

FITZGERALD HIGH SCHOOL COLLEGE & CAREER ACADEMY BAND PROGRAM

2026-2027 Handbook

(last updated 07/09/2026)



Jason High – Director

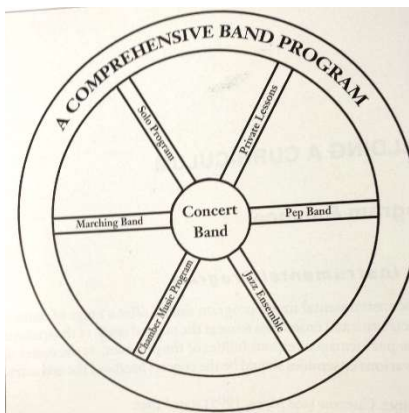
Asst. Directors:

Melissa Bracewell

Katie Strickland

Opportunities to Participate

Concert Band – ALL YEAR



ALL students signed up for a Band class are expected to perform as part of their grade calculation. Georgia Performance Standards (GPS) state “Participation in concert performances outside of regular class hours is expected.” Performances count as major test grades. This is the primary place where musicianship is developed, and is the core of a comprehensive Band program. Being a part of these groups WILL require some time spent outside of the school day for rehearsals (on average, one day a week), and for performances (as noted in “Performance Schedule”). Members are expected to be at rehearsals and performances to earn their grade. Band is unique in that an absence affects all

other members. Classes are split by instrumentation to focus on fundamentals. We don't really have a full band experience until putting everyone together in after-school rehearsals. In some cases, these rehearsals and performances might be spent in solo and chamber ensembles, in lieu of full concert performances. Georgia Performance Standards also state, “Individual growth and achievement are encouraged through participation in adjudicated solo and ensemble festivals, district honor bands, and private lessons.” **This is the only level of participation required by all students in Band classes.** Other groups, such as Marching Band, Jazz Band, Pep Band, etc., will be considered extra-curricular.

Marching Band – July through mid-December

While Marching Band is considered extra-curricular (mainly because there are costs involved), to say that it is HIGHLY ENCOURAGED would be an understatement. Concert Band offers the most enrichment to a musician's experience, but Marching Band has tremendous value. It is the most visible aspect of our program to the community. It encourages people to support what we do, and the frequent performances build confidence and a lifetime camaraderie. ALL INSTRUMENTAL (woodwind/brass/percussion) MARCHING BAND MEMBERS MUST BE ENROLLED IN A BAND CLASS the full school-year. Our current FHSCCA master schedule does not allow for a class for color guard. As such, they are exempt from this requirement.

Jazz Band – December/January through May

Jazz Band has not yet been started at FHSCCA, but we hope to as soon as possible. This is an opportunity for students to learn a uniquely American art form, and learn additional styles of music and playing that differ from the Concert Band approach. Performance dates have not yet been determined, as this will be new. It will definitely require some after-school rehearsals, and participation will be determined by audition, as positions will be limited. Students in this group should be stand-out musicians and willing to represent FHSCCA at a higher level than ever before.

Solo/Chamber Ensembles – ALL YEAR

Small ensembles are essential to developing individual playing. Small ensembles will be encouraged and developed throughout the year. These performances may be included as required performances during or in addition to our Winter/Spring Concerts, but there are additional opportunities to perform for GMEA Solo & Ensemble Festivals twice during the year. As these cost to participate in, they will be optional for right now.

Courses

While after-school rehearsals are great for “putting all the pieces together”, class time in school is necessary to ensure that each student has built up and maintains the skill set to be a successful and contributing member. In order to participate in any aspect of the band program, students must include band in their class schedule. Band members are strongly encouraged to participate in band for each of their four years at FHSCCA.

Freshman Course Numbers

Normally, I like to have a progression from Beginning Band to Intermediate Band to Advanced Band. With a 4-block schedule, however, we are very limited in the variety of classes that can be offered. For this year, the Band class schedule is as follows:

53.0371000-2 Intermediate Band I - Brass

This class meets during first block and is for intermediate brass players. Students in this class should be able to play at least 8 major scales (circle of fourths order, starting with G Concert). Students have prior Band experience and preferable played all three years in middle school. In general, this class will make up one half of the Concert Band.

