



*the*  
**normal**  
**marching**  
**band**

2024

**HANDBOOK**

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**NORMALMB.ORG**

*the normal marching band*



# ABOUT THE NORMAL MARCHING BAND

The Normal Community and Normal West High School Bands are the proud producers of the **NORMAL MARCHING BAND!**

The **NORMAL MARCHING BAND** continues the rich traditions of excellence previously established at Normal West and Normal Community High Schools. The group represents our schools, school district, and community on the local, regional, and national stages.

Since it was established in 2018, the NMB has been named Grand Champion at competitions hosted by the Illinois State Fair, Danville High School, Metamora Township High School, and the University of Central Missouri. The group has earned multiple Division I Ratings at Bands of America Championships. In 2021, the NMB was the Governor's Grand Champion at the Illinois Marching Band Championships (at the University of Illinois) and was selected to perform at the Chicago Thanksgiving Parade. In 2022 and 2023, the NMB was named the Class 6A Illinois State Marching Band Champions. The band is the recipient of countless placement awards and caption awards that recognize outstanding musical performances, visual performances, and performance effectiveness across each section of the band. The Normal Marching Band is honored to be a performer in the 2025 London New Year's Day Parade.

The NMB directors and staff are a 2023 recipient of the Illinois State Board of Education's Those Who Excel Award of Excellence, in the team category. This is the highest honor for an instructional team as a part of the same program that selects the Illinois Teacher of the Year. In addition to an outstanding staff, the NMB is supported by an exceptional team of parent volunteers and community supporters.

We are excited about the team-building, collaboration, and leadership opportunities available to students in this outstanding ensemble. Participating students develop self-discipline as well as musical and marching skills as a part of a high caliber band, drum line, front ensemble, and color guard. We feel very strongly about the quality of the young adults that participate in our marching programs, and we are excited to invite you to participate! The experience will be one to remember for a lifetime!

*the normal marching band*



The Normal Marching Band is the competitive marching ensemble for students from Normal Community and Normal West High Schools. This handbook describes its policies and procedures. Additionally, all members of the NMB are expected to adhere to the *NMB Student Conduct Agreement*, *NMB Commitment Form*, and their school's *Student Handbook*.

# MARCHING BAND COMMUNICATION

The NMB website ([normalmb.org](http://normalmb.org)) is the primary source of information and communication.

Students and parents should sign up for push notifications through the [BAND App](#).

During the season, the Lead Parent Coordinators send weekly messages with timely and important details.

In addition to communication that occurs through the NMB, the parents maintain a private Facebook group called *Normal Marching Band (NMB) Parents*. This is a great space for parents and volunteers to share information, ask questions, and communicate with one another.

# PARTICIPATING IN THE NORMAL MARCHING BAND

NMB membership is open to all NCHS and NCWHS students who commit to the schedule of rehearsals and performances and the NMB dues/fees. Woodwinds, brass, percussion, and drum majors are required to enroll in a band course at their school. Participation in the drum line and color guard is by audition. Percussionists who are not placed in the drum line/battery are eligible to perform in the front ensemble (stationary percussion instruments). Color Guard and Percussion clinics and auditions are held each spring, for the season that begins in the summer and extends through the next school year.

In addition to the above, all performers must maintain **academic eligibility** by earning passing grades in five or more courses (A, B, C, D, or equivalent). Each student's grade report is generated weekly, and that report determines the student's eligibility for the following week. As this is a team event without a bench or alternates, the entire group is negatively impacted when a member is ineligible and absent from rehearsals and performances. For this reason, members who are ineligible or in danger of becoming ineligible may be permanently dismissed from the group at the directors' discretion.

## THE SCHEDULE

Upcoming rehearsals and performances are displayed on the homepage at [www.normalmb.org](http://www.normalmb.org). To view the full calendar on a computer, hover over the EVENTS menu and click CALENDAR. On a mobile device, tap the ≡ menu icon in the top corner, tap the + sign beside EVENTS, and then tap CALENDAR. Clicking on a specific event often displays locations and additional information.

