



Fort Calhoun Pioneer Band



Fort Calhoun Community Schools, 5876 County Rd P43, Fort Calhoun, NE 68023
Phone: 402-468-5591; Fax: 402-468-5593; E-mail: mjones@ftcpioneers.org

MAINTAINING THE TRADITION!! ALWAYS CHANGING!.... ALWAYS THE SAME!

[2016 Note: Our Bands have turned over and progressed so amazingly well the last three years that it seems this exact same thought I had a few years ago is still almost exactly what we need to hear this season. So...I modified the opening paragraph and changed the name of the Field Show for this season. Otherwise...this is a repeat memo, but PLEASE RE-READ IT! Consider how relevant this really is!]

Hello, again As I reviewed this add-on letter I sent out a few summers ago I thought it had a lot of good things to say that are still relevant for us to keep in mind. It was written just coming off from an outstanding summer trip and a great school year. Well, the succeeding seasons turned out very well also. We have discussed the outstanding elements of these classes several times...and even to the conclusion that it is going to be VERY difficult to match or duplicate. And, of course, that is part of the point of this letter: No two bands are ever going to be exactly the same. However...if we can duplicate anything that set the tone for these past years' Bands...that would probably be a good thing! So at this point, let's pick up the text from a former year's letter.... "[That] band...that particular group of talents and personalities...is over. It was great, but we are left with only memories to cherish. As a living, breathing musical entity, that band will never exist again, as some of the people have moved on. The rest of us, though, are left to **carry on the tradition**. It's obvious we are going to have some new leadership in the Band. You know what? That's the way its supposed to work!! Students gain experience, they grow up a few years, become the new leaders, and then...about the time they get everything figured out....snap...they're out'a here. They just graduated.

Now **new people** will be in charge. **New opinions** will make the day to day to decisions. **New voices** will be heard speaking up in class every day. **New people** will wear the mantle as those who have to push everyone else to their limits.And you know what? This should always be an EXCITING thing!!! Yes, while we always miss those who just graduated, this is really what its all about... students growing up, developing, maturing, and graduating from this phase of their life. Its time for them to move on... its time for YOU to move up... to step up... to have YOUR day and YOUR time as leaders. So... LET'S GET GOING!!

[I find things like this online every summer, but you can go online yourself and check any of these strongly competitive bands. You will find similar schedules to what I quoted here from last summer.] The Director of let's just say "one of the prominent marching bands in the metro area" (and its not one of the Bellevues or Millards) was at that time President of the Nebraska State Bandmasters Association, so it was very easy to stumble onto their website, as the link was right there by their signature on an email I received. **Here's where that Band is** in their marching show "process" at this point in the summer. In addition to various sectionals, they have been having "Summer Band" from 6 to 10 p.m. every Tuesday night for most of the summer. In last week's online information notes, the Band was being thanked for **having the first movement MEMORIZED by July 19...**[about three weeks from now—before our Band Camp starts]...and for **having the second part MEMORIZED by July 27th** (again, before Session One starts). It went on..."we will **not set drill** until music is memorized which includes: correct notes, correct rhythm, correct articulations, correct dynamics, and correct phrasings." I know we have always done things a bit differently, but this should give you a little perspective, and should also give a little perspective to those who think my expectations are "way out there somewhere!"

To the Leadership people in our group...(hmm...are YOU in this group? Should you be? Can you be?) Here's another thing for your consideration from that same website.... A second

announcement encouraged their leadership team and their “upperclassmen” to either start or continue making “house calls.” It was mentioned that this will help their band to improve. Now I’m not sure exactly what “house calls” are meant to include, but I think with a little imagination you can figure out some of the things that might be positive from upperclassmen contacting younger members during the summer. Make sure everyone is on board and knows the schedule. Keep building excitement. Make sure everyone knows they are welcome, needed, and IMPORTANT to the group. As I talked about on the Band Trip, the younger members aren’t as sure as the upperclassmen as to exactly where this “journey” in Band class is going to take them.

In addition to that, what can we be doing to get ready for the new season? For one thing, you can go to the Arranger’s Publishing website and LISTEN to the music. The show is called “La Nouba.” I will also try to get it posted on our website soon.

Don’t be content with our current membership rosters. Start thinking of people who “got lost” on their journey. There are some sections in particular who really need every player in the school who knows how to play that instrument. This is not a big school! But, we do have a great “family” here in Band that most of you know is well worth being a part of. Do them a favor and invite them back to be a member. Be proactive; if you don’t say something, perhaps no one will.

The leadership WILL be different. Even the people who stand out as the ones who “make things fun” will be different. There will always be someone. Every individual class level has “fun” people in it. It’s a good thing that new people will step up to our leadership positions.

Some things, however, will never change. The need for quality effort, for quality “time on task” when we are working, for quality attitude, for quality leadership...these will never change. The need for attention to detail, the need for “making improvement every rehearsal,” the need for demonstrating each day that “I care”....these needs must always be met.

The “Tradition” of Quality, Class, and Pride must always carry on. “Quality”...high standards for the level of every note we perform, every song we play, and every product we turn out of our department. “Class”...every aspect of the program should exude “Class,” as in “high class, first class, classiness.” This should include our “conduct,” both as a band and as individuals who represent the band. “Pride”...the quality of our works needs to be such that our pride in our work is obvious. That Pride then, in turn, becomes an element of the performance—after which, when it’s over, we are also able to walk away with a great sense of pride in what we have accomplished.

Again, change can be exciting. YOU can develop a great band, just as the classes before you have done. You had good leaders to learn from. Get out there and do what you saw them do...especially what you “liked” of what you saw. (Yes, I know its hard to believe they weren’t perfect!) But then... push it another step further. See if you can take it to an even higher level. See if you can inspire even more people to be a part of the group and a part of your VISION for the group.

Former Superintendent Finch gave the whole staff plaques one year that said: “Aim Low...BORING; Aim High...SOARING!!” Another idea along the same lines says something like: “Shoot for the Stars! Even if you miss, you’ll still be Miles Above Everyone Else.” Don’t let former successes necessarily be the goal, or the “bar.” Perhaps the “bar” should be raised even higher! AIM HIGH! You never know where you may land!

For the upper grades, among the first things to AIM for during the season is All-State Honor Band. The system is very different this year, so please read the information sheet.

BEST WISHES, EVERYONE, FOR ANOTHER GREAT SEASON. LET’S GET GOING!!

“Pioneer” Band: A Tradition of Quality, Class, and Pride.