

THE **UNOFFICIAL**  
GUIDE FOR NEW  
HOUSTON  
HIGH SCHOOL  
BAND  
PARENTS



## **Welcome to THE HOUSTON BAND!**

This booklet is the product of former “new band parents” who spent a good bit of time during our freshman years in various stages of confusion. In the many hours we spent watching practices, picking up our kids, attending concerts, and going to competitions we have all felt confused, lost, and totally bewildered at one time or another. We hope this booklet will help ease you through the transition from “freshman” band parent to “veteran” band parent.

The Houston Band program is supported by a parent run organization - The Houston Band Boosters. The Boosters exists solely through volunteer parents in order to help provide your students with an enjoyable and rewarding band experience. Please join us in meeting this challenge by volunteering your time and talents. The students will reap the benefits. We welcome all new parents (and grandparents, aunts, uncles) and look forward to getting to know you and your students!

One important thing you can do as a new band parent is to get involved right away; do not wait for someone to ask you to help. New band parents are like new band students because they are “not new by the end of the season”. First year band students are expected to learn their music and march their drill just like the seniors. First year band parents should do the same. Do not wait a year or two to get involved. The four years go by much too quickly.

The Houston Band web site ([thehoustonband.com](http://thehoustonband.com)) is a place that you will want to visit often, not only to keep informed, but also to view the most recent pictures of the band’s activities. It is here that you will find the latest information on all upcoming events, fund raising opportunities, rehearsal times, schedules, and parent contact information.

# MARCHING BAND 101

## BAND CAMP

Starting in early June, Mr. Smith will schedule Tuesday afternoon rehearsals for the horn-line and Tuesday evening rehearsals for the drumline. These rehearsals are not required but, if your child is in town and available, the summer rehearsals are strongly recommended. This is a great opportunity for your student to meet other band members in their section and to start learning the music and proper marching technique. The week just prior to Band Camp Mr. Smith will schedule two or three rehearsals to gear up for the following week.

Band Camp is usually conducted the last week of July, Monday through Saturday, 8:30 AM-4:30 PM. The camp begins with a pre-camp summer picnic on the Sunday evening prior to band camp. The staff and students work VERY hard during this week. Here the students learn the music and the marching routine for their fall show. Attendance is absolutely required. Your child will not be able to stay in the band if he or she misses band camp.

The kids get quite a workout. Be prepared for tired bodies and plenty of sweating. It's an experience most of the kids "love to hate". Make sure your child dresses appropriately: a light colored t-shirt, shorts, comfortable, closed-toe shoes (**no flip-flops or sandals!**), hat, and sunscreen. Tell them to bring a large water container/thermos - water is your best friend. The students will be out in the sun, on the pavement for the majority of the day. It will be HOT! Make sure your child eats breakfast and does not skip meals. Should there be some sort of emergency, the boosters will be there to help take care of your child. There is a first aid tent to assist sick students.

The boosters provide the students with a lunch each day. This ensures that all students stay on campus and are well nourished. Sharing these meals is also a good bonding experience for the kids, especially for the freshmen. We ask parents to help in the cafeteria preparing, serving, and cleaning up.

The booster organization provides each band member with a band t-shirt. The t-shirt is their informal uniform for early performances. Mr. Smith will tell them when to wear it.

Band Camp culminates with a “show-n-tell” for the band families. It’s great fun to come out and see how far the kids have come in just one week. We usually have a water carnival for the students following the show-n-tell performance.

Another major benefit of band camp: when your freshman marching band student arrives for the first day of high school, he or she will already be a part of a well-respected group and will have a whole new group of friends (across all grades) to help with the transition into high school.

## **MARCHING BAND SEASON**

Following Band Camp practice continues after school on Tuesday and Thursday afternoons, 2:00-4:30 PM. Rehearsals during Marching Band season are mandatory. One absent member will disrupt the rehearsal for all members of the band. To be able to put the best possible musical product on the field, Mr. Smith and staff need for all members of the band to be present during all scheduled rehearsals. Management of a band this size is a monumental task and it becomes next to impossible if members of the band are absent. Help your student make every effort to be at every practice - **schedule doctor/dentist appointments, tutoring, and music lessons for Monday or Wednesday afternoons.**

## **FOOTBALL GAMES**

The band performs the show at half-time at all home football games (Friday evenings), as well as playing in the stands during the game. The football games start at 7:00 PM. Mr. Smith usually expects the band to be dressed (in uniform) and in the band room by 5:30 PM - this means that you should be dropping off your child between 4:30 and 4:45 PM.