53.0371000-1 Intermediate Band I - Woodwinds

This class meets during second block and is for intermediate brass players. Students in this class should be able to play at least 8 major scales (circle of fourths order, starting with G Concert). Students have prior Band experience and preferable played all three years in middle school. In general, this class will make up one half of the Concert Band.

53.0741000 or 52.0751000 Instrumental Ensemble (Percussion)

This class meets fifth period and is for all percussion players in the Marching Band. This group is selected by audition in the spring. Any percussionist not participating in Marching Band will be placed in another class, to ensure they get the proper attention and participate at the necessary level to learn.

The fourth number after the decimal indicates the course level – Intermediate Band I, Intermediate Band II, Intermediate Band III, Intermediate Band IV. So, a student who takes the woodwinds class all four years would take 53.0371000-1 (9th grade), 53.0372000-1 (10th grade), 53.0373000-1 (11th grade), 53.0374000-1 (12th grade).

Grading

Performing in Concert or Symphonic Band is a part of your grade. You cannot miss rehearsals and performances and expect to receive a passing grade in Band. Students should understand they are committing to something that is bigger than themselves, and must understand that absences and tardies affect more than just them individually. **MARCHING BAND IS NOT GRADED.** Any issues of students not performing as they should with marching band will be handled by limiting or eliminating participation.

Besides performances and corresponding rehearsals, the biggest part of a Band class grade will be participation. There will be a Daily Participation grade for every time concert band meets – be it in class, or as an after-school rehearsal. Students that don't have their instrument/music, do not play, cause distractions for others, or have unexcused absences or tardies will have see their participation grade affected. Students who have all necessary materials and give an honest effort can expect a grade of 100. Participation is necessary at all times. If a student is well enough to be at school, they should give THEIR BEST EFFORT on their instrument. Sometimes, a sore throat or other ailment may get in the way, but my response is always “do the best that you can do”. That may be studying the music that day. It may be helping another student. It may be fingering your notes without blowing through the instrument. If the student is so ill they can't do one of those things, he or she should probably not be at school that day.

Band Camp Rehearsal Schedule

Band Camp is essential for marching band members. Forty hours of rehearsal in two weeks is equivalent to 10 weeks of after-school rehearsals. Adding students to our halftime show after missing band camp is impossible.

07/06 – 07/10	M/W/F	8am-12pm	Color Guard
		1pm-5pm	Percussion
	T/Th	8am-12pm -	Leadership
07/13 – 07/17	M-F	8am-5pm	Everyone
07/20 – 07/24	M-F	8am-5pm	Everyone

After-school Rehearsals

Concert/Symphonic Band

Concert Band will have combined rehearsals Tuesday 2:45-4:45 between the end of football season and our Winter Concert. Depending on how late football season runs, Tuesday concert band rehearsals may replace marching band rehearsals. Starting in January, Concert Band will practice Tuesdays 2:45-4:45 **THESE ARE FOR A GRADE AND AFFECT EVERY PERSON IN A BAND CLASS.**

Marching Band

Marching Band practices Tuesday and Thursday after school, from the week before school starts, until the end of football season. Members must attend them all. **Work is not an excuse.** If your job cannot be scheduled around your rehearsals, you will have to make a choice. Two rehearsals a week is less than I have ever had for a high school marching band, and it is essential for us to have these times together. Excused absences need to be coordinated with the Band Director at least a week ahead of time. It is highly encouraged to try to schedule any appointments on Mondays and Wednesdays to avoid marching band absences.

- **ANY STUDENT MISSING THURSDAY'S REHEARSAL (EXCUSED OR NOT) WILL NOT MARCHING FOR THE NEXT DAY'S GAME.**
- Any **unexcused** absence will also result in a missed game for that week.
- **THREE UNEXCUSED ABSENCES WILL RESULT IN DISMISSAL FROM MARCHING BAND.**
- Two unexcused tardies of more than 15 minutes will be considered an unexcused absence. Tardies less than 15 minutes will be made up at the end of practice , with some chore or exercise that will benefit the band, or that student's participation therein.

These are for members of Marching Band, which is extra-curricular.

(Please bear with us on nailing down our after-school marching band rehearsal times. We will have many students participating from the middle school, and are trying to figure out the exact transportation/timing of that. Rehearsals will be two hours each day (T/Th), and the exact time will be announced shortly.)