## ATTENDANCE POLICY AND PROCEDURES

**Rehearsal attendance is essential.** *Individual practice does not "make up for" missed rehearsal time because it is not possible to replicate the collaborative nature of our large group setting individually—performer roles in the competitive show rely on one another, so both the absent student and their peers are impacted. Absences also result in missed instruction from the directors, staff, and show designers.*

- **Rehearsals in June:** In regard to unavoidable scheduling conflicts, June is the more flexible time of the season, however families should make every effort to schedule vacation around these three weeks and avoid conflicts. *Students' failure to request time off from work is not considered an approved absence.* June absences must be preapproved by email with the directors. Members whose position is earned by audition (drum line, color guard) are expected to attend all rehearsals.
- **Band Camp in July/August:** Attendance at band camp in its entirety is mandatory (without exception) for all members of the NMB. Avoid scheduling back-to-school medical appointments and any other obligations during this time. A significant portion of the competitive show is taught during this camp, so all performers must be present.
- **All Performances and Rehearsals after Band Camp:** Attendance is mandatory (without exception) at all rehearsals and performances following the end of band camp, including those summer rehearsals scheduled between camp and the beginning of the school year.

*Absences are considered "excused" when school is missed due to student illness or a death in the family. In these cases, please communicate with the band directors in advance, by email at [budzinsr@unit5.org](mailto:budzinsr@unit5.org) and [carterp@unit5.org](mailto:carterp@unit5.org). At the directors' discretion, students with unexcused absences may be dismissed from the group. Absent students miss the opportunity to learn new material or make changes/improvements to the competitive show. For this reason, it may be necessary to limit students' subsequent performance participation after an absence, either temporarily or permanently, even if the absence is excused. In the case of extended absences, recurring tardies, and/or frequent mental health days, absent students may be replaced or written out of the portion(s) of the show that were covered in the missed rehearsal(s).*

# REHEARSAL EXPECTATIONS

Organized rehearsal activities begin at the time published on the NMB website. Members are expected to arrive early enough to prepare their equipment and report to the appropriate rehearsal area by the posted start time. (Arriving ten minutes before the scheduled time is barely on time.) The staff will make every effort to conclude rehearsal at the scheduled time. After rehearsal, it is common for students to take a few extra moments to meet with their sections, collect equipment, and put items away. We appreciate your patience!

- **Cellular Phones:** Unless technology is being used for instruction (UDB drill app/BAND App communication), NMB rehearsals are phone-free. This prevents distractions and promotes face-to-face student interaction. If extenuating circumstances warrant that a student carry their phone during a rehearsal, they should alert a band director prior to doing so. Phones are not to be used during breaks.
- **Rehearsal Attire:** Attire should permit and promote physical activity, comfort, and safety in all weather conditions. Layers are recommended, as we expect all kinds of weather and temperatures, both indoors and outdoors. Air conditioning sometimes leads to cooler rehearsal segments, even during summer band camp. Proper athletic shoes are a must, and students should avoid clothing that inhibits proper stretching or athletic motion. We encourage students to wear a hat when in the sun and to use athletic braces or properly wrap injuries/existing conditions. Woodwind, brass, and percussion members are expected to have sunglasses at rehearsals. Performers must also dress appropriately in cold weather. (There will be times when shorts are not appropriate.) Students who are inappropriately dressed will be instructed to call a parent/guardian to arrange for delivery of appropriate attire, or they will be sent home, and the absence will be unexcused.
- **Rehearsal Materials:** Students are to have the following items at all rehearsals: large water bottle (half-gallon thermos is recommended), binder with music/drill (including plastic page protectors, clothesline or strap, twist-ties, pencils), and instruments/color guard equipment with all necessary supplies and accessories (reeds, valve oil, sticks/mallets, guard gloves, etc.) Sunscreen, bug spray, and bandaids will be on hand at rehearsal—we always gratefully accept donations of these items. We also recommend that performers obtain athletic knee pads for comfort when kneeling.

## BAND CAMP

During full Band Camp days, water breaks will be given regularly, and coolers filled with cold water will be available for refilling bottles. An afternoon snack break is planned each day. Parents can help by signing up to provide snacks on the volunteer Sign Up Genius link that will be posted at [www.normalmb.org](http://www.normalmb.org). Students should bring a sack dinner with nutritious food to give them a boost in the evenings! Be sure to look for themed spirit days on the NMB calendar prior to the start of camp!

