HCHS Band Program Member Handbook



2026 - 2027

Houston County High School Bands – 920 Highway 96, Warner Robins, GA 31088 – Phone: (478) 988-6340
DIRECTOR EMAILS – Dillon.Watkins@hcbe.net benjamin.norton@hcbe.net

Dear Bears, July 13th, 2026

WELCOME to the 2026 - 2027 edition of the Houston County High School Band Program! You have earned the right to join one of the most exclusive and exciting organizations at Houston County High School! This isn't just music; this is a passport to adventure, creativity, and friendships that last a lifetime. Welcome to the band family! You are about to embark on a journey that is sure to be one of the best experiences of your entire life. You (students and parents) will make new friends, create fond memories, and become a part of one of the largest organizations in the entire Houston County community.

In this packet you will receive important paperwork that will allow you to be part of the program, as well as obtain vital information regarding policies, dates, fees, fundraisers, expectations, and volunteer opportunities. Feel free to reach out with any questions you may have.

Sincerely,

Dillon L. Watkins

Benjamin Norton

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Houston County High School

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CALENDAR

2026-2027 ALL BANDS

In place of printing the entire calendar, here is where to find it.

hocoband.org/calendar

Follow the link at the top that says “Calendar”.

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ATTENDANCE POLICY

2026-2027 Black and Silver Brigade

In order for all members of the Houston County High School Black and Silver Brigade to be successful in experiencing efficient, positive, and meaningful rehearsals and performances, the following is the attendance policy for the Houston County High School BASB.

1. All marching band members are expected to check the HOCO Band website and/or band calendar often for updates and to know when all events are scheduled.

The website address is: www.hocoband.org There is a live calendar available with dates provided well in-advance.

2. All BASB members are expected to attend all rehearsals.

In the event that a member misses a rehearsal, the absence will be categorized as one of the following:

Excused Absence: Following the absence, the member will be allowed to return to the band in good standing, immediately.

Unexcused Absence: The member may not be allowed to perform at halftime with the band at the next game. The member is still required to attend all rehearsals and to participate in all other aspects of the game.

3. Multiple unexcused absences may result in the student being removed/replaced from the Houston County Black and Silver Brigade and/or student leadership positions.

We simply will not allow a student who is habitually absent from rehearsal, to negatively impact the experience of others. This is also a safety issue, as students who do not know where they are going on the field can injure other students.

4. An unexcused absence from any performance will result in being removed from the Black and Silver Brigade, effective immediately.

5. An absence from the last rehearsal before a performance will result in that student being ineligible to perform as part of the halftime performance the following day. Students will still be expected to perform in the stands, but will not be allowed to perform as a part of the show.

This is, above all else, a safety concern for students who may have missed critical changes or instructions regarding the performance and cannot be expected to perfect these changes prior to the gameday/competition performance.

6.. Every absence will be taken into consideration on a case-by-case basis

The following are examples of an **excused absence**: sickness (if present at school, you will be asked to provide a doctor's note), death of a family member, and wedding of an immediate family member. If you are unsure if an absence will be excused, please reach out to Mr. Watkins or Mr. Norton.

The following are examples of an **unexcused absence**: not feeling like coming to rehearsal, homework, birthday, work, attending a concert, going out of town, any absence where an acceptable excuse is not provided

A note on homework: Being a part of the marching band is not a requirement. It is a privilege. Members of the Black and Silver Brigade are expected to maintain good grades,

while simultaneously participating in the marching band in its full capacity. It is important that members of the band stay on top of their homework, and various other assignments so that a conflict does not arise. Students who miss rehearsals due to homework will be removed from the ensemble. Plan your homework and assignments ahead.

7. All excuses must be submitted to a director (Mr. Watkins/Mr. Norton) and Mrs. Elderkin via email.

dillon.watkins@hcbe.net/benjamin.norton@hcbe.net/tara.elderkin@hcbe.net

If you know you are going to be out ahead of time, please be sure to submit the necessary information to Mr. Watkins/Mr. Norton (via email) prior to your absence, in order to make sure your absence will be excused.

