

njpac
arts
education

**schooltime
performance
series**



teacher resource guide

about the performance

DRUMLine Live is a high-energy stage show inspired by the marching band traditions of Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs). Created by the producers of the popular movie *Drumline*, the performance showcases drumming, choreography and vibrant musical arrangements. Featuring skilled percussionists, brass players and dancers, *DRUMLine Live* is a blend of a live concert with the intensity of a competitive marching band. The show celebrates the cultural significance of HBCU bands, highlighting their intricate rhythms, high-stepping routines and electrifying performances, all while honoring African American music and traditions.



cultural connections

Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) were established in the 19th century to provide higher education opportunities for African Americans, who were often excluded from predominantly white institutions due to racial segregation. Cheyney University of Pennsylvania, founded in 1837 (as the Institute for Colored Youth), is widely regarded as the nation's first HBCU, established through a bequest by Quaker philanthropist Richard Humphreys. Today, some of the most prominent HBCUs include Howard University, Spelman College, Morehouse College, Tuskegee University, Florida A&M University, Hampton University, Xavier University of Louisiana, North Carolina A&T State University, Wilberforce University and Fisk University, all of which continue to lead in academic excellence, cultural influence and social impact.

The culture at HBCUs is deeply rooted in pride, community and activism. These institutions emphasize the value of Black identity, history and cultural expression, offering a supportive environment where students can thrive academically and socially.

Marching bands play an iconic role at HBCUs, serving as more than just musical ensembles. They are an integral part of campus life, contributing to the energetic atmosphere at sporting events, parades and other school functions. HBCU marching bands are renowned for their dynamic performances, which seamlessly blend music with intricate choreography, showcasing the rich traditions of African American culture. These bands are a source of pride and unity, instilling discipline, teamwork and a sense of community among students.

vocabulary

Battery

The section of percussion instruments that are carried and marched on the field

Brass

A family of wind instruments made primarily of brass or other metals that produce sound through the vibration of the player's lips into a cup-shaped mouthpiece (ex., trumpet, trombone, tuba)

Choreography

The creation and arrangement of movement patterns, often set to music, to express ideas, tell a story or enhance a performance

Drumline

A section of a marching band or drum corps that consists exclusively of percussion instruments, primarily drums

Drum Major

The lead field commander of the marching band, known for combining military-style precision, theatrical flair and high-energy leadership to guide and entertain both the band and the crowd

Fifth Quarter

A post-game performance by a marching band, particularly HBCU band, featuring improvised music, dance routines and band battles to celebrate school pride and showcase musical skill

Front Ensemble

The stationary percussion section of a marching band or drum corps, typically positioned at the front sideline of the field

Halftime

A scheduled intermission or break in the middle of a sports game, typically dividing the game into two halves; provides time for entertainment

HBCU

An institution of higher education in the United States that was established before 1964 with the principal mission of educating Black Americans. HBCUs were founded during a time when African Americans were largely denied access to traditionally white institutions due to segregation and racial discrimination

Homecoming

An annual tradition in schools, colleges and universities where alumni return to campus to celebrate and reconnect, often centered around a football game and accompanied by festivities like dances, parades and rallies



Majorette

A dancer who performs choreographed high-energy routines alongside an HBCU marching band, blending jazz, hip hop, ballet and African dance

Marching Band

A musical ensemble that performs while marching or moving in formation, often at sporting events, parades, competitions or ceremonial occasions

National Battle of the Bands

An annual non-competitive event that brings together HBCU marching bands to celebrate musical excellence, school pride and Black culture through powerful performances of marching, music and show-style routines

Pep Rally

A school spirit event typically held before a sporting event, designed to energize and unite students, cheer on athletes and build excitement and pride within the school community

Percussion

A family of musical instruments that produce sound by being struck, shaken, or scraped using hands, sticks, or other tools; it consists of the front ensemble and the battery

inspired learning for the classroom

P

Prepare

Before starting the lesson, lead students through a quiet activity to help them release negative energy. Students should be sitting comfortably in their chairs with their eyes closed. Instruct them to take a slow, deep breath in through the nose for four counts, hold it for four and then slowly breathe out through the mouth for four. Finally, instruct them to open their eyes and to think about a color that describes how they feel in this moment. Have each student share their color with the class.

Lead a class discussion with the following question: What do you think of when you hear the word drumline? Allow students to share their knowledge and experiences. Explain that *DRUMLine Live* is inspired by the Historically Black College and University (HBCU) marching band tradition. The show blends traditional marching band style with elements of hip hop, R&B, gospel and jazz to celebrate Black culture and musical excellence.

