



GUIDANCE FOR A RETURN TO HIGH SCHOOL MARCHING BAND

Kentucky Music Educators Association (KMEA)

Adapted from a document produced by the NFHS, also using language from additional sources.

GUIDANCE FOUND HERE FOR AFTER JULY 12 ARE SUBJECT TO CHANGE PENDING RELEASE OF AN AEROSOL DISTRIBUTION STUDY AND THE RELEASE OF KENTUCKY-APPROVED HEALTH SAFETY DIRECTIVES.

The COVID-19 pandemic presents schools with a myriad of challenges. KMEA offers this document as guidance on how schools can consider approaching the many components of returning to high school marching band activities across the United States.

KMEA believes it is essential to the physical and mental well-being of high school students to return to physical activity and activity participation. KMEA recognizes that it is likely that ALL students will not be able to return to – and sustain – activity at the same time in all schools. There will also likely be variation in what activities can be held. While we would typically have reservations regarding such inequities, KMEA endorses the idea of returning students to school-based athletics and activities in any and all situations where it can be done safely.

KMEA is a well-respected voice for music education issues, and it has established a goal to engage with state and local health departments to develop policy regarding coordinated approaches for return to activity for high school marching bands.

The recommendations presented in this document are intended as ideas for schools to consider with their respective marching band directors in designing return-to-activity guidelines that will be in accordance with state or local restrictions. Please note that the phases outlined below are based upon the White House document released in April 2020. Consult your state and local health departments to review if they are using a similar approach, or how the phases in this document correspond to your state or local governments nomenclature.

For the periods defined within any published order of the Governor of Kentucky during this pandemic, all KMEA guidelines must not contradict and shall be congruent with such order(s).

Importance of restarting marching band activities to the well-being of children:

1. KMEA believes it is essential to the physical and mental well-being of students to return to physical activity and various forms of competition.
2. KMEA recognizes that all Kentucky students may be unable to return to and sustain marching band activity at the same time across the state.
3. While recognizing that district-to-district reopening may lead to perceived inequities, KMEA advocates for returning students to school-based marching band activities.
4. Even more important is the strong relationship that exists between most performers and their band directors, a relationship that likely has never been more important to both the student and the teacher in light of this pandemic.
5. The band director is integral in monitoring the health and well-being of all participants; and band directors are in a unique position to help determine if additional guidance or alternative steps are needed to ensure each participant begins the process of recovery from the physical, mental, psychological and other aspects of this pandemic.

Consideration for fall: Due to the near certainty of recurrent outbreaks in the coming months, schools must be prepared for periodic school closures and the possibility of some marching bands having to isolate for two or more weeks while in-season.

Points of Emphasis:

1. In addition to on-campus options, schools should consider providing students guidance for practicing at home or remotely away from school. This can include virtual practices, emailed or otherwise electronically delivered practice instructions, or any delivery model approved by the local school district.
2. Decreasing potential exposure to respiratory droplets is the guiding principle behind social distancing and the use of face coverings. The use of cloth face coverings is meant to decrease the spread of respiratory droplets.
 - a. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) is additionally “advising the use of simple cloth face coverings to slow the spread of the virus and help people who may have the virus and do not know it from transmitting it to others.” (“Recommendation Regarding the Use of Cloth Face Coverings, Especially in Areas of Significant Community-Based Transmission”)
 - b. Recognizing the benefits and potential drawbacks of the use of cloth face coverings during conditioning and physical activity, KMEA recommends the following:
 - i. State, local, or school district guidelines for cloth face coverings should be strictly followed.
 - ii. Cloth face coverings should be considered acceptable. There is no need to require or recommend “medical grade” masks for marching band activity. In order to ensure maximum comprehension and compliance, signage posted throughout the venue should show how to wear and use a face covering, and that includes the following information: Physical respiratory protection such as a cloth face covering should be worn whenever people are within six feet (two meters) of each other because (a) COVID-19 is spread through respiratory droplets and (b) a significant number of infected people will show no outward symptoms of illness.
 - iii. Directors should be prepared to provide a means to label all PPE with the student’s name and keep them separate, such as in a zip-lock bag. This is to avoid confusion as to whose items are whose.
 - iv. Consider having masks available to give to students who do not arrive with their own.
 - v. Wash your hands before putting on a face covering.
 - vi. Put the same side of the covering against your face each time to avoid wearing the “contaminated side” against your nose and mouth.
 - vii. Remove your face covering using the straps to avoid touching the part that protects your face.
 - viii. Wash each cloth face covering after each use, and wear other masks only according to the manufacturer’s specifications and limitations.
 - c. Any student who prefers to wear a cloth face covering during a rehearsal, performance,

or contest should be allowed to do so.

