

Section Leader Responsibilities

Westlake High School Thunder Band

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

General Leader Responsibilities

Understand what being section leader means. Being a section leader is hard; not only do you have to worry about your music, but you have to worry about the music of your section. It also doesn't mean you get to be some dictator; you have to help your section. You are there to serve the people in your section, 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 section leader, 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. You need to know how each member of your section is doing in regards to school grades and participation. It is your duty to 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 your 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.

Section Leader Responsibilities

Assist Drum Majors and Field Commanders. 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.

Section performance. You are responsible for the discipline and actions of those in your section. 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 section within the ensemble as directed by staff. It is your job to train members on expectations, instrument maintenance and care, what it means to be a part of the band and bring new members up to speed and understanding. Ultimately, marching technique, playing ability, and all other aspects of performance and conduct of those within your section comes down to you.

Teaching technique. Teaching and making sure that your section members understand: Notes, Rhythm, Dynamics, Tone, Intonation, Articulation, Blend, Balance and Phrasing is your job. You are the staff for your section and it is your job to train and work with your members in progressing their playing ability. Make sure that a tuner is being passed through the section on a weekly basis and coach players who consistently experience intonation and technique problems.

Track section attendance. It is your job to know where your section members are and to report this to the Drum Majors. Call members who may be missing and find out if there is anything you or the band can do to help get the person to rehearsal.

You are responsible for music. Make sure that all parts are covered and that the section is balanced in both rehearsals and concerts. Determine which part the person prefers to play. Make assignments based on what would be best for the band, making sure that there are strong players on all parts of the music. Make sure that every member has music. You can ask the aid to make copies or you can make them yourself. Retrieve music and folders from members who leave the band.

Marching pass-offs. It's your job to make sure your section can march. Marching fundamentals need to be taught and understood. While new members will benefit and learn with the band as a whole, you need to take time with them so they understand marching details.

Music pass-offs. It's your job to make sure your section can play. This means assisting them and pushing them to memorize their

music and accomplish by the required times. Your example determines if music pass-offs are treated lightly and if they happen or not.

Hold and lead sectionals. Sectionals are time when your section is the focus, not the entire band. Find the difficult passages and go over them with your section. Make sure your section knows exactly what they're trying to fix; if they don't know what they're trying to fix, it probably won't get fixed.

Other Responsibilities

Welcome new members in your section. Introduce yourself before rehearsals. Introduce the new members to other section members and other band members. Set the person up with a stand partner for the first rehearsal or others in your 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 section. 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 section to cherish the uniform and the band experience.

Get on friendly terms with your section. When you become friends with your section, they'll be more likely to listen to you, and you'll get a better feel of their playing ability.

Help your section when they need it. Let them practice, but if you see someone struggling with a part or playing it wrong without realizing it, go and help them.

Hold your section to their promises. If someone said they'll learn a passage by next Tuesday, they better have it down when next Tuesday comes rolling by. If they don't, ask them why they didn't.

Keep your section under control. This doesn't mean order them around, but when they get out of hand, let them 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 section. Hold them at your house or at a section member'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 your section something completely different than the other section leaders, it will only confuse your section.

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 section leader 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 field commanders. 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.
- Make sectional t-shirts and or sweatshirts.
- 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 your section won't be, offer to give them rides home from practice if they need them.
- Call your section a week before band camp starts. Remind of band camp, and suggest that they practice so they don't have to catch up during band camp.
- If practical, try and get in contact with former section leaders of your section, and ask them for assistance. This is a great way to learn from others, especially if you haven't been paying much attention to your past section leaders.
- 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 section to do well. Even be willing to sacrifice your dignity sometimes to do it. You could try making a "deal" with your section, 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 section 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 section 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 section 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 section. Listen to advice, but make your own decisions.
- Make sure you don't get too power-hungry; remember that being section leader doesn't mean you have to control every minute aspect of your section's 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