Watch and read the following:

Video | ‘Black excellence at its best:’ Inside the history and legacy of HBCU band culture

Article | The Culture: Historically Black Colleges & Universities

Resource Guide | *DRUMLine Live*

English Language Arts
SL.9-10.1

Social & Emotional Learning Competencies
Self-Awareness

Social Studies
6.1.12.CivicsDP.6.b

Visual & Performing Arts
Anchor Standard #7, 11

E

Experience

Before the performance, go over audience etiquette. Encourage students to enter the venue quietly and respectfully. Ensure that all phones are turned off. Remind students to stay seated to avoid distracting others. Also, share with students that it is acceptable to clap or cheer during natural breaks (after a musical number or routine).

Ask students to consider the following questions while watching the performance:

1. Are you able to identify any specific songs or styles of music?
2. What influences do you see in the performance?
3. How did the beginning, middle and end of the performance differ from one another?

English Language Arts
SL.9-10.1

Social & Emotional Learning Competencies
Self-Awareness

Theater Arts
1.4.12.prof.Re7a

Visual & Performing Arts
Anchor Standard #7

R

Reflect

Lead a class discussion based on the questions from the previous section. Allow students to share their answers. Ask the students to reflect on the skill set of the performers from the show. Go around the class and have each student fill in the blanks to the following statement: “I can already _____ like the performers did, but I can’t _____ yet.” Remind students that with enough time and practice, they can accomplish anything they set their minds to.

Have students write a paragraph in response to the following prompt:

What do you think is the overall goal of the performance? Do you think that goal was achieved and how?

English Language Arts
SL.9-10.1

Social & Emotional Learning Competencies
Self-Awareness

TheaterArts
1.4.12.prof.Re7a

Visual & Performing Arts
Anchor Standard #7

F

Focus

Using the provided **vocabulary** and **resources**, have students research the history and significance of this specific style of art. Provide students with two activity sheets to complete throughout their research. Before they begin, have students list two or three things they hope to learn during their research at the top of **Activity Sheet 1**.

Activity Sheets Link

Career Readiness, Life Literacies & Key Skills
9.4.12.CI.1

English Language Arts
NJLSA.W7

Media Arts
1.2.12.Cr1a

Social Studies
6.1.12.CivicsDP.6.b

O

Originate

Ask students to compose and perform a short *DRUMLine*-style cadence using found objects (desks, pencils, buckets, water bottles, etc.).

They should think about rhythm, dynamics and call-and-response patterns inspired by HBCU marching bands.

Challenge students to name their group and perform a “mini halftime show” with choreography.

Creating
1.3A.12.prof.Cr1a, 1.3A.12.prof.Cr2a
1.3A.12.prof.Cr3a

Performing
1.3A.12.prof.Pr4a, 1.3A.12.prof.Pr5a

R

Rehearse

Give students time to continue developing their creation. If time allows, let them develop their projects on their own, then break the class out into small groups to discuss their ideas and receive additional ideas from peers.

As they are working, use this time to walk around and ask them each about their project, the materials they are using and what inspired them.

Creating
1.3A.12.prof.Cr1a, 1.3A.12.prof.Cr2a
1.3A.12.prof.Cr3a

Performing
1.3A.12.prof.Pr4a, 1.3A.12.prof.Pr5a

M

Mix it all together!

Once everyone is done, come to an agreement as a class on how it would be best to share what everyone’s been working on.

Allow each student to present their work, discussing their research and what inspired them. Remind students to be respectful of one another. Between presentations, allow two or three students to describe their reactions to the work that was presented. Encourage them to use phrases like “It reminded me of _____” or “It made me feel _____” rather than describing the project as good or bad.

Creating
1.3A.12.prof.Cr1a, 1.3A.12.prof.Cr2a
1.3A.12.prof.Cr3a

Performing
1.3A.12.prof.Pr4a, 1.3A.12.prof.Pr5a

curriculum standards

Career Readiness, Life Literacies & Key Skills

9.4.12.CI.1
Demonstrate the ability to reflect, analyze, and use creative skills and ideas.

Creating

1.3A.12prof.Cr1a
Generate melodic, rhythmic, and harmonic ideas for compositions or improvisations to express intent and demonstrate understanding of musical structures.

1.3A.12prof.Cr2a
Assemble and organize sounds, timbres, or rhythmic ideas into compositions, using technology or traditional instruments to express intent.

1.3A.12prof.Cr3a
Evaluate, refine, and present musical ideas by applying personal and peer feedback to improve performance quality.

English Language Arts

NJSLSA.W7
Conduct short as well as more sustained research projects, utilizing an inquiry-based research process, based on focused questions, demonstrating understanding of the subject under investigation.

