

# Planning For the Fall Marching Season

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It is often times difficult to think about marching band in the midst of concert festival season, jazz band, solo ensemble, spring concerts and the other program concerns that bombard us during the winter months. There are however, a number of ways to get a “head start” without imposing on the other functions of your program.

This time of year is a great time to debrief your marching staff or reflect yourself about the things that worked well and those that did not during the past season. Write them down! A few minutes defining breakdowns in technique, programming, music level, instrumentation concerns and difficulty levels can pay huge dividends when the process picks up again.

Another major off-season opportunity that presents itself is the repair and preparation of the marching band’s rehearsal area and equipment. Spring is a great time to reseed those worn out locations on the practice field. Repairing observation decks and towers, drum major podiums, pit trailers, and any rolling stock should be a priority. Organizing storage area and repairing PA and other electronic equipment can also be done. Keep in mind that this work does NOT need to be added to your “to-do” list. Delegating such responsibility to booster parents or other knowledgeable people in these area is a must!

As the musical program for the new season takes shape, Spring is a very good time to analyze tempo demands and choreography that may need to

be incorporated into your program. It is important to take time to analyze what is BEST for your students’ level of achievement. Just because the neighboring school has a particular system in place, does not mean it is right for you and your students. Begin to determine exercises and movements that will help your students both physically and musically during the new season. Incorporating other staff members and possibly dance professionals available locally may be a way to begin developing higher expectation for your students

Increasing tempos, the integration of more choreography and physical demands of carrying large and small instruments for extended periods of time has brought the role of physical fitness to the forefront and has become a priority to many marching bands. Many highly competitive groups and drum corps around the country have recognized that the demands of performances and rehearsals require a new level of aerobic and muscular fitness. These groups have gone well beyond the normal push-ups and the brief morning runs and calisthenics to developing a total fitness program. Many have gone so far as to utilize a fitness trainer to help them throughout their season. In the off season, take the time to analyze the muscular demands of certain instruments and work with knowledgeable fitness instructors or your physical education staff to develop an effective program to ensure your students become more fit. Your students’ stamina will increase resulting



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**Hear more from Randy Gilmore at the Convention/Clinic this summer.**



in a higher level of musicality and physical demand. Also, this is a great way to avoid injury during the season.

The key to any improved performance and to maximize your students' learning is to identify both the positive and negative ingredients that affect the success of your program. Many areas of weakness can be illuminated and worked on ahead of time in order to build a solid performance when the season is in full swing. The opportunity also exists to improve consistency through the development of the basic fundamentals in the preseason. Understanding and executing strong basic techniques are critical to developing a successful program in the fall. Never underestimate the time needed to build a strong foundation.

Someone once said, "A wise man learns from the knowledge of others." I challenge you to reach out to as many other colleagues, professionals and parents as possible who can assist you getting a head start to a smoother running and stronger program this coming season!

*Randy T. Gilmore served ten years as a nationally recognized high school band director and assistant marching band director at West Chester University. For over 20 years Randy has developed Marching Show Concepts as a nationally known company for quality marching band products and exceptional one-to-one services. Randy exemplifies an expertise and standard of excellence that is well known and respected throughout the music industry. He is an accomplished clinician, adjudicator and drill designer who continues to display his talents in the MSC collection of products and services.*