



Pride in Performance

2025-2026

Program Handbook

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Contact Information

Band Directors

Co-Director of Bands

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Co-Director of Bands

Katrina Fitzpatrick
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Office: (309) 284-5028

Assistant Director of Bands

Luke Shaffer
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Office: (309) 284-6045

Jazz Director/Fine Arts Coordinator

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Band Staff

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MHS Band Parents – Band Booster Executive Board

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About Morton Bands

The Morton High School band program is located in Morton, Illinois, an east suburb of Peoria, Illinois. Morton Bands operates within Morton Community Unit School District 709, serving both Morton and Groveland area students. Morton Bands includes three concert bands (Wind Ensemble, Symphonic Bands, and Concert Band), jazz ensemble, pep band, numerous chamber ensembles, and the competitive Morton High School Marching Band. Steeped in a rich history of tradition centered on family values, Morton Bands represented the Morton community at the 2009 Presidential Inaugural Parade in Washington, D.C., Music for All's 2017 National Festival presented by Yamaha, and numerous Bands of America Regional, Super Regional, and Grand Nationals performances. Morton Bands operates in a NAMM Best Communities for Music Education (2017, 2023). The Morton Marching Band has earned recognition as 19-time Illinois State Marching Band Champions Class 2A (2005-2024), 3-time Illinois State Marching Band Grand Championships (2022-2024), 5-time University of Illinois Marching Band Governor's Trophies for small schools (2010, 2011, 2013, 2014, 2016), and was named the 2012, 2023, and 2024 Bands of America St. Louis Super Regional Class AA Champion. The Wind Ensemble, a placement-based concert ensemble comprised of the top 50 wind and percussion students at Morton High School, regularly performs at the University of Illinois SuperState Concert Band Festival (named Honor Band in 2024 and 2026), and performed at the Illinois Music Educator Association's 2012 and 2019 state music education conferences, as well as at the Music For All National Concert Band Festival in 2023.

About the Directors

Andy Empey, Co-Director of Bands

Andy Empey is a trumpeter and Co-Director of Bands of Morton CUSD 709, serving since 2024. Mr. Empey joins Morton from his most recent position as Director of Bands at Galesburg Junior Senior High School (2018-2024). Under Empey, the Galesburg Marching Streaks were a finalist in the Illinois State Marching Band Championships in 2019 and again in 2023. Additionally, the band attended the Bands of America Super Regional in Indianapolis for the first time in 2022 and attended BOA St. Louis in 2023 where they received a Division One rating. The Galesburg H.S. Wind Symphony performed in 2022 as one of three honor bands at the Western Illinois University Showcase of Bands and has performed with the Western Illinois University Wind Ensemble and the Augustana College Symphonic Band. Prior to joining the music staff in Galesburg, Mr. Empey was the Director of Bands at Limestone Community High School (2006-2018).

Mr. Empey received a B.A. in Music Education from Western Illinois University in 2004 and a M.A. in Music Education from Eastern Illinois University in 2018. He has been active in the marching music activity as a trumpet player, as a member of the Cavaliers Drum and Bugle Corps in 1996, 1998, and the 2008 Cavalier Alumni Corps. He was a member of the Star United Mini Drum and Bugle Corps of Indianapolis from 2013-2017. Additional performing groups include the Prairie Wind Ensemble, Fanfare Brass Quintet, and the Knox Brass Ensemble.

He is married to his wife of over twenty years, Danielle, a school librarian. Mr. Empey has three children: Keaton, attending college as a Music Education major, Bryant, a high school percussionist, and Abbie, a junior high trumpet player.

Katrina Fitzpatrick, Co-Director of Bands

Katrina Fitzpatrick is a flute player and Co-Director of Bands for Morton CUSD 709. She received her Bachelor of Music Education degree from Bradley University and Master of Music Education degree from Illinois State University. Mrs. Fitzpatrick's junior high jazz bands and high school concert bands have presented several performances and clinics at the Midwest Band and Orchestra Clinic in Chicago, Illinois Music Education Conference in Peoria, and University of Illinois SuperState Concert Band Festival in Champaign.

In 2017, the MJHS Jazz Band presented a session at the Midwest Band and Orchestra Clinic in collaboration with Peoria-based jazz band JC and the Redemption. Mrs. Fitzpatrick is honored to have served as the guest conductor in both concert and jazz festivals throughout the country, including a current position instructing high school flutes for the Music for All Summer Symposium Marching Band camp in Muncie, IN. She is a flutist in the Prairie Wind Ensemble and a former president of the band. She is a proud member of Phi Beta Mu, International Bandmasters Fraternity.

In 2016, Mrs. Fitzpatrick was recognized as the “Master Potter,” the Morton School District 709 teacher of the year. She is a native of Morton, Illinois and has been with Morton Bands through its receipt of 19 Illinois State Class 2A Marching Band Championships, 3 Illinois State Overall Marching Band Grand Championships, 3 Bands of America St. Louis Super Regional Class 2A Championships, and 2017 John Philip Sousa Foundation Sudler Shield. When she is not at band rehearsals or events, she enjoys spending her time with her husband Craig and goldendoodle Padfoot.

Luke Shaffer, Assistant Director of Bands

Luke Shaffer is a percussionist serving as Assistant Director of Bands at Morton CUSD 709 since 2024. He is currently pursuing an M.M. in Music Education at Ohio University and holds a B.M. in Music Education from Southern Illinois University. Previously, Mr. Shaffer was Director of Bands at Du Quoin High School (2020-2024) and an Assistant Band Director at Carbondale Community High School (2018-2020). He is a member of the National Band Association, Phi Mu Alpha Sinfonia Fraternity of Music, and Kappa Delta Pi Honor Society in Education.