If the absence is unexpected, information regarding the absence should be submitted (via email) to Mr. Watkins/Mr. Norton & Mrs. Elderkin on the day you return.

8. All Marching Band members are expected to be on time for all rehearsals.

9. Students who are removed from the program (or quit) for attendance or behavior issues may not be allowed to return to the program in seasons that follow.

10. All marching band participation fees, uniform accessory payments, and/or additional item purchases are not refundable.

In the event a student quits, is removed from the program, moves, transfers schools, etc., your payment will be considered a contribution to Houston County High School Band Boosters, Inc. and used to help recover lost funds caused by your student's remaining dues not being paid.

In the event a student quits, is removed from the program, moves, transfers schools, etc, items purchased through the boosters such as shoes, gloves, uniforms, warm-up suits, make-up, body tights, bags or flag bags, will not be distributed to the student. These items will also be used to help recover lost funds caused by your student's remaining dues not being paid.

ATTENDANCE POLICY

2026-2027 ALL CONCERT BANDS

The following attendance policy is for students enrolled in Concert Band 2, Concert Band 1, Symphonic Winds, Wind Symphony, or Percussion Ensemble. The term “concert band” applies to each of these ensembles.

In order for all members of the Houston County High School Concert Bands to be successful in experiencing efficient, positive, and meaningful rehearsals and performances, the following is the attendance policy for the Houston County High School Concert Band program.

1. All Concert Band programs are co-curricular.

Band is co-curricular. Meaning, there will be after school rehearsals/performances and your attendance at these rehearsals/performances will be graded.

- If a student misses a graded rehearsal, a “Missing” will be entered into the gradebook
- Students are able to make up this rehearsal time in the band room at 7:15AM each morning until they have made up the same amount of time that they missed. For Example: Students miss a 2-hour rehearsal, they must make up 2 hours of time in the band room during morning practice time.
- Missing a performance for ANY reason (excused or unexcused) will result in a “Missing” in the gradebook. Our class is built on performance standards and there will be an alternative assignment for students to complete. This assignment will be similar in nature to the amount of hours required for performance preparation (15-20 hours of work). Directors will set a due date for students to submit this assignment within 10 days of the concert

2. All Concert Band members are expected to check the HCHS Band website and/or band calendar often for updates and to know when all events are scheduled.

The website address is: www.hocoband.org There is a live calendar available with dates provided well in-advance.

3. All excuses for missed rehearsals must be submitted to Mr. Watkins and/or Mr. Norton via email.

dillon.watkins@hcbe.net/benjamin.norton@hcbe.net

If you know you are going to be out ahead of time, please be sure to submit the necessary information to Mr. Watkins (via email) prior to your absence, in order to make sure your absence will be excused.

If the absence is unexpected, information regarding the absence should be submitted (via email) to Mr. Watkins on the day you return

4. All Concert Band members are expected to practice at home and come to rehearsals prepared.

If you show-up unprepared, you won’t be allowed to perform with the ensemble.
You are expected to earn your spot, and work hard to keep it throughout the school year.

5. All Concert Band members are expected to be on time for all rehearsals

ACADEMIC POLICY

2026- 2027 ALL BANDS

Academic Standing

Students must remain in **good academic standing**. It is no secret that band kids are some of the brightest students in the school. We understand that many of you will be taking rigorous course loads and trying to manage tons of extracurricular activities as well. Because of this, we are adopting a new academic policy for the 2026-2027 school year. This policy is meant to offer support for those that need it as well as hold all of our members accountable to each other. Rehearsal becomes impossible when students are missing due to sub-par grades. The following will be our expectations for ALL members:

Expectations

- Passing all classes
- Demonstrating responsibility and effort
- Students with a class average below 75% will have **MANDATORY** study hall in the band room at 7:15AM each Monday & Wednesday until their average is above 74%
- Students who are failing ANY class will be ineligible to perform until they are no longer failing. Students who are failing will also receive **MANDATORY** study hall in the band room at 7:15AM on Mondays and Wednesdays until they are no longer below a 74%
- Students who do not attend study hall will be ineligible to perform until they make up the missed time (must be scheduled with a director)

