Dear Parents,

Please take the time to read this letter!!! It is lengthy, but it could be one of the most important in your child’s life. It is our final plea as teachers for you and your student to consider an amazing opportunity.

Every year, we send info and talk with students and parents about joining high school band. Every year, we hear the same responses. Enthusiasm, fear, ambivalence, excitement, negativity….it runs the full spectrum. Often, we hear grossly exaggerated rumors about what we do and how we do it. It borders on humorous, except that it can have a serious impact on your child’s future! If it’s fear of a stereotype, then rest assured that every other activity on campus has their own stereotype and everyone knows it!

Here’s the bottom line:

Band students are and have always been among the best in the high school. Academics, community service, social functionality, organization, achievement, school spirit, you name it…they are at the top of the heap. If you want a solid peer group, we have it. The Pope Band is THE most honored and acknowledged activity on campus for the past 30 years. The band has earned over 400 awards of excellence and a multitude of championships not only locally, but on regional, state, and national levels. We have more championships than all other sports groups combined. With performances in front of literally millions of audience members world-wide, band members have also been featured in TV commercials, in major sports arenas, concert halls and on the stage of the FOX Theater in sold out shows. Not many students at Pope can claim such involvement.

More importantly, students learn life lessons that are becoming vital to their future success. For 30 years, parents have praised the skills learned in time management, goal setting, teamwork, and initiative that the band experience teaches. Students constantly tell us that they apply these skills in all other activities (including academics!) Throughout our history, we have had fewer students with serious discipline referrals than any other activity on campus. We also have had more scholarship monies awarded band students than in any other activity in school history. Individual students in band have been awarded scholarships as high as $280,000/full four-year awards. Every year, we average over million dollars in scholarships. Yes, you CAN take band and advanced academics…and do well in school! You can even do other extracurricular (lots of our kids do).

We also hold the distinction of having large numbers of students who choose to continue music after high school. Currently, 25 Pope Alumni are band directors. Over 30 are professional performers. There is definitely something about our program that breeds success.

Even though your student (or you) might think “I don’t want to do band”, you would be surprised at how many of your predecessors who felt the same way gave it a try and stuck with it. Two of those band directors referenced above were ADAMENT that they hated band and didn’t want to do it…until they gave it a one semester trial and were hooked!

You and your student have invested time developing a musical skill. It is a shame to put it aside just when greater doors of opportunity are set to open. Your student should be getting a call from one of our current students to discuss band with them. PLEASE treat them with respect and at least allow them to talk to you or your student about their experiences. You never know when an opportunity can turn into a positive avenue for the future. (I’ll bet no one from your student’s future academic classes and likely not from any extracurricular activity has called!)

We hear a lot about time and money being factors, so we have lowered cost and cut rehearsal time over the past few years. Ironically, some of the same people who argue these points find time (and money) for extended vacations, extra activities, i-phones, or other things that they deem “important”. We even offer fundraising to offset our participation costs (how many other activities do this?). We have scholarship monies available so that finances should NEVER affect your decision, but even so, some families do not ask for assistance. PLEASE let us know if we can help.

What if you already registered for a different elective? Simply contact us and we will do a schedule change form for your student. What do you have to lose with a one-semester trial period? You earn a credit necessary for graduation (fine arts, foreign language bundle), and you know firsthand if you want to continue music. It is MUCH harder to come back after a semester off and catch up with the motor skills.

This will be our last full scale “blast” regarding high school band participation. After this, we will be removing names of non-registered students and of those who have requested “no more contact”. We wish you and your student much success in high school. It can be a formidable transition for those who have limited contact with other students/organizations. If we can be of any assistance, please contact us through our e-mail links at [www.popeband.com](http://www.popeband.com/).

Gary Gribble & Josh Rudolph

Band Directors, Pope H.S.