In his previous position, Mr. Shaffer led Du Quoin to its first competitive marching band season in school history and established new color guard and winter guard programs. His students regularly received Superior ratings at IHSA Organizational and Solo & Ensemble festivals, quickly returning Du Quoin to the IHSA State Music Sweepstakes ranking for the first time in decades. At Carbondale Community, Mr. Shaffer led marching and concert percussion sections to competitive success and festival recognition, as the whole Carbondale music program placed in the IHSA Class A Music Sweepstakes at #2 and #3 in the state during his two years at CCHS.

Mr. Shaffer is a former Mike Hanes Memorial Percussion Chair of the Southern Illinois Symphony Orchestra, and has performance experience across the Midwest. He has performed in the Blue Lake Summer Arts Festival's live public radio broadcasts, in the Southern Illinois Summer Music Festival, with The Chicago Winds, with the Con Brio Voce Brass Ensemble of Michigan, and in pit orchestras of regional theatre companies' and high schools' musical theatre productions. Mr. Shaffer lives in East Peoria with his fiancée Maddie and four cats.

Morton Band Parents and Band Boosters

The Morton Band Parents, a non-profit 501(c), is a volunteer parent organization that supports the operations of the full Morton Band program, including concert ensembles, jazz band, marching band, and leadership development. Morton Band Parents has a five member board made of the president, vice-president, treasurer, secretary, and director of bands. Morton Band Parents holds regular meetings throughout the school year to discuss and plan fundraising efforts and areas of support for the band program. Within the Morton Band Parents are numerous parent teams that current parents or supporters are able to serve on. These teams include:

Props Team

Members of this team help bring the creative thought of the marching band field props to reality. Anyone that can hammer a nail or drill a screw is welcome to assist on this team. This team also needs help with painting props and repairing props throughout the marching season. You do not need to be a skilled carpenter to serve on this team.

Special Events Team

Members of this team assist with creating special moments for the band students and staff. They assist with Band Camp events, the Community Performance Show during marching season, the final band concert cake and drinks as well as numerous other special events throughout the year.

Meal Team

The meal team plans all snacks and meals throughout the marching season and for other overnight trips. The team utilizes parents to help with meal service and donations of certain foods throughout the season. Anyone that can help prep, cook or serve is invited to assist with the meal team.

Uniform Team

The parents on the uniform team assist with everything from sizing, checkout, washing, altering, and fixing the marching band uniforms. They also assist with uniform storage and inventory at the end of the marching season.

Pit Crew

The pit (also known as the Front Ensemble) is made of the concert percussion instruments and electronics on the sideline during the marching band performance. Parents on this team assist students with moving the instruments and equipment on and off the field during performance.

Transportation Team

The transportation team is a group of parents that assist with loading and unloading trucks and transporting equipment to and from performance venues. Members of this team usually serve on the Pit Crew or Prop Team.

Invitational Team

The Morton Marching Invitational is the largest fundraiser for the band program and takes our entire parent force to operate. It is held annually, in 2025 on **September 27**. Please be available to assist with the Morton Marching Invitational. There are numerous roles to operate the invitational including concessions, band guides, warm-up area supervisors, gate attendants, ticket sales, program sales, hospitality rooms, etc. The Invitational Chair creates teams of parent volunteers to assist with the operations of the invitational. Each of those teams has a team head who coordinates their area.

Send Off and Welcome Home Teams

Each time the band leaves town for a marching band event, there is a huge group of parents with signs and noise makers to cheer as the buses leave town. If leaving on US-150 East toward Normal, the team meets at the soccer fields and lines both sides of the street. If leaving on I-74, the team meets at Mike Murphy Ford along the turn from Jackson Street to Morton Ave. Locations are also announced on our Parent Facebook Group.

Upon arriving home, parents and supporters create a tunnel for the students to walk through to cheer them on as they return to the band room.

The students LOVE this aspect of competition days!

Being a Band Parent Volunteer

Without our parent volunteers, the band program is not successful. One of the most rewarding aspects of our program is serving as a parent volunteer. We encourage all parents to find their niche, get involved, and enjoy the activity. Even if your child does not want you around, consider volunteering on a parent team. It is a great way to meet other parents and watch your child make some of the most incredible memories of their high school career. Each individual brings great success to every child in the program.

To show interest, reach out to a team leader.

Parent Volunteer Meeting

There is a parent volunteer meeting held annually each summer, right as marching season begins for the year. Check the band calendar for the specific date and time. At the Parent Volunteer meeting, numerous important topics are discussed, including supportive volunteering, working with large groups of teenagers, etc.

Parent Facebook Group

Please find and add our parents group on Facebook! This is a great way to network with other band parents, learn about imminent volunteer opportunities, be reminded of Merch store sales and pickups, and much more

Morton Band Parents

Band Member Eligibility

The eligibility requirements for high school band are the same as those dictated by the school district for all athletics and extracurricular activities. When a student is ineligible, he/she is not eligible to perform in competitive band-related events. Please refer to the school handbook for more details.

Band Member Expectations

LEARN YOUR MUSIC AND/OR CHOREOGRAPHY

Instrumental students are expected to prepare notes and rhythms during personal practice time at home while practicing body movement and choreography for marching band. Color Guard students are expected to work on their equipment work at home as well as their body work and choreography. Playing tests will be set up during the school year to assess the proper knowledge of music. These will be assigned well in advance to the date due. Color guard will also be assessed based on knowledge of choreography.