Other Ensembles (Jazz, Pep, Solo/Chamber Ensembles)

These times have not been determined yet. **They will be announced as we go and affect only those participating.**

Performance Schedule

Marching Band

07/07	@ Coffee (Scrimmage)	10/09	vs Thomasville
07/14	vs McIntosh (Scrimmage)	10/16	@ Cook
07/21	@ Clinch	10/23	vs Berrien
09/04	vs Irwin	10/30	@ Brooks
09/11	@ Dodge	TBA	late October/early November – possibly
09/18	@ Worth		two festival/competition Saturdays
09/25	vs Jeff Davis	TBA	Playoff games – likely into early December
10/02	@ Bacon	TBA	Christmas Parade

Concert/Symphonic Band

As of this printing (07/09/2026), the purpose of the handbook is to prepare prospective Marching Band members for the season. This section will be updated before the 2026-2027 school year starts.

TBA	Governor's Honors
10/17	Fall Solo & Ensemble (exact date not yet announced)
12/12	All-District Tryouts
TBA	Fall Concert (tentative) (required – performance grade)
TBA	Winter Concert (required – performance grade)
01/09	All-State Tryouts
02/04-02/06	All-District Honor Band
TBA	Pre-Festival Performance (required – performance grade)
03/01-03/03	Large Group Performance Evaluation (LGPE) (required – performance grade)
04/03	Spring Solo & Ensemble (exact date not yet announced)
TBA	Spring Concert (required – performance grade)
03/04-03/06	All-State Honor Band
TBA	College/Scholarship Auditions

Time Conflicts

In general, there should be no conflicts. Band is something where every individual affects the whole. We cannot succeed by depending on whoever decides to show up that day. Again, a job is not a valid excuse. Out-of-season activities (baseball, basketball, etc.) do not take precedence over marching band. As it relates to concert band, decisions need to be made based on the level of seriousness of our event versus theirs. Your other coaches/sponsors should be just as aware of your band commitment as you make us of their obligations so we can work together on it. Any ongoing activities that require tardiness or absence must be submitted and approved by the Band Director. There is a form for this at the end of the handbook.

Please make all efforts to arrange any type of personal appointments for days that do not conflict with our two days of band practice & Friday performances. Any conflicts that can not be avoided should be arranged ahead of time enough to give us at least a week's notice. The form at the back of the handbook should be submitted. ALL absences and/or tardies should have an adult (parent, teacher, coach) vouching for the reasons.

Communication



Band App

The primary on-the-go method of communication for marching band members is the “Band” app. There are two groups: “Fitzgerald High School Marching Canes”, and “FHSCCA Concert Bands”. You can send messages to me when necessary, but I ask that you keep this to a minimum.



Facebook

“Fitzgerald High School Hurricane Bands” - www.facebook.com/FHSCCABANDS/
This account serves as more of a public face for our band activities. I can receive messages here, but it's not very practical to use.



Band Website – www.fitzgeraldbands.org

This is the best place to keep up with information including downloads, a calendar, etc.

Standards of Behavior

General

Respect –We are here to inspire everyone to be a better version of themselves. Please refrain from insults, harassment, and name-calling. Anyone who experiences a problem of this sort should report it to the Band Director. Also, always keep your hands to yourself.

Punctuality – This is one of the most important elements of operating a group of this type and size, and is one of the best ways to show respect for the time other people are investing by choosing to meet with you. I will ALWAYS make sure we dismiss on time and never leave parents wondering when we will be done. In kind, please make sure you are always on time.

Attendance – any unexcused absence from Marching Band rehearsals will exclude you from the following performance. You will be required to attend, but not perform. If you are not present and available to help out where needed, you will not be allowed to rejoin the group on the next performance. Anyone who builds up three or more unexcused absences should find another activity to spend their time on. Just as I have respect for your time in terms of punctuality, I also do for attendance. I don't call extra rehearsals. The afternoons that we are not having band practice are yours.

For band class, any **unexcused** absences/tardies will count against the daily participation. This includes time spent in ISS. School policy also states that students in ISS are not allowed to participate in extra-curricular practices & events. This will be enforced in marching band.

