



**Texas Bandmasters Association
Convention/Clinic July 22-24, 2021**

**From Beginner Band to the
Marching Field**

CLINICIANS:

**Jason Bird, Michael Lemish, Asa Burk, Evan
Fletcher, Bojan Gusic, James McNair**



HENRY B. GONZALEZ CONVENTION CENTER - SAN ANTONIO, TEXAS



"From Beginner Band to The Marching Field"

The students and staff from The Argyle High School Marching Band will present "From Beginner Band to the Marching Field". This student demonstration will explore the essential visual skills needed for a successful marching program. From setting hand position to marching a zig zag drill, it's all about the details.

Featuring students from the Argyle High School Band

Clinicians - Jason Bird, Michael Lemish, Asa Burk, Evan Fletcher, Bojan Gutic, and James McNair

Expectations and Accountability for all classes grades 6-12

Before we can fully discuss and breakdown the visual demonstration of our marching technique, we would be remiss if we didn't clarify expectations and student accountability that we feel can be the "tipping point" for success. These expectations are taught from the time a student enters our beginner band program. It is imperative that all members of the organization hold each other accountable for maintaining these principles.

Rehearsal Space(s) - The marching band and band hall are to be held to the same standard concerning organization, assigned seating (spots), conduct, engagement, etc.

Supplies for students - Students are held accountable for having their supplies at all rehearsals and practices.

Beginner Classes and Concert Band Rehearsals	All indoor marching band music rehearsals	All outdoor marching band rehearsals
Binder with pencil pouch	Binder with pencil pouch	Fanny Pack (to put all rehearsal supplies in)
2 Pencils	2 Pencils	2 Golf pencils
Music in binder with measures numbered	Music in binder with measures numbered	Dot book
Working tuner and clip	Working tuner and clip	Working tuner and clip
Instrument	Instrument	Instrument
All supplies needed for the instrument to be in good playing condition. (Reeds, valve oil, etc)	All supplies needed for the instrument to be in good playing condition. (Reeds, valve oil, etc)	All supplies needed for the instrument to be in good playing condition. (Reeds, valve oil, etc)
		Water bottle (1/2 gallon minimum)
		Flip folder (on days we play with the dance team)
		All indoor supplies (on days we plan on having an outdoor music rehearsal)

Supplies for rehearsals - Staff and leadership are held accountable for having supplies for rehearsal spaces.

All indoor rehearsals	All outdoor rehearsals
Harmony director with amplification	Full band voice amplification
Tuner	Smaller ensemble voice amplification. (For use when we split into smaller groups)
Chairs and stands	Full band metronome amplification
	Small ensemble metronome amplification. (We use phone metronomes with small bluetooth speaker). You could also use a block and stick. The most important thing is that the kids have something to listen to for pulse.
	Stands - Only on select outdoor music rehearsal days.

Student Engagement - Director(s) and staff should expect the same conduct and engagement from all students in a marching rehearsal as an indoor class rehearsal. This includes writing down important information, making eye contact, raising your hand to ask questions, etc.

Important Middle School instruction to set-up success on the marching field

Posture and Pulse on Day 1

Foot tap

- Left foot for everyone, same as first step.
- Anatomy of the foot tap.
 - Specific down and up-defines eighth note subdivision that will later transfer to the crossing count.
 - Body awareness (beginners have never thought about their posture before).

Body alignments from hips is the exact same as marching band

- Stand to sit.
- Start standing and get everything in alignment, then sit without changing anything in upper body.
- Head perpendicular to the floor.
- Correcting alignments early will save time in the future.
- Shoulders soft and relaxed.
- Elongated spine (sit tall).
- Rib cage off of diaphragm.

Proactive Pulse Participation

- Some students are able to demonstrate pulse easier than others; regardless- it is something that is developed.
- Goal is for students to have an automatic reaction to any metronome or pulse source without prompting.

- More reminders need to be given about foot tap as students get older.
- Defining where pulse originates. (always from behind you)
- Have metronome behind students as much as possible.
- Instrumental pulse source is defined during the first beginner band rehearsal.
- As students get older and music becomes more complex, defining the pulse source becomes that much more important.