RESPECT YOUR INSTRUMENT AND EQUIPMENT

If you own your instrument, you know how important it is to maintain its care. If you are using a school-owned instrument, treat it as if it were your own. Polish it, clean it, put it properly in the case, and store the case appropriately. All equipment and instruments should be properly stored at the conclusion of each rehearsal.

RESPECT THE FACILITY

Everyone is expected to pick up after themselves, store instruments and equipment in proper locations, and not bring food or drink into the classrooms or storage rooms. Storage areas in the band room will be used for instruments and band equipment only. Please note that personal items (i.e. clothes, shoes, books, etc.) will **not** be stored in lockers unless approved through a band director. Morton schools reserve the right to search lockers at any time.

RESPECT ONE ANOTHER

Respect one another by not worrying about anyone other than yourself when it comes to roles within the ensemble. Show respect for each other's instruments, equipment, and personal property as well.

BE PROFESSIONAL

This is perhaps the most important expectation of all since it embodies and encompasses everything we do from rehearsal, to practice at home, to performance, to attending a concert.

- Be prepared for rehearsal.
- Practice at home, not at rehearsal. Amateurs practice until they get it right. Professionals practice until they cannot get it wrong!
- Remain quiet during rehearsal when you are not being addressed.
- Dress according to the performance attire guidelines.
- Always mind what you say when representing the ensemble. Profanity is NOT tolerated!
- Extend respect to individuals outside of the ensemble and Morton. Leave a positive impression in the minds of others about our band and our school!
- When at a performance (concert band, marching band, choral, orchestral, etc.) never speak during the performance, either on stage or in the audience.
- Be human. Kindness can have the most profound impact of all. If you have nothing nice to say, keep it to yourself. If it will brighten someone's day, say it!
- When the band travels to contests and/or has overnight stays. Keep in mind you are always representing Morton Schools and the reputation of the school and the band.

Social Media Expectations

Students and Parents utilizing personal social media should do so responsibly when representing our band program. No public or private messages should be sent or posted that could reflect negatively upon the student or the band program. This includes posting or sharing images or words that depict anything against the Athletic and Activity Code – drugs, drinking, sex, violence, profanity, bullying, etc. Through the Athletic and Activity Code, students **CAN BE** held responsible for all social media posts, even those away from school. Depending on the severity of the offense, the student can be removed from the band program.

IMPORTANT: We respectfully ask that **audio or video recordings of band rehearsals or performances** **never be shared** to social media due to Copyright restrictions/lack of permission to share works we use in field shows. Additionally, just like a football team would never share their plays and secret preparation with opposing teams, we don't want our competitors to know what they're up against or know our secrets and preparation until competition day. We prefer to keep band audio and video recordings "in the family" only, and always offline.

Band Member Registration

BAND STUDENTS DO NOT NEED AN ATHLETIC PHYSICAL

8 to 18 Registration

All band members (wind, percussion and color guard) are required to be registered in the 8 to 18 online system managed by the Athletic and Activities office at Morton High School. This system centralizes all students who are noted for random drug testing throughout the school year due to their involvement in a sport or activity. This system also identifies all students who are on the academic eligibility list.

THIS MUST BE COMPLETED BY A PARENT DUE TO LIABILITY CONSENT

Go to: <https://mortonilhs.8to18.com/>

Select 'Create An Account'

Follow the steps to create an account

Once logged in, select "Register" and follow the steps to add Band as registration.

Remember your login information. This is a centralized registration system for every sport and activity at Morton High School. Throughout the year, you will be able to add registrations to your account.

School Course Registration

During 2nd semester, all 8th through 11th grade students participate in course registration.

Please follow these guidelines:

- All marching band **WIND** students should register for Marching Band Woodwinds and Brass
- All marching band **PERCUSSION** students should register for Marching Band Percussion
- All marching band **COLOR GUARD** students should register for Marching Band Guard
- All 1st semester band students **NOT MARCHING** should register for Concert Band

For the second semester, all wind and percussion students should register for either Symphonic Winds, or Concert Band, or Wind Ensemble or the band they were placed in the previous year. These classes will be finalized and schedules adjusted after placement auditions in November.

Band Course Grading Policy

Marching Band Winds, Marching Band Percussion, and Marching Band Guard Courses

Marching Band Course grades are split into three categories: **Class/Rehearsal Participation**, **Performance Grades**, and **Recorded Check-Offs**. Class Participation will be worth 5 points per week. Scheduled Rehearsal Participation will be worth 25 points per week and 50 points for Saturday rehearsals. Performance Grades will be worth 100 points for Football game Fridays and Competition Saturdays. There will typically be three to five scheduled Check-Offs recorded and submitted to Directors (your Director of 5th, 6th, or 7th period classes) worth 50 points each.

Attendance and Grading

Since Marching Band Course grades are affected by attendance, please take time to review our program's attendance policies (part of the "Marching Band" section) and ensure that all procedures are followed closely. Excuse absences only as a last resort, as acceptable and fair excused absence reasons include a sickness, a death in the family, and pre-approved other school events. Absences due to work conflicts, non-emergencies, and any reason not pre-approved by a Director will always be unexcused and affect grading.