A Note on NI's (Non-Instructional Absences)

- Students may receive NI's for band events throughout the school year. We will utilize the school policy when determining eligibility for these events.
    - Grade check 10 days prior to event
    - If failing classes 10 days prior to event, student will not be allowed to receive the NI
    - This is a *school policy* and not a band policy
- If a student is approved for an NI, it is the student's responsibility to meet with teachers and complete work that they will miss **PRIOR** to leaving for the event. The NI event **DOES NOT** excuse you from the work that is due that day.
- Teachers have the ultimate right to assign students with an NI differing work and due dates, but you, the student, are responsible for communicating with them.

PUBLIC EXPECTATIONS & ETIQUETTE

MARCHING BAND 2026-2027

Being a member of the Black and Silver Brigade means that you will constantly be put on display in the public eye. It is vital for the continued success and legacy of our band program, that we always put our best foot forward. The following is a list of some of the specific expectations for etiquette.

FOOTBALL GAMES

Students will…

1. remain in their assigned sections.
2. wear the uniform correctly at all times.
3. treat the uniform and its parts with respect.
4. be in the correct place(s) at the specified time(s).
5. display good sportsmanship at all times.
6. be attentive to drum majors during the game.
7. be respectful towards teachers, chaperones and student leaders.

Students will not...

1. publicly display affection towards other students.
2. swear or use inappropriate gestures.
3. wear additional items without prior approval (i.e. hats, jackets, etc.).
4. harm their instrument, a school-owned instrument or the instruments of others.
5. leave the stands without a Staff Member/Chaperone's permission.
6. run in uniform.
7. Eat or Drink in uniform
8. Have food or drink in the stands

COMPETITIONS

Virtually all football game expectations and etiquette apply to Marching Band Competitions. In addition:

Students will...

1. be positive towards other band members, hosts, adjudicators, etc.

Students will not…

1. criticize other bands or band performances.
2. celebrate the shortcomings of other bands.
3. criticize adjudicators.
4. be sore losers.

UNIFORM POLICY

2026-2027 BLACK AND SILVER BRIGADE

Uniforms are an important part of the Black and Silver Brigade and help set band members apart as we represent the band program and Houston County High School as a whole. The uniform is a significant part of the team spirit that characterizes the marching band. We hope that students will take special pride in their distinction. By accepting a uniform, you are accepting the responsibility of taking care of them. Uniforms will be kept at school to help minimize long-term loss and allow for periodic and necessary cleaning.

All jackets are rented and not property of the student. Damaged or lost uniform parts will be charged to the student, just as a textbook or other school property would be.

Uniforms will be stored and maintained in the band uniform room. This is where students will pick up their uniforms prior to each performance. There is a specific procedure for this process.

After performances, the uniform must be correctly placed on the matching, numbered hangers, and rehung in the correct location.

Uniform Etiquette will be followed at all times. This includes but is not limited to the following:

1. No running while in uniform.
2. No swearing while in uniform.
3. No crude or obscene gestures while in uniform.
4. No public displays of affection while in uniform.
5. No eating in uniform
6. No drinking in uniform (other than water)

A note on Food and Drink in the stands

- There is NO FOOD OR DRINK ALLOWED in the stands. Please DO NOT bring your student food or drink other than a water bottle. This is to protect our uniform jackets and our instruments. There will be a ZERO TOLERANCE policy in regard to this. You may deliver food or drinks to students when we are not in the stands and on a break.

SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY

ALL BANDS 2026-2027

A note on social media: It is the obligation of every student to use social media in a responsible way. Remember, what you say on social media is public to the whole world. Students observed using social media in an irresponsible manner will be dealt with according to school discipline policies and/or may be dismissed from the band program.

VIDEO POLICY: Rehearsal and/or performance videos are never to be POSTED online without approval from Mr. Watkins or Mr. Norton during the Season. Failure to acquire written approval may result in copyright infringement. All copyright infringement penalties occurring from individuals posting HCHS band performance videos will be the responsibility of the individual who posted the unapproved videos. Those wishing to record the performances are more than welcome to, and share privately with others, but we ask that you ensure anyone receiving the video understands that they are not to publish.

