing ovation from the entire 3000-member student body! In the past three years, the music program at Naperville Central has been recognized by the

Grammy Foundation as a Signature School. This identifies it as one of only a handful of the top music programs in the country. Over the past decade, NCHS Bands have traveled to Orlando, Colorado, Germany, Washington D.C, and the Bahamas! How cool is that?!

Our concert uniform is formal black (tuxes and gowns), and our marching uniform is one of the most contemporary in the activity. It is always amusing to find that some of the students who complain the loudest about wearing a band uniform will proudly wear a uniform while working at a fast-food place! Anyone who makes life choices based purely on fashion is a very shallow person, indeed.

**This is where you should be.**

We believe our uniform, our teaching style, our family-atmosphere, and our overall philosophy combine to form one of the best experiences of your life.

Indeed, many things in your life will change -- your school, your friends, and your maturity. But music will always be a part of you. And if you are anything like most of the freshmen that enter the band program, music will be the best part about high school. Whether you are a master or a beginner, this is where you belong.

**More questions? Call or e-mail us! Don't forget to visit the New Student Guide in the "About Us" section of the band website: [www.nchsbands.info](http://www.nchsbands.info)**

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