Facilities

Facilities should be respected at all times. DO NOT EAT OR DRINK IN THE BAND ROOM. AT ALL. **THE BAND ROOM (DRUM ROOM, FLAG ROOM, etc.) IS NOT A LOCKER FOR YOUR BELONGINGS.** Any bookbags or belongings left in the Band Room at the end of the school day will be sent to lost and found, or possibly put to other use.

The Band Room is not a place for **ANY kind** of screaming, shouting, horseplay, or running. EVER. PERIOD. For any reason. The Band Room is full of expensive & delicate equipment that takes a lot of know-how to take care of. For this reason, people that are not in Band do not need to be in and out of the Band Room, or cutting through to or from the outside doors. If a person is not known to the Band Director, they need to make themselves known and state their business upon entering.

*During Band Camp and the remainder of marching season, sections will be assigned to clean up the Band Room. If we enter the gym or auditorium at any time, then when we leave, all trash cans must be empty and the floor/seats must be free of all mess and trash....**EVEN IF IT WAS THERE WHEN WE CAME IN.** The same is true with any buses we travel on, or places we perform.*

Equipment

Equipment is also limited. Musical instruments are fragile, and expensive. **DO NOT ATTEMPT TO FIX ANYTHING YOU ARE UNSURE ABOUT.** Bring it to the Band Director immediately. ANYONE intentionally or neglectfully damaging instruments will be summarily dismissed and excluded from any and all Band activities.

The school system provides some instruments for student use. These are larger instruments, and do not cover the extent of our instrumentation. There are not enough for everybody. For that reason, students who play smaller instruments are expected to purchase and maintain a working instrument. Any student who places their instrument in a shop for repairs should get a slip from that business stating what is being done to the instrument and when it is expected to be returned. **CHECK WITH THE BAND DIRECTOR FIRST** – I may save us some playing time, and save you a repair bill if the issue is not that serious.

Students playing school instruments are still responsible for accessories necessary to play [such as reeds, mouthpiece (neck and bits for sousaphones), ligature, valve oil, cork grease, neck straps, etc.) Students who own instruments have that same responsibility.

ALL STUDENTS MUST KEEP A NOTEBOOK (BINDER), AND SHOULD BE ABLE TO PRODUCE ANYTHING HANDED OUT IN CLASS WITHOUT PRIOR NOTICE. I will try to hole-punch handouts, but a set of clear sheet-protectors is recommended.

Percussionists should have a pair of concert sticks (Vic Firth SD1 General, or sticks of size 2B or 5A), and a pair of xylophone mallets (rubber or plastic) **AT MINIMUM.** That is about \$30-\$40 total, and is much lower than the price of a trumpet, clarinet, flute, or saxophone. A student who is serious about getting better, trying out for All-District/etc., should also have an array of bell/xylophone/marimba mallets, timpani mallets, and a good stick bag.

Those instruments owned by the school system can be signed out by filling out a form where the parent acknowledges responsibility for all upkeep and any incidental repairs, if the instrument is damaged. If a student

does not return the instrument in its original condition, fees may be assessed. Grades and records will be held by the office until this obligation is met. **ANYONE PLAYING A SCHOOL-OWNED INSTRUMENT IN CLASS MUST HAVE THIS FORM FILLED OUT AND ON FILE TO CONTINUE USING IT, AND TO GET PARTICIPATION CREDIT IN CLASS.**

Leadership/Authority

Students are expected to follow the instructions and recommendation of their Band Officers and leaders, **especially if they are pointing out a rule already made plain in this handbook.** Those people have been placed in those positions under my authority. Anyone who does not follow the directions of the section leaders cannot continue to be a part of our group. Sometimes, those leaders may get something wrong. Any student who encounters a problem following the instructions of band officers should IMMEDIATELY bring it to the attention of one of our directors. Leaving practice for personal conflicts with other students is not a viable solution.

Members report up the chain as necessary. Graduates or college students who show up to help can do a lot to help individual section members with reading music and making good sounds on their instrument, or using proper technique on the field. However, any volunteer who comes in to help should not change the agenda of the rehearsal, unless specifically handed authority by the Band Director.

Cost & Fees

Payments may be made by cash or check payable to "FHSCCA Band Boosters". Please include your child's name on all checks.