ENSEMBLE CASTING

ALL BANDS 2026-2027

In high school, it is not uncommon for students to perform on a variety of instruments or ensembles. In order for ensembles to be successful, we will work to establish proper numbers with the instrumentation and equipment of each ensemble.

For example, we may decide to set a marching brass section as 12 trumpets, 8 mellophones, 12 trombones, 5 baritones, and 8 tubas.

This may mean that Mr. Watkins and Mr. Norton discuss students learning secondary instruments to perform on.

Common transitions for marching band will include:

Trombone to Baritone
Horn to Mellophone
Tuba to Sousaphone

Common transitions may also include:

Trumpet to Mellophone
Trombone/Baritone to Tuba
Clarinet/Bass Clarinet to Alto or Tenor Saxophone
Any Saxophone to any other Saxophone
Flute to Tuba

BOTTOM LINE: Don't be surprised when your child comes home learning a new instrument. This is totally normal in a high school band program and is typically not permanent. All instrument transitions will be discussed with students and voluntary to ensure the success of our overall program. No student will be forced to switch to an instrument they do not enjoy.

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REHEARSAL CHECKLIST

2026-2027 BLACK AND SILVER BRIGADE

The following are items that each marching band member will need for every rehearsal .

_____ 1. Athletic Shorts
_____ 2. T-Shirt
_____ 3. Running Shoes/Athletic Shoes (No sandals, flip flops, etc)
_____ 4. Hat or visor (Optional)
_____ 5. **1-gallon** insulated water jug (Fill up before you come each day)
_____ 6. Backpack (This will make life much easier)
_____ 7. Sunscreen
_____ 8. Bug Spray
_____ 9. Mechanical Pencil(s)
_____ 10. Highlighter(s)
_____ 11. 1-inch 3-Ring Binder (NOT REQUIRED BUT RECOMMENDED)
_____ 12. Clear plastic sheets (for use in 3-ring binder)
_____ 13. Black towel (NOT REQUIRED BUT RECOMMENDED, the size of your instrument)
_____ 14. Your dinner (lunch provided by Houston County Schools)
_____ 15. Your instrument/mouthpiece/reeds/equipment
_____ 16. Valve Oil/Slide Grease

A few things to consider:

1. You may want to bring an extra pair of shoes/socks and a change of clothes to keep in your band locker just in case it rains.
2. Keep a snack in your backpack, that is not chocolate, just in case you/someone else needs it.
3. The black towel is there to keep your instrument off the dirt/pavement.
4. Wear your sunscreen. Re-apply every rehearsal block.
5. You will not need UDB app until Wednesday 7/15 so if you don't understand what it is, you're fine.
6. A carabiner works great for attaching your water bottle to your backpack (and frees-up a hand) for your walk to/from the field.

**There may be optional themed spirit days. We will let you know as these come up.*

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REHEARSAL PICK-UP/DROP-OFF TRAFFIC PATTERNS

2026-2027 BLACK AND SILVER BRIGADE

In order to increase the safety of our students, please utilize the traffic pattern below.

1. Enter from Hwy 96.
2. Continue around front of school until arriving in front of theater to unload students
3. Do not park on the road at the front of the school. If needing to park, please use the attached parking lot at the front entrance
4. Pick-Ups should follow this same idea, with parents not parking in front of the school

- Lunch/Dinner drop off will be through the bus lane off Bear Country Blvd
- Follow bus lane around to cafeteria, shown with yellow arrow

➔ Juniors/Seniors may park in back lot off Jerry Barker Drive, as has been done in previous seasons



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SECTION-SPECIFIC ITEMS

2026-2027 BLACK AND SILVER BRIGADE

Different sections of the marching band are required to own unique and specific items in order to successfully perform the competitive show. The following items should be and/or are recommended to owned by specific sections:

