



NEWSLETTER

JUNE 2024

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OUR 33RD YEAR OF SERVICE TO SMALL SCHOOL BANDS IN TEXAS

PRESIDENTS COLUMN

RODNEY BENNETT



It seems impossible that the 2023-2024 school year has come to a close. I hope all of your spring performances were rewarding and successful. It's time to step back, take a breath, and reflect on the challenges and successes of the year.

By the time you receive the June Newsletter, the UIL State Solo & Ensemble Contest will have been completed, and the final UIL music event of the 23-24 school year will be in the books. Congratulations to all who had students at TSSEC, and hopefully, it was a positive and inspiring event for the students.

This school year felt exceptionally challenging, with student behavior being a major issue. This issue created challenges to education and our band programs. We all pressed on to share the gift of music with our students and create meaningful and satisfying musical experiences. I am reminded daily how fortunate we are to teach band at our respective schools and share the gift and power of music with our students.

Many of us are on extended contracts and have obligations at school, but don't forget to take care of yourself. Get away from the band hall, be with your family or friends, or have some quiet time alone to reflect. This will help you recharge physically and emotionally. I personally still struggle with getting away (there's always something that needs to be done), but I'm making plans to actually get away from school and recharge. It will help you prepare for the summer marching camps and pre-band activities before we dive into fall 2024. Best wishes for a safe and relaxing time away; the fall semester will be here all too soon.

Thank you for the honor of serving as President of ATSSB. If I can ever be of assistance to you or your students, please don't hesitate to ask.



JUNE 2024 NEWSLETTER

PRESIDENT-ELECT COLUMN

ANGIE LISS

Happy summer! Congratulations on surviving another year of evaluations, auditions, contests, festivals, concerts, etc.! I am 100% positive we are the busiest people on our campuses. I recently helped plan my 40th High School Class Reunion. When we went to set a date for the event, my fellow planning committee members asked me to pick a date that would work for me since they knew no one else in our class would have as hectic a calendar! Our job is a never-ending cycle of activities and planning for the next activity.

That said, the older I get, the more I look forward to the chance to reflect, reorganize, and recharge. These last few weeks of school have been especially tough in our district. In April, a young man in our freshman class took his own life. While I didn't know him well, he was active in sports & FFA and an excellent student. The shock waves from that event affected everyone in our district in ways I couldn't have ever predicted. It was a harsh reminder that we do not know what many of our students are going through. Even though things can look fine on the surface, our kids fight battles we don't see.



The first few days after it happened, I was reminded that band is much more than contests and ratings. We often speak about our band "family," but this was played out in real-time on our campus. That first day, our high school administration allowed students to move throughout the building as they needed to grieve. After students were told what had happened, somber silence permeated the building. But after an hour or so, my band hall became full of students. Kids wanted to be in places they felt safe and normal. Many wanted to sit in my office and talk, but as the day went on, the practice rooms started filling up with kids playing their instruments. It's probably the one class of the day on our campus that went through its normal routine with a full band rehearsal. I wish I could articulate the emotions I felt seeing students using music to cope and get through that day. I'm still processing it myself, but what a blessing we have in this profession, sharing these bonds with our students and seeing the power of music. It can be a heavy load in some circumstances, but what a gift we have been given!

I did not intend to make this an emotion-filled newsletter article, but here we are! Anyone who knows me knows I'm not one to hide my feelings! Again, take some time this summer to do your reflections, and as I always tell you before an extended break, take time to recharge—whatever that looks like for you! I am a phone call, text, or email away, so never hesitate to reach out if you need me!



JUNE 2024 NEWSLETTER

PAST PRESIDENT COLUMN

MATT KNIGHT



Friends! Do you feel caught in a whirlwind? Didn't we just have Christmas break? By now, you have wrapped up solo and ensemble, probably taken that last trip, and are looking at a band camp or two. In Abernathy, we had our 73 in Austin/Pflugerville, thirty-six hours to do laundry, then caught a plane with 108 for five days in Orlando. Our four-hour flight home became seven and a half hours! I don't know about you, but I am tired!!! But as has been said by many before us, there's no rest for the weary. After a family wedding and a band camp, we still have to prepare the band hall for custodial in the summer. Do you ever feel like you're running in front of that infamous boulder in Indiana Jones, and you just stubbed your toe??? When does it let up? When do YOU relax? Do you know how?