Instrument Carriage

- Discovering the hinges of the arms and hands.
 - Biggest hinge to smallest
- Chin is always parallel to the floor, never lower.
- Instrument always comes to you.
- Do not change anything in your upper body when bringing instrument to playing position.
- Music stand height is important, make sure students are never looking down at the music.
- Goal for all instruments is to take up as much space as possible, no body part touches any other body part.
- Bell front brass angles start by matching the angle of the airstream (downward). When students move into HS, the head is tilted back more so that no extraneous pressure is put on the top lip to get a 10 degrees above parallel look.
- Brass right hand:
 - Visually, the most important hand position.
 - Straight right thumb, between first and second valve casing.
 - Natural C.
 - Wrist up, convex not concave.
 - Pinky on top of hook.
 - Make as little contact with the instrument as possible.
 - Right hand is not weight bearing, just used for technical facility.
- Marching baritones, mellophones, and sousaphones:
 - If possible, have a few available in the Spring for students to play on during advisory or any supervised practice time. The more familiar they are with the instruments, the easier the transition will be. Playing these instruments becomes the cool thing to do instead of something scary.

The Basic Rules of our Marching Band Program

We have established three basic rules for our marching program that we instill every day:

Rule #1 - Feet must be in time with the given pulse.

Rule #2 - You must play while marching.

Rule #3 - You must be aware of yourself, your trio, and the field. Especially in regard to pulse, path and pace.

Begin with pulse - Rule #1

- We begin with just moving our feet in time with music that they know. My favorite song to start with is *Billie Jean* by Michael Jackson. It's a solid beat at 117 bpm. We also will take suggestions from the students.
- Place hands on the hips for balance and just let the kids practice moving in time.
- We take this opportunity to teach 8x8's. We do not talk about step size during this.
- Back edge of the heel hits with the beat, not the center of the foot.
- Count every step of the way.
- Immediately talk about subdivision and crossing counts.

Begin to integrate rule #2

- Students breathe in and just blow out naturally while marching 8x8.

- Articulate quarter notes and eighth notes with the beat. (Air only)

Moving along with Rule #3

- Introduce and re-introduce the field to all students
 - Side 1, Side 2, Front Hash, Back Hash, etc.
 - Step Size.
 - Awareness of your step size, your trio, and how it relates to the hash marks and sideline markings.

Integrate other skills:

- Posture
 - 5 points.
 - Feet and ankles (we use open second), knees, hips, shoulders, and ears.
 - Small to big exercise.
 - Take up space with your body.
- Marching step.
 - Straight leg step off.
 - Press with the right foot on count 8 of the prep. (<159 bpm); On count 7 of prep (>159 bpm).
 - Left leg moves out on the up-beat of 8 of the prep(,150 bpm); On count 8 of the prep (>159).
 - Establishes pulse, style, and step size.
 - On the beat with the back edge of the foot.
 - When both feet are on the ground, both legs are straight.
- Crossing count
 - Slight relaxed knee.
 - Happens when ankles are even with each other.
 - Second step .
 - Confirms path, pulse, and style.
- Slides and upper body orientation.
 - Chest goes to 90 degrees and the body acts as a spiral staircase.

Philosophy of doing drills and exercises

We instill in the program that every exercise we do has a purpose and a “why”. We may do the same exercise every day, however we will change the skill we work on. We do not want to get better at the exercise, we want to get better at the skill. Do NOT do anything just to do it; Do EVERYTHING to do it better. This is where we really hit home our basic rules of marching band.

Exercises to detail individual visual skills

“Break down the step”

- 1/4 time, 1/2 time, and full time for forward march.
- 1/2 time and full time for back march.
- Develops awareness and control of the body.

“2 Step exercise”

- Confirms path, pulse, step size, and style.
- Forward and backwards.

“8x8’s”

- This is a favorite of ours to work on many skills including the following:
- Step size, path, halts, checkpoints, etc.
- We also use this to teach awareness of the sideline markings.
- Start 1 off, 2 off, etc. and discuss checkpoints. (When do you cross lines, etc.)
- Slides - Do all orientations and go into detail regarding the challenges of the first and last step of each direction.

“Plus sign drill”

- Works on all of the above skills.
- Makes students think faster about the assignment and how they move.

Exercises to detail individual and ensemble visual skills

“Box Drill”, “Small Diamond Drill”, “Large Diamond Drill”, “Zig Zag Drill”

- Continues to work on all skills while moving in and out of slides.
- Detail the challenges of the first and last steps of every direction change.
- Brings awareness to ensemble marching.
 - Students should be aware of their primary, secondary, and tertiary trios. Do they look and move the same as those trios?
- Have different lines move in different directions to encourage students to look for new trios. Their trios will change.
- The most important trio is the trio that is most exposed to the center of the audience.
- Practice starting each drill on different field markings (1 off, 2 off, etc)

Acknowledgments

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