Band Program Communication

With a program the size of Morton Bands currently encompassing nearly 200 students, communication is key to our success. Students, parents, and staff have to be on the "same page" as to what plans are and where we are headed. We utilize numerous communication methods to successfully operate the program:

Email

Weekly newsletter email updates are sent via CutTime with reminders and upcoming schedules. **Read your email regularly. Please make sure all email addresses are up-to-date in CutTime.** *If you need assistance with CutTime, please contact Anne Bradford at tableof4@hotmail.com. Anne can assist with any portion of logging in and adding information to CutTime.*

Schoology

During the school year, all information for students is posted to Schoology. In some cases, the music, drill, drill videos, handbook, and much more will be available in Schoology. Grades and homework will also be in Schoology.

Facebook

The official Morton High School Band Facebook Page is – **Morton High School Band (Morton, IL)**. Requests to join this closed group, which is moderated by the band directors and booster board. All supporters of the MHS Band Program are encouraged to be on the band Facebook Page. Many pictures and large community reminders/updates are posted to Facebook page. Additionally there is a Morton Band parent page where parents can help each other with questions, especially someone new to the band family.

Instagram

The band's Instagram is **mortonbands**

Website

Visit **www.mortonbands.org** for calendar and program information.

Section Communication

In order for section leaders and section staff to communicate with students, many utilize group text messages, GroupMe, a section specific Remind, or other new ways. Students will be given information directly from their section leaders and staff members to join these communication platforms.

It is expected that all communication is professional, regardless of the communication platform.

CutTime

CutTime (formerly *Charms*) is the “hive” of information for everything to do with Morton Bands. It is IMPERATIVE all student information is up-to-date in CutTime – email address, cell phone numbers, addresses, everything! While traveling, we utilize CutTime for emergency contact information through a secure app on director’s cell phones.

CutTime Web Address

www.cutttime.com

CutTime Coordinator

Contact Anne Bradford anytime you need help with access, adding information, etc.

Anne Bradford
tableof4@gmail.com
Cell: 309-472-3697

Program Calendar Sync (iPhone)

Syncing your iPhone Calendar to CutTime can be one of the most helpful things to do. You can access the CutTime calendar from our program website, www.mortonbands.org/calendar. Find “Subscribe to your Public Calendar” to copy this code: (<https://app.gocutttime.com/program/calendar/9548ce43-cd70-441c-954e-ecd356a4fd59/ics>)

Then, in the Calendar app, find “Calendars,” select “Add Calendar,” select “Add Subscription Calendar” and paste our code. Subscribe and you will see all Morton Bands Calendar events which will update automatically with any changes.

Private Lessons

One of the most important ways to improve as a musician and to stay motivated is through private lessons. There is no substitute for weekly sessions of individualized instruction by an instrumental specialist. Private lesson instructors serve as an ideal model and mentor to assist in your child’s improvement in the areas of tone, technique, and general musicianship. **A list of potential private teachers is in the weekly band newsletters.**

Private instrument lessons are a small investment that helps insure success on your instrument. Times are arranged convenient to your schedule and prices for instruction are reasonable.

What is a private music lesson?

Your son or daughter is tutored by a professional musician who is an expert at the same instrument your child plays, once each week for a 30-minute session.

Can lessons fit in my child’s busy schedule?

The time lessons are scheduled can be very flexible.

What are the benefits of private instruction?

Private lessons are a great motivator for kids to practice.

A one on one experience can greatly enhance the student's musical experience.

As students improve, they enjoy playing more.

Learning from teachers that specialize on each instrument is vital to long term performance potential.

Summer Music Camps

In an effort to lessen the impact of summer learning loss, we recommend students participate in summer music camps. There are many local and national camps available for students. Due to our connections with Music for All and Bands of America, along with band staff being involved with the camp, we recommend the Bands of America Summer Camp hosted at Ball State University in Muncie, IN. Morton drum majors attend the Drum Major Institute of this camp. There are other tracks available including concert band, marching band, color guard, jazz, music production, and percussion. A leadership weekend is also available for students looking to strengthen their leadership skills. For more information about Summer Symposium or recommendations for summer other camps, please ask a staff member or visit musicforall.org.

Recommendation for College or Employers

Students needing a recommendation for college or employment application are asked to give directors **at least two weeks' notice** and provide as many specifics as possible. Recommendations will be on Morton Bands letterhead and either sent directly to the organization (college or employer) or returned to the student for distribution. **It is very difficult to turn a quality recommendation around in less than 48 hours.** Please give as much notice as possible.

Concert Ensembles

Wind Ensemble

Wind Ensemble is the first of three ability-based concert ensembles at Morton High School, and is the most selective in membership. The Wind Ensemble rehearses in-class and on a schedule of after-school rehearsals and clinics to refine a selection of advanced wind band literature for concerts, regional festivals, and audition recordings.

The Morton High School Wind Ensemble has performed at the highly competitive University of Illinois SuperState Concert Band Festival of Champaign (named Honor Band in 2024 and 2026), the Music for All National Concert Band Festival of Muncie, IN (named Honor Band in 2023), and the Illinois Music Education Conference of Peoria. Students are regularly selected for ILMEA All-District and All-State Festivals and Mid-Illini All-Conference Honors Band. Private Lessons are expected.

Symphonic Winds

Symphonic Winds is the second of three ability-based concert ensembles at Morton High School, typically the largest concert ensemble of the three. With a diverse range of age and experience, Symphonic Winds seeks to compliment the strengths and improve the weaknesses of its musicians with engaging and challenging wind band literature that helps accomplish this goal.

Students in Symphonic Winds frequently take on extra-curricular musical challenges such as ILMEA All-District/State Auditions, IHSA Solo & Ensemble Festival performances, and some are selected to the Mid-Illinois Conference Honors Band. Private Lessons are highly encouraged for Symphonic Winds students, and after-school rehearsals will be scheduled to deepen study into their repertoire.

