

National Association  
of  
Military Marching Bands  
N.A.M.M.B.



Concepts for Writing  
the  
Military Marching Drill

Texas Bandmasters Association Convention  
July 2017

## Concepts for Writing the Military Marching Drill

Music - primary in constructing a drill.

- \* Select music that challenges students but keep in mind their success
- \* Do not over-program
- \* Re-arrange music as needed for better flow and continuity
- \* Determine the amount of music needed (usually three marches)
- \* Memorize music to enhance marching learning and to reduce wasted rehearsal time

Getting started

- \* Decide what number of students will be marching. Factor in overall number of performers, instrumentation, potential eligibility, and alternate positions
- \* Field position - end zone entry or sideline entry
- \* Center band to the field for easier charting options (Allows for better blend and balance)
- \* Sideline marching might better accommodate small bands soundwise

Writing the drill to fit the music.

Symmetrical drills.

- \* Begin formations on both primary and secondary (major) phrases
- \* Makes sense to marchers when learning
- \* Is visually and aesthetically more pleasing to the layperson
- \* Is generally easier to perform music
- \* Students learn drill faster
- \* Allows for more time and attention to music and marching when polishing
- \* Easy to set up rehearsal points

Asymmetrical drills.

- \* Formations begin based more on field positioning and specific drills
- \* Allows more flexibility in drill design
- \* More difficult to teach and learn
- \* More likely to create individual errors both marching and musically
- \* More likely to expose and/or create music weakness
- \* More difficult to polish
- \* Formations or band direction changes can occur anywhere in the music

Things to consider when writing a drill.

- \* Optimal length of a drill is six minutes, thirty seconds to seven minutes, fifteen seconds. This allows for time to polish and easily falls within time constrictions
- \* Use opposite direction turns to eliminate 'direction of horn' sounds.
- \* Use 'dead counts' or clicks to reposition a band for the next march and/or formation
- \* Try to not exceed four dead counts unless they are in conjunction with a specific formation set up. (Ex: clicks during an alternating 'to the rears' going from company fronts to a diamond formation)
- \* Use cadence during difficult marching maneuvers
- \* Always consider time delay when splitting blocks and separating them
- \* Be very aware of specific music challenges (Ex: low brass runs) and where it occurs in the drill. Minimize or eliminate these passages from occurring at turns.

### Stacking a band (See chart)

- \* Position instruments to enhance overall band sound
- \* Stack to the press box
- \* Stronger players closer on the near side
- \* Keep in mind band balance when marching sideline to sideline
- \* Position percussion away from press box to achieve better balance
- \* Place brass towards center files in band
- \* Avoid placing a section all on one rank (Ex.) Placing all or most of the trombones or trumpets on one rank; though visually effective it negatively affects the flow of sound from that section thereby weakening the music performance (The primary exception is the bass horn section)
- \* Stack strong players front to back by files to help maintain a more secure sound through turns
- \* Stack the formation goal to goal first, then back feed to a fanfare position if the marching formations fundamentally change from the fanfare position

### Chart drills others can read

- \* Facilitates teaching your band
- \* Show specific formations
  - How to get into them and how to get out
  - How the formations are coordinated with the music
  - Exact positioning on the field
  - Rehearsal points
- \* List terms or abbreviations for reference purposes (Ex: TTR - to the rear; CM - countermarch, cad - cadence, etc.)
- \* List instructions on the chart beside formations and at the top of the page
- \* List the music that coordinates with the formations on any particular page
- \* Make yard line and press box positions clear
- \* Teach/explain the drill to the staff first