- d. In the absence of guidelines to the contrary, we recommend that cloth face coverings be worn by students during Phases 1 and 2 as outlined below. Cloth face coverings may continue to be used during Phase 3 when a student is not engaging in vigorous activity.
 - e. Plastic shields covering the entire face shall not be allowed during rehearsals and contests. Their use during marching band training or a performance increases the risk of unintended injury to the person wearing the shield, or to other band members.
 - f. According to a recent risk assessment at the Hochschule für Musik in Freiberg, Germany, "If minimum distancing is observed, the risk of infection while singing and playing music outdoors can be considered to be very low." More study is being done regarding the level of risk created by these activities in enclosed spaces.
 - g. Directors, adjudicators, and other personnel may wear cloth face coverings at all times during Phases 1 through 3.
3. Testing regimens, specific guidelines regarding mass gatherings, and response to a student, staff member, or volunteer testing positive for COVID-19 (including contact tracing) are all currently under review, and guidance will come from CDC and state and local health departments. Limited testing availability, lack of resources for contact tracing, and expanding knowledge of the characteristics of COVID-19 transmission could all result in significant changes to the recommendations below. KMEA expects to disseminate this information as it becomes available.
 4. Due to the near certainty of recurrent outbreaks this coming fall and winter in some locales, schools must be prepared for periodic school closures and the possibility of some bands having to isolate for two to three weeks while in-season. In parallel with school athletics policies KMEA expects to issue recommendations regarding rehearsal and/or competition during temporary school closures, the cancellation of contests during the regular season, and parameters for the cancellation or premature ending to the KMEA State Marching Band Championships.
 5. With the uncertainty of which phase will be attained by the beginning of the season or maintained during the season, band directors should consider selecting contests that require less travel when possible to reduce time spent in buses or vans. It will also potentially decrease the likelihood of facing a cancellation, as "opening up" may occur regionally. In other words, if any participating bands at the time of a contest are subject to greater restrictions than the majority, the contest is likely to proceed without bands that cannot attend.
 6. "Vulnerable individuals" are defined by CDC as people age 65 years and older; people with serious underlying health conditions, including high blood pressure, chronic lung disease, diabetes, obesity, asthma; people whose immune systems are compromised such as by chemotherapy for cancer and other conditions requiring such therapy, and persons who have blood disorders, such as thalassemia and/or sickle cell diseases.
 7. Until a cure, vaccine or very effective treatment is readily available, or so-called "herd immunity" is confidently reached, social distancing and other preventive measures such as face covering will be necessary in order for workouts, rehearsals, and contests to continue.

Areas to Address:

1. Administrative

Conduct of Conditioning and Rehearsal Sessions—consider having a school-approved individual wholly or partially dedicated to ensuring that protocols described in these guidelines are being successfully

implemented and followed.

Phases are in accordance with guidelines published by the White House and CDC, available at <https://www.whitehouse.gov/openingamerica/>. Please consult with your local or state health department regarding their plan for “opening up” your community or Kentucky, respectively. Use the following as a resource in designing a plan for your band program. Please note that there will be coronavirus benchmarks, known as “gating” criteria, to establish Phase 1, and that further criteria must be met to advance from one phase to the next. These criteria will be determined by state and/or local governments and must be strictly followed.

Current thinking on dates of the phases:

Phase 1: June 15–28

Phase 2: June 29–July 12

Phase 3: after July 12

a. Pre-rehearsal Screening, Phases 1 (June 15–28) & 2 (June 29–July 12), and Phase 3 (after July 12):

- i. Every day all adults and students should be screened for [signs/symptoms of COVID-19](#) prior to a rehearsal. Screening includes a temperature check using a school-supplied touch-free thermometer. Anyone with a temperature greater than 100.4 degrees should not participate, and should be sent home. See <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/symptoms-testing/symptoms.html>
- ii. Any person with positive symptoms reported (who cannot transport themselves home) should immediately be quarantined until a parent or guardian picks them up, they should not be allowed to take part in rehearsals, and they should contact their primary care provider or other appropriate health care professionals.
- iii. Any person who has had a [fever or cold symptoms](#) in the previous 24 hours should not be allowed to take part in rehearsals, and they should contact their primary care provider or other appropriate health care professional. See <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/symptoms-testing/symptoms.html>
- iv. Vulnerable individuals should not oversee or participate in any rehearsals during Phases 1 or 2.

