

Field Commander Responsibilities

Westlake High School Thunder Band

Great, you were just made field commander by your band teacher. Now what? Once you have become a field commander, your main goals are to keep the band happy, motivated, out of trouble and prepare them to play a good show. The following items identifies the general expectations and duties for Field Commanders.

General Leader Responsibilities

Understand what being a leader means. Being a leader is hard; not only do you have to worry about your music, but you have to worry about the music of your sections. It also doesn't mean you get to be some dictator; you have to help other sections. You are there to help serve the section leaders and the people in your band, not to rule over them.

Learn Names. Learn the names of everybody in your section and in the band ASAP. Trust and respect work best when they go both ways.

Lead by example. Not only will this let your band know what to do, but it is also essential to leadership. Members learn to trust and respect you when they see that you practice what you teach. You were most likely chosen because of your playing or marching skills; now is your time to pass these on.

Participation in leadership trainings and band council. From time to time there will be activities and events to help train you and guide you in your responsibilities. You are expected to participate in these training sessions. You will also need to participate in band council meetings to help guide the band programs and give your ideas, input and help. Remember that this is your band and you will only get out of it what you put into it.

Learn your music. As field commander, you're expected to know it before anyone else. If you don't know your music, how can you help others with their music?

Following up with grades. Section leaders need to know how each member of their section is doing in regards to school grades and participation. It is your duty to help them make sure that each member is eligible to compete and participate in every part of band. Help out if you can or see if other members of other section can help out in any way. If you have any concerns or are worried about a members grades or attendance, please talk with and keep Mr. Mangelson informed.

Field Commander Responsibilities

Assist drum majors. Assist with field setup and cleanup. Manage and help transport equipment as directed and assigned by the Drum Majors. This means taking ownership for band property, equipment and facilities. Make sure that whenever you leave the band room or field that it is cleaner than you found it. Show up early and stay late.

Lead when drum majors are not present. When Drum Majors are not present, field commanders fill the leadership role and responsibilities of the drum majors. This includes leading brass or woodwind sectionals, conducting music and warmups, leading rehearsals as well as taking the initiative to make sure the band is where they need to be and using time wisely working hard. During competitions and events it is important to take charge and working with section leaders to know where every member of the band is. You will also be using commands to call the band to attention as well as teaching, organizing and calling cheers during these performances and awards ceremonies.

Creating efficient rehearsals. It is your job to brainstorm with the drum majors and section leaders to create great practices. This includes creating and maintaining quiet practices on the field, helping the band focus, keeping discipline, as well as helping maintain quiet time and focus before competitions on the bus and during warmups.

Section performance. You are responsible for the discipline and actions of your sections. It falls on you to make sure everyone is where they need to be earlier than they need to. You determine the physical setup of the sections within the ensemble as directed by the staff. It is your job to help train section leaders on expectations, instrument maintenance and care, what it means to be a part of the band and to bring new section leaders up to speed and understanding. Ultimately, marching technique, playing ability, and all other aspects of performance and conduct of those within your sections comes down to section leaders and you are there to assist and help them in this effort.

Teaching technique. Teaching and making sure that section leaders understand how to teach: Notes, Rhythm, Dynamics, Tone, Intonation, Articulation, Blend, Balance and Phrasing. It is the section leaders job to train and work with their members in progressing their playing ability. They need to make sure that a tuner is being passed through the sections on a weekly basis and coach players who consistently experience intonation and technique problems. Again, you are here to help the section leaders with these responsibilities.

Attend sectionals. Help with sectionals where you can. Assist section leaders and coordinate how to best help them out. When you become friends with your section leaders and those in their section, they'll be more likely to listen to you, and you'll get a better feel of their playing ability and how best to assist them.

Other Responsibilities

Welcome new members in your band. Introduce yourself before rehearsals. Introduce the new members to their section leader and other band members. Help the section leader set the person up with people in their section to watch over them so they have someone to hang out with.

Be understanding. If someone can't make it to the sectional because their grandma died, don't hold that against them. People have lives outside of marching band.

Be exacting about your uniform. Besides looking your best, you set the standard for your sections. Make sure you can explain the correct arrangement of hats and any other pieces of your uniform. Keep shoes, gloves, and gauntlets polished and all uniform parts clean. Never eat or drink anything but water while in uniform. Dry clean your uniform at the end of parade season and again at the end of show season. Show respect for the uniform and the tradition that it stands for. Teach the members in your sections to cherish the uniform and the band experience.

Keep your sections under control. This doesn't mean order them around, but when they get out of hand, let section leaders know. If necessary, seek help from another section leader or from staff. Remember, rehearsal time is limited and essential to the success of the whole band. Keep your section quiet and focused so they don't miss important instruction.

