



2025-2026

# **Welcome to the Douglas S. Freeman High School Bands Band Handbook**

Douglas S. Freeman High School  
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## **ATTENTION**

**Band Students and Parents:**  
Please read this entire handbook and manual.

# *Douglas S. Freeman H.S. Bands*

DOUGLAS S. FREEMAN H. S. 8701 THREE CHOPT RD. RICHMOND, VA 23229

## Director's Welcome Message

Dear Parents,

As a high school student, your child is beginning the preparation that will shape his or her future. I'm pleased that you and your child have elected to include involvement in band and the fine arts as part of this preparation.

The decision to continue with band will be one that will have far-reaching benefits for your child and will provide many advantages in today's very competitive world, regardless of the career path he or she chooses. Numerous scientific studies have shown a very distinct correlation between participation in the arts, particularly music, and child development. For instance, the average for standardized test scores including the SAT, are higher for students involved in music than the national average. Moreover, the longer the child's participation in music, the higher above the national average his or her score. Students involved in music also earn an average GPA higher than the national average.

Other studies have shown that music students tend to have higher degrees of self-motivation and self-discipline and increased time management skills. These students also have a more positive self-image and improved social skills. These are attributes that are absolutely necessary in today's work environment.

Additionally, many college admissions boards give special consideration to students involved in music due to their high level of commitment and community involvement.

Participation in band at Douglas S. Freeman High School will teach your child the benefits of teamwork, dedication, persistence and loyalty. Because of the many performance opportunities, band in high school is more challenging than in the typical middle school program, and thus more rewarding. These opportunities will result in many wonderful experiences for your child. Welcome to the Freeman Band!

Musically yours,



Rob Blankenship, Director of Bands



# **Band Handbook**

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## Freeman Band Handbook

### I. PURPOSE

To set forth the guidelines, policies and expectations governing the Douglas S. Freeman High School Band Program in order to ensure maximum learning and performance potential, enjoyment and safety for all parties involved.

### II. WHAT IS THE FREEMAN BAND?

**MARCHING BAND** - The Marching Mavericks is the name of our award-winning marching band, which includes our Color Guard. We perform at Friday night football games, both home and away, and in various Saturday competitions throughout the fall. This is a co-curricular ensemble that will meet during the fall semester as an “Early Bird” class. .5 hours of “honors” credit will be earned for participation.

**CONCERT BAND** – The Concert Band performs at school assemblies, concerts throughout the school year and at the Spring Trip competition. This is a co-curricular ensemble that will meet during specific class periods based on the type of instrument the student plays (brass, percussion or woodwind).

**WIND ENSEMBLE** - The Wind Ensemble is the premier concert ensemble at Freeman High School. Membership is by audition only. The Band Director will hold auditions for this ensemble during the spring semester for the following year. This is a co-curricular ensemble that will meet during a specific class period. The Wind Ensemble also plays at various assemblies, concerts, and competitions. **All members of the Wind Ensemble are REQUIRED to audition for All-District/All-County Band and participate if accepted. All members of the Wind Ensemble are REQUIRED to participate in the Marching Band unless an exception is given by the band director.**

**JAZZ ENSEMBLE** – Membership is by audition only and meets during a specific class period. The Jazz Band explores various styles of jazz including swing, Latin, fusion, and rock. **All Jazz Band members are REQUIRED to participate in Marching Band and Wind Ensemble unless an exception is given by the band director. Additionally, all members of the Jazz Band are REQUIRED to audition for All-District/All-County Band and participate if accepted.**

**PERCUSSION ENSEMBLE** – currently an extracurricular ensemble that meets in the spring semester. The ensemble explores in-depth, more advanced percussion techniques.