Winds and Percussion

a.1. Uniform jacket	\$85.00
a.2. Band Shirt	\$25.00
a.3. Band Camp Fee (additional instructors)	\$50.00
a.4. Band Shoes	\$45.00
a.5. Bibbers	<u>\$45.00</u>
Total	\$260.00

Color Guard

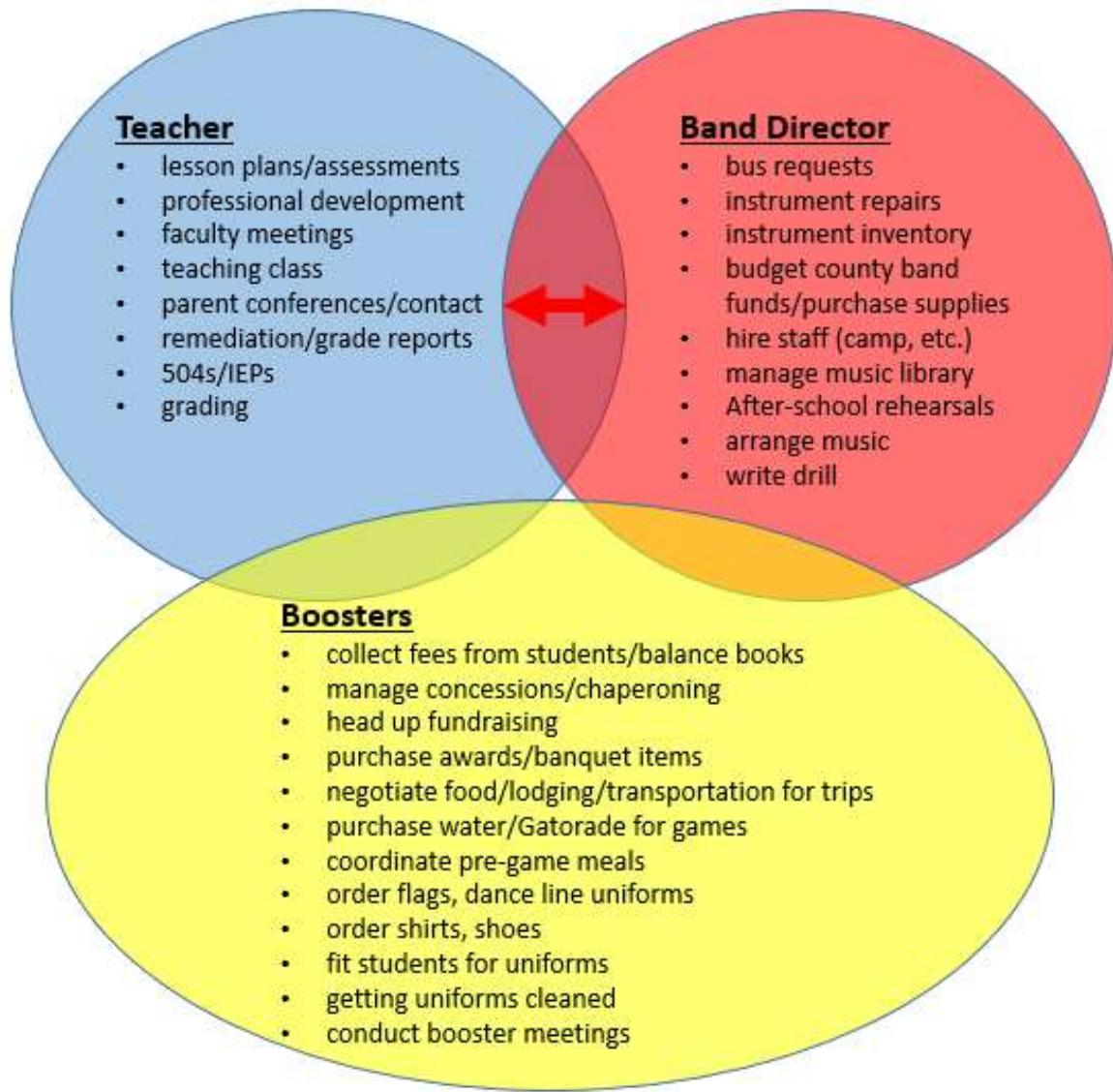
a.1. Bag	\$36.95
a.2. Flag Pole	\$17.95
a.3. Jacket	\$32.95
a.4. Poms	\$12.95
a.5. Practice Flag	\$14.95
a.6. Shoes	\$39.95
a.7. Shorts	\$23.95
a.8. Uniforms	<u>\$169.95</u>
Total	\$349.60

