Welcome to Bethel Winter Guard!

2024-2025 Season



Parent-Member Winter Guard Program Guide

**Our Mission:**

The Bethel Winter Guard’s mission is to provide an opportunity for participants to achieve excellence, develop teamwork, learn sportsmanship, and strive for the highest ranking in our competitive circle, all while entertaining through the performance art of color guard.

**What is Winter Guard?**

Winter Guard, also known as the “Sport of the Arts,” combines the physical demands of an athletic event with entertainment, creativity, and excitement. Unlike an outdoor marching band show, Winter Guard performs indoors to prerecorded music. Performing indoors means weather is not a factor and the audience is closer to the action, creating an enhanced connection with the viewer. The performers and the audience members can see each other’s faces and thus experience together the emotion of the story being told.

Winter Guard performers maintain a delicate balance between the physical and emotional demands of the performance, coordination, expressive storytelling, and moving in harmony as a group. This combination creates a unique experience for both the performer and the audience!

**Winter Guard Organizations**

There are more than 10,000 young people involved in Winter Guard organizations around the world. WGI (Winter Guard International) began in 1977 to bring together the growing Winter Guard community at an international level. WGI sets the standard for judging Winter Guard and offers education for directors and performers, and also hosts regional competitions throughout the US. Our teams may compete at WGI events, but locally we compete in the Musical Arts Conference circuit. This organization operates in the same manner as the WGI but on a more local level. Please visit the MAC website at <http://musicalartsconference.com> as it is a great resource for questions about schedules and scoring.

**What will my child learn by being a part of the Bethel Winter Guard?**

Your child as part of guard will spend many hours learning basic dance techniques and spinning skills with equipment such as flags, rifles, and sabers. Focus will be placed on moving and spinning their equipment in unison while adding a performance quality to the movements. They will gain confidence as they learn the art of performing, along with time management and organizational skills needed to successfully balance school, home life, extracurricular activities, and rehearsals. They will become an essential part of a team and ultimately learn that they must work hard as an individual in order to achieve success together as a team.

**Do they compete?**

Yes! The hard work of the teams comes together during competition season. Competition exists in many aspects of our lives, the competitive environment is used as a place to teach the children to strive for excellence while instilling in them the values and judgment to keep a healthy perspective about “competition.”

**The competition Schedule will be shared once event schedules are announced. See the attached calendar.**

The MAC conference shows are in Connecticut (generally Masuk, New Milford, Naugatuck, Norwalk, etc.) Varsity and JV have participated in WGI competitions in the past (Salem, MA for both; Allentown, PA and Dayton, OH for Varsity). The MAIN conference is another option for competitions. Our competition season generally runs from early February through early April, though the schedule is subject to change.

Expectations of Members

***I can do this!*** Once a student is a Bethel Winter Guard Team member, the whole organization really does count on them to meet certain expectations. They must know that being on a team is truly a commitment, but it certainly is worth the effort!

* **Schoolwork is important**. Members must remember that their schoolwork is a priority. They will need to learn to keep up their studies while participating on the team.
* **Be present and on time.** Attendance is required, although exceptions can be made for Fall activities. It is imperative that every person be at each rehearsal so that the Guard may learn to work together and synchronize as a group. It is also vital that the members be at all competitions. Certainly, illness or injury may come into play at times; however, the member must notify their respective Director if they are going to be absent or delayed, and why. Please do not schedule doctor appointments, meetings, etc. during rehearsal time. Also, just as we support a parent in their decision to have a member miss practice for disciplinary/ personal reasons, we ask the same courtesy in return as the Directors make their coaching decisions.
* **Learn your choreography.** Team members will most likely be learning new choreography at each rehearsal. It is important that they learn the choreography and ask questions to ensure they understand the work before they leave rehearsal. If a member has missed a rehearsal, it is their responsibility to learn the missed information in a timely manner.
* **Come prepared.** Guard involves a lot of movement and dance. Members need to wear clothes that are appropriate for rehearsal – clothes they can move in – and will usually be barefoot or in socks during rehearsal. Hair should be tied back (ponytail etc.) and away from their face., clothing should accommodate stretching and moving and be appropriate for the public. All equipment necessary should be brought to every practice. If a piece of equipment or uniform is lost or stolen, the member is responsible for the replacement value. Flag bags to make carrying equipment easier are available for purchase.
* **Be financially responsible.** Since Guard is minimally funded by the schools, the members must pay their dues to keep the program running. Junior Guard dues are $350 for the year. JV Guard dues are $650 and Varsity Guard dues are $1300 yearly. Bethel’s membership dues are generally much lower than dues in our competitive area, and fundraising activities will be held throughout the year to help defray program costs. Every member needs to participate to ensure our success. More information on fundraising activities will be distributed throughout the season. Communication is key! Please contact a Board member if you have any questions concerning dues or challenges with the payment schedule; the Treasurer’s email is [bethelctwinterguardtreasurer@gmail.com](mailto:bethelctwinterguardtreasurer@gmail.com) .
* **Maintain a reputation of dignity and respect for themselves, others, and our schools.**

At all times, on and off campus, members are expected to be polite, courteous, and respectful of all members, staff, and adults. Guard members must be dressed appropriately and behave in their best behavior while representing our Bethel Guard. Remember that you are representing more than just yourself as an individual, you are representing the Winter Guard community as a whole.