## SECTIONALS

Members of the student leadership team are required to arrange sectional rehearsals. These rehearsals may be held at a Unit 5 school or off campus, and they are in addition to the mandatory rehearsal schedule. During sectionals, student leaders help members of their sections refine music and marching skills or they lead team-building/social activities. This process is encouraged by the directors, and NMB members are encouraged to attend these types of rehearsals.

## HOME FOOTBALL GAMES

NMB students are required to attend home football games at their own high school unless the NMB is scheduled to perform elsewhere. The Full NMB (including students from both schools) will attend each Unit 5 High School's homecoming football games, to perform at half time.



## COMPETITION DAYS

We recommend clearing your schedule of commitments on competition days. Contest hosts generally release performance times early enough for the band to publish an itinerary one week or more in advance of the performance. Most competition days include a pre-contest rehearsal, travel to the contest site, at least one performance, a culminating awards ceremony, and the return trip back to Normal. Students are expected to travel with the band to performances when transportation is provided. Students who wish to return home with their parent/guardian following the performance must submit a note to their bus chaperone that includes a guardian's signature. The guardian should meet their student at the bus to check them out in the presence of a designated chaperone. For their safety, students whose guardian is not present to check them out at the time of departure will be asked to board the bus and return to school with the NMB. Though we make every effort to accurately predict our arrival time at school, we ask students to call or text their ride approximately fifteen minutes before our return to school. The NMB also typically shares its location in the BAND App during the return trip. Guardians are encouraged to download the BAND App and track the band's location.

We encourage friends and family to attend performances and cheer on the NMB! Most competitions include an admission charge as well as concessions and small souvenirs (program books, occasionally apparel, etc.) The band enjoys performing for a supportive audience, and the show will evolve from week to week—with new things to see each time! Funds raised by ticket sales and concessions support groups like ours who host these events. When we host the NMB Invitational at IWU, visiting bands, their friends, and their families support us, and it is a substantial fundraiser for our band.

## STANDARDIZED TESTING

NMB students should schedule testing commitments around mandatory NMB events.

There are no conflicts with ACT Tests on June 8 or July 13. Avoid registering for the ACT testing dates on September 7 and October 26 due to scheduled competitions.

There are no conflicts with the SAT Test on June 1. Avoid registering for the SAT testing date on August 24 and October 5 due to scheduled rehearsals and competitions.

## PHYSICAL EDUCATION

The Illinois State Board of Education and Unit 5 acknowledge that marching band is a physical activity. For this reason, juniors and seniors who participate qualify for a physical education exemption during the fall semester. Exemptions forms are available in the guidance office, and students have the option of replacing their PE class with a study hall or another single-semester course offering. The PE requirement is waived, but no credit is earned. Consult your counselor for additional information.

the normal marching band



**Appearance:** In performances and competitions, the band is evaluated based on standards of uniformity and professionalism. This includes appropriate attire and grooming: members' hair must be long enough that it can be worn in a dance-style bun (for all performances) or short enough that it does not extend over the eyebrows or ears in the front or touch the collar in the back. Any artificial hair coloring treatment must result in a naturally-occurring hair color. Students should be free of facial hair or be clean-shaven. Jewelry, makeup, and visible fingernail polish are not permitted during performances.

**The Parade Uniform** is worn at parades and performances in warm temperatures. It includes:

- Marching Band Parade Shirt or Color Guard Top/Tunic
- New in 2024: the NMB will designate uniform black athletic shorts for band members to wear with the parade shirt - additional information coming soon
- Short Black Socks: solid, unbranded, ankle socks
- Shoes: woodwind, brass, and percussion performers wear black *Super Drill Masters*. These are available locally at The Music Shoppe and Carl's Pro Band, and the band has a limited supply of used pairs available for students in need. Stop by the band office for details.
- Color Guard: performers will be fitted for a parade uniform top, and you will receive shoe and pant/legging information at rehearsals