The horn-line warms up in the band room. Colorguard and drumline warm up in the grassy areas around the band room. When it is time, (about 6:15 PM), the band will march in single file into the stadium. The band enters the stadium and goes to their seating area. No food or drinks are allowed while in dress uniform, except when on break (usually 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter). When they are marching in, they are not allowed to move anything except their feet, not even a smile, so don't distract them! The band has a roped off section in the stands and many of the band parents sit together just left of the band (facing the field) - a great opportunity to get to know other parents.

For away football games, Mr. Smith usually takes a pep band. However, the full band attends the game together if Houston is playing Germantown or Collierville High School at their home fields. The band occasionally goes to other away games as well. Check the band schedule. We always perform the show to the home side.

## COMPETITIONS

The marching band competes against other high school bands on most Saturdays in the fall. Some of the competitions are local, but most are out of town. Usually, Mr. Smith requires the students to meet at the high school a couple of hours before the scheduled departure time in order to run through the show before boarding the buses.

On the day of the contest make sure your child is at school at the appointed time. Mr. Smith sends home an agenda for each competition. When The Houston Band is traveling to a competition, please remember to send the necessary items with your child so that he or she will have everything they need to make their day complete (snacks, pillow, blanket, jacket, etc.). Make sure you send them with the black socks they need to wear with their uniforms. The student should have the appropriate equipment: instrument, reed, sticks or mallets. Give them some spending money should Mr. Smith decide along the way to stop for a snack and to purchase food for themselves at the competition.

To transport the students, their instruments, uniforms, props, and equipment to competitions the band needs five tour buses, the semi-truck, and a smaller truck. For the out of town competitions we add a **parent bus** so that you can travel with the band (you must have a reservation and have paid for your seat before the day of the competition). It is great to watch the competitions and cheer the kids on. But expect to arrive home very late (or very early on Sunday morning) since these competitions are at night and out of town. The parent bus often fills up early, so check the website for signup opportunities.

## **CONTEST ETIQUETTE**

A great incentive for students to perform better is to have a responsive crowd in the stands. If you are not riding the parent bus, you should try to arrive at the stadium at least an hour or two before our band is to perform. We feel that it is a great tribute to the other schools to show that you support all bands at the event.

Be supportive of the hosting school by purchasing a program of the day's activities, which includes the bands that are competing that day, in what order they'll be performing, information about the judges, how the event will be judged, and what awards will be presented. Also, these programs make great souvenirs/ mementos of your child's involvement in The Houston Band. Proceeds from each competition are used by the host school band to fund their activities during the season. Check out the booths, food, and refreshment areas before finding a seat in the stands. This will help you avoid having to crawl over people once the competition begins.

Please be considerate of other bands by showing your support at the end of their performance. They have worked hard to prepare their show and appreciate your support. Please be respectful of all participants and spectators while you are in attendance. Band students are to be commended for their tireless efforts to get a show prepared for a competition season.

Whether or not our band receives what you consider a good or bad review by the judges, please be considerate of all the bands; let them know that you support them no matter what the outcome is on any given day.

## **PICK-UP**

You are expected to pick up your student in a timely manner after the competition. Mr. Smith always gives you an estimated time of arrival in the letter regarding the competition. You should instruct your child to call you when the band is about 30 minutes from the high school. Then you should be waiting in your car when the buses arrive. Please don't make Mr. Smith or Mr. Taylor wait for you to arrive to pick up your child before they can go home. **DO NOT PARK** in the semi-circle in front of the high school - this is where the buses will be pulling in to let the children out; also, **DO NOT PARK** in the drive by the band room because this is where our semi-truck has to maneuver to park.