Concert Band

During the fall semester, Concert Band is an indoor option for students who do not wish to participate in the competitive Marching Band. This group rehearses during 7th hour, and instruction is tailored to meet the needs of the class, with

students generally performing small ensemble pieces, preparing for upcoming ensemble placement auditions, and completing short musical projects.

During the spring semester, Concert Band becomes the third of three ability-based concert ensembles at Morton High School. Concert Band performs a diverse variety of standard and contemporary wind band literature, aiming to develop and deepen students' musicianship and technicality, especially helpful to younger members of the Morton Band program. Private lessons are highly encouraged.

Honor Band Participation

All students are strongly encouraged to prepare and audition for the All-District and/or All-State Honor Bands. Students interested in participating in the Wind Ensemble must audition for All-District Honor Band. Audition material, including scale sheets, etudes, and recordings of etudes are available here:

Honor Band opportunities from universities, such as the Mid-Illini Honor Band at a Conference school and Bradley Honor Band at Bradley University, as well as other national organizations are also available throughout the year. Jazz students should also remember there are jazz honor ensembles available on a yearly basis.

Jazz Ensemble

The Jazz Ensemble is a traditional big-band set up including saxophones (alto, tenor, and bari), trombones, trumpets, drum set, electric/upright bass, guitar, keyboard. Other instruments, such as vibraphone, clarinet, flute, flugelhorn, or voice may be featured based on selected repertoire. The Jazz Ensemble performs yearly at the Bradley University Jazz Festival, the Mid-Illini Jazz Festival, as well as the Mid-Winter band concert and a Spring Jazz concert. The Jazz Band rehearses on Tuesday and Thursday evenings after auditions are held. Students interested in auditioning for Jazz Band should contact Mr. Arbisi at the conclusion of Marching Band. Audition materials and information will be provided.

Pep Band - Basketball

The Morton High School Pep Band performs throughout the winter sports season for both girls and boys basketball games. The band is made up of members that volunteer their time to perform at 10 games throughout the year. This ensemble focuses on performing fun, energetic, popular music that ROCKS the Potter Dome! This ensemble has open instrumentation for electric bass, guitar, as well as other more "popular" instrumentation. Students must be enrolled in a second semester concert band to participate in Pep Band. Questions can be directed to Mr. Shaffer and Mr. Hornsby.

Student Leadership Curriculum

Incorporated in the Morton Band program is a student leadership development program targeted at developing students to serve their peers and program. The student leadership team is paramount in the efficiency and productivity of the band program. Students assume numerous roles to assist the program and staff while best understanding positive peer-to-peer interaction. Grounded in service-based leadership philosophy, the foundation of the student leadership program is service, role modeling, and mentoring.

During 2nd semester, any student interested in applying for the band leadership team should attend the leadership workshop. In-season sports students are excused from the leadership workshop during their season but are required to get all notes and topics covered from a trusted peer before applying.

After the workshop, students complete a digital leadership application. The staff reviews the applications and places students onto the leadership team. Students are placed based on the current needs of the program and the individual leadership development of the student. This year in 2021 there will only be a workshop after selection of leadership.

Each year the team is built from scratch. No student is guaranteed a position on the leadership team. Leadership students may be removed from the leadership team at any time for reasons deemed inappropriate for the team. The

number of students on the leadership team varies year to year. The entire staff works to build a leadership team that will have the most positive impact on the program.

Leadership students are held to a higher standard of expectations within the band program. They are given higher levels of responsibility and assist with the operation of every rehearsal. Leadership team students meet regularly to discuss how to improve rehearsals and the band program while continually evaluating their personal leadership development and execution.

Roles on the leadership team include:

- Drum Majors
- Section Captains
- Section Leaders
- Field Crew
- Librarians
- Social Team
- Activity coordinator
- Secretaries

Marching Band

The Morton High School Marching Band is a competitive marching band serving over 180 wind, percussion, and color guard students at Morton High School. While the marching band is the most visible aspect of the band program, it operates in conjunction with a full music curriculum for students in concert, jazz and chamber music ensembles. The Morton Marching Band performs at all home football games, local community parades, local and state-wide marching band competitions, as well as Regional, Super Regional, and National Bands of America competitions.

Student-Centered Traditions

Throughout the marching band season, there are numerous student-specific traditions that are passed student to student. We ask parents and supporters to allow the students and staff to have these moments **without video or audio recording**. Still pictures, from a distance, are approved. A staff member will make an announcement before these traditions take place, respectfully giving parameters as to who can participate. In some cases, band alumni are invited to participate.

Band Fees

The district-approved band fee is \$650.00 per student per year. This fee is all-inclusive and includes show element design, show uniform and flag design, props, uniform cleanings, meals/snacks during band camp and competition weekends, all travel, special events, hotel rooms, charter buses, etc. The actual operating per-member cost is approximately \$1050.00. Through fundraising efforts hosted by the Morton Band Parents, the band fee is lowered to \$650.00.

Additional costs to families include purchasing marching band shoes (Black MTX) at the beginning of the freshman year and any personal items needed to operate instruments (reeds, valve oil, sticks, etc.).

Band Fees are paid to the school district. Band fees may be paid via eFunds (credit card) or in person (cash or check) at the Morton High School main office. Fee payments are broken down as follows –

April 1	\$250.00 Non-Refundable Deposit
May 1	\$100.00
June 1	\$100.00
July 1	\$100.00
August 1	\$100.00

Payments should be made through contact with the MHS Bookkeeper, Jennifer McMillan, at jennifer.mcmillan@mcusd709.org or through RevTrack.