**The Full Uniform** is generally worn at competitions throughout the fall. It includes:

- The woodwind, brass, percussion uniform will be designed in the theme of the 2024 competitive show concept. Additional details will be shared as they become available.
- Undergarments: Students should wear compression shorts and the specified show t shirt under their uniform. As competitions do not offer changing facilities for participating bands, this is necessary in order to ensure modest dressing prior to performances. In colder weather, it may be appropriate for students to wear long sleeves, warmer athletic performance wear, leggings, and/or long underwear under their uniforms. The uniforms should never be worn over bulky items such as pants, sweats, joggers, jeans, sweatshirts, or hoodies, as this changes the fit, affects our uniform appearance, and leads to undue wear and tear on the uniform fabric and seams.
- Uniform Carts: Uniforms are stored and travel to and from competitions on uniform carts. We ask each student to bring a drawstring bag, labeled with their name, for shoe storage.
- Color Guard: Uniforms are different from the band uniforms and vary from year to year. Specific instructions will be provided when uniforms arrive.

# APPEARANCE AND UNIFORMS

# THE NORMAL MARCHING BAND



*London*  
NEW YEAR'S DAY  
PARADE 2025



TRIP DATES: DECEMBER 27, 2024  
THROUGH JANUARY 3, 2025

ALL LONDON NEW YEARS TRIP  
INFORMATION IS POSTED AT  
[NORMALMB.ORG/LONDON](https://NORMALMB.ORG/LONDON)



## LONDON BECKONS

In order to perform in the London New Year's Day Parade, band members and color guard performers **must** participate in the full 2024 NMB competitive season. NMB members **are not required** to participate in the London trip in order to perform as a part of the 2024 NMB during its regular season.

## PAYMENT INFORMATION

The NMB dues for the 2024 season are built into the LNYDP payment schedule. **Trip participants need not pay the NMB dues in addition to the trip payments**, however Unit 5 will still assess its activity fee for 2024-2025. Fees are listed on the next page.



BE SURE TO JOIN THE LNYDP  
GROUP ON THE BAND APP  
BY CLICKING HERE!





## NMB DUES/FEES

The Marching Band Dues cover individual student expenses, including but not limited to: uniforms, summer supplies, and show design/equipment costs. Each member is responsible for their \$150 deposit, which is due at the Registration Open House on March 17 or 18. The fee schedule is as follows:

### **\$350 total, payable as:**

\$150 deposit due by March 18\*

\*Color Guard \$150 deposit is due at the Clinics/Auditions in the spring

\$100 payment, due on June 13

\$100 balance, due on July 23

Each NMB member (or their family) is responsible for payment in full, unless individual fundraiser proceeds from the student's Miscellaneous Ledger in Charms are applied. Payments can be made by check, payable to the *Unit 5 Music Parents*, or by credit/debit card (through PayPal and Charms, with a 3% service charge.) [Click here for Charms instructions.](#) The NMB fees are committed to expenses at the time they are due, and based on individual vendor policies/deposits, it may not be possible to refund the fees should a student withdraw from the group after payment is made.

The Unit 5 Music Parents recognize that there are families who benefit from assistance in meeting these financial obligations. As such, multiple individual fundraisers are offered. It is expected that students who are unable to pay their dues raise funds through one or more of these fundraisers. The NMB Dues are not subsidized by the school district's free/reduced lunch program.

Families who have difficulty meeting the payment schedule are asked to contact the NMB Lead Parent Coordinators for an alternate payment plan as early as possible. It is our philosophy that financial obligations should never keep a student from participating in the NMB, though communication is vital. Students (families) who have not been in contact to make alternate arrangements AND whose fee ledger is not current may be subject to removal from the NMB.

The Marching Band Dues are different and separate from the Unit 5 Activity Fee that is assessed by the school district/athletic office in the fall. The Unit 5 Activity Fee is payable through *My School Bucks*. The high school Athletic Director or their administrative assistant can confirm receipt of payment, discuss fees for students who qualify for free/reduced lunch, and establish payment plans. Fee amounts are set by the Board of Education, and the 2024-2025 fee amounts have not yet been adopted.