I pause here to take care of a bit of business before I leave you with my finishing thoughts. First, good luck to all of those entered in OPS. We feel the growing pains of transitioning to a completely online process. Kudos to Colin Anderson for all he does to put this together. We have heard the phrase "building the plane in the air" ad nauseum since COVID, but that is what Colin has to do!

I want to thank Mr. Anderson for all he is doing. We are not the most patient bunch of people, and he is working so hard to accommodate our needs while simultaneously working out kinks. Not an easy job! Make sure you pick that phone up if he calls and asks you to judge OPS at the state level. If you have never judged OPS, it is a great way to hear phenomenal groups and new music!

VERY IMPORTANT! Think back to those directors who made you love music. Think about the ones who came before and paved the way for us to do the jobs we do. There is a way to honor those people!!!! The ATSSB Hall of Fame is designed to honor the men and women who have made a difference in small school music education. It is a new honor that is in its infancy. The best way to help it grow and gain the prestige it deserves is to nominate those heroes. The process is straightforward and a great way to show homage to those who have genuinely been our mentors, difference makers, and pioneers in building the small school arena. Check the ATSSB webpage for information on the nomination process. Don't assume, "Oh, no one cares what I think. Someone else has surely nominated...(fill in the blank with that special name.)" Don't make that assumption! Your opinion matters. If we assume someone else has taken care of the nomination, some special people will fall through the cracks! One thing is certain. If everyone waits for someone else, no one gets it done. Let's build on the grassroots legacy by recognizing those who have been difference-makers.

The state of our organization is in great hands. Rodney Bennett and Angie Liss are the tops, and we can never say enough about Kenneth Griffin keeping us all on track! The state board is comprised of people who want the best for all students! If you want to learn about the organization's inner workings, reach out to your region coordinator, state rep, or one of the board members/officers. Good people don't just pop out of the woodwork. Get involved! You may be the very person needed to fill a specific role!

Have you thought about my questions from before? Do you know how to rest and how to be still? Before those kids show up for summer band, there are a million things to do. Some of you already have kids in and out of the band hall. But as I get closer to the end of my career than the beginning, I think about a slogan I have used with my band for decades. TAKE CARE OF THE IMPORTANT BEFORE THE URGENT. Do you do that? You are important. Take some time this summer to take care of YOU. We all live under time and budget constraints, but take time to care for your most significant commodities: mind, soul, and body. You are so many things to so many people. Without rejuvenation, you cannot be what others (what YOU) need you to be.

Take time to love your people, and do things that leave more than your "mark on the world." Do the things that make memories, connections, bonds. Take some time to be still and listen to the quiet. We all get in the throes of getting the next marching show ready and all of the planning, sectionals, marching fundamentals, etc., going, but consider taking a couple of days and attending the Texas Bandmasters' Association convention! Iron sharpens iron. Meet with your colleagues to build some memories, have some laughs, collaborate, and sharpen your saw. Two to three days can make the difference of weeks if they help reignite your passions.

Sometimes, the best thing you can get from a convention is knowing you are not alone! Others are in the same boat! I leave you with one of the best pieces of advice I have ever received about being a better band director, teacher, husband, and dad. Find that director from an older generation who has had the program you desire, the numbers, the success, the fun. Take that director for a Coke and just let them talk. Soak it in!!! Their knowledge of the trenches might be just what you need to be able to go home and be the difference maker in your program and to your kids.

I look forward to seeing you (hopefully at TBA), but I am closing this letter to get "all of the things" done so I can spend some much-needed time with my wife. Remember, all of our students will graduate, move on, and create lives of their own, but you have people who will be with you forever. Take some time with them this summer. Make up for a few of those long days and late nights. That is an invaluable investment in YOUR tomorrow.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Matt Knight". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a large initial "M".



JUNE 2024 NEWSLETTER

EXECUTIVE SECRETARY COLUMN

KENNETH 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 2024-25 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 should be sent with the initial entry forms for the first audition entered (ATSSB or TMEA).



Remember that if you enter students in the Jazz Ensemble competitions, audition deadlines are EARLY, so take care of your ATSSB and TMEA dues 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 spam guards, so make sure we are allowed). While you are at it, go ahead and join TBA for July. Be sure to check this link to see the region to which your ISD is assigned: https://align.tmea.org/align_2426/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.pdf>.

