

ATSSB NEWSLETTER



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ASSOCIATION OF TEXAS SMALL SCHOOL BANDS

Beginning our 30th year of service to small school bands in Texas

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President's Column

by Eric Gray

It is hard to believe another year has come and gone and with it the students that came into our lives 7 years ago as beginners in our band programs. What an awesome opportunity we have had to spend that length of time with the best students in our schools. Unfortunately our year was cut short and we did not properly get to say “good bye” to most of our students. We will never forget the class of 2020!!! I think of all the great things they have accomplished as a group and as individuals and I know they will be successful in whatever avenue they choose to pursue.



Another big “Thank You” to all of you out there that volunteer to serve each year to make this organization great for all our students. The number of students from small schools that benefit from this organization is amazing and ATSSB is truly their home! De Ann Hollis stated, “the heart of a volunteer is never

(Continued on Page 2)

(Gray, continued from Page 1):

measured in size, but by the depth of the commitment to make a difference in the lives of others.” Rest assured, the work and time you put in on any level of this organization is making a difference in the lives of students of small schools across the state!

Summer convention aka TBA is going virtual this year and so must we! I am scheduling an ATSSB State Board of Directors meeting for Tuesday, July 7 at 2:00 in the afternoon. If you attend that meeting at TBA or TMEA, then make plans now to attend. You will receive an email with an invitation and a code. You must also provide you own food this time, breakfast will not be provided!

Finally, spend some “down time” away from the school with family and friends. Read, relax, exercise, camp, fish... whatever “fills your tank” as we anticipate another great school year. To those of you that have retired or have moved up to larger classifications, please keep in touch and know the work you have done with ATSSB will never be forgotten. I hope you all have a great summer and we all get back to normal with our programs in the fall!



The ATSSB Newsletter is the official publication of the Association of Texas Small School Bands. Any correspondence should be addressed to ATSSB; 2117 Morse Street; Houston, TX 77019. You may also contact us on our Web Site (<https://www.atssb.org>) or email the Editor (Kenneth Griffin) at atssb@att.net or call 713-874-1151. Letters to the Editor will be published as space permits if signed and verified, although writers may remain anonymous by request.

Advertising is accepted for the ATSSB Quarterly Newsletter. The Newsletter is published online each September, December, March, and June.

See our advertising policy and costs at:

<https://www.atssb.org/files/execsec/AdPolicy.pdf>

President-Elect's Column by Matt Knight

Welcome to the end of a crazy year. I hope you and your family are both safe and healthy during this time. The first things that comes to my mind is “unfinished business.”

I know many of us have missed Concert and Sight reading evaluations, TSSEC Contest, Spring Festivals, band trips, end of year concerts and summer camps. Did anyone really realize everything we do each year from March to May?

I know lots of people have been upset about “All the Things we missed” I challenge you to look at it through different eyes... Our son Keelan is a high school senior this year. I know he has missed lots of Senior Stuff and I hate that his graduation will be different this year. I also know for Anna Jo and I, the time off has been a blessing. We have gotten to eat meals together, listen to him laugh in the other room as he plays games with his friends, and visit about gifts he received from friends. We have also gotten to listen to the perils of a first job. When your parents are both band directors, you don't get much family time from March to May. These are experience that we will never have again. This has truly been a special time.

To the senior class of 2020, you came in with 9/11 and you are going out with Covid 19. Anyone that can get through all of that, must be destined for great things. “Godspeed.”

As normal starts to come back, I hope you remember the most important thing we do is teach kids! It is not about the grades they make, how good they march, or even ratings our bands make. It is about relationships. It is building the next generation of young adults to be supporters of Bands for their children. It is about helping the students you teach, make a difference in someone else. Pay it forward! Someone did it for you

I had a student leave a note in a school saxophone case at the end of last year, that I thought sums up what we should strive for each day. I would like to share the end of that note. It is addressed to the next student who plays the saxophone he had. “Lastly, she will only take you as far as you will let her. Do her justice and work hard. And promise both of us this, you will never give up on music! It is one of life's great joys! This note means more than any trophy on the shelf. This is why we do what we do.