### III. STUDENT RESPONSIBILITIES

#### A. Daily Class Responsibilities

1. Students are expected to have the following items every day during band class:

- instrument, unless it is being repaired, in which case a written note must be provided
- music – students are responsible for keeping up with their own music and folder.
- any equipment or accessories needed for a particular instrument such as reeds, mouthpieces, fully equipped stick bags (percussion), valve oil, cork grease, polishing cloths, mutes etc.

- A **pencil** with an eraser (pen should not be used to mark music at any time)

**NOTE to Percussionists:** All percussion students must have their own fully-equipped stick bags for use during concert season. Students may use school-owned mallets for the larger instruments such as the concert bass drum, timpani, gong, etc. School-owned drumsticks WILL NOT be available for student use.

All percussion equipment is to be treated as valuable and irreplaceable.

Equipment is to be put in its proper place at the end of each rehearsal. Failure to do so will result in the deduction of points from the daily class grade.

**NOTE to ALL Band Members:** Percussion equipment is to be used **ONLY** by Percussion Students.

2. Students are to be completely in the room when the tardy bell rings (tardies will be handled as per school policy). Students then have five minutes to be seated with instruments **ready to play**. If a student is not ready to begin after five minutes, he or she will be marked as tardy.
3. Students are to be quiet, attentive and cooperative during all class times so as to ensure maximum productivity.
4. Food and drinks are allowed in the band room **only** at the Band Director's discretion. Water is always permitted; **however, water bottles are to be discarded at the end of each class period. If empty bottles are left behind, water will no longer be permitted in the band room. Gum is NOT ALLOWED.**
5. At the conclusion of each class period, all instruments, folders and personal belongings are to be put in their appropriate places. The band room, including all storage areas, will be left neat and orderly. Periodic inspections of instruments and lockers will be held.

## **B. Rehearsal and Performance Participation**

Rehearsals and performances outside of normal school hours are a common and necessary part of the program. Therefore, individual participation in these rehearsals and performances comprises a large portion of the overall grade. Points will be deducted from the student's grade for unexcused tardiness or absence (see section on Attendance Policies for further information).

Parents, please be advised that, occasionally, performances will require early dismissal from school. On these occasions, students will miss classes (band and others) and will be required to complete all work for those classes, according to the makeup policy. **Students are encouraged to find out what assignments will be missed PRIOR to missing the class.**

To ensure productive rehearsals and, thus, successful performances, students should follow these guidelines:

- Be ready to start at the designated time. **That means all students should arrive 10 to 15 minutes prior to the start of a rehearsal.**
- Students should always display a courteous and cooperative attitude.
- Students are not to talk during rehearsal time.

- Gum, food and drinks (other than water) are not permitted during rehearsals or performances.
- Students are to have all necessary materials such as instruments and related accessories, drill charts, poker chips, music, etc. for all rehearsals and/or performances.
- Each student will be expected to always rehearse to the fullest of his/her ability. Remember, we are a TEAM and each student depends on every other student 100% of the time.
- Regular home practice is expected of every student.

### C. Instruments

1. All students are expected to keep their instruments clean and in working order. If a student's instrument must go to a repair shop, written notification from a parent or guardian must be submitted to the band director.
2. **Instrument repair is the responsibility of each student regardless of whether the instrument is checked out through the school or is the personal property of the student.**
3. All school-owned instruments must be issued to a student through the band director. **Once issued to a student, the maintenance, care, and repair of that instrument (including any financial costs) are the responsibility of the student.**
4. Any instrument stored in the band room must be properly placed in a locker, in its case with the case closed, and **secured with a combination lock**. Unfortunately, theft and damage DOES occur.

### D. Lockers

1. For a student to be issued a locker, that student **must use a combination lock. Locks must be provided by the student.**
2. To keep damage to instruments to a minimum, *any* instrument, personal or school-owned, stored in a locker must be placed in its case with the case closed and the locker properly locked and secured.
3. Douglas S. Freeman High School, the band booster organization, or the Band Director will NOT be responsible for any items damaged in or removed from a band locker.
4. Only instruments and accessories directly related to the use and maintenance of those instruments will be kept in instrument lockers. Shoes, clothing, or any other personal belongings may not be stored in lockers except during band performances.
5. Instrument lockers will be kept neat and clean. (There will be periodic inspections.)