c. Limitations on Gatherings, Phase 1 (June 15–28):

- i. Consider strategies to prevent groups from gathering at entrances/exits to facilities to limit crossover and contact, including staggering starting and ending times.
- ii. Rehearsals may take place only outdoors. If weather prevents outdoor rehearsals, rehearsals should be canceled until the weather allows rehearsing outdoors.
- iii. Schools should devise a plan for care of students if a sudden weather-related danger makes staying outside a risk.
- iv. Ensure that restrooms are properly and regularly cleaned, and that proper distancing is possible if more than one person is in the restroom at one time.
- v. There should be no car-pooling to or from rehearsals.
- vi. Students should report to rehearsals in proper attire with their instruments in hand, and take them home with them at the end. Storage and changing rooms should not be utilized, except for large instruments and other equipment that cannot be taken home.
- vii. Students must be encouraged to return home immediately after the rehearsal, and to shower and wash their rehearsal clothing promptly upon arrival at their home.
- viii. There should be no gathering of more than 10 students at a time, with no more than one adult instructor per group.

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- ix. A group of people working/rehearsing together may be known as a “pod.” The number of pods allowable on a campus simultaneously will be determined locally, possibly reflective of the overall size and the ability to separate pods from each other. KMEA recommends that pods rehearse with a minimum of 15 yards between them.
- x. Each student should be assigned their own area (4' x 3' area) designated for their case and other equipment that is their space alone and not touching other students. Students should be encouraged to use the center of that space and then move outward as needed.
- xi. Rehearsals should be conducted in “pods” of students with the same students always rehearsing together. This ensures more limited exposure if someone develops an infection.
- xii. Social distancing should be observed when music is being taught. Students should learn and rehearse the music standing still (or sitting), spaced at a minimum of 6-foot intervals. If teachers or instructors need to move within the 6-foot area to correct a student’s playing position, embouchure, posture, etc. they should do so briefly and then move away. Teachers or instructors should wear cloth face coverings at all times.
- xiii. Students should be spaced by the show designer/drill writer at a minimum of 3 step intervals for all drill and on-field formations (referencing the standard 22.5” per step, thus at a minimum distance of 5 ft 7.5 in).
- xiv. Instruments, equipment, and sheet music should not be shared without proper cleaning and disinfecting, including music stands, drumsticks, and color guard equipment.

d. Limitations on Gatherings, Phase 2 (June 29–July 12):

- i. Consider strategies to prevent groups from gathering at entrances/exits to facilities to limit crossover and contact, including staggering starting and ending times.
- ii. Allow inside gatherings of up to 10 people at a time in “pods” with the same students always working together. This ensures more limited exposure if someone develops an infection.
- iii. Allow outdoor gatherings/rehearsals of up to 50 individuals.
- iv. Music rehearsals at which wind instruments are to be used should take place outdoors. If weather prevents outdoor rehearsals, rehearsals may be allowed indoors at a distance to be determined once the results of the aerosol study are available. School-supplied buckets should be available for emptying condensation from brass instruments. Buckets are to be sanitized after each rehearsal.
- v. Schools should devise a plan for care of students if a sudden weather-related danger makes staying outside a risk.
- vi. Ensure that restrooms are properly and regularly cleaned, and that proper distancing is possible if more than one person is in the restroom at one time.
- vii. There should be no car-pooling to or from rehearsals.
- viii. Students may leave instruments at school. Use of a storage room is up to local discretion. Directors should create a plan for students getting instruments from the band room to the practice facility that allows for social distancing and sanitation, such as staggered times of migration.
- ix. Social distancing should be observed when instruction is taking place. Students should learn and rehearse standing still (or sitting), spaced at a minimum of 6-foot intervals when outdoors. If teachers or instructors need to move within the 6-foot area to correct a student’s playing position, embouchure, posture, etc. they should do so briefly and then move back away.
- x. Students should be spaced by the show designer/drill writer at a minimum of 3 step intervals for all drill and on-field formations (referencing the standard 22.5” per step, thus at a distance of 5 ft 7.5 in).
- xi. Instruments, equipment, and sheet music should not be shared without proper cleaning and disinfecting, including music stands, drumsticks, and color guard equipment.
- xii. Equipment that absolutely must be shared (certain percussion items) should be wiped

down thoroughly with school-supplied sanitizing wipes before and after an individual's use of such equipment.

