

Band Parenting 101:

A Guide to Making the Most of Your Musician's and Your High School Band Years

**Rincon/University H.S. Ranger Band
Tucson, Arizona**

Part 1:

Marching Season

And it begins with band camp...

Your first introduction to the world of high school marching band comes full force. Few have any real idea how involved the inner workings of the band are. What goes on beyond the scenes – your time, energy, dedication and expense is amazing. Here your student is just starting high school, and before they ever walk in on the first day, they have spent days and evenings on end practicing drill and learning their show music. They, along with well over 150 of their fellow musicians, will make the transition from middle school to high school band over the course of two weeks. They'll come home after their first two days on campus tired, sweaty and hungry, and then they'll head to a week of band camp for more practice and bonding!! What starts out as a bunch of wide-eyed, unsure young musicians unfolds into the pride of the Rincon/ University H.S. Ranger Band! We, fortunate parents, will bear witness to our students' hard work as we watch their post band camp performance. But, the growth doesn't stop here. As the weeks go on, the band learns more and more as they perfect their show. Parents are encouraged to sit in the stands and watch weekday practices and football games. With each football game performance, the band gains strength and confidence. Relationships intensify, friendships build, and the band becomes one unit.

Playing at the football games also serves as practice for competitions. We participate in 3-4 marching competitions each year, including UA Band Day. In these events, the Ranger Band performs their show along with schools from

all over the state, and the shows are evaluated and rated by professionals in the field. The performances are exhilarating! Families and friends are welcomed to attend. Food and drink are often available for purchase, as well as supplies, t-shirts and other novelty items. Many competitions offer “airgrams” for sale, where you can have well wishes announced to your student. Amidst our practices, games and competitions we also support our community by marching in local parades. For years, The Ranger Band held the distinction of being the only high school band in the city marching in the Veteran’s Day Parade. The contrast between the band’s performance at their first football game, to how they play and march by the end of the season, is amazing.

We parents have a very important role in the success of our marching season. First on the list is for us to help our musicians achieve a good balance of time given to band practice, football game attendance, and competitions, and to their academic responsibilities. Marching season can be very hectic, and especially at the beginning,. Good time management is essential. It’s a big commitment, but well worth it. Continual communication with your student is the best assurance that they are successful in managing their time.

We also have a commitment to keeping our musicians well prepared for the rigors of practice and performance. They’ll need to dress weather appropriately, since so much of what they do is outdoors. Water and sunscreen are big issues in our desert climate. RUMBA provides water for

drinking at our football games. Proper nutrition is very important. The kids exert a great deal of energy on the field. Traditionally, for a nominal cost, RUMBA provides meals prior to rehearsals and football games. We encourage band members to have healthy snacks on hand to eat while out of uniform, especially when we have long distance away football games and competitions. RUMBA will try to retain a supply of snacks for away performances. Appropriately clothed, sun screened, hydrated, well fed kids also need adequate rest. It's genuinely hard to attend practices and performances, arrive home late at night, have some kind of social life, study, and still get enough sleep, but a good night's sleep can make a huge difference in managing the rest of their busy lives. Wherever possible, sleep is an important area of balance. At first, managing everything may seem so overwhelming that the fundamentals are easily overlooked. The fundamentals are the foundation of strong musicians, and it's our strong musicians (and their supportive families) that are the building blocks of our mighty Ranger band!!

So far, we've discussed areas of support from the sidelines, but there's nothing like being there. Raising and financially supporting a family is a huge time commitment. If you can make the time, we encourage you to be an active part of our band family. Yes, the kids want their independence and don't always want us around, but they light up when they see us in the stands, handing out water, setting up the field, and cheering them on. They want us to see their competitions! We can't travel to away football games or competitions without an adequate number of

chaperones. We're basically on the buses to keep an eye on things and to provide support as needed (anything from stitching an unexpected tear in a uniform, to calming a nervous kid). You can hand out food and water, sell Ranger Band gear to fundraise for the band at our Spirit sales table at home football games, distribute and collect uniforms, make phone calls to other parents to relay important information, haul percussion instruments on and off the football field (yeah Pit Crew!)...there's some way of being involved for everybody. We open our arms to all that want to be involved!