### E. Fees

There are a number of fees associated with participation in band. Information is available on our website.

### F. Spring Trip

On alternating school years, the band may take an extended, overnight field trip (3-4 days) for the purpose of competing with and observing bands from other parts of the country. Though not required,

all students are encouraged to participate.

#### **G. Code of Student Conduct**

The Henrico County Schools Code of Student Conduct, as well as any other policies or regulations set forth by Henrico County Schools and/or Douglas S. Freeman High School will be in effect and enforced during all band functions, regardless of time or location.

#### **H. Cell Phones**

**Cell Phones are not permitted during rehearsals or performances. If a cell phone is seen being used during a rehearsal or performance, a grade of ZERO will be given for that rehearsal or performance. After the third offense, further disciplinary action may be taken.**

### **IV. ATTENDANCE POLICIES**

As band is a performance-based class that involves outside performances and relies heavily on outside rehearsals for the success of those performances, attendance at all rehearsals and performances is mandatory. Excused absences and tardies include only the following:

- 1) Severe personal illness
- 2) Family emergencies
- 3) Religious holidays

**Work is not an excusable reason for missing rehearsal!** Proper arrangements should be made with employers and are the responsibility of the student.

Family vacations should be scheduled to avoid conflict with Band Camp dates. Band Camp dates are published well in advance.

#### **A. Absences**

Any absence from a rehearsal or performance must be approved by the band director in advance except in the case of an emergency. Written notice from a parent or guardian is required. Any absence without such prior notice, except in the case of an emergency, will be deemed unexcused. Unexcused absences will adversely affect the student's grade. The band director reserves the right to prohibit participation in any given performance due to excessive absences, whether excused or unexcused. Any student who does not participate in a rehearsal or performance without an excusable reason will not be allowed to make up the grade.

#### **B. Tardies**

Students are expected to be punctual in arriving for all band functions. This means that students are to be on the field (marching band) or seated and ready to begin at the designated time. In order to comply with this rule, **students should arrive at least 10 minutes prior to the starting time of the rehearsal or performance.**

#### **C. Notification of Extra Rehearsals and Performances**

When possible, at least two weeks' notice will be given for any extra rehearsals, performances, or other functions. Once this notice is given, all band members are required and expected to attend.

#### D. Conflicts with Sports and Other DSF School Sponsored Events

If a participation conflict between band and a **Freeman-sponsored event** arises due to postponement and subsequent rescheduling of either the band or school-sponsored activity, it is expected that the conflict be resolved in the following manner:

- 1) An **athletic game** receives priority over a **band practice**
- 2) A **band performance** receives priority over an **athletic practice**
- 3) If a conflict between **two practices arises, the longer-standing commitment** receives priority.
- 4) If a conflict between a **game** and a **performance arises**, the longer-standing commitment receives priority.
- 5) Resolution of a conflict must be communicated to the band director and coaches at least 24 hours prior to the scheduled activities.

The above steps for resolution of scheduling conflicts pertain **only to school-sponsored and band events** that have been postponed and **rescheduled** on short notice. Other conflicts are to be resolved by the student, keeping in mind the attendance policies stated in this handbook.

**STUDENTS AND PARENTS ARE REMINDED THAT BAND IS CURRICULAR. THEREFORE, PRACTICES AND PERFORMANCES ARE GRADED. FAILURE TO PROPERLY RESOLVE A CONFLICT WILL RESULT IN THE ABSENCE/TARDY IN QUESTION BEING DEEMED UNEXCUSED, THUS ADVERSELY AFFECTING THE STUDENT'S GRADE.**

**The band director reserves the right to make revisions to the Handbook as necessary.**