### Pyware charting

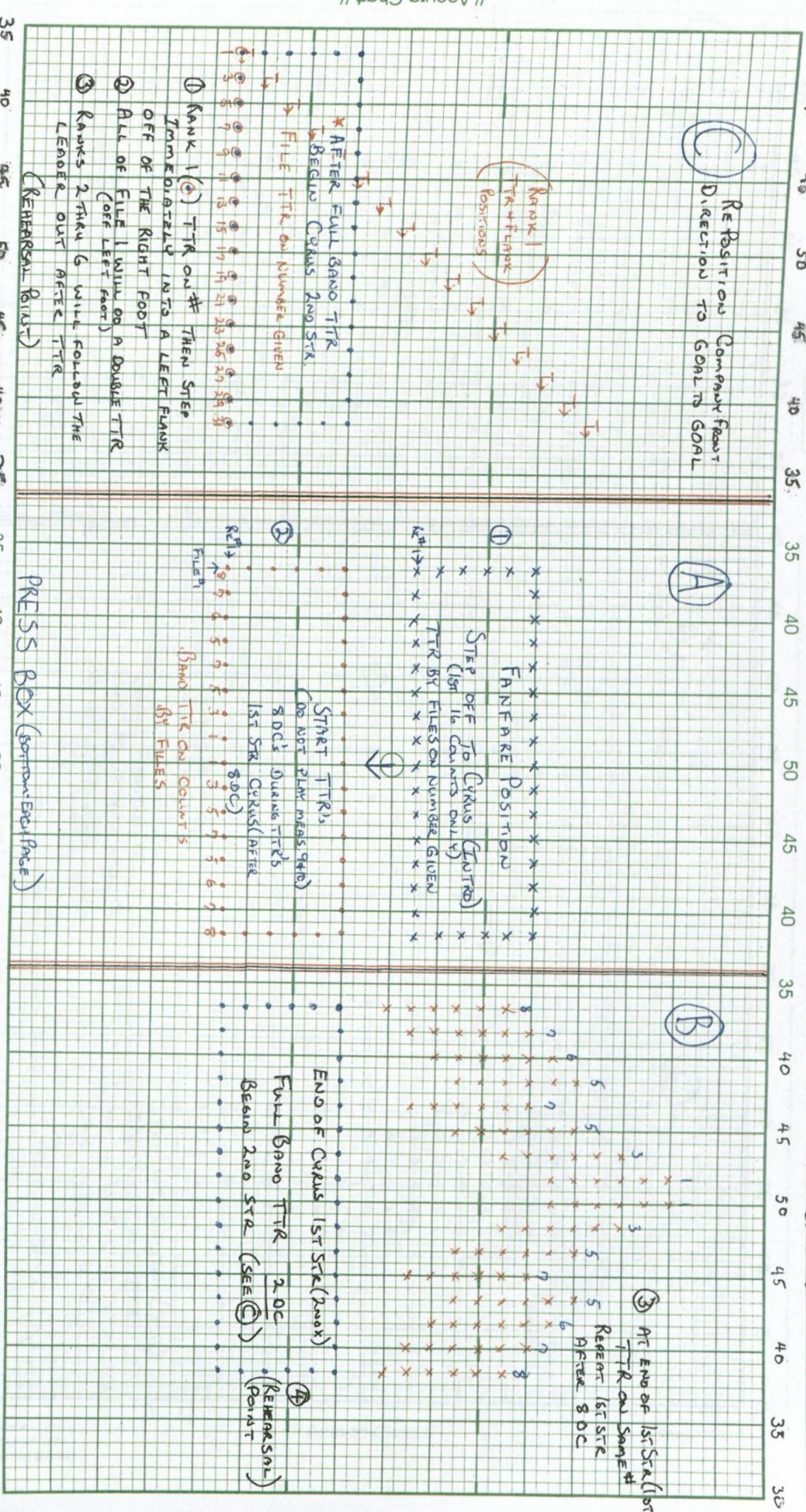
- \* Allows more flexibility in charting
- \* Aids in eliminating potential charting/marching problems quicker when rewriting
- \* Can expose discrepancies in teaching the drill versus what was actually written
- \* Showing chart to students will facilitate learning
- \* Aids other directors in understanding the chart for more efficient instruction time
- \* Any charting requires time, Pyware can be a much faster more effective method with practice

### Thoughts

- \* It is easy to write a simple drill and it is easy to write a challenging drill but it is difficult to write the 'right' drill.
- \* The will to win is not nearly as important as the will to prepare to win.
- \* Utilize rehearsal time properly. Every teaching/learning moment counts - consider the time you waste.
- \* You can't teach them if you haven't got their attention.