- xiii. Additional guidance will be forthcoming with regard to putting marching drill to music once the commissioned aerosol research study is completed, and results have been published. The study is described here: <https://bit.ly/30hD6Lx>

e. Limitations on Gatherings, Phase 3 (after July 12):

- i. Gathering sizes of up to 50 individuals, indoors or outdoors.
- ii. Schools should devise a plan for care of students if a sudden weather-related danger makes staying outside a risk.
- iii. Ensure that restrooms are properly and regularly cleaned, and that proper distancing is possible if more than one person is in the restroom at one time.
- iv. There should be no car-pooling to or from rehearsals.
- v. When not directly participating in practices or contests, care should be taken to maintain a minimum distance of at least 6 feet between individuals. Consider using tape or paint as a guide for students and directors.
- vi. Equipment that absolutely must be shared (certain percussion items) should be wiped down thoroughly with school-supplied sanitizing wipes before and after an individual's use of such equipment.
- vii. Additional guidance will be forthcoming with regard to putting marching drill to music once the commissioned aerosol research study is completed, and results have been published. The study is described here: <https://bit.ly/30hD6Lx>

f. Facilities Cleaning, Phases 1 (June 15–28), 2 (June 29–July 12), & 3 (after July 12):

- i. Adequate cleaning schedules should be created and implemented for all facilities used to mitigate any communicable diseases.
- ii. Prior to an individual or groups of individuals entering a facility, hard surfaces within that facility should be wiped down and sanitized (chairs, furniture, storage rooms, instrumental equipment, bathrooms, etc.).
- iii. *Phases 1 & 2 only:* Sufficient distance should be established between the locations of instrument storage, music rehearsal, and break areas.
- iv. Individuals should wash their hands for a minimum of 20 seconds with warm water and soap before touching any surfaces or participating in rehearsals.
- v. School-supplied hand sanitizer should be plentiful and available to individuals as they transfer from place to place.
- vi. Students must be encouraged to return home immediately after the rehearsal, and to shower and wash their rehearsal clothing promptly upon arrival at their home.

g. Hydration/Food, Phases 1 (June 15–28), 2 (June 29–July 12), & 3 (after July 12):

- i. All students should bring their own water bottles. Water bottles and food must not be shared. Social distancing guidelines should be observed during water, snack, and meal breaks. Consider staggering break times.
- ii. Consult with school or school district officials regarding meal preparation and distribution.
- iii. Hydration stations (water cows, water troughs, water fountains, etc.) should not be utilized.

2. Contests, rehearsals, and travel after school begins.

Given the volatility of the circumstances, this guidance may change as the summer progresses.

In the coming weeks, guidelines for fall contests, rehearsals, and travel, to be informed by guidelines from authorities will be forthcoming, including conclusions from the commissioned

aerosol research study once it is completed. These guidelines will be sent to schools immediately after they are finalized and approved by KMEA.

Aerosol study described: <https://bit.ly/30hD6Lx>

3. General best practices

A. Continue to practice good hygiene

- i. Wash your hands with soap and water, or use hand sanitizer, especially after touching frequently used items or surfaces.
- ii. Avoid touching your face.
- iii. Sneeze or cough into a tissue, or the inside of your elbow.
- iv. Disinfect frequently used items and surfaces as often as possible.
- v. Use face coverings while in public, and particularly when riding buses.

B. People who feel sick should stay home

- i. Do not go to work or school.
- ii. Contact and follow the advice of your medical provider.

C. Other considerations

- i. Wide availability of hand sanitizer at contests and practices. Participants, directors, staff, and adjudicators should clean hands frequently.
- ii. Wiping down equipment frequently.
- iii. No handshakes/high-fives/fist bumps.
- iv. Adjudicators and volunteers should wear face coverings when 6-foot social distancing cannot be maintained.

References

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APPENDIX I

COVID-19 Participant/Director Monitoring Form

Date:		Circle Yes/No below											
Name	Time	Fever		Cough		Sore Throat		Shortness of Breath		Close contact, or cared for someone with COVID-19		Is Temp lower than 100.5°F?	
		Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
		Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
		Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
		Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
		Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
		Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
		Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
		Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
		Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
		Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
		Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
		Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No