

ECSD Bands Shine at 2016 MPAs

Pensacola, FL: The Fall 2016 Music Performance Assessment Report (MPAs) results are in and Escambia County Bands had a great year! Out of seven high school bands, four received an overall Superior Rating and three scored a Superior rating from all five judges. This year's MPAs was hosted by Fort Walton Beach High School and included 17 marching bands from across the Panhandle.

MPAs are a chance for bands to be evaluated on their musical performance as well as their marching ability and the overall quality of their performance on the field.

"This isn't a competition with one winner, but an assessment," explained Angela Barberi, Escambia County School District's Fine Arts Specialist. "The bands are judged against a set of standards and are evaluated and given feedback for further growth.

Every musician knows that each note, and each step they take, matters to the entire band. Even one wrong step could be seen by one of the five judges and hurt your band's score. So, to get to this day has meant hours and hours of practice on their own, with their section, and as a whole band.

"This past weekend gave our high school musicians motivation and guidance. Bands, like a sports team sometimes have a large number of members graduate and they experience a growth period. The chance to get feedback from experienced MPA judges helps every band and is especially valuable to our smaller, growing, bands, like Northview and Pine Forest right now," Barberi said. "They are both growing their programs and their membership. I am so proud of the leaders and students at all of our schools. It is especially exciting to watch student musicians as they grow into leaders."

Megan Couey, Band Director at Pine Forest High School further explains, "This year has been one for growth for us. I ended last year with 28 or so returning members. Something strange (and wonderful) happened and the program grew to 49 in June, and then to 59 by the first month of school. They are now referred to as the "Nifty Fifty. So, I took 50 students to marching MPA."

Couey added that it often takes new band students a year or two to get serious about developing their instrument skills as well as their dedication to the band's mission. That delay can be detrimental to a small band as they depend on every member even more so than a large band might. But, this year, she has seen something quite different.

"There's been a lot of personal growth within the group. The leadership this year really took an interest in recruitment and pushing their peers to get caught up. They even were willing to take a few beginners under their wing," said Couey, who is quite proud of her rookie band. "The Super Sound Band is performing better than last year. I really enjoyed their final performance at the FBA District 1 Marching MPA. A lot of things locked in with music, drill and visuals."

Band Director at Escambia High School, Doug Holsworth added, "The thing that stands out to me is how many outstanding programs we have in the Panhandle; out of the 17 bands that appeared, 14 were rated Superior. In our county, 4 of the 7 high schools were rated Superior, three received Superiors in EVERY CATEGORY. That is extremely unusual."

Holsworth pointed out that this is especially noteworthy when you compare these results to MPA results across the state of Florida. "Particularly when you consider that we have the earliest MPA date in the state - meaning we have at least 1-2 weeks less time to prepare!"

West Florida High School's director, Pete Krostag said, "WFHS has a young band this year. Many freshmen! Our motto this marching season is '*Get better daily.*' I challenged them to make something better every day. Every rehearsal. Come away doing something a little better. If everyone does that, then there will be a noticeable difference every week. It seemed to pay off."

Tate High School's Showband of the South was especially pleased with their results as they achieved straight Superiors for the 46th year in a row. Tate band director Mike Philley who is quite proud of the Aggie band, posted a note to his students' families on Facebook. "These kids have poured themselves into a patriotic show that is meant to honor people they've never met. No one will ever know how many people have been blessed by it... reminded of sacrifices made by many men and women long gone... or touched by the fact that these kids (when society tears them down) continue to believe in one another and work every day to get better. No trophy or 1st place win can teach them to appreciate and love others!"

Philley added, "Yes, there are many activities where you simply show up and everyone gets a trophy. But, this isn't one of them!"

Each of the five judges gave each band a score that equals a rating of Superior, Excellent or Good. Those are averaged for a final score. The results this year were:

Escambia High School = Straight Superiors

J.M. Tate High School = Straight Superiors

Northview High School = 1 Excellent, 4 Goods for an Overall Good

Pensacola High School = 2 superiors, 1 Excellent and 2 Goods for an Overall Good

Pine Forest High School = 1 Superior, 1 Excellent and 3 Goods for an Overall Good

Booker T. Washington High School = 4 Superiors and 1 Excellent for an Overall Superior

West Florida High School = Straight Superiors

To truly appreciate these bands and their performances, they are best when watched in a live performance on a football field. Check with your local high school and ask about attending their next home game.

Visit, and LIKE, the Escambia County School District – Fine Arts page on Facebook to find video clips from the schools. Tate High School’s performance has also been posted on YouTube at: www.youtube.com/watch?v=KeQC7C3s5TY&feature=youtu.be West Florida’s performance can be seen: <http://youtu.be/qW6CLwzQSi0>

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