ABBREVIATIONS:

RK - Rank	SIR - STRAIN	MUSIC:	PAUSE
DC - Demo Counts (quick)	CT(S) - Count(s)		CYRUS (Intro)
TR - To The Rear	CF - Company Front		80C
CM - Counter March	CAO - CADEUCE		1ST SIR
RF - Right Flank	R/O - Roll Off		2ND SIR
LF - Left Flank			



C

REPOSITION COMPANY FRONT  
DIRECTION TO GOAL TO GOAL

A

STEP OFF TO CYRUS (OUTRO)  
(1ST 16 COUNTS ONLY)  
TTR BY FILE OR NUMBER GIVEN

FANFARE POSITION

START TTR,  
DO NOT PLINK MEAS. 9+10  
80C'S DURING TTR'S  
1ST STR. CYRUS (AFTER 80C)

2ND TTR ON COUNTS BY FILES

B

END OF CYRUS 1ST STR (2ND X)

FULL BAND TTR 20C

BEGIN 2ND STR (SEE C)

AT END OF 1ST STR (1ST X)  
TTR ON SAME #  
REPEAT 1ST STR AFTER 80C

END OF CYRUS 2ND STR (SEE C)

(REHEARSAL POINT)

- 1 RANK 1 (C) TTR ON # THEN STEP IMMEDIATELY INTO A LEFT FLANK OFF OF THE RIGHT FOOT
- 2 ALL OF FILE 1 WILL DO A DOUBLE TTR (OFF LEFT FOOT)
- 3 RANKS 2 THRU 6 WILL FOLLOW THE LEADER OUT AFTER TTR (REHEARSAL POINT)

- 1 RANK 1 ON SIDELINE - MARCH 30 STEPS TO FANFARE POSITION (FIGURE 1)  
AFTER FANFARE - STEP OFF TO CYRUS INTRO (OBJECT ONLY) OMIT MEAS. 9+10  
BEGIN ALTERNATING TTR'S (BY FILE OR GIVEN NUMBERS) (FIGURE 2) 80C
- 2 AFTER ALT. TTR'S (80C) PERFORM CYRUS 1ST STR (1ST X) IN WIND FORMATION (FIGURE 3)  
BEGIN ALT. TTR'S (80C) WITH SAME #'S AS BEFORE TO STRIKE BACK INTO COMPANY FRONT  
PERFORM CYRUS 1ST STR (2ND X) AT END FULL BAND TTR (SEE C)