If you are new to ATSSB, check out our secure website (<https://www.atssb.org>). If you are having difficulty finding the 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 them to our Webmaster, Marc Nicholson (mnichelson@atssb.org). Also, let us know if any links are not working so we can keep this huge trove of data up to date.

In your fall region meetings, you must nominate a President-Elect, a Class 1C Representative, a Class 1 Representative, and a Class 3A Representative to the State Board of Directors. An electronic ballot will be cast in January if an office has more than two candidates to reduce the final ballot to no more than two candidates per office. The election will be held at the General Session tentatively scheduled for Friday of the convention.

The Prescribed Audition List Update (Use Year D) is now available online:
<https://www.atssb.org/files/PAL-Files/YearDUpdate2025.pdf>.

This coming year, Dr. J. Eric Wilson (Baylor University) will be the clinician for the Symphonic Band. We have commissioned Julie Giroux to write a piece for the Symphonic Band this year. Dustin Seifert (Eastern New Mexico University)) will be the Concert Band clinician. Ronald Wilkins (Shires Trombone Artist and New York Musician) will be the clinician for the Jazz Ensemble. The Jazz Ensemble will premier a piece by Mr. Wilkins commissioned by ATSSB.

Numerous commercial audio and videos of the ATSSB Area etudes are available for purchase. Jordan Sound Productions (JordanSP@aol.com) sells audio files, and Dallas Winds sells a complete audition year of videos (121 videos) at <https://dallaswinds.org/atssb/>. There may be other options for audio or video files of the Year D offered, but please look for an official affiliation with ATSSB before using them. We have had numerous issues with universities that do not become official ATSSB Licensees who take liberties with the editions, altering excerpts beyond what the Prescribed Audition List allows.

Your ATSSB State Board of Directors will meet in July. The 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 policies and procedures, I 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 hope you all have a great summer, and I get to visit with many of you in San Antonio at TBA.



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Any correspondence should be addressed to ATSSB; 2117 Morse Street; Houston, TX 77019.

You may also contact us on our Web Site (www.atssb.org) or email the Editor (Marc Nichelson) at mnichelson@atssb.org 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:
<https://www.atssb.org/files/execsec/AdPolicy.pdf>.



JUNE 2024 NEWSLETTER

STATE JAZZ COORDINATOR COLUMN

BRIAN DONNELL

What a terrific All-State clinic/concert! Congratulations to the students on their outstanding performance. Along with a variety of charts, the band premiered this year's commission, "Solstice Samba" by Dr. Aaron Lington (San Jose State University). Nice work to everyone!

If you did not get an opportunity to visit one of the rehearsals with our clinician, Mr. Noe Marmolejo (University of Houston), you missed an intense and positive rehearsal where the students were challenged to perform at a high level.

A special note of appreciation to our band organizer this year, Mr. Michael Childs (Stephenville), who took care of our clinician, students, and directors during the four days of rehearsals and performance. So very organized. Thank you, Michael, for all your work to help make the event run so smoothly!

Also to our sectional leaders who worked with our students on Friday morning. Mr. Mike Korson (University of North Texas) with our saxophones, Mr. Erick Matta (freelance trumpet player) with our trumpets, and Dr. William Ford (Tarleton State University) with our trombones. The students were fortunate to spend time with you.

Lastly, a huge word of thanks to Mr. Kenneth L. Griffin, who continues to do an amazing job for our association, its directors and our students. His attention to details is legendary, and the work he does behind the scenes, while largely unnoticed by most folks, is especially appreciated by those of us who are on the coordinator and organizer side of things. Thank you, Kenneth!

Looking ahead:

- 1) The State Board of Directors approved an addition to our jazz rules relating to piano and guitar auditions. Students auditioning on piano can use an electronic/digital keyboard, but the patch setting must be piano. Those students auditioning on guitar must not use effects pedals.
- 2) The audition music for 2024-2025 is available at www.matteimusicsservices.com/atssbjazz
- 3) If your region has a new coordinator this spring/summer, please reach out to me if you have any questions about the jazz audition process. I'm here to help!

I continue to be honored to serve ATSSB, and hope everyone has a terrific finish to the school year!