Optional Uniform Costs:

In future years, the band shirt and band shoes will not need to be purchased each year, provided a Band member keeps up with them and doesn't outgrow them. If you have bibbers and shoes that you believe you can use again this year, please bring them in for approval. Please note that this year's choice of shoe is different from last year's

Parent Involvement

We could not function successfully without the help of Band students' parents. FHSCCA Band Boosters is an independent organization that raises money and offers services to see that the Band program is successful. There is a separate set of by-laws that governs the Band Booster organization. I would like to aim for monthly meetings and give a monthly financial report to the principal. I DO NOT WANT TO HANDLE YOUR MONEY, and want total transparency. We need help with fundraising (including concession stands), chaperoning, moving of equipment, feeding/hydrating students, uniform alteration/cleaning/organizing, collecting fees, record keeping, etc.



Chaperones

Each time we travel, we need to have 1 chaperone per 10 students. We only have three teachers on-staff, some of whom may not be present at every single function, and there is also an equipment truck that needs to be driven in addition to the two buses (minimum) we will need this year. Parents who chaperone should realize they are there to ensure the safety and good behavior of **EACH AND EVERY CHILD IN THE BAND**, not just be there to see their child perform. Parents are asked to keep ALL foot traffic out of the Band block in the stadium bleachers, as well as keep Band students from interacting with the crowd at all times. No one but the drum majors (including chaperones and children/siblings) should be in front of the Band at ALL TIMES during the football games.

Fundraising

There will be opportunities to raise funds for other purposes, especially if we should plan a trip. This will be discussed later. All students (not just Marching Band members) are encouraged to participate, as it is my great desire to expand opportunities for ensembles other than Marching Band. Currently, our biggest fundraiser is the football program.

Parent Volunteer Incentive

Students who sell ads for our printed football program get 10% of the sales attributed to them as a credit against their band fees. I would like to add a similar incentive for parents to cover concession stands during the football games. That is yet to be announced.

Middle School Marchers

As part of our mission to grow our band, we allow students to march as early as 8th grade. This is a unique opportunity for these students, and they must demonstrate above-average musical ability, an exemplary discipline record, and maintain their academic obligations. First and foremost, a middle school student must satisfy all requirements of the middle school band program to participate with the high school. Missing middle school rehearsals or performances or failing to abide by behavior expectations in the middle school will disqualify any 8th graders from being part of FHSCCA Marching Canes.

Fitzgerald High School College & Career Academy Band

Medical Information and Release Form

All information provided will be treated as confidential.

Student's Name _____ Gender _____
last first

Home Address _____
Street Address City Zip

Contact Info (____) ____ - ____ (____) ____ - ____
Home Phone Cell Phone

Student lives with (circle): Male Guardian

Father or Male Guardian _____
Last

Contact Info (____) ____ - ____
Home Phone

Email

Mother or Female Guardian _____
M.I.

Contact Info (____) ____ - ____
Work Phone

Email

Name of Health Insurance _____

Name of Person Insured _____ Employer _____

Group Number _____ Individual Policy Number _____

Known Allergies/Medical Conditions:

List all prescription drugs currently taken on a regular basis:

We will be collecting this information electronically.
Please request a QR code if you haven't already received one.

I have read the Fitzgerald High School College & Career Academy (FHSCCA) Band Policies and Procedures Handbook and related information, and consent for the above-named student to participate in the 2026-2027 FHSCCA Band under these guidelines. As the parent or guardian of this student, I understand that the band program is a year-long commitment for its participants and that my child is expected to remain in the program for the entire period (July 13, 2026 – May 21, 2027[including graduation]) without interruption. Not fulfilling the commitment could prevent participation in subsequent school years.

Parents and guardians are notified that students may, from time to time, be photographed, videotaped or interviewed by the news media on school property or at school activities or events. Students may also be photographed, videotaped or interviewed by faculty, school or system personnel for the purpose of public relations through the mass media such as newspaper articles, publications, television appearances or website usage. Unless the parent or guardian objects in writing to a student being photographed, videotaped, or interviewed to the principal of the school where the student is enrolled, permission is released for publication of such photos, images, or contents or interviews. The system holds the unlimited right to usage of likeness voice and imaging of students for any legal purpose, both internal and external. The principal must be notified of said objection for the 2026-2027 school year by no later than August 1, 2026.