Listen to both sides of a conflict. If there's a conflict between two sides, you will probably have to be the third party to step in and solve it. If it starts to get physical, keep them apart and tell someone to get help from an adult as soon as possible.

Sectional parties are required. Organize get-togethers with your sections. Brass and woodwind parties are encouraged. Hold them at your house or at a section leader's home. They can be after sectionals or pass-offs. This will help you and your section bond.

Be on the same page with other section leaders. If you're telling one section something completely different than the other section leaders, it will only confuse your sections.

Remember the team. No matter what goals you may have for your section, don't lose sight of what is best for the entire band. Each section must work together to achieve what is best for the entire ensemble. Your band directors and drum majors' goals should take priority over your own. Also, being a field commander is a privilege, not a right. Remember... with great power comes great responsibility, as said by Uncle Ben.

Other Helpful Tips

- Respect the chain of command. While it's perfectly all right to bring a problem or concern to the attention of the director or other staff, try to resolve any major disagreements privately and discreetly. You undermine your authority and that of your director, otherwise.
- Likewise, listen to your group members and any section leaders or drum majors. If somebody approaches you with a problem, do your best to address it. Be responsive to peoples' needs and accommodate what you can. If something is beyond your control, explain to the group what you know about the situation as ask their assistance and forbearance, as appropriate.
- Be generous with compliments. Compliments are often more powerful than criticism. If somebody is doing something well, or has improved, say so. It's ok to single somebody out for the good news, or tell the whole group. It will help everybody be more confident and it will encourage people to try harder. It will also improve morale.
- Be a part of your group as much as possible. There will be times when you do act independently as part of your duties, but make an effort to do what they do. Rehearse and perform when they do. Eat when and what they eat, and if you are traveling, sleep where they sleep. Most importantly, don't carry on as though you are above them or apart from them.
- Notice or recall what you like and dislike about directors, drum majors and teachers you have worked with. Analyze their styles. What was effective? What wasn't? What was fun? What was miserable? Your priorities should be first to do your job and second to please people. While you can't possibly please everyone, your group will be easiest to lead and it will perform its best if the people in it are generally satisfied and confident about your performance.
- Pass on section traditions; handshakes, pre-competition/game traditions, any unusual sayings, etc. This will keep the tradition alive, and it will establish a sense of being a part of something.
- Tell everyone to come to sectionals early. This way, time won't be lost waiting for people to show up. To be Early is to be on time. To be on time is to be late. To be late is to miss the bus. Being late is unacceptable.
- Since you'll probably be able to drive while those in your sections won't be, offer to give them rides home from

practice if they need them.

- Call your section leaders a week before band camp starts. Remind them to make reminder calls to their sections of band camp.
- Do your best to offer advice in a way that doesn't hurt anyone's feelings. For instance, instead of yelling at them for always missing the same accidental, say something like "by the way, there's a B flat in measure 7... make sure you've all got it marked". Wording is key.
- Be funny and creative to motivate your sections to do well. Even be willing to sacrifice your dignity sometimes to do it. You could try making a "deal" with your sections, that if they all pass-off, they can pie you or make you do something else ridiculous. Make goofy, bright colored hats for people to wear when they need to focus (all in fun, of course).
- Feed them. Food is a great motivation and it also offers your sections a chance to bond with each other. Bring breakfast on competition mornings, or hand out small pastries for no reason. They'll love you for it.
- Give rewards! An really easy and ridiculous way to motivate your sections is to give stickers to them when they do a good job. For some reason this works. Offer to throw a movie or pizza party if everyone memorizes their music by a certain date.

Warnings

- Don't let other people in your sections tell you or your section what to do. You're the one that will have more experience, (plus Mr. Mangelson put you here for a reason) thus you will probably know better than your sections. Listen to advice, but make your own decisions.
- Make sure you don't get too power-hungry; remember that being field commander doesn't mean you have to control every minute aspect of your sections lives.
- Don't be bossy. There is a fine line between asserting yourself and just being a jerk. Remember: A good leader is selfless. Take the blame; give the credit away.

Quality Leader Traits we all Like

Have a sense of humor
Have a passionate interest in some things
Have high energy levels
Are tolerant of changing moods
Know how to listen
Are creative
Is trustworthy
Are enthusiastic
Exude self-confidence
Knows how and when to be personal and professional
Takes initiative
Appreciate success - are sympathetic when I fail
Have a keen sense of justice and injustice
Are sensitive to the needs of others
Can take risks
Knows everyone
Are not sure of everything
Are punctual
Are optimistic
Don't make fun of people
Can offer love unselfishly
Are people in whose presence I like myself more