## FUNDRAISERS

The Unit 5 Music Parents support the NMB and its members through two types of fundraisers:

- **General Fundraisers** – support the group as a whole through events such as the Invitational, Car Washes, Garage Sales, Dine-to-Donate nights at local restaurants, and similar. General fundraisers make the program possible and offset what would otherwise be higher per-student costs.
- **Individual Fundraisers** – these fundraisers are generally sales of items such as detergent/household items, cheesecake, coffee, pasta, etc. The money that individual students raise is tracked in their "Miscellaneous Ledger" in Charms and can be applied toward band fees.

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Marching Band is a very physical activity. The directors must be informed before students with preexisting conditions or injuries begin participating in the activity, and the condition must be documented on the *NMB Medical Release Form*. Please include a **complete list of all medications** on the medical form. This information will be kept confidential and is very important in cases when a student is injured/in need of first aid or medical treatment.

Documentation from an appropriate medical professional must be given before a student is permitted to modify or be excused from rehearsal activities. Should a concussion occur, we will work with the school nurse to follow the *Unit 5 Schools Concussion Protocol*.

Students are expected to comply with treatments prescribed by their medical professional, and they should be proactive in caring for existing conditions (wearing braces, knee pads, etc.) **Unless a physician provides documentation that restricts participation, students are not permitted to sit out of rehearsal activities.** If an injury or illness prevents a student from participating fully, they will be sent home to recover or be evaluated by a medical professional.

While it is acceptable for a student to communicate with the band directors regarding injuries or health concerns, we suggest that the parent(s)/guardian(s) follow up with the directors via email. A prolonged injury that prevents the students' active participation may result in communication between the student, parent/guardian, and directors to determine the best course of action. The NMB directors have the discretion to determine the extent of a student's participation in any and all events in order to ensure the health and safety of all performers.

**Students will not be permitted to resume participation in marching band after an injury, concussion, medical procedure, or health concern without medical documentation that indicates that the student is fit to engage in physical activity.** This documentation should be given directly to the NMB directors and the school nurse, as appropriate. Once a medical professional "clears" the student to resume participation, the band directors will exercise their discretion regarding the best way to integrate the student into the group/production. This discretion includes but is not limited to defining the manner/extent of the student's participation, selecting which segments of the competitive show the student will perform, and setting the date/event when the student may resume participation in performances. Depending on the timeline and a variety of other factors, it may not be possible for the student to return to performing the show in its entirety. Every effort will be made to include the returning student, as appropriate, while also developing the show design for the entire group to remain competitive.

# MARCHING BAND HEALTH AND SAFETY

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## MUSIC AND DRILL MATERIALS

Music will be uploaded and shared with students through their Unit 5 Google Drive account. When music becomes available, we ask students to check their part assignments and print their own copy. Once available, a link to the Music and Drill folder will be posted on the marching band website, under the INFO/FORMS menu. **Due to our agreements with copyright holders, access to these materials can only be granted to marching band members through their Unit 5 Google credentials. Requests for access from other accounts cannot be granted.** Families who are new to Unit 5 and do not yet have credentials should email an NMB director for access to these materials.

The Normal Marching Band utilizes the *UDB App Pro* by Ultimate Drill Book. This tool aids in learning and refining "drill," the process of moving performers about the field. Students will need access to this app during rehearsals starting at band camp. Be sure phones are fully charged and the latest version of the materials are downloaded. Students without a cellular phone should contact a band director for assistance. Color Guard performers generally carry their phones in a fanny pack. Woodwinds, Brass, and Percussion should carry phones in a cell phone lanyard such as a *Gear Beast*. These will be provided for new members, or "rookies." Returning members should utilize their lanyard from a previous year or purchase a replacement (options are readily available on Amazon.)

**Performers are expected to have all materials at every rehearsal.**

## THE BAND APP

Important and time-sensitive announcements will be communicated by push notifications through the BAND App. Download the app from your mobile app marketplace, and use [this link](#) to join our group. The BAND App sends its own marketing notifications (which are different from the notifications sent by the NMB.) Users can disable these extra messages by following these steps: Tap the ≡ menu icon, then tap the "Settings" ⚙ icon. Tap "Push Notifications" and scroll to the bottom. Disable the "Event Promotion Notifications" and the "Service Notices." We hope this makes for a better user experience!

