

Dear Fort Mill School District Band Students and Parents:

We are providing this update to keep you informed of the decisions we are making regarding high school band for the Fall of 2020. We have studied guidelines and recommendations from national, state, and local associations, and we have engaged in continuous discussions with our School Administrations and fellow band directors from across the state of South Carolina to determine the path forward. Our primary concern is, and always will be, the health and safety of our students and families.

As it stands now, both local and state marching band competitions are continually being cancelled or temporarily postponed with the strong possibility of ultimately being cancelled due to circumstances beyond anyone's control. All FM Band Directors are currently working to develop plans that will provide our students with an exceptional music education experience, yet the reality is that this will likely look different than what we have all been accustomed to from previous years. As always, these plans will continue to be focused on music education, national standards, and developing students into leaders and exceptional young people. Given the uncertainty of school scheduling challenges, coupled with family concerns, administration decisions, and other issues, we are forced to navigate challenges that have never been dealt with before. We are trying to work together creatively to determine what kind of performance opportunities will be available to us. Bands may be able to perform at football games or local exhibitions (if they are allowed), but we do know that things will be different from what has taken place previously.

As teachers who are charged with the care of our students, we feel that it is imperative that we move forward in a responsible manner. Therefore, the FMSD Band Directors have determined that it is in the best interest of our students, staff, and band programs to push back the start of summer band rehearsals and camps until further notice (this start date may coincide with the new school start date of August 10th). We realize this is a departure from the norm; however, we all feel confident that any impact brought about from the delay of starting rehearsals would be negligible on future show/production plans. Future details regarding alterations to the revised summer schedule and band fee structure will soon be sent by each director once a suitable start date has been determined. As for the school year, there is much to be decided and most of those decisions cannot be made at this time (this includes after school rehearsals, performances, etc.).

We know this is not the perfect resolution we wanted, but the safety of the students, staff, and families, as well as the integrity of the music education experience, must remain our priority. Our philosophies are centered on students and the performance of great music —this must remain a priority throughout this pandemic. The camaraderie, music making, and pursuit of excellence will not diminish, but rather will flourish in a new and distinctive manner.

We will continue to communicate with you and appreciate your understanding of our working through this most difficult process.

Sincerely,

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