

Centennial High School Band

3 Year Plan (2019 – 2021)



Submitted by Tyler Ehrlich and Michael Reid

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Goals of This Document

Over the past two years, Michael and I have worked to improve many areas of our band program, broad categories being defined as:

- the **culture** of our program
- the **musical abilities** of our ensembles
- the **teaching practices** of our classes

While we have been successful in making progress over the past two years, having a clearly defined document requires that we are (a) not planning a journey before we have a destination in mind and (b) gives us clear benchmarks along the way to document our success. Additionally, this document includes ways that the school administration can help ensure the success of these goals.



2018 student leadership after defeating rival Cambridge HS at the Sprayberry Invitational.

Why Does Having a Successful Band Matter?

While it may appear that students in band are no different than students in any other elective, there are many reasons as to why these kids need unique attention:

- **More community members see the band perform than any other organization at Centennial.** In total, more audience members from around the state of Georgia will attend Fulton County Marching Band Exhibition, local marching competitions, parades, football games, band concerts, and other events. We estimate that approximately 10,000 people see our marching band yearly, and will be quick to judge Centennial High School as an entity based solely on our performance. It's essential that this judgement be positive to further develop our school image.
- **More students participate in band than any other activity at Centennial.** With almost 160 kids involved in our marching band, concert band, and color guard programs, the largest subset of Centennial students participate in band activities. Being sure to provide these students (and therefore, families as a whole) with a positive experience translates to community support for our school.
- **High performing students typically participate in band.** Last year, the Centennial Band had four of the five highest performing SAT scores from graduating seniors, as well as the Valedictorian and the Salutatorian. Last year, students were accepted to Yale University, Georgia Tech, SCAD, UGA, and other extremely competitive universities. If we know that high performing students benefit our CCRPI score, satisfying their social, emotional, and community needs through a successful band is important.
- **High performing schools in metro Atlanta have strong band programs.** Many high performing schools in our area – Johns Creek, Milton, Chattahoochee, Northview, Alpharetta – have strong band programs. If our goal is to compete with these local schools in all areas, having a strong band program is essential.

What Have we Accomplished Since 2017?

Since joining the faculty at Centennial two years ago, our band has made tremendous strides in the development of our program, divided into three areas: **culture, musical ability, and teaching practices:**

- **Culture**
 - This upcoming year, we are retaining all but four ninth graders currently in band. Once students join our program, almost every single one stays.

- We have recruited 60 incoming ninth graders from very targeted efforts for the 19-20 year (e.g. hand written letters home, Eighth Grade Knight, emails to parents, joint concerts, side-by-side rehearsals); this is a 35% increase from last year.
- Re-evaluated and redesigned our week long leadership training for marching band; we're currently working to add a weekend camping leadership training as well for this July.
- Sent students to drum major workshops at UGA to further their skills of student leadership.
- Students helped define our three goals; we help hold students to them: (1) everyone loves and appreciates one another (2) everyone works together (3) everyone tries their best.
- Implemented daily team talks during band camp to help strengthen the culture of our organization.
- Have structured rituals and routines for how students enter and exit the rehearsal room, required materials for marching band, and defined classroom expectations.
- Hold weekly leadership meetings to get a pulse on the students, and offer words of encouragement and advice to our student leaders.
- Encourage section bonding activities, ran by our leadership, to further strengthen the positive relationship between our kids.
- Open our room before school, after school, and during lunch for students that wish to hang out with their friends in a safe and loving environment. During these times, we'll typically have 50 students practicing and enjoying each other's company.
- Hold spirit nights at local restaurants as fundraisers for the band, as well as to encourage camaraderie.
- Hold parent celebrations to allow parents to socialize among themselves and to offer appreciation for their support.
- Start a new coffeehouse event for Spring 2019 for students to perform as soloists and small chamber ensembles.
- Offer the Winterguard activity to allow students to continue to refine their craft when marching band season ends. Our Winterguard continues to improve – this past competition they came in second out of eleven groups after coming in first place and moving up a classification the week prior.
- **Musical Ability**
 - Last year was the first year to score straight superior ratings at LGPE (potentially the first year in the school's history.)

