

Meeting the WSMA Concert Festival Requirement Through Marching Band Participation

The purpose of the WSMA Concert Festival Requirement is to ensure that students participate in a quality concert experience at a regular interval. One well-known format is the traditional Concert Festival where a concert group performs three selections for a panel of up to three adjudicators with one of those selections being chosen from the WSMA Festival Music List. Another is the Clinic Performance Assessment where the concert group participates in a clinic experience as outlined in WSMA Festival Rules. A third option is the Alternative Clinic Performance Assessment designed to allow concert groups to explore a variety of formats that provides a quality concert experience for students and meeting the Concert Festival requirement.

During the 2013-14 school year, Greendale High School opted to meet the WSMA Concert Festival requirement by using the marching band as the ensemble and the Alternative Clinic Performance Assessment process as the option. Even though marching band is not a concert band, the skills required for success are similar especially when the marching band repertoire is taught and learned in an educationally sound method with clear student outcomes that allows the student to grow as a musician and performer. Even though there are many methods used in the marching band arena, most competitive marching bands, as well as numerous non-competitive marching bands, would be able to use the marching band participation and experience as a way to meet the WSMA Concert Festival requirement. While it might seem overwhelming at first, the procedure to gain WSMA approval for this requirement through the marching band is actually very simple.

There are three specific areas to address regarding this process:

- Teacher Responsibility
- Student Responsibility
- Activities

TEACHER RESPONSIBILITY:

As many teachers are aware, the development of a marching band show requires a great deal of time, research, planning, and preparation. Tasks include selecting repertoire, developing a theme that provides a strong musical and visual foundation, selecting/arranging music that highlights a band's strengths/improves its weaknesses and planning key visual/musical moments. The steps in preparing for a traditional concert band festival experience are very similar to the steps taken by teachers developing a marching band show and even exceed the requirements necessary for successful concert band preparation.

This may seem to be an insurmountable amount of extra work on the part of the teacher but in terms of the WSMA Alternative Clinic Performance

Assessment approval process, teachers are not required to do any additional work. Rather, the teacher simply needs to document choices made and follow a very easy-to-use format outlined in MyCenter of the WSMA website.

STUDENT RESPONSIBILITY:

In a traditional concert band festival format, ensembles are often critiqued only on the final product, as the adjudicator/clinician is present at one performance. In the marching band arena there are multiple performances throughout the season that receives adjudicator feedback. Students are part of developing the product from beginning to end with an opportunity for reflection and journaling throughout the process.

Each performance and review of adjudicator feedback provides the student with an opportunity for learning and musical growth. Through various means of technology, students can review early performances and then compare with performances later in the season. For all concert groups, this review/reflection process is vital to improvement of the ensemble and this includes the marching band.

Just as in other concert band festival offerings, the student must remain the central focus in the Alternative Clinic Performance Assessment. The primary benefit in utilizing the alternative assessment is that the students can be involved throughout the entire process in the creation of the marching band program and its performance on the field.

ACTIVITIES:

Marching band students gain a great deal of knowledge and understanding of music and the arts through involvement in marching band. The WSMA Alternative Clinic Assessment provides an avenue for directors to substantiate the learning involved in preparing for the season by utilizing elements that quite often are already in place. This allows the Alternative Clinic Performance process to be genuine and integral part of the school curriculum while meeting the WSMA Concert Festival requirement.

The student activities that are required as parts of the Alternative Clinic Performance Assessment are activities that the majority of marching band students already do in preparation for the season.

- **Introductory Activity** - Students are introduced to the show/design concept and the music. Students learn the music and drill and start bringing the product to life.
- **Listening Activity** - Students listen and critique performances throughout the season. Not only will students critique his/her own performance but the performance of other marching bands. Students will also research the selected music and discover other recordings for comparison.

- Culminating Activity - Students reflect back on the season, the successes, the strengths and weaknesses of the program. The review of results based on adjudicator feedback, review of journals and continued journaling to assess the final analysis of the season.

These activities represent the normal activities that marching band students participate in each and every year. To gain approval of marching band as an Alternative Clinic Performance Assessment as a method of meeting the WSMA Concert requirement is simply substantiating what the students and director are already doing.