How do we manage the busy marching season and make sure our kids and Mr. Marchant have what they need? Communication is extremely important, and we've vowed for everyone to have the information they need available to them. In fact, we have a RUMBA committee devoted to communication issues. We have a computer list serv and urge all to have their email address included. We also have a website at www.rangerband.org where you can find up to date information, calendar schedules, band photos, etc. Frequently, flyers with vital information will be given to your musician in class, so please ask for them. We also hold a monthly RUMBA meeting, held in the band room, usually the second Monday of the month at 6:30 pm. All are welcomed to attend and be part of the process. Many decisions are made at these meetings and we want your input. We're all volunteers, after all, with the common goal of a wonderful experience for our kids. We work hard on their behalf, but have a great deal of fun too.

In a perfect world, our kids would have the instruments they need, all the sheet music they can get their hands on, fresh clean uniforms to wear, food and water on game nights to sustain them, a “Superior” rating marching show, parties and banquets for end of the season celebrating, and travel costs all paid for by our tax credit donations.

Unfortunately, funding for Fine Arts is at an all time low, and our expenses can be daunting. Band fees are kept as minimal as possible, yet adequate enough to allow our musicians the band experience deserving of their talents. We have devised several ways to make things financially more bearable, but they require maintenance. We have several fundraisers geared toward allowing RUMBA to provide benefits to the band at large. We sell items at our “Spirit Sales” table at home football games. We also sell baked goods prior to our concerts. Our fundraisers are organized and staffed by parents. It’s a great feeling knowing that you are helping the band thrive. Our fundraising activities are very social and we have a good time working them! A large source of money for the band at large is “Tax Credit Donations.” Most of you are familiar with the program and we encourage you to contribute, along with friends and family members in Arizona. Few are aware that to produce a marching show can cost in excess of \$10,000 per season. Tax credit donations have helped fund these shows, as well as other essential band needs. We also appreciate sponsorships, both individual and corporate. We can offer them signage and announcements at home football games, and feature them in written materials at concert and events. Consider including your place of business as a proud Ranger Band

sponsor. Item donations are also very helpful when we host silent auctions. And, we are always in need of food, drink, and paper goods donations for our meals and parties.

In addition to helping the band to be financially healthy, we have several regular fundraisers aimed at lessening individual family financial burden. We call these Individual Merit Funds or “IMF” fundraisers. Money generated from participation in these activities will be held for your student in an IMF account that can be used for band fees, band trips, and even instrument purchases and instruction. Money is kept in the account until your student graduates, and can be passed on to a sibling. Unused or under designated funds at the time of graduation go to the band at large. Our IMF fundraisers include such things as working a concession stand during football and basketball seasons for the U of A, recycling cell phones and ink jet cartridges, Entertainment Book sales, and grocery store cards and Scrip.

Fundraising is an ongoing process. We welcome any ideas you might have to offset our expenses. Our fundraisers and many other support activities were devised and planned by thoughtful, innovative parents who want the band to have what they need, and for this to cost as little as possible for all of us. At some level, we need everyone’s involvement. We need money and your time, and if each of us give a little of ourselves in some fashion, we’ll do some amazing things! Other bands have looked at RUMBA with high regard for what we provide our kids. We’re organized and diligent in being a strong support system for our band.

Part 2:

Concert Season

Rumor has it that RUMBA rests and recuperates after marching season. It's true that we're not going at quite the frenetic pace that we go at during football season, but our involvement for the year is far from over. We're there supporting the band throughout the Spring as well. Our musicians are honing their playing skills for individual competition at the regional and state levels, and will be rated in small groups during Solo and Ensemble Festival. Our concert and jazz bands are practicing for competition as large groups. Spring brings the annual ABODA (Arizona Band and Orchestra Director's Association) Festival where we have an opportunity to advance to State Competition. We will also be treated to hearing our musicians perform during several concerts, including our annual "Arts Under The Stars" performance where all of the various RUHS fine arts programs are represented. RUMBA sells Eegees and baked goods at this event. We end our year with a nice Band Banquet and Awards Night to celebrate all that the Ranger Bands have accomplished throughout the school year, as we say goodbye to our graduating seniors and their families. It's a gala evening that we hope all will be a part of! The final event of the year is the band's performance at the school's annual graduation ceremony.