Attendance Policy

Marching band is an activity unlike most others in that each student plays a unique and irreplaceable role within the visual and musical design of the show. Because of this, it is imperative that all students be able to adhere to the attendance policy outlined below if they wish to participate in the activity. Please review the following information carefully, mark all rehearsal and performance dates on your family calendar.

Reporting & Approval of Absences

- All absences from full group or sectional rehearsals must be reported directly to Mr. Empey, Mrs. Fitzpatrick, and Mr. Shaffer via email. **This should be at least 24 hours in advance!** Please be sure to also notify the student's section staff member and copy a parent so the directors know the parent is aware.
- Excused absences are absences that are approved by the directors with adequate prior notice. In emergency situations only, some absences may be excused after the fact.
- Unexcused absences may be either absences for reasons not approved by the directors or absences for which the student fails to give prior notification to the director. Please note that work, babysitting, homework, and social events will not be excused. Excessive absences – even for reasons that would be excused under normal circumstances – may also be counted as unexcused absences at the director's discretion.

Student/Parent Responsibilities and Expectations

- Review both the attendance policy and the marching band schedule carefully in order to avoid unnecessary conflicts.
- Report any anticipated absences directly to the directors for approval.
- Give as much advance notice as possible (a few months isn't too much!) for anticipated absences.
- Schedule work, social activities, and appointments around rehearsals and performances.
- Be proactive in planning for homework, projects, and any other responsibilities that may arise during the season.

Summer Rehearsal Attendance

- The summer rehearsals to which this section refers are any full or sectional rehearsals occurring from the beginning of July through the start of the school year. Band camp and pre-camp are subject to a separate policy.
- Students/parents are expected to notify the directors in writing of any summer rehearsals that will be missed for non-emergency purposes. Please send notification to the directors by July 1st of the calendar year.
- Students will be allowed up to two excused absences from summer rehearsals, NOT CAMP, for vacations and/or family events.
- Work, babysitting, social events, and similar activities are not excused.

Band Camp and Pre-Camp Attendance

- Full attendance at pre-camp and band camp is **mandatory** for all students who wish to participate in marching band.
- As the dates for both pre-camp and band camp are available months in advance, students are expected to consider these dates and plan accordingly. Absences during pre-camp or band camp will not be excused.

Season Rehearsal and Performance Attendance

- Students are expected to attend all sectional and full rehearsals and all performances once the school year begins.

- Absences for required MHS Choral, MHS Orchestra, or MHS Athletic activities are excused. Students involved in these activities are expected to notify the band directors of any such conflicts as soon as they are known. Students who anticipate recurring conflicts with these activities should consult the band directors in order to work out a schedule that allows them to participate in both.
- In the event of absences for events or activities not included above, students and/or parents should contact the band directors as early as possible. As long as adequate advance notice is provided, approval for such absences may be granted on a case-by-case basis at the director's discretion. Absences for non-emergency events or activities will be considered unexcused unless pre-approved by the band directors.
- In the event of serious illness or emergency situations, the band directors should just be notified as soon as possible after the situation has been dealt with.
- Medical, dental, and orthodontic appointments of a non-emergency nature should be scheduled around rehearsals and performances.
- Homework, work, babysitting, social events, church, homecoming decorations, and similar conflicts will not be excused for any reason.

Season Attendance Consequences

In the event of unexcused absences during the season, the following series of actions will be taken:

- 1st Offense: Student will receive a warning and band detention. Parents will be notified via email/call. Student will receive necessary make-up assignment/s.
- 2nd Offense: Student will have a conference with parents and directors; serve a detention. Student will receive necessary make-up assignment/s.
- 3rd Offense: Student will be "sidelined" for one performance. Student will receive necessary make-up assignment/s.
- 4th Offense: Student will be dismissed from group.

Rehearsal Attire

It's all about comfort, NOT FASHION. Students are expected to dress appropriately for all marching band rehearsals. Here are some guidelines to assist with rehearsal dress –

NOT ALLOWED IN ANY REHEARSALS

- Denim material pants (such as black or blue jeans) or any tight fitting clothing that doesn't allow the body to cool itself
- Any shoes except MTX Marching Band Shoes or Athletic Shoes
- School Dress code is enforced

Summer Rehearsal Attire Recommendations:

- Loose fitting, light colored t-shirts
- Athletic shorts that allow full range of movement without exposing buttocks or private areas
- Athletic shoes (no sandals, skating, or casual shoes) – **BREAK SHOES IN A WEEK BEFORE REHEARSALS BEGIN!**
- Socks that cover the back of the ankle to minimize or eliminate blisters

Cooler Fall Rehearsal Attire Recommendations:

- Long sleeve t-shirts, or a hoodie/sweatshirt
- Athletic pants or leggings
- Gloves (as needed and able)

Student Health

During marching band, student health is of the utmost importance. We want students to feel comfortable at all times under heavily physical demands.

Hydration

Staying hydrated is the most important aspect of marching band. Students should ensure their water jug (detailed below) is regularly cleaned and not shared with other students. Students should only put water in their water jugs. During the season, especially band camp, students will drink, on average, 4 to 5 gallons of water per day – the more the better. Hydration begins TWO DAYS before physical activity. Students should eliminate sugary, carbonated, and highly caffeinated drinks from their diet, removing sodas, tea, coffee, etc., replacing all drinks with water. Once hydrated (light or clear urine color when using the bathroom), students may add in electrolyte-based drinks (Gatorade, PowerAde) to their diet. For every one 20 oz. Gatorade consumed, 40 oz. of water should be consumed.