Brian Donnell
ATSSB State Jazz Coordinator
Director of Bands
Greenhill School
bdonnell@atssb.org





JUNE 2024 NEWSLETTER

CLASS 1A REPRESENTATIVE COLUMN

BRIAN TILLMAN

Greetings from beautiful West Texas – home of big skies, stunning sunsets, and friendly people!

Many of you know May was "Mental Health Awareness Month." Along with the usual growing pains adolescents and teens have always had to go through, we know that young people today face stresses and pressures that most of us "old folks" never had to deal with (thanks, social media). As a band director, you help provide these young people with a positive group and social safety net – thank you! So often, we get caught up in pursuing ratings, awards, and recognition for our groups that we forget the most important reasons we have school bands. Yes, music in and of itself is a worthy thing to teach and learn – we know that it activates the brain in ways no other subject can. And yes, the self-discipline and responsibility that band students develop will serve them throughout their lives. But don't overlook the pure social connection band provides, especially in small schools and small communities where some of these students may struggle to find "their people." Thank you for giving these kids, often our most "at-risk" regarding mental health issues, a safe and welcoming place to be.

As we advocate for mental health awareness, we must remember our own well-being. I'm writing this from my band hall computer, in the midst of end-of-year organizing and cleaning. But in the coming weeks, I'll be shutting it all down, stepping out of 'band director mode,' and enjoying quality time with my family and friends. I hope each of you gets a similar opportunity and is fortunate enough to have people in your life with whom you can share non-band-related things. These moments of respite are crucial to maintaining our sanity and perspective in this demanding job we have.

Once again, I want to express my heartfelt gratitude for your unwavering dedication to improving the lives of our young people. Your work is truly invaluable. Wishing you love and peace!

Brian Tillman
Class 1A Representative



JUNE 2024 NEWSLETTER

OUTSTANDING PERFORMANCE SERIES

COLLIN ANDERSON

The 2024 Outstanding Performance Series competition is gaining momentum with record-high entries! This year, we are thrilled to have a total of 906 pieces to be heard, a significant increase from 878 last year. The number of competing organizations has also seen a rise, from 320 to 326. We are particularly excited about the increased participation of Non-Varsity ensembles, who have submitted entries to be a part of the Non-Varsity pilot competitions.

While the contest is not having some of the same hiccups as it did in 2023 because of a DropBox issue, there is one primary concern that everyone needs to understand. The OPS webpage is the official source for all things regarding the Outstanding Performance Series. Reading the OPS webpage would have easily remedied a lot of the confusion about entries this year. I am always available to answer questions; however, once entries start coming in, I get around 500-600 emails just as I upload receipts, and your email may get buried amidst all of those. However, I am typically a phone call away if you have a pressing matter.

All adjudication deadlines and certification of advancement dates are clearly listed on the OPS webpage. A comprehensive matrix of all adjudications is also available, showing which regions will be judging your entries. Following each level of adjudication, a Certification of Advancement form will be emailed by the OPS State Chair, indicating which entries have advanced from region to area and then to the state OPS contest. This form will also be accessible on the OPS web page for your reference.

Should you get a call from this number, 903-390-3271, during the summer, be sure to respond, as I may have questions regarding your entries or may be calling to hire you as a judge for the state-level contest at TBA.

Thank you, as always, for the opportunity to serve you and our fantastic organization as the OPS State Chair.



JUNE 2024 NEWSLETTER

WEBMASTER COLUMN

MARC NICHELSON



As we transition into the summer season, we must reflect on the remarkable achievements and challenges we've navigated throughout the past academic year. Despite the unique obstacles presented by evolving educational environments, our students have demonstrated resilience, creativity, and a steadfast commitment to musical excellence. The dedication of our band directors to foster a love for music in our small schools has been truly inspiring, and we are proud of the accomplishments of our students across the state.

The summer offers a valuable period for rest, reflection, and preparation for the upcoming year. We encourage our members to take this time to rejuvenate while also exploring new ideas and strategies to enhance their programs. Whether you're attending professional development workshops, planning for the next marching season, or simply enjoying a well-deserved break, know that the Association of Texas Small School Bands is here to support you every step of the way. Together, we will continue to build on our successes and create enriching musical experiences for our students. Enjoy your summer, and we look forward to another year of exceptional music-making and community.