Music:  
"Quality Plus" - Introduction  
8 Counts

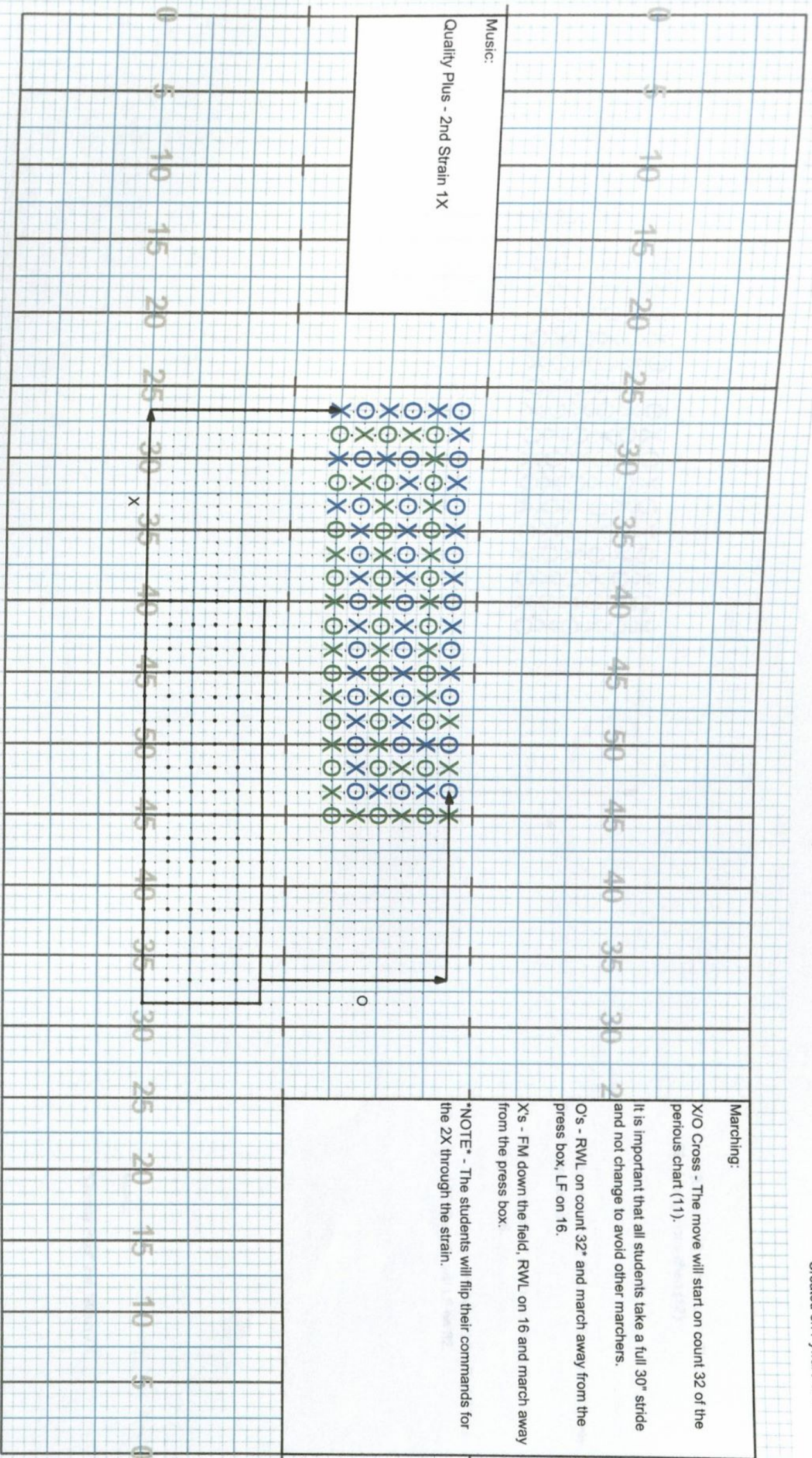
Marching:  
FULL BAND Forward March

RBB Contest Drill 2016.3dJ

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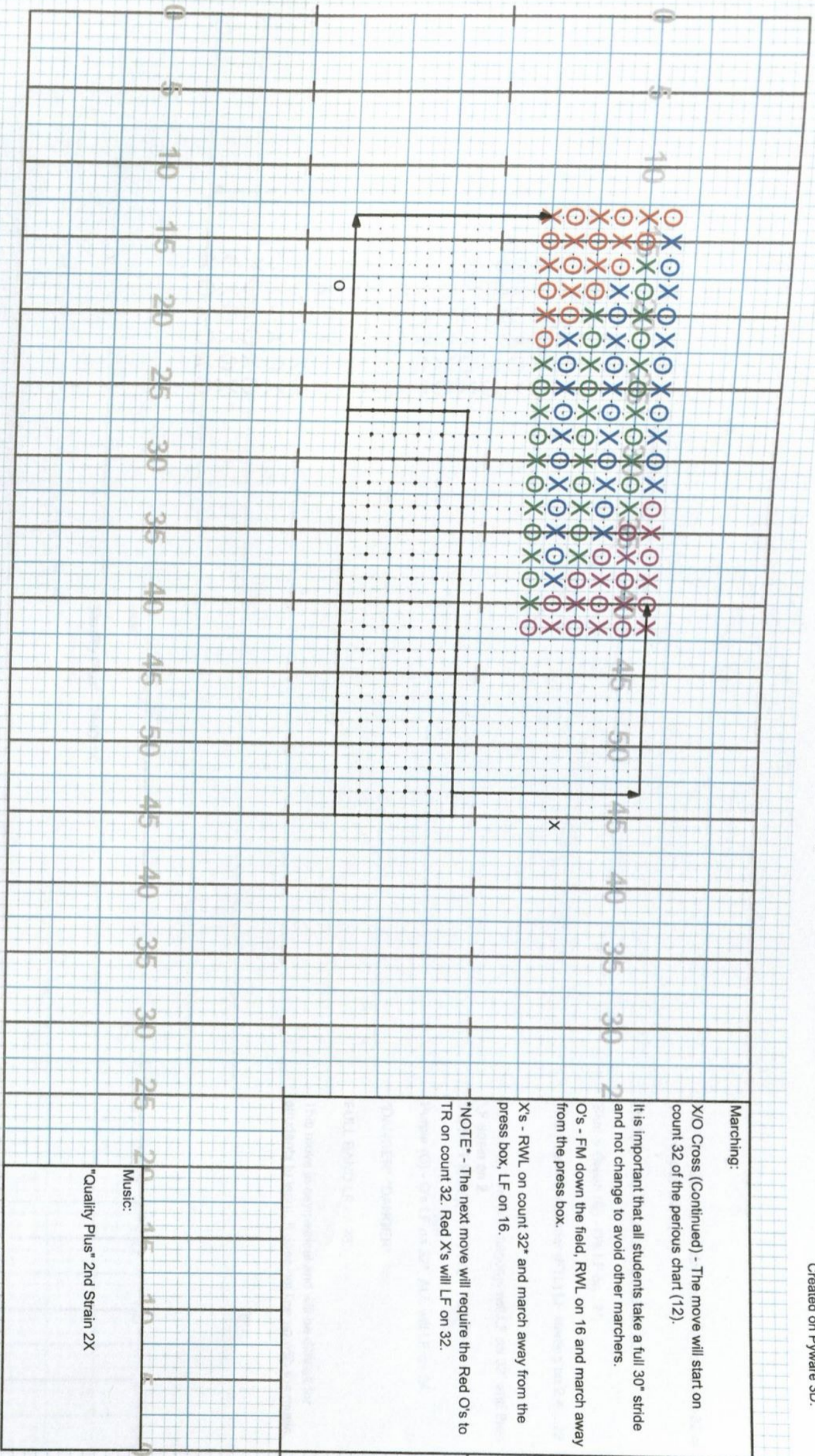
<p>Marching:</p> <p><b>*NOTE*</b> - All students will start their move on count 8 of the previous chart (10-Introduction).</p> <p>Red (A) - TR on 8*, FM</p> <p>Blue &amp; Green (B) - RWL on 8*, Follow the Leader (FTL) RWL starting on 2,4,...22.</p> <p><b>*DANGER*</b> the first diagonal will RWL on 8* and then RWL again on 2. DO NOT MOVE THE PIVOT POINT!</p> <p>Purple (C) - RWL on 8*, ALL will RWL on 24.</p> <p><b>*NOTE*</b> - The X/O's marked are for the next move which will start on count 32 of the 1st strain.</p>	<p>Music:</p> <p>"Quality Plus" - 1st Strain - 1X ONLY!</p>
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RBB Contest Drill 2016.3dj

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Marching:

X/O Cross (Continued) - The move will start on count 32 of the previous chart (12).

It is important that all students take a full 30" stride and not change to avoid other marchers.