I hereby authorize Ben Hill County Schools (BHCS) personnel to examine, administer medication, and provide other treatment as necessary to my child while participating in the FHSCCA Band. This authorization shall apply to physicians to whom my child may be referred for consultation, if necessary, for services not available at FHSCCA. By law, a parent cannot consent in advance to any and all manners of emergency care. It is understandable that in cases other than the need for immediate emergency treatment, the attending physician may defer treatment pending the parent's express permission to administer specific professional services.

I have read the BHCS Computer/Internet Policy. I understand that access to computers and the Internet is designed for educational purposes and that student access will be monitored; however, I also recognize that it is impossible for BHCS to restrict all controversial materials, and I will not hold them responsible for materials acquired on the network. I hereby give permission for my child to use the Internet and computing services and understand that students are responsible for their behavior while using said services just as they are responsible for their behavior in classrooms, hallways, and all other times during which they are under the supervision of BHCS. Furthermore, I accept liability for any damage or expense caused by my child's misuse of the computer resources of BHCS and free BHCS from any liability upon my child's misuse of the equipment, acquisition or inappropriate materials, or unacceptable use of the BHCS computing resources.

I have read the foregoing and fully understand the contents hereof. I represent that I am the parent/guardian of the above-named student; I hereby consent to the foregoing on my behalf, and on his/her behalf.

Signature of Parent/Guardian _____ Date _____

I _____(student) hereby affirm that I have read and thoroughly understand the FHSCC Band Policies and Procedures Handbook. I further affirm that I will abide by the rules, regulations, and intent of said Handbook, and understand the consequences for not doing so. I have had all questions concerning the content of this Handbook answered and will do my best to live up to the intent of this contract.

I have read the BHCS Computer/Internet User Policy and agree to adhere to its provisions. I understand that my use of computers and the Internet is a privilege, not a right, and inappropriate use may result in cancellation of those privileges, school disciplinary action, and/or appropriate legal action.

Signature of Student _____ Date _____

FHSCCA Band
EXCUSED ABSENCE REQUEST FORM
2026-2027 School Year

* MUST BE TURNED IN A MINIMUM OF 7 SCHOOL DAYS BEFORE CONFLICT DATE *

Name: (Last) _____ (First) _____

Band: _____ Instrument: _____ Phone: _____

List the date and hours of any band practice or performance you miss, or wish to miss, that you feel meets the criteria for an excused absence. **Requests for pre-arranged absences should be filed as soon as a conflict is identified and will rarely be excused when notice is given at the last minute except in emergency situations.** Please turn in requests a minimum of ten (10) school days before conflict date. Be specific when stating the reason for your absence and include enough information for a decision to be made. Please attempt to **arrange your schedule** to attend all practices and resolve conflicts whenever possible. We have a progressive rehearsal schedule that includes new material and/or changes at each rehearsal. **A student's work schedule is not considered an excusable reason to miss practice.** Band schedules are set very early to allow students the necessary time to arrange other activities, work schedules and/or doctor's appointments. Thank you for supporting your son/daughter in a great youth activity and please help them with the responsibility of managing their team calendar. **All performances and practices as listed on the MHS band calendar and are required of all students.**

* If student is a member of the marching band - band camp practices (see calendar for specific dates) are required of all members. We try to be flexible when early summer vacations or camps create unavoidable conflicts; however, a student must attend all sessions of band camp and all regular season practices to keep his/her position in the FHSCCA Marching Band. Please see the director immediately if you anticipate any conflicts during this critical time of learning.

Date(s) of absence: _____ Total hours missed: _____

State reason(s) for absence - Please be specific – List team, coach's name, and e-mail address when conflict is for MHS sports practice:

Parent Signature: _____ Date: _____

.....

(For Director Use Only)

Date request received: _____ Emergency Situation: YES NO

() Request approved – No make-up necessary

() Request approved – Make up required (Due one week from date assigned)

Make up assignment will be: _____

() Request denied – Student will not receive credit for time missed

Director Signature: _____ Date: _____