The staff, chaperones and nurses constantly monitor students for hydration while at band. Parents and students should take responsibility for hydration while at home.

Water Jugs are the responsibility of the students. We recommend a large (at least ½ gallon) insulated water jug filled with ice and water at the beginning of each day. Water and ice is available to students throughout pre-camp and band camp rehearsals to refill jugs as necessary.

Stretching

At the beginning of all rehearsals we do dynamic stretching (large movements such as jumping jacks, windmills, etc.) followed by some strength (pushups, planks) to build upper body and core control. After long rehearsals, the staff leads students in a warm-down static body stretch to ensure muscles are taken care of before leaving. Students should stretch again once getting home, while taking a warm shower.

Food

Throughout the season we encourage students to eliminate highly processed and fried foods from their diet, focusing more on high proteins, good carbohydrates, and naturally grown foods like vegetables and fruits. Fruit and vegetables are available during all snacks and meals. Meals during band camp are focused on repairing muscles and utilizing carbohydrates as energy to burn. Pasta, rice, meat, salads, and fruit are great energy foods!

Medical Assistance

We utilize the support of the school trainer to assist with joint and muscular issues. We also have a team of registered nurses that assist during band camp and while traveling. The band keeps regular OTC medications in all of our medical boxes.

Chafing

Students prone to chafing between the legs are encouraged to utilize synthetic underwear (polyester) that covers the inside of the legs below the pelvic area, otherwise known as compression shorts. Other options are using Gold Bond or Glide (a runner/bicyclist) athletic stick that reduces chafing.

Taking Care of Your Feet

The most regular nurse visit during band camp is blisters to the feet. Clean, dry socks are a must for all rehearsals. We recommend bringing an extra pair of socks to have as a backup. It is also important you stretch your feet/ankles at the end of each rehearsal. The staff will assist with teaching stretches that assist with taking care of the muscles of the feet.

Sun Exposure, Hats, Sunglasses, and Lip Balm

Students are responsible for providing their own sunscreen during rehearsals. We recommend nothing less than SPF 30. Students may wear hats to block the sun as long as they don't impede their visual site lines for setting and cleaning drill. Sunglass may also be worn during all rehearsals to assist with the glare of the sun. All wind players should take extreme care of their lips by utilizing a lip balm or ChapStick. We recommend the peach colored DCT (Daily Conditioning Treatment) canister found by the register at CVS and Walgreens because it has a built in sunscreen for lips. If the student prefers a stick, the Medicated ChapStick (baby blue cylinder) is recommended.

Sleep and Rest

During long meal breaks students should rest their bodies and avoid running around or burning unnecessary energy. Sleep, especially during band camp, becomes very important as the body only repairs itself while sleeping.

Illness

If a student becomes physically ill, the directors should be contacted immediately. During pre-camp and band camp, every effort should be made to have students at every rehearsal, even if they aren't feeling 100%. The student can still make notes in their dot book under reduced physical activity.

Is Marching Band a Sport?

No, marching band is not a sport, but it is a **highly athletic competitive activity**. The shows that we produce will elevate pulse rates to the level of athletes running sprints. Students need to prepare their bodies during the summer months by doing physical activity – walking, swimming, running, push-ups, sit-ups, etc. Students need to stay flexible as much of the choreography is dance based and will require full range of motion of all joints and limbs. Students should get outside as much as possible and acclimate to warmer temperatures.

Pre-Camp and Band Camp

Pre-Camp and Band Camp are two of the most important weeks of the entire season. By the time we complete Band Camp, 1/3 of the season's rehearsal hours and learning is complete. Students should arrive rested and ready for the day with all necessary supplies – instrument, equipment, water jug, music binder, dot book, and appropriately dressed.

Closed Rehearsals

During Pre-Camp and Band Camp, all rehearsals are 'closed' except the final parent preview concert held at the end of Band Camp. Rehearsals are closed to minimize distractions while students are working. If there is a family emergency during pre-camp or band camp, please contact **Tim Bradford**, Head Chaperone, at **309-472-3679**.

Coordinate Sheets and UDB Access will be provided to students during band camp. The student is responsible for keeping up with their Coordinate Sheet and updating UDB during the entire season.

Band Camp Week 1 Specifics

- Band Camp Week 1 is from 8:30a until 5:30p, Monday through Friday. See the band calendar for specific dates.
- Students are responsible for rides to and from all rehearsals.
- Students should eat breakfast before arriving.

- **DO NOT eat milk based products for breakfast (milk, yogurt, etc.) - it will make you sick in the morning block**
- Students may not leave during rehearsal time – only during the lunch break. Please schedule doctors appointments around rehearsals.
- **Students are responsible for their own lunch during Week 1.** They may pack their lunch and eat in the cafeteria or leave campus with a parent or parent-approved student driver to get lunch. Students must be back on campus before the next rehearsal begins. **Lunch is from 12:00p – 1:30p during Week 1.**

Band Camp Week 2 Specifics

- Band Camp is from 8:30a until 8:30p Monday to Wednesday, with Thursday and Friday 8:30a-5:30p.
- Students are responsible for rides to and from the full day of rehearsals.
- Students may not leave during the day for any reason. Please schedule all doctor's appointments during a different week.
- Students need to eat breakfast before arriving. Eating breakfast will be important to your performance each day. Lunch and dinner will be provided for all students and staff during band camp.
- **DO NOT eat milk based products for breakfast (milk, yogurt, etc.) - it will make you sick in the morning block**

Uniform Conduct

While wearing band and color guard uniforms, very specific policies and procedures are expected. Students will be shown those expectations and the routine for uniforms during the first home football game of the season when uniforms are worn.