* **MOST IMPORTANTLY be enthusiastic and have a positive attitude.** These are a must for every rehearsal and performance. These qualities are essential to the success of the Guard program. You will be amazed at how great you can be if you stay positive!
* **To ensure a quality experience for everyone, students** and parents are expected to adhere to requirements regarding attendance, participation, and general conduct. Separate documents will be provided at registration.

Competition Day Info

**What to expect?** **Competitions are really when the fun begins!**

There will be approximately seven competitions which generally begin in early February and run through early April. They are held on Saturdays. Members of the Bethel Winter Guard will travel to the different schools and competition locations generally by bus and be picked up by parents at the competition site at the end of the competition.

Competition days usually begin with a rehearsal at the Bethel Middle School.

Members of the different units are told exactly what to wear, what to bring, and what time to report.

After some rehearsals and run-throughs, the teams will take buses to the competition site. Upon arrival at the competition site, the Guard will check-in, may have time to finish getting ready, and then will go to warm up, and perform. Guard teams are assigned classrooms by the host school and may have ‘downtime’ before or after their performance, in addition to time to get ready. Many competition sites have food and snacks for purchase during downtime.

Parents/Families attending the competition should plan to arrive before their child’s team is to perform. In general, the MAC competitions cost $15 per person, as each competition is a fundraiser for the host Guard. \*Details including costs for each competition are available at [www.MusicalArtsConference.com](http://www.musicalartsconference.com) Except for parent chaperones, parents are encouraged to watch the competition and not check in with their child until after they have performed. Before their performance, the team is preparing for their show, and needs to have minimal interruptions.

Our parents and family members may watch from the stands within the gymnasium and must abide by the rules of each location. By all means, cheer on your guard members and units, the encouragement certainly helps! Most locations will also have items to purchase so that audience members may root on individuals and units, such as Air Grams (announcements read prior to their performance), Candy Grams, etc.

BWG, MAC, and WGI may photograph members of the guard, during performances or awards. Photos are often posted on the Musical Arts Conference Facebook page. If you will not permit the publication of your child’s photograph, please advise the Board at the beginning of the season.

After the performance, the equipment and floor are loaded and students may have time to watch other groups perform, purchase food from the concession stands, or buy guard apparel from the show vendors. Depending on the show schedule, younger students may be ready for parent pick-up right after their performance, at intermission, or possibly not until the end of the event.

After the show, scores are calculated by judges. Typically a few members of each team line up for ‘Retreat’, where scores are announced and trophies are awarded.

Family members are encouraged to assist in several ways. Please see the section on parent involvement opportunities.

Finally, competitions should be an enjoyable part of Winter Guard for families. Seeing their unit and other units compete in such a creative manner is inspiring and a great community surrounds us when we are all at the shows together, cheering positively for one another.

Also, it is important to note that Junior Guard members are under the supervision of parent chaperones until they are released to their parent/guardian at the designated classroom at the competition site. No Guard member is allowed to travel through competition sites without a buddy, including older members! This is for the safety of all members.

Parent Involvement Opportunities **How can you help?**

**Sewing/Prop Building** – There may be small or large projects that involve sewing. Some of these jobs include hemming uniforms or making small adjustments, repairing flags, or making a show-specific prop. Props may need to be constructed and painted. If you have a specific skill to offer or just want to help out, email [bethelwinterguardCT@gmail.com](mailto:bethelwinterguardCT@gmail.com)

**Chaperones at Practices:** We need adults to be present at practices to help when the kids aren’t practicing - getting a band-aid for someone, reminding students to behave appropriately, etc. If you have some time, sign up! Sign-up links will be available on our website, Facebook Bethel Winter Guard-Members Group, or email distributions.

**Chaperones** **for Competitions**  – We need chaperones with each team at every competition. Their job will be to ride the bus with the Guard to competitions, as well as chaperone the team throughout the day. We need someone to help make the day go smoothly and to be there in minor emergency situations such as mending uniforms, finding ice for boo-boos, etc. Please refer to *Chaperone Guideline*s for more details. Sign-ups will be posted during competition season (February-April)

**Floor/Pit Crew** – We need parents to assist in helping move the floor and props, loading them onto a UHaul at BMS, then off at the competition site, around the school hallways, onto the performance area, and back onto the truck again, to be delivered back to BMS for storage.