## **HELP NEEDED!**

During marching season, the students need many hands behind the scenes to make their shows successful. As your student enters high school, this is one of the few opportunities you may have to stay involved with their activities. The students very quickly realize that Marching Band doesn't happen without a lot of parental support. The boosters will be looking for parents to:

- \* Help with lunches during band camp.
- \* Help distribute water to band members during football games and competitions.
- \* Help with uniform fittings, alterations, repairs.
- \* Help getting equipment on and off the field during half-time shows and competitions (better known as Pit Crew)
- \* Any other special talents or skills you have to offer the program!



## **UNIFORMS**

### **Horn-line and Drumline**

Your student will be issued a marching uniform consisting of jacket, pants, hat, gauntlets, and gloves. You will need to purchase black marching shoes (\$35.00) on the day of uniform fitting and you will need to provide black socks (we suggest having several pairs). We usually fit uniforms the week after band camp. Your child will receive a letter the week of band camp telling him/her what day and time to come to the Storage Building for their fitting (the fitting will take about an hour). They should wear shorts and a black t-shirt under their uniform (nothing bulky). The uniform is never taken home. All cleaning is paid for through the band fees.

Some years the Pit (mallet percussion) wear special costumes designed to reflect the theme of the marching show.

### **Color Guard**

Color Guard uniforms change from year to year. Your student will be fitted for a uniform in late May or early June. The uniform belongs to the band and the school under Germantown Municipal School District policy. If your child for whatever reason does not return the uniform, you will be responsible for the cost of the uniform as we recycle for various shows. They are expected to be returned after each performance and, like the band uniforms, are stored in the Storage Building. The Guard purchases shoes and gloves individually. Gloves are approximately \$12.00 and ordered by the Guard parent and shoes range from \$25-\$40, based on the style required. Student account dollars can be used for these items.

For parades the guard uniform is usually not winter weather friendly so for parades and indoor competitions, we have a jacket that each student must purchase. The Guard members keep their own jacket and are responsible to wear for band events/competitions. Warm-up pants are purchased and owned by the band and are kept in storage until parades or specific events. Fundraising dollars can be transferred from the student account for their jackets as well.

## **CHRISTMAS PARADES**

The Houston Band marches in only one or two parades at Christmas, usually Germantown and Collierville. As the holiday season gets close Mr. Smith will send home a letter regarding when and where the band will be performing.

## **MEDICAL RELEASE FORMS**

It is vitally important that you complete the medical release form for your child. First, it is required by Germantown Municipal School District for all students going on school sponsored trips. Second, although it is very rare, sometimes a medical emergency does come up and the directors need to be able to authorize treatment immediately. Please complete your form and turn it in as soon as possible.

## **BAND MERCHANDISE**

We are proud of our band and our kids and we like to let others in the community know it. The band has available for purchase band sweatshirts, jackets, tote-bags, hats, car magnets, flags, and shirts. Other items are available, too. See the website [thehoustonband.com](http://thehoustonband.com) for an order form.

# CONCERT SEASON

At the end of marching competitions, Mr. Smith will divide the band into three concert bands: Wind Ensemble, Symphonic Band, and Concert Band. Your child's placement in the band is determined by an audition. Auditions are held in the band room in mid-November. All three bands rehearse during their normal band period each day with an afternoon rehearsal scheduled for once a week.

There are three to four concerts a year, including a Holiday Concert held at GPAC in mid-December, a February Pajama Concert, and a final Spring Concert in May at GPAC. Once again, these are wonderful opportunities to support your child and the entire Houston Band by attending these terrific concerts.

All three concert bands participate in the West Tennessee Concert Festival held at one of the local schools in March. This contest is as important to our concert bands as the marching competitions are to our marching band. Mr. Smith will let you know the time and location of the contest and you are invited and encouraged to attend.

The Wind Ensemble is frequently asked to play at schools and special events in the area; and are, also, asked to play at the Houston High School graduation ceremonies. Of course, each year many of the students in the Wind Ensemble are seniors and cannot play for graduation. So even if your child is not normally in the Wind Ensemble, don't be surprised to learn that he or she has been asked to play for graduation. Mr. Smith posts the "Graduation Band" roster several weeks before graduation and there are a couple of afternoon rehearsals.