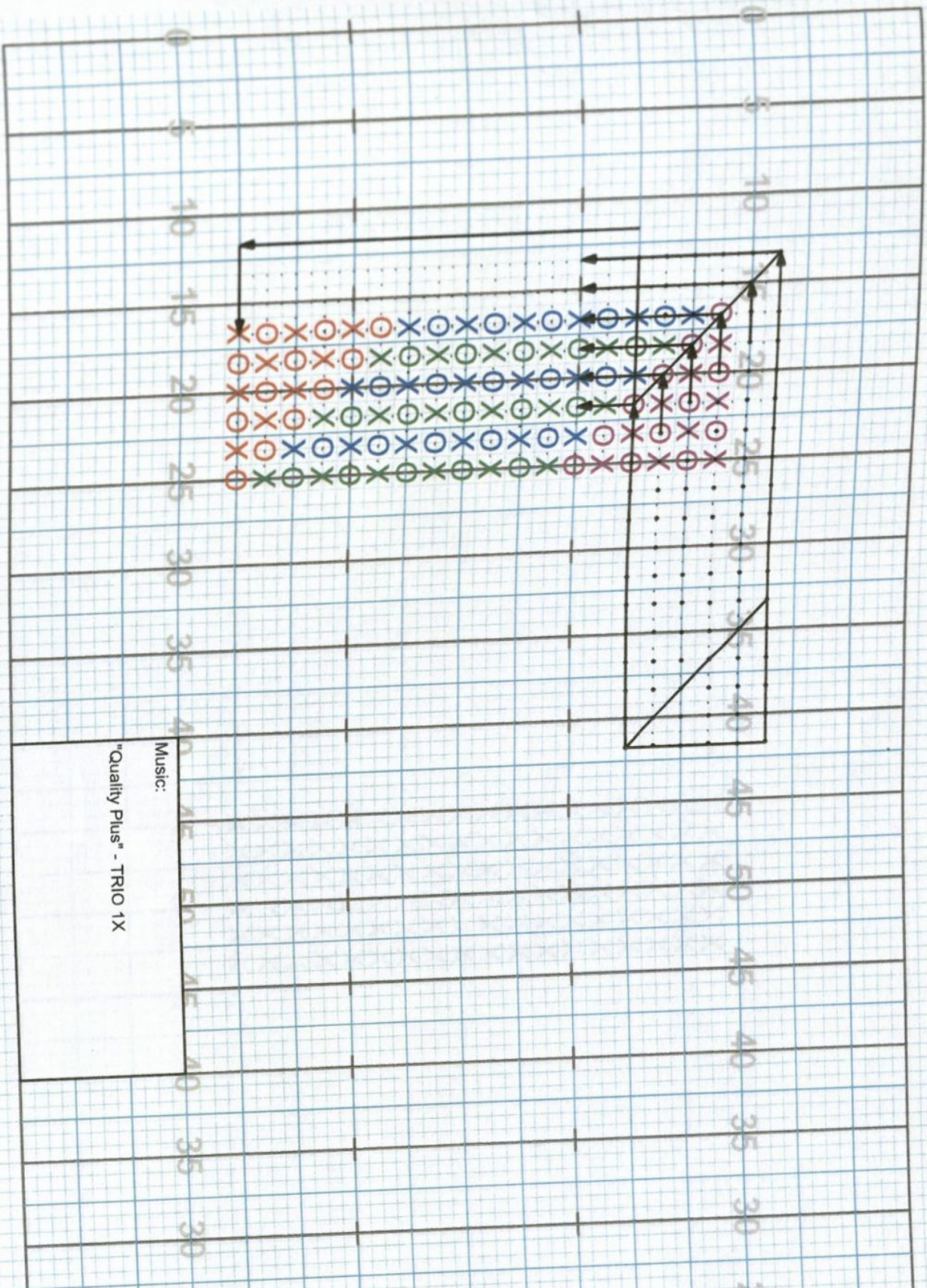
O's - FM down the field, RWL on 16 and march away from the press box.

X's - RWL on count 32\* and march away from the press box, LF on 16.

\*NOTE\* - The next move will require the Red O's to TR on count 32. Red X's will LF on 32.

Music:

"Quality Plus" 2nd Strain 2X



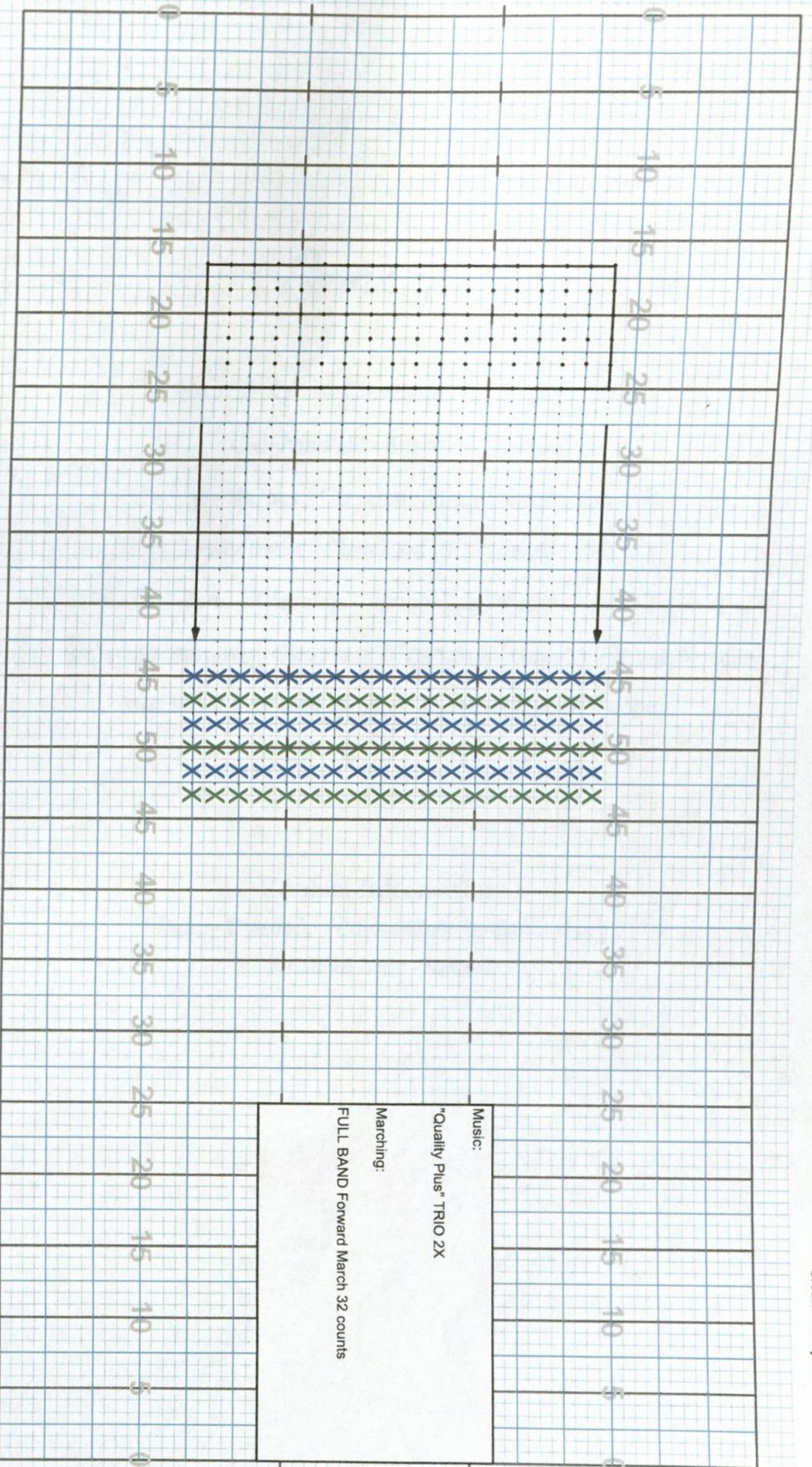
Marching:

- \*NOTE\* - Red X's will start their move on count 32 of the previous chart (13).
- Red (A) - X's TR on 32\*, O's LF on 32\*
- Blue & Green (B) - O's LF on 32\*,
- ALL Follow the Leader (FTL) LF starting on 2,4,...22.
- \*DANGER\* the first diagonal will LF on 32\* and then LF again on 2.
- DO NOT MOVE THE PIVOT POINT!
- Purple (C) - O's LF on 32\*, ALL will LF on 24.
- \*DANGER\* \*DANGER\*
- FULL BAND LF on 28.
- This move is asymmetrical and will be difficult for students to learn. It does not line up with the music.

Music:

"Quality Plus" - TRIO 1X

Director Viewpoint



Music:

"Quality Plus" TRIO 2X

Marching:

FULL BAND Forward March 32 counts

*Thank you to:*

Dr. Darrell Myers - Cleveland ISD Superintendent

Cleveland ISD Board of Trustees

Dr. Glen Barnes - Cleveland High School Principal

Mrs. Kristy Jones - Cleveland ISD Director of Bands

Mrs. Alicia Diosdado - Cleveland Middle School Associate Band Director

Ms. Kaila Spoonemore - Cleveland High School Associate Band Director

Mrs. Kammie Enloe & The Cleveland Band Boosters

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