- Dr. Vandewalker, our Fine Arts Supervisor, has said our band program has made tremendous strides in musical quality over the past two years at LGPE.
- This year we scored higher than both Johns Creek High School and Cambridge High School at local marching band competitions.
- More students (22) take private lessons than likely ever have in the past at Centennial, demonstrating more students making music at a higher level.
- More students (12) have made District Honor Band in 2019 than ever previously.
- More students (14) have made UGA's January HS Band Festival in 2019 than ever previously.
- **Teaching Pedagogy**
 - Requested and granted a projector for the band room that all students could see.
 - Requested and granted a class set of tuners for daily classroom use, implementing technology to improve instruction.
 - Worked with Ms. Crumbley, parents, and county employees to see the construction of our rehearsal tower.
 - Begun implementing **differentiated instruction** by co-teaching during each band class, and bringing in section coaches six times a year.
 - Begun implementing **Standards Mastery** by building a curriculum using modern pedagogical techniques built by Dr. Vandewalker, our Fine Arts Supervisor.
 - Hired an entirely new design staff for our marching band to elevate our production level for the 19-20 school year.
 - Searched (and are currently interviewing) a booster paid Percussion Director to **differentiate our daily instruction** four days a week at Centennial.
 - Work with our Middle School directors to build consistency across the program in our teaching practices.
 - Bring high school students to our two feeder middle schools several times per year to hold sectionals, and encourage them to continue in band.

Where do we want to be by 2021?

- **Culture**
 - While we believe our current students make a great impact on the rest of the student body, and represent Centennial well, we want more students to participate in band. Having approximately 200 students in band by 2021 is our goal.

- We hope to further develop our leadership training beginning next year, including more frequent after school meetings, a guest leadership speaker, and a further developed leadership curriculum.
- **Musical Ability**
 - This past year, we had three students accepted to All State Band. By 2021, we would like to have five students (adding one per year.)
 - This past year, we had 22 students accepted to District Honor Band. By 2021, we would like to have 28 students (adding three per year.)
 - This past year, all three ensembles earned Excellent ratings at LGPE for their stage performance, and Superior ratings for sight reading. By 2021, we would like all three bands to earn Superior ratings on stage and in sight reading.
 - Next year, we are hiring a new design staff for our marching band, and we're working meticulously to have a more artistic and competitive show. We will be attending a more competitive marching band competition held at Georgia State University. We hope to receive an overall Superior Rating at that show by 2021.
- **Teaching Pedagogy**
 - We are in the process of hiring a new percussion director – we hope to have more differentiated instruction for our wind players and for our percussionists by having an extra teacher four days a week.
 - We are in frequent communication with Dr. Vandewalker as we continue to implement his teaching practices of **standards mastery framework** in the large ensemble setting.
 - We currently bring in six section coach visits per instrument per year. With additional financial support (from donors, the school, and students) we would like to increase this to eight visits per instrument by 2021.

Administrative Support Requested (Order of Priority)

- **Request #0: Continue Co-teaching of Band Classes**
 - I listed this as request #0 because we've been fortunate over the past two years, but having Michael and I available to teach all the bands is essential for our continued growth. Not only will we alternate who is on the podium, but the other teacher will teach sectionals of students from the classes, offer pull out support, sit in and play with the band, fix a student owned instrument, and provide other in-class support. With a growing question that there may be more students in music tech and guitar, **not**

allowing all three classes to be co-taught would result in the detriment of our band program.

- **Request #1: Course Release from Music Tech and/or Guitar**

- Michael and I are Band Directors first, and we're both extremely passionate about teaching our band students. We're convinced that more time to visit the middle schools, prepare for our rehearsals, organize logistics, and focus on teaching band will result in an explosive growth of quality in our program, and for our students.
- The Music Technology program deserves a teacher that's fully committed to its growth. There are many opportunities – guest speakers, field trips, more personalized learning, collaboration with AV Tech, recording of live events, etc. – that could easily be implemented by someone who has the time. This position could start at .5 and then grow to full time. With a new tech lab, more intentional recruiting and retainment, Centennial could be have the best program for Music Tech in Fulton County Schools.

- **Request #2: Scheduling Band classes back to back**

- For next year, we hope to bring in more differentiated instruction through additional section coaches. In order to be more appealing to private teachers in our area, and to minimize downtime, we would request the band period to be back to back (periods 3, 4, and 5.) This would only involve moving one period, our current second period class to third period. Having this time would also allow us to more frequently visit the middle schools as they would be in the beginning or end of the day, and prevent us from having to quickly change gears for teaching band and then our secondary areas.

- **Request #3: Financial support of purchasing music and staffing**

- As of now, our only school support is our \$800 office supply budget each year. We also receive a repair budget each year from the county. Our band booster budget is typically \$77,625, with \$50,475 going towards staff: Percussion Director, Color Guard Director, Visual Staff, Section Coaches, etc. Any support possible, from purchasing sheet music, to further support for conferences (lodging, meals, etc.) would allow us to redirect costs from these administrative expenses towards instructional materials to improve our band program's musical abilities.