## **CONCERT ATTIRE**

For Concert Season your daughter will be fitted with a black formal dress and your son with a tuxedo/vest/tie. Each student is responsible for getting their outfit hemmed, storing them, and having them properly cleaned and maintained until they are returned in May at the end of Concert Season. (Additional instructions regarding hemming can be found on the web site at [thehoustonband.com](http://thehoustonband.com)). In addition you will need to purchase black dress shoes (no flip flops or backless shoes) for the girls and a white dress shirt with stayed collar (not buttoned down), and black dress shoes for the boys. No jewelry is allowed except stud earrings. No bracelets or necklaces.

At the Pajama Concert, all of the students wear pajamas. Mr. Smith will explain this to everyone, but it is true...the students wear pj's.

## **JAZZ BAND**

Jazz Band meets at separate class period and is open to juniors and seniors. There is no audition but your child needs Mr. Smith's permission before registering for the class

## **ALL WEST BAND, ORCHESTRA, JAZZ BAND**

The West Tennessee Band and Orchestra Directors Association offers a wonderful opportunity for your child to play with the best high school musicians in Tennessee through the All-West Band, Orchestra and Jazz Clinic! For the past several years the clinic has been held at the Memphis Convention Center on a Thursday and Friday in late January or February culminating with concerts on Friday night and Saturday morning at the Cannon Center. Students stay at the downtown Marriott and rehearse all day, each day. There is an audition fee and, if selected, you are responsible for the cost of the hotel and meals. Clinicians for this event are outstanding directors in their respective fields and your money will be well spent. Auditions are held on a Saturday in December or January. Mr. Smith will have the audition music available in October. Encourage your child to sign up and to practice. Participating in All-West is an honor and a terrific learning experience!

If your child is selected to participate, you will be responsible for getting your child to the Convention Center at the announced time. After that, Mr. Smith and Mr. Taylor will help them register, get to their rehearsal hall, and supervise your child between rehearsals, and at night in the Marriott Hotel. Of course, you will want to attend the concert - it really is terrific.

## **ALL STATE BAND, ORCHESTRA, JAZZ BAND**

The top musicians at All-West, as well the top musicians in middle and east Tennessee, are invited to attend All-State. All-State is held in Nashville in April on a Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday with concerts on Friday night and Saturday morning. You or your child will be responsible for transportation to and from the clinic but Mr. Smith will be there to supervise the Houston High students. There is a hotel fee and your child will need money for meals.

## **INDOOR DRUMLINE**

After marching season is over, the battery percussion, and most of the mallet players in the pit participate in Indoor Drumline. This is very similar to marching band, except it takes place inside the gymnasium and only includes percussion. Each year this group travels to winter/spring competitions. Rehearsals are usually Tuesday and/or Thursday evenings. There is a second fee for this activity. Mr. Smith will provide more information for Indoor Drumline usually around October. The Houston High School Indoor Drumline participate in local, regional, and national competitions as a member of Winter Guard International (WGI). They have twice been a World Championship finalist, most recently in 2004. The Drumline travels extensively in the spring. There is an additional fee to participate in this program. For the past several years this has been about \$500.00.

## **WINTERGUARD**

The indoor color guard, also known as Winterguard, is a subsection of the very successful Houston High marching band. Often known as the Sport of the Arts, Winterguard builds skills in dance, design, and choreography while presenting a sense of pageantry to its audience. The indoor season technically begins in November after the marching season ends. However, Mr. Smith and the color guard instructor develop the music and corresponding flag, rifle, saber, and dance work months ahead of time. Once practices begin in November, the girls practice daily in class and 2-3 hours after school twice a week (afternoons or evenings) in preparation for the competition season that runs from January through April. Winterguard members commit over six weekends in the spring semester for competition. There is an additional fee to participate in this program. For the past several years this has been about \$500.00.

## **COLORFEST**

The Indoor Guard and Indoor Drumline sponsor a competition held here at Houston High called Colorfest. This indoor competition is usually held in February and is one of the major fund-raising events for Indoor activities. Drumlines and Colorguards from all over the area often attend this event.