Parts of this job require a bit of heavy lifting. Sign-ups will be posted during competition season (February-April)

**Fundraisers** – Fundraising is so essential to the program. Throughout the year there will be numerous fundraisers and we encourage every member and family to participate in the fundraisers, and additionally, may need some to coordinate the fundraiser itself. Bethel Winter Guard gear will be available for purchase.

**Come to competitions!** – There is nothing better than having a big crowd cheering our Bethel team on. It completely transforms the performance when the teams have a big show of support. So come show your support to our kids and do not forget your Bethel Winter Guard gear!

Our Staff

**Directors and Coaches**

The Junior Winter Guard will have an adult director and coaching staff that includes members of the high school Winter Guard team. The high school Guard members teach the Juniors, and the director mentors the instructors. The older teams are coached by staff members who write shows, instruct in drill and teach choreography. Directors, coaches, and technicians are Janos Pergely, Emily Mayerson, Caidyn Wachnuik, and Maeve St. Onge. High school members also act as student instructors for the Junior and JV teams.

**Our 2023-2024 Winter Guard Board**:

Liz Grauer, President Alyssa Chang, Vice President

Amanda Martinez, Treasurer Jen Mead, Secretary

Sandy Smith, Fundraising Coordinator John McMurray, Logistics

Tricia

The Board also meets with Tamara Wachnuik, Junior Coordinator

Winter Guard FYIs

* Dues are required to participate in Winter Guard.
* Competitions are day-long events and participation is mandatory.
* As a spectator, admission fees apply for *every* competition; we have a limited number of passes for chaperones and volunteers.
* Bumps and bruises do happen sometimes.
* Our Board is available if you have questions: Our general mailbox is [bethelwinterguardct@gmail.com](mailto:bethelwinterguardct@gmail.com)

Stay informed!

Check the Bethel Winter Guard site and the MAC sites for updated information and calendars.

[www.bethelwinterguardct.com](http://www.bethelwinterguard.com) and [www.musicalartsconference.com](http://www.musicalartsconference.com)

The WGI competitions (Salem for JV and Varsity, Bethlehem for Varsity) will be posted at WGI.org

If you are on Facebook, join Bethel Winter Guard – Member’s Group

If you are not receiving BWG’s emails or have another email address that should be getting the emails, please notify [bethelwinterguardCT@gmail.com](mailto:bethelwinterguardCT@gmail.com) to add or change email usage.

Students and parents may use the Band app as a group communication method; Remind or similar apps may be used for timely communication with parents.

Fee Schedule

**How much is it? When is it due?**

The cost for participation in **Junior Winter Guard** is $350, which can be paid upfront or on the payment plan schedule. The first payment of $100 is due by September 30th, in addition to completing online enrollment in FamilyID. If an equipment deposit was made over the summer, it will count as your first payment. The second $100 payment is due by November 30th and the third payment of $100 is due by the end of January. A final payment of $50 is due by the end of February. Payments are non-refundable after September 30th.

The cost for participation in our **JV team** is $650. The first payment of $100 is due by September 30th, in addition to completing online enrollment in FamilyID. If an equipment deposit was made over the summer, it will count as your first payment. The next 4 payments of $125 are due by the end of October, November, December, and January, respectively. The final payment of $50 is due in February. Payments are non-refundable after September 30th.

 The cost for participation in **Varsity Winter Guard** is $1,300.  The first payment of $100 is due by September 30th, in addition to completing online enrollment in Family ID. If an equipment deposit was made over the summer, it will count as your first payment. The next 4 payments of $200 are due by the

end of November, December, January, and February. There is also $250 due in December which can be fundraised via the November calendar fundraiser; after which point it will be added to the regularly invoiced dues for the $1,300 total. The final payment of $150 is due in March. Payments are non-refundable after September 30th.

\*For all programs, timely payment is needed so that the program has funds as needed to purchase equipment, pay competition registration fees, etc. To encourage timely payment, **any outstanding balance as of March 1st will have a 10% late fee added for each month the balance is overdue**. Please contact a Board member if you have any questions concerning dues or challenges with the payment schedule. For questions about payments and balances, contact [bethelCTwinterguardtreasurer@gmail.com](mailto:bethelctwinterguardtreasurer@gmail.com)

BWG is now accepting payments for merchandise and donations through Square!

There is an administration fee charged by Square for this convenience; if you’d like to avoid the fee then, please pay by cash or check instead. Checks can be made to Bethel Winter Guard and checks or cash (labeled with student name and reason for payment) can be provided to Board staff or mailed to the Treasurer.

Payments can also be made through Zelle, if your bank offers it. Make payments to [BethelCTWinterGuardTreasurer@gmail.com](mailto:BethelCTWinterGuardTreasurer@gmail.com) There is no fee to use this service!