All wind and percussion students are provided a uniform locker in the basement of the high school to store their uniform and all associated parts (pants, jacket, shako [hat], MTX marching shoes, black socks, lanyard, etc.). Only uniform specific items should be stored in that locker.

WIND AND PERCUSSION students need LONG solid black socks (no stripes or branding) that rise above the calf for anytime they are in uniforms, including Tuesday night rehearsals. This includes Tuesday night rehearsals when students wear their marching band pants and MTX Marching Shoes. We recommend keeping a few extra pairs of black socks in your uniform locker.

WIND AND PERCUSSION students are required to have a black pair of MTX Marching Band shoes. New Members will order these during pre-camp so they arrive in time for the first uniform day. Returning members may utilize their shoes from previous years or order new shoes if needed. MTX Marching Band shoes stay in the student's uniform locker.

COLOR GUARD students will store all uniform parts in the guard storage room in the outside storage warehouse. They will be given specific instructions from the color guard instructor as to their uniform storage, needs, shoes, jackets, etc.

Tuesday Evening Rehearsals

Beginning in August, after band camp, all family members and supporters are invited to attend Tuesday night rehearsals in the football stadium from 7:00p until 9:00p. These rehearsals are 'open' and give the students and the audience to perform while rehearsing.

The staff is grateful for everyone that comes to Tuesday night rehearsals to support the students and program!!

Home Football Games

Home football games, unless rescheduled due to inclement weather, take place on Friday nights. Please check the band calendar for specific dates. **Call time for students will be announced each game.** Students will attend a full program meeting, dress in uniform, rehearse with their section staff, perform pregame, cheer from the stands during 1st and 2nd quarter, and perform a portion of their show at halftime. The band will watch the dance team from the end zone then report to the band room for equipment and uniform storage.

Parents and Supporters – at the conclusion of the band's halftime performance, please do not immediately exit the stands during the dance team's performance. The students will not be finished with their band responsibilities for about 45 minutes after their performance. Please stay and cheer on the football team!

Band Competitions

The Morton Marching Band is one of the most recognized competitive marching bands in the state. Due to this, all actions taken by students, parents, supporters and staff must be tasteful and appropriate. While at competitions, individuality no longer exists for anyone associated with the band program. Any hurtful words or poor gestures will immediately be associated with Morton Bands. Because of this, we expect anyone associated with the Morton Band Program to exercise the most supportive actions possible. Therefore:

- While in the parking lot and audience, all band members are invited to appropriately mingle and interact positively with other band students from other schools.
 - **DO NOT EXCHANGE CELL PHONE NUMBERS OR SOCIAL MEDIA CONTACTS**
- While at competitions, Morton parents and audience supporters should cheer and show support for **all** band programs, soloists, etc. Positive interaction with band parents and students from other schools is highly encouraged!
- **No one should talk during another band's performance.**
- **No one should move in or out of the seating area, except for an emergency, during a band performance.**

Please remember: We will never know the limitations of any program. Some programs have great parent support but poor funding. Some programs just got a new band director, two weeks before band camp started. Some programs are working through the loss of a band student or a close supporter. Some programs have a band director just out of college trying to build a program with lots of barriers. Some programs don't have instructional staff allocations that allow for individual teaching. **WE ARE ALL ONE BAND FAMILY REGARDLESS OF SCHOOL** and it is our mission to support the fine arts and music related abilities of each performer. Please make decisions that will only positively reflect upon Morton Bands and Morton Schools.

Parades

The marching band participates in parades, yearly – the Pumpkin Festival Parade, the March-A-Thon. and the Homecoming Parade. Specific information about both of these parades will be communicated closer to the event. Please visit the band calendar for specific dates of these parades. Other parades may be added to the calendar depending on the requests of the community or other events.

Travel

All students are required to travel to competitions on the provided transportation (school buses or charter coaches). Travel Deviation is allowed after the final awards presentation of the evening. Students who travel deviate are responsible to ensuring a section leader is taking care of their equipment and uniform once back at school. Students who need to adjust the trip home for their student should fill out the **Travel Deviation Form** found in the forms section of this handbook.



For Office Use Only	
___ Approved	Date: _____
___ Declined	Date: _____
Approved by: ___TG ___MJ	

TRAVEL DEVIATION FORM

Morton High School Bands will allow travel deviation at the **end** of any band trip before departure back to Morton High School.

Travel deviation is **not allowed** during the scheduled trip (for example – a student may not leave the planned itinerary to eat a meal with their family).

Please complete this form in its entirety and return it to the directors scanned via email to or return a hard copy with the student. If approved, the parent, student, and head chaperone will be notified of the deviation.

The student must be checked out with the head chaperone at the buses before the band departs for its return trip home.

The student is responsible for ensuring all personal items, instruments and equipment are taken care of. They may ask another student, who is returning to school, to assist.

Student Name: _____

Date of Travel Deviation: _____

Student will Depart with: _____

Relationship to Student: _____

I, the undersigned parent, understand that upon checkout, the person listed above for 'Student will Depart with' assumes all responsibility for the above listed student. Morton High School Bands and Morton CUSD 709 will not be responsible for my child upon checkout with the head chaperone.

Parent/Guardian Printed Name: _____

Parent/Guardian Signature: _____

Date: _____

Parent/Guardian Cell Phone Number: _____

Parent/Guardian Email Address: _____