## **SPRING TRIP**

Mr. Smith tries to take the band each year, usually in the spring, to a parade or concert competition (sometimes both) in another part of the country. Recent trips have included: San Antonio, Hollywood, Walt Disney World, Chicago, Clearwater Beach, and New York City. These trips are announced early in the school year and there is an additional cost. Your child does not have to participate; however, this is always a fantastic trip, full of sights, sounds, and special memories. We have special fund raisers to help your child earn the money to go. Please plan ahead and participate in fundraising activities to avoid having to cover fees out-of-pocket.

## **CHAPERONES**

Chaperones are needed for all band trips. Generally, chaperones are members of the band booster board and pay all their own expenses

# FUND RAISING

We conduct several fund raisers throughout the year to support the marching band program, as well as our other music ensembles. Fund raising activities are strictly voluntary and not a condition of your student's participation in any of the music programs. Your band fees only scratch the surface of the expenses incurred in running The Houston Band's outstanding programs. Please try to participate as you can in any of these or provide us with your ideas for others:

- Rock-a-thon. A Friday night in early August the band holds a lock-in in the band room or in the practice gym. Students are asked to raise money by rocking through the night. This event is very well chaperoned, the kids love it, and is great way to start off the marching season!

- Cookie Sale.

- Barbeque Coupons.

- Trivia Night. In January and February, the Indoor Guard and Drumline sponsor several Friday night Trivia Nights. These are fun for the entire family. Invite your friends!

- Kroger Rewards. We ask that all families sign-up for the Kroger Rewards Program. Changes in their program occurred a few years ago that eliminated our ability to allocate funds to your child's specific account; however, the band still receives a distribution. This program costs you absolutely nothing, yet add money to the band program every time you shop. These cards are available from the boosters or the store itself.

- Your ideas !!!



## **BAND FEES**

Germantown Municipal School District does not provide funding for the equipment, music arrangements, drill design, music supplies, uniforms, uniform cleaning, extra instruction, travel and transportation expenses, staff, instrument repair or other needs of the program. Therefore, there is a fee for participating in band. The fee is broken down into three installments due May 15, June 15, and July 15. If the first payment is not received by May 15, your child will not be written into the show. Due dates are not flexible; however unique circumstances can always be discussed and often worked out with Mr. Smith or the Band Booster treasurer.

Every student participating in The Houston Band is responsible for paying the fee. Checks should be made out to the Houston High School Band Boosters and mailed to:

The Houston High School Band  
9755 Wolf River Blvd.  
Germantown, TN 38139

If you have circumstances that challenge your family with the fees, Mr. Smith will work out a payment plan for you over and above your fundraising efforts so that your child can participate – we do not get any funds from the school to cover band expenses and fundraising can help everyone.

## **STUDENT ACCOUNTS**

In addition to Cookie Sales and BBQ another way to earn money for your child is with the Mustang MOOLA program. Here you buy gift cards for different merchants, and a portion of each purchase goes to your child's account.

## HELPFUL HINTS TO SAVE YOU TIME, GAS, & GRIEF

Mr. Smith, Mr. Taylor, the staff, and the booster organization want this to be a positive experience for all the students and their families. Here are some helpful hints (learned from our own experiences):

- \* Hold your child responsible for being prepared. The first time they forget something, will likely be the last. They really do learn to be responsible when they have to be.
  
- \* **“If you are early, you are on time. If you are on time, you are late. If you are late, plan to stay late to clean up the band room”**. This means that students are expected to arrive for scheduled practice about 15-30 minutes early so they are in position and ready to rehearse at the scheduled start time. If start time is 8:30 AM, plan to arrive no later than 8:00 AM.
  
- \* When you pick up your child from practice, try to be there a little early:
  - First, you'll get to see the band run through their show
  - Second, you can listen to the dismissal. There are usually announcements about what is new and what has changed.
  - Third, this is a great opportunity to meet other parents.
  
- \* Mr. Smith and the staff try very hard to end practice at the scheduled time. Occasionally practice may run over. Please be patient . . . it's usually for a very good reason.
  
- \* Check the web site often - [thehoustonband.com](http://thehoustonband.com)

- \* Network - Take the opportunity to meet other parents (after practice, at games and competitions, fund raising activities, etc.). This is how we all met each other. It is also the best way to get helpful hints on band parenting from others.
  
