CHRISTOPHER BLACKMER
DIRECTOR OF BANDS

January 29, 2013

Dear Grand Ledge Band Parents and Students,

Greetings! I hope this letter finds everyone enjoying a healthy New Year!

I am writing to you regarding two very important events on the Grand Ledge High School Band horizon, and they will both impact all current and future Grand Ledge Band students.

High School Band Restructuring

Beginning in the fall of 2013, the High School Comet Marching Band will become a co-curricular part of the High School Band offering. Meaning, it will no longer be a part of the "regular school day." The High School Concert Band, Symphony Band, and Wind Symphony will meet as three separate ensembles beginning with the first trimester, and run throughout the entire school year. The Marching Band (in addition to the traditional band camp and pre-school-start evening rehearsals) will move to two 3-hour evening rehearsals each week – Tuesdays and Thursdays from 6:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m.

Along with this, there are some additional modifications:

- Band students in grades 10, 11, and 12 will no longer be required to be a part of the Marching Band, however, 9th grade students will be required to participate their freshman year.
- Students wishing to be a part of the Comet Marching Band will be required to be full-year members of one of the High School concert bands (Concert Band, Symphony Band, or Wind Symphony). This includes all wind, percussion, *and* color guard members.
- Band students who wish to be considered for either the Symphony Band or Wind Symphony will need to be members of the Marching Band.
- Auditions for the 2013-2014 concert bands will take place in two phases: one in early March, and another in early June. Auditions for Marching Band percussion and color guard will still take place in late spring.
- Students in Marching Band will receive a partial credit, and a grade will still be assigned.
- Beginning with the 2013-2014 school year, the "Band Letter" will be given to students who have completed three years of High School Band (including three years of Marching Band).

There are several reasons for this change, but the most significant one is philosophical/educational. As many of you know, the three concert bands have traditionally been combined throughout the entire first trimester – through to Thanksgiving. It has become increasingly difficult to find qualified "assistant directors" to help with splitting these bands up for the daily rehearsal once the "marching season" is complete, and the trimester has become a very large "study hall" as a result, with very little music-making.

I have personally taught under this "new scenario" several times in my career with great success, and, while it will certainly feel different, I know that it will be equally successful here in Grand Ledge.

Marching Band Florida Tour

The second item that I wanted to address was the Marching Band's Florida Tour in April 2014. The tour dates have been tentatively set for **Thursday, April 3, 2014 – Wednesday, April 9, 2014.**

There will be an informational parent/student meeting on **Wednesday, February 20, 2013**, in the High School Band Room beginning at 7:00 p.m. This meeting would be for all current 8th grade and High School Band students and their parents. More information about the tour will be coming out prior to the meeting, but I wanted to be sure you could get that evening on your calendars as far in advance as possible!

If you have any questions about either of these two topics, please do not hesitate to e-mail me at blackmerc@glcomets.net.

Thank you!

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