

Sparta High School Band Handbook



2025 – 2026

Directed by:
Mr. Nicholson (Symphonic Band)
Mrs. Little (Concert Band)

Philosophy of the Instrumental Music Department

To provide an exciting and interesting musical experience for our students by developing all instrumental music organizations to their highest level of excellence.

To provide a well-rounded education in music by teaching an understanding of the structural elements of music: reading, performing, and listening skills, and the attitudes related to interests, appreciation, cooperation and discrimination.

To encourage the student to display a personal interest in music by demonstrating an active interest in their performing organization.

To lead the student toward independent music making and to help develop a love and appreciation for music (and other fine arts) that will be a real part of their total life.

To lead the student to develop skills in: goal setting, progress towards goals, and evaluation.

Instrumental Music Organizations and Activities at Sparta HS

Marching Band, Symphonic Band, Concert Band, Jazz Band, Pep Band, Solo/Ensemble Festival, WSMA Honor Band, NBA All State Honor Band, Dorian Band Festival, Winona State University Honor Band, All School Musical, Show Band, and Variety Show

Requirements for Participation and Attendance Policies

1. **Perspective, Teamwork and Camaraderie:** By being a member of the Sparta High School Instrumental Music Program, you have become a part of a community of musicians and performers. You serve as an ambassador for the SHS Music Program, SHS, and the Sparta Community. You are now a part of the proud tradition of excellence that is the SHS Band Program! Success in this program comes from each student's dedication to ensemble playing, performance, and **teamwork**. The good of the ensemble is of paramount importance. You will foster it by taking responsibility for scrupulous preparation of your part and playing with great musical discipline. We expect all musicians to share our dedication to great musical collaboration, teamwork, and personal camaraderie.
2. **Daily Attendance:** All band students are expected to be in regular attendance at all scheduled classes. Students are expected to be in the classroom by the end of passing time. If you anticipate being late to class, secure a pass from the teacher in charge or the office. All students must be in the band room when the bell rings and must have instruments assembled within 5 minutes of the start of class.
3. **Performance Attendance:** Performances are REQUIRED events. Concert Dress is all black for concert band and symphonic band. Students who miss a performance must have their absence approved IN ADVANCE by presenting the director with a written excuse from a parent/guardian at least TWO school days before the day of the performance. If an absence is due to illness, please email anicholson@spartan.org and jlittle@spartan.org as soon as possible. Students who fail to bring in an excuse note from their parent/guardian will be considered unexcused and will lose ALL POINTS POSSIBLE FOR THAT EVENT. Students who do bring in a note from a parent may complete a make up assignment. **It is the student's responsibility to obtain the make-up work from the director.** Parents must contact the director in any emergency situation. If there is an issue with our decisions please call us at Sparta High School.

4. **Curricular Class:** Band is a regularly scheduled school subject, and will take precedence over all other extra-curricular activities such as sports, clubs, jobs, etc. It is offered for credit and is NOT an extra-curricular subject. The music department attempts to schedule events so that conflicts will not occur, but with so many events offered throughout the year, this is sometimes impossible. When scheduling problems arise, contact the teachers/coaches involved immediately, so that a solution can be mutually agreed upon.
5. **Academic Integrity:** Plagiarism and cheating will not be tolerated in our classroom. Each assignment assigned to you in this class is designed with the purpose of increasing your skills and assessing where these skills are at. If I identify plagiarism or cheating, you (and the original student creator) will receive a failing grade and a discipline referral in Skyward. **This includes the following:**

Group Work/Collaboration: I will give explicit instruction when I expect you to collaborate on work. Completing assignments together without prior instruction to do so will result in a discipline referral and a zero for everyone involved. On work that you are instructed to collaborate on, there should be a clear distinction of your work. At no point in time during collaborative work should you have identical work unless you have been given permission to submit one project as a group.

Artificial Intelligence (AI): There may be times where we use SchoolAI in class. However, I will explicitly state when you are allowed to use it, and it will always be under my supervision. If you use AI (including but not limited to ChatGPT, Gemini, Snapchat AI, Grammarly, Siri, etc.) without prior permission, you will receive a discipline referral and an automatic zero on the assignment. Since AI pulls information from across the worldwide web, it is not appropriate at this time to cite AI (AI is not the original source; AI gets the information from somewhere else); therefore, even if you cite AI as a source without prior permission from me, you will receive disciplinary action under the grounds of cheating/plagiarism.

Paraphrasers: Under no circumstances will you be allowed to use a paraphrasing tool. (This includes but is not limited to Grammarly, paraphraser.io, Quillbot, Scribbr, etc.) If you want to increase your vocabulary, you are welcome to use a Thesaurus or Dictionary. You can also ask me for assistance.