Website Projects Currently in the works:

1. Solving a Plugin related issue causing site load errors at times.
2. Small school oriented Podcast covering topics we are seeing across the spectrum in small school bands. Please email me if you have anyone who'd like to act as a sponsor or if you have someone who you think would be a great person to interview.
3. 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.
4. Job Board Upgrade and Membership services area of the website is currently in the works!
5. I am also looking at digital media/site based locations (video clinics, podcasts, clinics at local schools, and even zoom hangouts) to continue adding opportunities for directors not only use our contests but have more wonderful resources given through our website. If you know of anything we can add PLEASE LET ME KNOW!

Official Licensees

These companies have paid a fee and are under contract to use the ATSSB logo and marks on their products. They pay a royalty on products they sell using ATSSB logos and service marks. Please consider using them before using any other companies for similar services. Logos contain links to their website so just click to visit (or obvious contact information is given).



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903-539-6485
JordanSP@aol.com



ASSOCIATION OF TEXAS SMALL SCHOOL BANDS Membership Application

Please type or LEGIBLY print! We want to have accurate information for our Directory and mailing list.
If this is a membership renewal, only enter name and school and ANYTHING THAT HAS CHANGED.

NAME _____ Last four SS# _____ TMEA # _____
SCHOOL _____ CLASS _____ REGION # _____
TITLE _____ SCHOOL PHONE _____ Best time to call _____
If a public middle or junior high school, what high school does your school feed? _____
How many directors are on the band staff in your ISD? _____ New to this region? _____
SCHOOL ADDRESS _____ FAX# _____
CITY & ZIP CODE _____ EMAIL _____
HOME ADDRESS _____ PHONE# _____
CITY & ZIP CODE (if different from school) _____ CELL# _____
MAJOR INSTRUMENT(S) _____

Until October 1, mail this completed form and \$50* for dues to:

ASSOCIATION OF TEXAS SMALL SCHOOL BANDS
Kenneth L. Griffin, Executive Secretary
2117 Morse Street
Houston, Texas 77019

Are you a judge listed with the Texas Music Adjudicators Association? If so, please select your area of certification::

**I would also like to donate \$_____ to the
ATSSB All-State Band Scholarship Fund.**

Dues may not be deductible, but any amount over \$50 is considered a fully-deductible contribution.

**I would also like to donate \$_____ to the
Bruce Kenner Memorial Scholarship Fund.**

Donations to this scholarship are fully deductible.

***NOTE:** The membership year runs from August 1 to July 31. After October 1, Regular Member dues increase to \$75 (the additional \$25 is deposited into the ATSSB All-State Band Scholarship Fund). A membership card and receipt will be returned to you via email, so make sure you have a valid email address. Associate Member dues are \$25 all year, so anyone may join as an Associate Member after October 1 for \$25. To enter students into competition leading to membership in an ATSSB All-State Band, you must be a current Active Member of the Texas Music Educators Association in addition to ATSSB. Retired Members dues are \$25. Only ATSSB Active Members may vote or hold office in ATSSB and submit entries in the Outstanding Performance Series. ATSSB membership is held on an individual basis and is nontransferable.

ASSOCIATION OF TEXAS SMALL SCHOOL BANDS COLLEGE DIVISION APPLICATION

Please type or LEGIBLY print! We want to have accurate information for our Directory and mailing list.

NAME _____ Last 4 SS# _____
COLLEGE/UNIVERSITY _____ Anticipated Graduation Date _____
SCHOOL ADDRESS _____ SCHOOL PHONE () _____
CITY & ZIP CODE _____ SCHOOL EMAIL _____
PERMANENT ADDRESS _____ TELEPHONE () _____
CITY & ZIP CODE _____ EMAIL _____
MAJOR INSTRUMENT(S) _____

Email address to which you want the ATSSB Newsletter sent: _____ School _____ Permanent

Mail this completed form and \$25 for dues to:

ASSOCIATION OF TEXAS SMALL SCHOOL BANDS
Kenneth L. Griffin, Executive Secretary
2117 Morse Street
Houston, Texas 77019

Make checks payable to ATSSB

NOTE: College Division Membership entitles you to have your name listed in the ATSSB Directory. You will also be listed in the region, area and state database for selection to judging panels for ATSSB auditions. Only Regular Active Members may vote or hold office in ATSSB.