

One parent's perspective

This is based on comments of a parent who was in high school and college band herself and who has several years of experience as an involved AHS band parent

Band members consider themselves part of one big, close family. The bonding between members of the groups happens through both the good times and the stressful times. Almost all of the groups at AHS have extremely rigorous practice/rehearsal schedules...it takes a lot of time and energy to make a successful marching band.

How to make it (Guard, good grades and everything else) happen? It takes some coordination and juggling. My daughter - who is in all AP classes and has a demanding academic schedule - sometimes takes her homework with her, especially to non-game events, and does some of it in the stands. (She has learned to focus on homework even with distractions). A lot of the students in band meet in study groups and they teach each other a lot. They work together on the bus rides and in the stands, and at supper time at school before leaving. The older ones will even mentor and tutor the younger ones.

Being together all the time is one of the things that makes band feel like a huge family. They learn to work together, and learn to count on each other. It can be considered as preparation for college, where there are long hours, much to get done and lots of things to distract you. Students will learn a great deal about time management, and it does get easier! Most of them end up thinking of the study times as doing homework with a friend - it's more fun that way. Probably as a result of this, the band students tend to have good grades.

There are some weeks that have more than one activity (mostly those include a game and a weekend contest or parade). Those are hectic; fortunately that doesn't happen too often. The students learn to work with it. Some have learned the value of naps. A lot of them even sleep on the buses and then do homework at home and go to bed. My daughter actually manages her time better in the fall during marching season, partly because she has to. I've seen my role as mom these last years as helping her figure out the time management aspect of it all. So far it's working.

Overall, band (and Guard) is a wonderful experience, a great way of making close friends, and the students learn many skills beyond those actually required to perform, including skills that will serve them well in their college years and beyond.