WINDS

FLUTE, CLARINET, BASS CLARINET, ALTO SAX, TENOR SAX, BARI SAX

Your instrument (You may use a school instrument if it is available)

Mouthpiece, reeds, case, cork grease. (You may use a school mouthpiece if it is available)

- Clarinet - Vandoren M13 and size 3 reeds
- Bass Clarinet - Vandoren B50 and size 3 reeds
- Alto Sax - Selmer C* and size 2.5 or 3 reeds
- Tenor Sax - Selmer C* and size 3+ reeds
- Bari Sax - Selmer C* and size 3 reeds

For all reeded instruments - it is fine to go down a reed size for marching band, or use a plastic reed. This should never be done for concert ensembles.

Marching Band Shoes and fingerless gloves.

1 Pair of Black Marching Band Shoes

Tiny Screwdriver Set (for fixing your instrument)

TRUMPET, TROMBONE

Your instrument

Mouthpiece

- Trumpet - Bach 3C
- Trombone - Bach 5g or Schilke 51D (**Important** - Be sure to get the correct shank size)

Marching Band Shoes and gloves.

1 Pair of Black Marching Band Shoes

Valve Oil / Tuning Slide Grease / Trombone Slide Grease

HORN/MELLOPHONE, BARITONE, TUBA

Mouthpiece (You may use a school mouthpiece if it is available)

- Horn - Schilke 29
- Mellophone - Hammond 5MPH
- Trombone/Baritone - Bach 5g or Schilke 51D (**Important** - Be sure to get the correct shank size)
- Tuba - Conn Helleberg Standard

Marching Band Shoes and gloves.

1 Pair of Black Marching Band Shoes

PERCUSSION

PERCUSSION
Innovative FP3 College Primer Mallet Pack (Suggested)
Vic Firth Heavy Hitter Slim Pad Marching Snare Practice Pad (MB Snares and Bases Only)
Vic Firth Heavy Hitter Small Quadropad Tenor Practice Pad *(MB Tenors Only)*
1 Pair of Black Marching Band Shoes

ADDITIONAL CONCERT ENSEMBLE FEES

ALL BANDS 2026-2027

Many students will choose to participate in additional ensembles above and beyond marching and concert bands. For planning purposes, approximate fees are listed below. Please note that the ensembles listed below are OPTIONAL and your student will not be charged unless they sign up to audition.

ALL STATE BAND	$25	Those accepted will be responsible for their own transportation and hotel accommodations.
REGION HONOR BAND	$10	
DISTRICT HONOR BAND	$10	
DISTRICT HONOR JAZZ BAND	$10	
Tuxedo/Dress Purchase - Wind Symphony - Symphonic Winds	$TBA	

2026 - 2027 Marching Band Fees

2026-2027 BLACK AND SILVER BRIGADE

Marching Fees: $625

Additional Uniform Items (Optional For Returning Members)