6. **Employment:** Every student who has a job is asked to notify their employer about the music department's policy on attendance. While you are a student at Sparta High School and enrolled in music classes, you will be expected to attend all of its functions. Your employer has an obligation to work around your school schedule. Please give all performance dates to your employer well in advance so that conflicts will not arise. The music department goes to great lengths to keep you informed and we expect you to be responsible about your commitment to this organization. Missing a performance for a job is considered an unexcused absence. Occasionally a performance will come up that is not on the schedule but we will do our best to notify you at least 2 weeks in advance. It is at the discretion of the directors as to whether an impromptu performance will be required. Remember, you are a student first!

7. **School Instrument Use:** Students using a school instrument (including percussionists) will be charged a \$50.00 rental fee for the school year. A copy of the rental contract will be provided the first week of school. Students and parents will be required to sign and return a school instrument rental contract and payment. Checks should be made to the Sparta High School and turned into **Mr. Nicholson** for documentation.
8. **Marching Band Uniform Use:** Your marching band uniform is a symbol of both school and community pride. It is to be taken care of in very specific ways. Proper labeling, hanging, and storage will be discussed before uniform check out. Students will sign a marching band uniform contract completed with uniform part numbers at the time of check out. If you do not return the full marching band uniform, you will be charged for its replacement.
9. **Marching Band Attire:** When appearing in your SHS Marching Band uniform, the following guidelines will be followed:
 - a. Long hair will be put up under your hat. This applies to both men and women.
 - b. No large or dangling earrings or sunglasses are allowed.
 - c. Black socks are to be worn at all times when in your marching band uniform. **Socks must cover the ankle.**
 - d. Drill Master Shoes must be worn at all times when in uniform.
 - e. Students should wear weather appropriate clothing under their uniform.
 - f. Pants under your uniform must be tucked into your socks so that they are not seen.
 - g. Uniforms should not, under any circumstance, be left lying on the ground.
10. **Music:** Students will be provided with a flip folder for marching and pep band use, and a concert/symphonic band folder for the concert season. Replacement cost for a flip folder is \$20.00. Concert folder replacement is \$30.00. Students are expected to keep their music in good condition. If an original piece of sheet music is damaged or lost, a replacement fee of \$2.50 will be charged for each piece of music.
11. **Band Lockers:** The Sparta High School Band Department provides instrument lockers for the use and convenience of its band students. **PLEASE KEEP CASES IN LOCKERS AT ALL TIMES, NOT IN FRONT OF LOCKER AREA SO WE CAN ALL MOVE AROUND THE BAND ROOM.** Priority will be given first for school instrument storage then student instrument storage. Lockers are for instrument storage and are to be kept clean and in good working order at all times. If your locker is found to be unclean and causes inconvenience to other band students, you will be asked to relinquish it. Your locker needs to be labeled with your name on the door handle. If you would like a lock for your locker, you must buy your own. Combinations for personal locks must be given to Mrs. Little or Mr. Nicholson or they will be cut off. Students who use their band locker for school storage may use extra lockers only. Students ARE NOT TO INCONVENIENCE THE CUSTODIANS AT ANY TIME TO UNLOCK THE BAND ROOM SO THEY MAY GET FORGOTTEN SCHOOL WORK. The custodians have been instructed to decline any such requests. Custodians are very busy people with important jobs to do. Please respect them.

Show pride for our band program by keeping the band room a place of pride!!!

Clean up after yourself and make sure there is room to walk around your locker!

10 Co-BAND-ments

(Created by 24-25 Season Section Leaders)

1. Have F.U.N. / Create Positive Experiences
2. Be Consistent and Accountable
3. Self Care
4. Focus on “Fundies” and Theory
5. Rehearsal is FOR Rehearsal, “Leave it at the door”
6. Memorize Show Music
7. Practice More Outside of Band
8. Peer Bonding and Relationship Building
9. Place at Comps / Feelings of Success
10. Keep the Band Room Clean!

SPARTA HIGH SCHOOL BAND GRADING REQUIREMENTS

Students who participate in Band at Sparta High School earn points through participating in, and completing, a variety of assigned activities. Points earned in a grading period are divided by the total number of points possible to determine a percentage grade.

Students in band, like students in any other class, are expected to make up assignments/points that are missed due to an illness or other excused absence.

Grading Criteria

Performances / Pep Bands	30%
5 lessons per Quarter	25%
Daily attendance/class participation	25%
Assignments	10%
Handbook Sign-off - due 9/12	10%

* Students will not be allowed to have more than 2 lessons per week or on two consecutive days. Plan accordingly! Do not try to cram 5 lessons into the last week of the quarter.

GRADING SCALE

99 -100% - A+
92 – 98% - A
90 – 91 % - A-
88 – 89% - B+
82 – 87% - B
80 – 81% - B-
78 – 79% - C+
72 – 77% - C
70 – 71% - C-
68 – 69% - D+
62 – 68% - D
60 – 61% - D-
59% and below – F

SPARTA HIGH SCHOOL BAND CALENDAR 2025 – 2026

Full District Music Calendar can be found [here](#)

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