

THE MANY FACES OF BAND: WHICH TYPE OF BAND SUITS YOU BEST?

by Rebecca Van Treeck



Band Offers Skills That Can Last a Lifetime

“Making Music For Life” isn’t just a catch phrase. It’s a reflection on the deep impression music makes on our individual personalities and chosen career paths! For many, this lifetime pursuit of music begins with participation in band.

When you think of band, what comes to mind?

Perhaps you visualize a pep band rallying a high school football team for a last-minute drive to the end zone. Perhaps a drumline keeping rows of uniformed marching band musicians in step on a Fourth of July parade? Maybe it’s a jazz band pumping out some tunes at a local music festival? Each one of these performance environments offers a very different experience, not just to the crowd, but to the musicians as well.

Exploring Different Band Types: Options For Musicians of All Interests

Band diversity is often introduced at the high school level. By this point, most students have a solid working knowledge of how to play their instrument alongside others and begin to pursue a style that best

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suits their interests.

If your student is unsure of which type of band to choose, allow them to explore different opportunities to see which one offers a good fit! Typically, band directors will arrange for parent meetings, put on concerts, and provide instrument demonstrations to expose beginners with a wide range of opportunities.

The following list provides some insight into a number of different band disciplines and the social environments that your student can expect to enjoy as they make music for life!

Concert Band: Where It All Begins

Concert bands typically offer the most diverse group of students and are often the starting point in a musician's career. These bands can be formed as early as 4th or 5th grade (in our school, we referred to this as our "Cadet" band), but quite often they are offered in 6th, 7th, and 8th grade.

These bands are typically non-exclusionary and welcome students of all playing levels and instruments, with a focus on student improvement, both as an individual musician and as part of a larger group.

Students are encouraged to show willingness to try anything and everything. Success or failure are of little concern, so long as the student is willing to show persistence and perseverance. Solo opportunities are often available for competitive students who are motivated by a rating system and like to be critiqued by solo/ensemble judges.

Jazz Band

A personal favorite of mine, jazz band embraces creativity and improvisation. Jazz musicians are normally a bit more laid-back, relaxed, and enjoy a more fluid musical experience. This type of band supports a creative personality type that is willing to take risks during their performance. These students oftentimes find themselves studying and performing a number of genres of music and enjoy playing secondary instruments as well (bass, piano, guitar, or drums). Students who enjoy jazz band may eventually find themselves performing in smaller combo groups and quite often perform in public venues like music festivals. These students may have more of an "ear" for music, as well as written musical literacy.

Pit Band and Orchestra Group

This type of band lends itself well to students interested in a unique performance setting. Oftentimes, these students will require extra time and rehearsal, as well as a fair amount of coordination and discipline to effectively collaborate with others. This need for coordination extends beyond the band and

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orchestra, requiring musicians to keep time with lighting effects and performers on stage.

Symphonic Orchestra

For students interested in working alongside strings and explore symphonic music, this type of band often appeals to those who have an interest in classical music. Students playing in symphonic orchestras enjoy playing alongside a wide variety of instruments, including not only string instruments, but wind, brass, and percussion as well!

Wind Ensemble Groups

Typically, students audition for wind ensemble at the high school level. This type of band offers a wide diversity in the type of music performed and is well-suited for students interested in playing more challenging music. These students typically take [private lessons](#) with [specialists](#) to help them improve.

Chamber Groups and Chamber Winds

Quite often an extracurricular opportunity, these groups play and practice before and after school at select community or school events. Frequently, these groups are assembled by the students themselves!

This type of environment is ideal for the independent and self-motivated student who is able to take the initiative. Chamber groups are also a great opportunity for students interested in preparing themselves for a career in music.

Pep Band

Is your student the life of the party? Do they have tons of energy, enthusiasm, and some serious school spirit? Pep band might be a good fit for them! Pep bands embrace a fun atmosphere, producing loud, raucous, and upbeat tunes with pop-like music. Quite often, pep band students will fondly recall memories of countless football and basketball games for years to come.

Marching Band

For those students who enjoy the challenge of hard work, discipline, and strenuous physical activity, marching band is a perfect opportunity. These students are typically very dedicated to their craft, competing on weekends and performing during holiday weekends. These students perform in highly visible public events and are typically a great source of pride for both the musicians and their school. More often than not, these bands will feature color guard positions for non-instrument playing students.

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One of the perks to participating in marching band involves the ability to travel to different communities, states, and sometimes even to different countries! These students are typically fairly close-knit, as they spend a great deal of time on the road together.

Succeeding in Band: How to Take Musical Skills to the Next Level

The best way to ensure success in band is to be actively involved in your student's progress. Encourage them to try different instruments. Keep in touch with their teachers. Take them to watch concerts at public venues and attend their performances as well. If your student is interested in advancing their music career, sign them up for [private lessons](#) with a [specialist](#) in their instrument of choice.

Band opens doors to a wide selection of different career opportunities. Skills learned in band can directly translate into careers pursuing the following positions:

- Teaching
- Professional Musician
- Music Retail
- Instrument Repair
- Instrument Manufacturing
- Sound Engineer
- Composer
- Talent Scout
- Music Journalist
- Concert Promoter
- Music Program Director (non-profit or radio station)
- Musical Theatre Director
- Military Band Member
- Festival Coordinator

These same skills also support personal growth and development in other career fields. By fostering creativity, instilling good work ethic, promoting teamwork, and encouraging attention to detail, band offers countless intangible qualities that allow students to succeed in life. How your student approaches their musical career may vary, but the skills developed in band truly enable them to "Make Music For Life."

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