I hope each one of you enjoy the “down time” It does not happen often in our profession. Drop a note to your staff and let them know how much you appreciate them. Thank an administrator for all their work behind the scenes. Send an email out to your band kids and let them know you miss them. WRITE a short note to you senior Band members and thank them for what they have meant to your program. Spend some time with your family. Hug them just a little closer. Thank your spouse for everything they do for you. You could not do it without them. Take care of the “Unfinished business!”

Hope you each have a great summer!!



Matt Knight

Immediate Past-President's Column

by Mike Bartley



It has truly been an unbelievable end of the 2019-20 school year. I do not think anyone could imagine how things would turn out for all of us just a few short months ago. Having a senior son myself, I have truly dealt with the emotional ups and downs from day to day the past few months. I know this graduating class has lost so much at the end of their High School career, but I also know they are a resilient group that still has so much to look forward to in their future. I wish the class of 2020 the best of luck and I can't wait to see you prosper in your life!

I would like to give a big thank you to all of the educators for their continuing guidance to our students through the new distance learning. This has been a very challenging time and may continue to be for some time to come. I know how wonderful the music educators are in the state of Texas, and I know all of us will continue on with the same passion and fervor that we have always shown. I am sure there have been many ideas exchanged amongst colleagues and there will be many more ideas to share as we forge on in these unprecedented times.

I know everyone always looks forward to the TBA convention in July, and I am sure it will still be a great experience even though it is now virtual. I encourage everyone to sign up and "attend" as many clinics as they can. This organization is very vital to our existence and success in the band world. I would also like to encourage everyone to renew their TMEA membership which expires at the end of June. This is a very important time to support this organization as well since Mr. Floyd is constantly fighting for the advancement of music education and helping us to have a voice in maintaining our relevance.

The most important thing I wish is for everyone to continue on and to encourage our students to do the same. I firmly believe we live in the best state for music education, and I would hate to see that status slip due to a bit of challenge in our path.

See everyone on the computer!

Mike Bartley

Executive Secretary's Column

by Kenneth L. Griffin



Your membership expires on July 31 so if you plan to enter students into jazz auditions which are always early, be sure to join for 2020-21 as soon as you can to avoid errors while entering students. If you are not yet a member for next year, fill out the application online:

<https://www.atssb.org/atssb-membership-application-form/>

You need only list name and school and any changes - we already have the other posted data in the database. Then send payment when your school budget year begins - or go ahead and send in the check or school Purchase Order now while you are thinking about it. Dues for Active Members are \$50, but remember that after October 1, the dues increase to \$75 unless you are joining as an Associate Member or College Division Member (everything is the same, you just cannot run for office, vote, or enter students in any ATSSB competition). Retirees who retire as an Active Member retain their Active Membership but dues are reduced to \$25 per year. A cover page showing your ATSSB and TMEA membership card must be sent with the initial entry forms for the first audition entered (ATSSB or TMEA). Don't forget that if you enter students in the Jazz Ensemble competitions that audition deadlines are EARLY, so get your ATSSB and TMEA dues taken care of as soon as possible. I email a copy of your card as soon as I receive payment of dues, so be sure we have an accurate email address for you and that your school does not block mail from this office (attachments trigger spamguards, so make sure we are allowed). While you are at it, go ahead and join TBA and enroll in the TBA Virtual Convention in July. We need to support TBA through these times just like we support TMEA and ATSSB with our membership and virtual attendance at the many clinics being offered online this year.

Be sure to check this link to see the region to which your ISD is assigned in this new biennium:

https://align.tmea.org/align_2022/index.php

See the following link to see how ATSSB has organized the 33 regions into 22 regions and five areas:

<https://www.atssb.org/files/execsec/AreaAlign.20.pdf>

You may have noticed that we have a new secure website. If you are having difficulty finding forms or data you need, you can always check out the link at the top of the home page "ATSSB A-Z" which can help you find what you are looking for. If you have suggestions on how we can improve the site's usefulness, send it to our Webmaster, Marc Nichelson (mnichelson@atssb.org). Also let us know if any links are not working or are out of date.

In your fall region meetings, you need to nominate a Class 1C Representative and a Class 3A Representative to the State Board of Directors in addition to President-Elect. The election will be held at the General Session tentatively scheduled for Friday, February 12, 2021, at 1:00 p.m. in Room 206 of the Convention Center. After nominees have accepted their nominations, their pictures and biographies (if submitted) will appear in the online December Newsletter, so keep an eye out for that issue. Please get involved in the district, region, and area activities of ATSSB - and seek state office if you would like to serve at that level. It is a lot of work, requires a lot of time and effort, and entails constant contact with fellow officers, but the end results are very worthwhile (and obviously beneficial to our students and ATSSB in general).