The BAND App is also a great place to view the NMB calendar and track the NMB's location on the road!

## SECTION MESSAGING

A number of sections in the NMB elect to use the BAND App to communicate instrument- or equipment-specific information, sectional times and locations, and other details. While this communication is not always monitored by the directors, we consider it to be an extension of the students' participation in Marching Band. As such, students are expected to communicate in an appropriate manner. Please limit discussion to NMB-related topics. Guidelines in the NMB Conduct Agreement and High School Handbook are enforceable by the directors and school officials. The NMB does not support SPAM chats or group chats outside of the BAND App platform (through apps like GroupMe, for example.)

*the normal marching band handbook*

# SOCIAL MEDIA

The official Instagram of the NMB is @normalmarchingband. Feel free to use #normalmb and to tag this account when posting photos of events!

**Due to copyright agreements, we ask that you not publicly post video or audio of the NMB. You may post video as “unlisted,” so that it is only viewable by those with a link. If you take a performance video, the staff and students benefit from seeing it—please email the link to the directors. Some contests prohibit photography.**

Some sections elect to have a “section” account on Instagram. These accounts must be set to private, and access should be granted only to those who are affiliated with the NMB. These accounts must also follow @normalmarchingband and allow @normalmarchingband, @ironmenbands, and @normalwestbands to follow back. Section accounts are student-run and should follow school expectations and guidelines for consent of those who are included in posts. While it is not possible for Unit 5 staff to monitor all social media activity, if brought to our attention, students who violate these expectations on band-related accounts or their own personal accounts are subject to disciplinary consequences from the school and from the band, up to and including the potential for dismissal from the group.

Please remember that all band-related social media posts, positive and negative, reflect not only on the account that authors the post, but also the NMB as a whole. We ask that students and family members consider this when posting. Please display positivity, sportsmanship, professionalism, maturity, and support of other bands and organizations. Thank you!

## ETIQUETTE AND THE REPUTATION OF THE NMB

We ask that all NMB performers and supporters contribute to the NMB’s positive reputation at performances. Please keep in mind that you represent our band, our schools, and our community to others in our area and from other parts of the country. As such,

- Silence cell phones and refrain from messaging or other phone use during performances.
- After our band takes the field and is introduced, the performance has officially begun. Please refrain from yelling anything out to your student or the band as a whole.
- Please stay seated during all performances. If you see or hear something from any group that you enjoy, let the performers know by applauding. Do not make derogatory comments about anyone or any group at any time. Maintain great sportsmanship and represent the NMB positively—in the stadium and on social media.

It takes a long time to build a positive reputation and a short time to lose it. Thank you for making the NMB proud!

## VOLUNTEER SUPPORT

We are very excited about the opportunities that the NMB will offer our students! The band staff are unable to offer these opportunities without family involvement. We understand that our families have a variety of talents, interests, and availability. The directors and the band parents organization are confident that there are opportunities suitable for each parent/guardian. We ask that you become involved in one way or another—the experiences are rewarding, the company is good, and it is a great opportunity to watch the students accomplish wonderful things! Every task, large or small, makes a difference.

**Volunteer opportunities will be posted regularly on a Sign Up Genius on the NMB website.**

In addition to communication that occurs through the NMB, be sure to join the *Normal Marching Band (NMB) Parents* group on Facebook.

Hosting the Normal Marching Band Invitational at IWU requires help from each and every NMB family. There are committees and tasks that prepare for the event as well as various responsibilities on the day of the event. We are confident that one (or more) of these opportunities will be congruent with each family’s schedule. Thank you for helping make this event a success!

**For additional information about getting involved, please contact the Lead Parent Coordinators at [nmbvolunteers@gmail.com](mailto:nmbvolunteers@gmail.com). The band students and staff appreciate your support!**



# **NORMAL MARCHING BAND**

THE PRIDE OF UNIT 5



## DIRECTORS

RYAN BUDZINSKI  
BUDZINSR@UNIT5.ORG

PAUL CARTER  
CARTERP@UNIT5.ORG

# NORMALMB.ORG

NORMAL COMMUNITY AND NORMAL WEST HIGH SCHOOLS