SL.9-10.1
Speaking and listening

W.9-10.1
Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts, using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence.

Media Arts

1.2.12.Cr1a
Formulate multiple ideas using generative methods to develop artistic goals and solve problems in media arts creation processes.

Performing

1.3A.12prof.Pr4a
Select, analyze, and interpret music demonstrating understanding of expressive intent and musical elements (rhythm, pitch, dynamics, tempo).

1.3A.12prof.Pr5a
Develop and refine technical and expressive performance skills through practice and rehearsal.

Social & Emotional Learning Competencies

Self-awareness
Integrating personal & social identities; Identifying ones’ emotions; Linking feelings, values & thoughts

Social Studies

6.1.12.CivicsDP.6.b
Relate the creation of African American advocacy organizations (i.e., the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People) to United States Supreme Court decisions (i.e., Plessy v. Ferguson) and state and local governmental policies.

Theater Arts

1.4.12prof.Re7a
Demonstrate an understanding of multiple interpretations of artistic criteria and how each might be used to influence future artistic choices of devised or scripted theatre work.

1.4.12prof.Cn10a
Examine a community issue through multiple perspectives in a theatrical work.

1.4.12prof.Re9a
Analyze and compare artistic choices developed from personal experiences in multiple devised or scripted theatre works.

Visual & Performing Arts

Anchor Standard 7
Perceiving and analyzing products

Anchor Standard 11
Relate artistic ideas and works with societal, cultural and historical context

additional resources

NJPAC

About NJPAC
njpac.org/about

NJPAC’s Arts Education programs
njpac.org/arts-education

NJPAC’s David G. Berger Master Class Series
njpac.org/berger

DRUMLine Live Activity Sheets
njpac.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/10/Drumline_ActivitySheets-2.pdf

Websites

The Culture: Historically Black Colleges & Universities
drumlinenetwork.com/hbcu#google_vignette

Overture Center for the Arts | *DRUMLine Live*
overture.org/media/m3snb0y3/drumline-live-with-cover.pdf

Homecoming: A Celebration of HBCUs and Their Legacies
nmaahc.si.edu/explore/moments/homecoming-celebration-hbcus-and-their-legacies

Legacy and Culture of HBCU Marching Bands
bestcolleges.com/resources/hbcu/legacy-culture-of-marching-bands

Musical Life at HBCUs
nmaahc.si.edu/explore/stories/music-hbcus

Marching Percussion Techniques for Prospective Band Director Thesis by William Kenneth Garrett, Jr.
digitalcommons.liberty.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1503&context=masters

Videos

THEE MERGE | J5 Drum Majors “Get Ready” Exit
youtube.com/watch?v=5whEvpZ06CQ

GMA | Stepping through history
The vibrant legacy of HBCU majorette teams
youtube.com/watch?v=PDKF_r10oY

Southern University Human Jukebox Field Show
Battle of the Bands 2024
youtu.be/Rl9LV2koZCs?si=6XKxyGL9FJ6fBBdo

Drumline (2002) Battle of the Bands
youtube.com/watch?v=WRFT6iw56lQ

Drumline (2002)
In The Stone Scene (Earth, Wind and Fire)
youtube.com/watch?v=7-2eRCMe1k0

HamptonU – Coach Brint leads Ebony Fire
youtube.com/watch?v=AujXUG7XU6M

BCU Ice Cream Man Pep Rally
youtube.com/watch?v=di1LMbKiKXs

USA TODAY | ‘Black excellence at its best:’
Inside the history and legacy of HBCU band culture
youtube.com/watch?v=SzXSjFRwfoY

Books

The Legendary Florida A&M University Marching Band
The History of “The Hundred” by Curtis Inabinett Jr.. 2016

Marching to the Beat: HBCU Bands from A to Z
by Johnetha Lindsey. 2025

The HBCU Experience: The HBCU Band Alumni Edition
by Dr. Ashley Little and Dr. Christy Walker. 2022

bring the arts to your school

In-School Residencies

NJPAC teaching artists come right to your school to teach the performing arts to your students. Our super-flexible in-person residencies are designed to meet your needs and you'll have a dedicated program manager to help you every step of the way. It's the perfect program to keep your students creating, connecting and expressing themselves through the magic of the arts.

Professional Development

Calling all educators! Expand your teaching skills, deepen your curriculum and give yourself a creative boost in NJPAC's forward-thinking professional development workshops. Our virtual PD programs are for teachers all the way from pre-K to high school and include hip hop, dance, storytelling, theater, music and more. Not only will you learn something... you'll also have fun and be inspired.

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