- \* Wisdom Teeth - If your child plays a wind instrument, DO NOT plan to have their wisdom teeth removed before checking with Mr. Smith first. The recovery time varies from 2 to 4 weeks and your child will be unable to play for a while. This procedure is usually best done in late May, after the final concerts.
  
- \* Be prepared to cheer! The band loves it when they have their own cheering section at games and competitions.

Don't hesitate to ask any of the "veteran" band parents for information or advice. We've all been there and are anxious to help. If you have any questions, the Houston Band Booster Board members' e-mail addresses are listed on the band website: [thehoustonband.com](http://thehoustonband.com).

# **YOU KNOW YOU'RE A BAND PARENT WHEN . . . .**

- You no longer speak of your child as a fourteen-year-old son/daughter, but as a “freshman trumpet.”
- You prominently display a band calendar in your kitchen, a band magnet on your car, and you have the band performance dates marked on your work calendar.
- You can't pick your child out of the crowd because they all look alike.
- You know you will be wearing something black, gray, or white every Friday night and on Saturday.
- Early is on time and on time is late.
- You don't leave home without cushions to sit on, camera and camcorder!
- Your newest best friends are fellow band parents!

We hope this booklet has been helpful. Anytime you feel lost, tap a “veteran” parent on the shoulder and ask for help. Our main goal is for each of the kids to have a great experience being part of The Houston Band. In closing, we would like to say that regardless of the capacity that you serve as a band parent, the choice to support your child is something that you will not regret. If you are not currently involved in the band booster organization then we invite you to get involved. Please be assured that we want and need your help. If you are an active band parent, on behalf of your child, Mr. Smith, Mr. Taylor, and all band members, we would like to say, thank you.

# **BAND DIRECTORS**

## **Jim Smith**

Band Director

Jim Smith is in his 34<sup>th</sup> year as a band director and his 25<sup>th</sup> year as the band director at Houston High School. He holds Bachelor's and Master's degrees from Mississippi State University and has done post graduate work at the University of Memphis and Cumberland University. A native of Corinth, Mississippi, Mr. Smith was a teaching graduate assistant with the Mississippi State Band in 1981. He also taught at Fayette Academy in Somerville, Tennessee, from 1982 – 1989. Mr. Smith was named Teacher of the Year by the Fayette County Chamber of Commerce (1989), the Houston High School PTSA (1999), and has received the National Band Association's Citation of Excellence (2000). He was named a "Teacher Who Makes a Difference" by the Shelby County Board of Education (2002) and was made a lifetime member of the PTSA in 2004. In 2008, Mr. Smith was named by School Band and Orchestra Magazine as one of their "50 Directors Who Make A Difference." He has been named multiple times to Who's Who Among American High School Teachers.

He and his wife, Amy, have been married for 33 years and have two daughters, Faith and Mary Ann. He likes golf, his family, golf, reading, golf, and Shania Twain.

## **Matthew Taylor**

Assistant Band Director

Matt Taylor serves as the Assistant Band Director at Houston High School. Mr. Taylor assists with the Marching Band and Jazz Band and is also the director of the Symphonic Band. Prior to his current position, he served as director of bands at Cordova High School. While at Cordova, the band won many class and division championships. The wind ensemble received superior ratings at concert festival. He has also been a member of the instructional staff at Arlington High School, serving as arranger, visual technician, and music instructor. In addition he has experience teaching middle school band and choir at Woodstock Middle School and Millington Middle School. Mr. Taylor graduated from the University of Memphis with a degree in Music Education.

Mr. Taylor studied wind conducting under Dr. Nicholas Holland, Dr. Kraig Williams, and Dr. Sidney McKay. While in college, Mr. Taylor also studied trumpet pedagogy with Dr. David Spencer. He has performed internationally in Marktoberdorf, Germany and Salzburg, Austria. He also served as trumpet section leader for the Mighty Sound of the South. He is an active consultant, clinician, and arranger in the Mid-South Region. He is a member of WTSBOA and NAFME.

He and his beautiful wife, Rachel, are the proud doggy parents of Henry the Boston Terrier and Walt the Beagle.

In addition to Mr. Smith and Mr. Taylor, several other musicians are contracted to assist with instruction throughout the year.



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