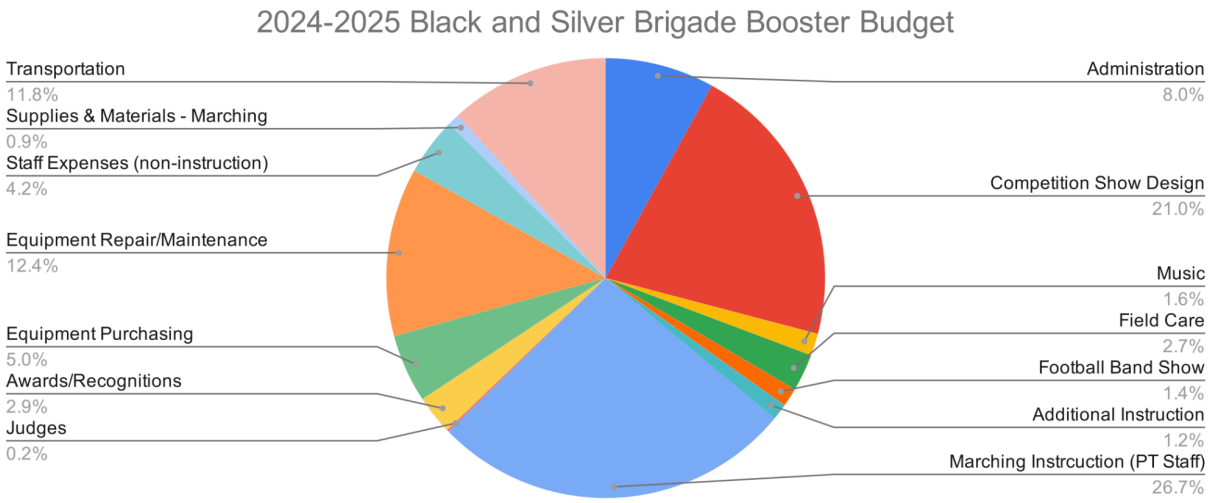
- Bibbers
- Dri-fit
- Shoes
- Gloves

Colorguard Specific Items (Billed Individually)

- Shoes
- Colorguard Uniform
- Gloves

Full Band Charges

- 3rd QTR Meals (will be billed at end of football season)
- Comp Meals (will be billed at end of season)



Payment plans are available. Any student/family needing to set-up a payment plan must do so by September 1st. Failure to do so will render students ineligible for performance. Payment plans must have been agreed upon by directors, boosters, and families by the date specified above to be eligible for exemption.

*extenuating circumstances will be considered by the directors when determining eligibility

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MEMBER CONTRACT

2026-2027 BLACK AND SILVER BRIGADE

Participation in the HCHS Marching Band is a privilege requiring commitment, discipline, and accountability. By signing below, students and parents agree to the following expectations:

Commitment

Members are required to attend and fully participate in all rehearsals, performances, games, competitions, and assigned sectionals. Band commitments take priority over non-school activities.

Attendance (NON-NEGOTIABLE)

Consistency is critical to ensemble success.

Expectations:

- Students are expected to adhere to the attendance policy found in the band handbook.
- **Missing any performance with an unexcused absence is grounds for immediate dismissal from the program**

Excused Absences: illness, family emergency, school-required academic conflict (pre-approved), religious observance
Unexcused Absences: work, social events, unapproved extracurriculars, failure to communicate

Academic Standing

Students must remain in **good academic standing**.

Expectations:

- Passing all classes
- Demonstrating responsibility and effort
- Students with a class average below 75% will have MANDATORY study hall in the band room at 7:15AM each Monday & Wednesday until their average is above 74%
- Students who are failing ANY class will be ineligible to perform until they are no longer failing. Students who are failing will also receive MANDATORY study hall in the band room at 7:15AM on Mondays and Wednesdays until they are no longer below a 74%
- Students who do not attend study hall will be ineligible to perform until they make up the missed time (must be scheduled with a director)

Financial Obligations- Participation includes financial responsibilities.

Expectations:

- Fees must be paid according to the established schedule in the band handbook
- Failure to pay fees or set-up an approved payment plan with the BASB boosters will result in performance ineligibility (see pg. 18 for payment plan details)
- Families must communicate proactively regarding concerns
- **Students will be ineligible to register for marching band for the following season until all outstanding fees are paid**

Students may be withheld from performances if financial obligations are not addressed. Payment plans and assistance may be available.

Conduct & Representation - Members represent HCHS and the BASB at all times.

Students are expected to:

- Demonstrate respect, discipline, and accountability
- Follow all school and program rules
- Maintain a positive and professional attitude

Failure to meet expectations may result in disciplinary action, including removal from performances.

Program Values: S.U.D.A

All members are expected to embody SUDA:

- **Spirit:** *Consistent energy, pride, and passion*
- **Unity:** *Team-first mindset; collective responsibility always*
- **Determination:** *Relentless effort toward daily improvement*
- **Attitude:** *Uphold standards with positivity and accountability*

Acknowledgment

We have read and understand the expectations outlined above and agree to uphold the standards of the Houston County High School Band Program.

Student Name (Printed): _____

Student Signature: _____ **Date:** _____

Parent/Guardian Name (Printed): _____

Parent/Guardian Signature: _____ **Date:** _____