The Prescribed Audition List Update (Use Year E) is now available online:

<https://www.atssb.org/files/Unorganized/YearEUpdate2021.pdf>

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(Griffin, continued from Page 5):

The September Newsletter is no longer be mailed. We used to mail it to include a copy of the OPS winners CD as a reference tool for our directors. Of course, this year we had no OPS competition due to the coronavirus pandemic. Future OPS winners (hopefully in 2021!) will be distributed via a Permanent Digital Download (PDD). All Newsletters are now available online as a pdf file.

This coming year, Brian Balmages (FJH Music) will be the clinician for the Symphonic Band. The Symphonic Band will premier a piece by Balmages commissioned by ATSSB using the ATSSB Commission Fund set up in 2019. Russell Schmidt (Valley Jazz Cooperative) will be the clinician for the Jazz Ensemble. Don Lefevre (West Texas A&M University) will be the Concert Band clinician.

Jennifer Siler from The Village School in Houston has secured instructors for video clinics regarding the ATSSB audition etudes. These videos will be available during the TBA Virtual Convention July 20-22, 2020:

Flute: Kathy Daniels, Sam Houston State University

Oboe:

Bassoon: Dr. Nathan Koch, Sam Houston State University

Clarinet: Dr. Tricia Card, Sam Houston State University

Bass Clarinet: David Berndt, First Colony MS, Fort Bend ISD

Saxophone: Masahito Sugihara, Sam Houston State University

French Horn: Ronald Todd, Horn Instructor, Fort Bend ISD

Trumpet:

Trombone: Ben Osborne, Sam Houston State University

Tuba/Euphonium: Robert Daniel, Retired Adjunct Professor of Tuba, Sam Houston State

Percussion: Jesús Pacheco, Strake Jesuit College Preparatory, Houston

String Bass:

Your ATSSB State Board of Directors will hold a virtual meeting in July. Your board includes all elected state officers, all Region Coordinators, all Founding Charter Members, Past-Presidents, and invited guests. If you would like to have input on matters relating to ATSSB State Board of Director activities, I would suggest calling or writing your Region Coordinator (or any state officer) and telling them of your concerns so they can advise the full Board.

I know all of you had to deal with distance learning these past few months. I know I did even with my part-time job at a private school here in Houston. I assigned playoffs using FlipGrid for the students (our contest music until contests were cancelled, then audition music for next year after that) - and listening assignments after watching videos for those without instruments at home (I was fortunate that 107 of my 114 students were able to take their instruments home!). I know of many different scenarios all of you devised to keep your students playing and practicing - and connected. We would be interested in your success stories - perhaps making a webpage on or site available for that if enough report them to us.

I am sure I am like you - hoping things can return to normal by fall (but planning on alternatives should the need arise!).



State Jazz Coordinator Column

by Brian Donnell



Like everyone else in the state, this year ended unlike any other. I've just "finished" my 32nd year of teaching, all of those years at Greenhill School, although there wasn't really a finality to the year. Each spring we would have a variety of concerts – jazz night, percussion ensemble, middle school arts night and the requisite end-of-year ceremonies. The month of May was typically a whirlwind of performances and events. But not this year, of course. I glided to the end of the school calendar with an unfinished feeling about the performance calendar. Even looking ahead to the fall brings uncertainty and anxiousness. But we'll get through this season and be stronger for it!

Back in March, when it became obvious that this shutdown was going to last longer than expected, I decided to use the time as an opportunity to better myself in one area of weakness for me... particularly bass guitar. As a young director when I began teaching, the rhythm section was a blind spot in my teaching. Articulation minutiae for brass playing? I got you! Guided listening for style? Let's go! Correct chord voicing for the guitarist in a swing tune? Ummmm....let's just have the piano player comp there for a while.

My first step to improving my bass chops was to buy an instrument, since I had loaned out the school's two basses to our middle school and high school players to use while at home. I found a Fender Jazz bass, 2019 model made in Mexico, from a gentleman who had played it for about a year but went back to his Fender Precision bass for his church's worship team gigs. It's a beautiful instrument and I got it for an incredible price.