Bethel Winter Guard is an official public charity, our 501(c)3 tax-exempt ID is 45-1534391

Schedule of Practices

\*Subject to change due to practice space availability, weather, and staffing

**When and where?**

Practices are mandatory once the season begins in November. Note that the Junior and JV guard units will hold practices starting in September, while the Varsity guard starts practicing at the end of the Marching Band/Fall Guard season in November. Potential Varsity members not participating in Fall Guard should plan on practicing with the JV team so that they are in condition once Varsity practices start. After October, missing practices and/or arriving late and/or leaving early can impact not only the student’s progress but the entire team. All competitions are mandatory. Efforts should be made to schedule appointments and other conflicts at other times. Excessive absences/tardiness/early dismissals will have repercussions which could include changes to the role played in performances or student-leader positions.

**Junior Guard:**

Fridays starting at 4 pm at Rockwell school and adding Tuesdays(same time) in November. Johnson students will gather at dismissal and be walked over to Rockwell by a chaperone once traffic clears. If there is an early dismissal or other change to the BPS schedule, practices may be held at the regular time or may be revised or canceled, and this will be announced. On occasion, a Saturday practice may be called before competitions start; once competitions start Saturday practice times will be planned around the competition times.

**JV Guard:**

Fridays starting at 4:30-7 pm for September and October at Bethel Middle School Gym. In November a second weekday practice will be added and time frames will be adjusted to allow for practice time for the separation of JV and Varsity teams. Saturday practices will be scheduled as needed per the staff and can start in November, potentially between the hours of noon and 6 pm at BMS. Once competitions start, Saturday practices will be scheduled around the competition.

**Varsity Guard:**

Potential Varsity members not participating in Marching Band will practice with the JV team in September and October at Bethel Middle School Gym. In November a second practice will be added. Saturday practice times will be determined by the staff sometime between noon and 6 pm. Once competitions start, Saturday practices will be scheduled around the competition. The Varsity season begins in November once Fall Guard ends. Students not participating in Fall Guard should plan on practicing with the JV team so that they are in good condition once Varsity practices start.

**This program cannot exist without the generous support of our parents.** We realize that an extra-curricular activity for your student means *extra effort* for you as well. *We deeply thank you for your support! We always need volunteers to chaperone practices and competitions. Chaperones are there to monitor student behavior while they are not practicing, get a band-aid or ice pack if needed, and provide general student assistance ‘off the floor’.*

Fundraisers and Events

Fundraising will vary based on available activities, potential earnings, and parent help available. If you have a fundraising idea, please email [bethelwinterguardct@gmail.com](mailto:bethelwinterguardct@gmail.com)

**Fall Season–**May include Flower Power Bulb Fundraiser, Movie Night, or other events

**Winter** **Season** – Merchandise Fundraiser, Ladies Shopping Night Out, Applebee’s Flapjack Fundraiser, wreath and holiday plants sale, Friends & Family Night, and more!

**Spring** – Breakfast of Champions, End of Season Banquet

**Summer** – Summer Spin, Annual Car Wash

**Monthly** Dine-Around Town fundraiser is held each month at a different local restaurant.

Competition Chaperone Guidelines

**THANK YOU FOR VOLUNTEERING TO CHAPERONE!**

In addition to needing chaperones at practices, we also rely on chaperones for competitions! Chaperones are expected to actively monitor the safety and behavior of guard members during the bus ride, at the competition site, and before and after the competition. Chaperones should arrive at their designated time at BMS and may not leave until their duties are complete and all students have been picked up. Depending on team size and ages/grades, the school may require 1-3 chaperones per team.

Chaperones should take a regular count of members and assist members as appropriate and/or as requested by the Director during their prep/warm-up period.

Chaperones must be aware of the whereabouts of Guard Members at all times. Guard members must ask permission to leave for restrooms or otherwise, while under the chaperone’s charge.

No guard member is allowed to go anywhere alone. The two-buddy rule must be enforced! Please also be aware of how long guard members are away.

After bus rides, please look through the bus to see if any items/equipment have inadvertently been left behind. Be sure guard members dispose of trash appropriately.

Chaperones are free to address any guard member displaying inappropriate behavior. Chaperones should not accept any disrespectful behavior from any guard member.

Chaperones are not permitted to coach or interfere with directors'/coaches' preparation with guards. Chaperones should be positive and encouraging.

When watching fellow guards compete, chaperones should be sitting with guard members in the guard team bleachers. While watching competitions or traveling through hallways etc., chaperones should ensure that respectful competition behavior is being displayed.

Our Board staff will provide a complete list of everyone who is in your charge for the day and with all relevant medical information. Emergency numbers for each guard member will also be provided.

Once a guard member is released to their adult, the chaperone is no longer responsible for the member. However, the chaperone is expected to remain until all guard members have been released to their parents or guardians.