Step two, and this is where it relates to teaching students, was wading thru the enormous amount of materials online to use for practicing. I decide to settle on one physical method book and two online programs for lessons, and two apps for practicing. It's important to help our students sift through overwhelming number of apps, channels and books while they are trying to learn. Here's what I chose.

- Book...."Bass Lines in Minutes: An Easy Method for Creating Bass Lines" by Kris Berg was my physical book. I probably have purchased 6 of these over the years to give to my high school beginner players. It's a wonderful book that strips away the fluff to get a player playing bass lines based on scale construction. A Hal Leonard publication that I found easily on Amazon.

- Video lessons....TalkingBass.net is a free resource for lessons from Mark Smith, a UK based player. Amazing amount of lesson material.

Real Bass Lessons by Jim Stinnett on YouTube was the second online resource for lessons. All of his videos are organized in easy to find directories. I like his stuff because he teaches a concept, then practices along with the viewer. A great example for students on how to practice.

- Apps...iReal Pro for my iPad and SmartMusic. The computer never gets impatient playing the Rhythm Changes endlessly or ii-V and Circle of Fourths backing tracks repeatedly! And SmartMusic, of course, has hundreds of charts to play along.

(Continued on Page 8)

(Donnell, continued from Page 7):

So, if you are looking for personal growth opportunities, I would highly recommend picking an instrument, not just jazz of course, and jumping in to improve your playing. And share this journey with your students! They need to see that we are continually growing and improving, and they will respect you more for the vulnerability you show during the process.

Coming up in July, we will be distributing the audition CDs for the region and area jazz auditions. Check with your region coordinator about the deadline dates for entering students in the process. You can enter students even if your region does not have a performing region jazz band, by the way. Ask your coordinator!

I wish you and your families all the best during this season. Stay safe and stay in touch.



Brian
bdonnell@atssb.org

Outstanding Performance Series

by Collin Anderson, OPS State Chair



How frustrating it has been for all of us to have to suspend the 2020 Outstanding Performance Series season! I wish I were able to be telling you how many hundred entries have been submitted and where to check for OPS results, but, as we all know, nothing is in its normal state at present. With so many unforeseen variables, it is my sincere hope that we can all get to UIL Concert and Sightreading evaluations next spring and be able to resume a full OPS competition starting in March 2021. Perhaps we may even need to consider finding a way to include online collaboration recordings if the social distancing issues persist.

In the midst of these continuing uncertain times, do your best to enjoy your time off this summer. At least I personally will have more time to devote to home projects that normally get put off due to the time investment that OPS is for me. Also, best wishes as you attempt to formulate an approach to getting prepared for a new school year.



Webmaster's Column

By Marc Nichelson

What a crazy spring semester this has been! I hope you all have found ways to interact with your students effectively during this time. I know this was not the way anyone would want to end a semester, but I know I have found a new appreciation for the activities that I was taking for granted. I also want to reach out to all of our retiring members. Although this may have not been the way you imagined the end of your career would look, know that myself and your students/communities appreciate you and your dedicated career to music education.



As we complete the first year of the upgraded website, I have a few projects I am working on in order to continue building out the site and maximize its effectiveness for our membership. A few of the big projects I will be tackling:

1. The job board will get a face lift in the early fall (if we changed it now it would affect the current postings and I don't want any posting to be lost). This will include it to read a little differently so potential applicants can navigate the entries with ease.
2. The front-page banners will also begin to move to picture of bands that have been submitted to us from our membership (still working on the perfect sizing since it has to automatically resize depending on the device). If you have a picture you would like to us to use please email to me at mnichelson@atssb.org.
3. We are also now fully building out our advertising space with the intent of funding the website each year through that advertising revenue. If you know of any business that would be interested in beginning an advertising relationship with us please have them contact me at mnichelson@atssb.org.

As you head into summer, I hope you take time to recharge and reflect on the past year (I have learned a lot especially this last semester). I know summer is a sacred time in my life, and I wish you the best during that time. I am excited to see how TBA will look online and working with Kenneth to help facilitate our ATSSB activities during that time.

Best wishes,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'M. Nichelson'.

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