

# A History of the Association of Texas Small School Bands

## Preface

Whether one believes in the idea of an all-state band for A-AA-AAA students or not, the success of the Association of Texas Small School Bands and the All-State Band produced by that organization lives in the students and small school band programs in Texas. From the first 123 students representing 80 high schools in 1992 to the 230 students representing 128 schools in 1997, this organization has afforded many a bona fide “all-state experience” playing under conductors and composers of national reputation. The success is also written in the lives of the many thousands who prepare for the ATSSB All-State auditions and therefore become more accomplished musicians. This is evident in the band rooms across the state and the region and district bands organized to give these improving musicians other performance opportunities. The success and history of ATSSB is due to the vision, integrity, and determination of not only the founding members and officers, but also the hundreds of directors who embraced the idea and discovered the impact that the Association and the all-state process could have on their band.

As you read this history of the Association of Texas Small School Bands, we hope that you will understand the commitment made to the A-AA-AAA band students in Texas by the many who started, contributed, or continue this ongoing quest for excellence.

Fred Pankratz  
ATSSB Founding Charter Member  
ATSSB Vice-President 1991-93  
ATSSB President 1993-95

## History

At a TMEA Executive Board meeting in 1981, Region 2 Chairman Lonnie Dooley made a request for a feasibility study to consider designating one of the existing All-State bands for 4A and down students only. This request was based on information that although half of the students in Texas attended schools class 4A and down, less than twelve percent of the students in the All-State Bands were from those classifications. Less than three percent were from 3A schools and down. The proposal was defeated by a vote of 55 to 6 to make the study. Lonnie asked what had to be done to get the issue before the general membership and Bill Woods responded by naming a committee to study the proposal. The committee returned a negative report and after some discussion, the measure failed. After 1981, the number of small school bandmen in the All-State Band continued to decline as the quality and quantity of private lesson programs in 4A and 5A schools increased, in effect eliminating small school students from an all-state experience.

In 1989, Mike Marsh, from Eldorado High School and TMEA Band Division Chairman of Region VII, sent a letter to small school band directors across the state. In his letter, he called for directors to petition their Region Band Chairs to call for a referendum on the creation of a small-school All-State Band at the TMEA Band Division meeting to be held in February. Scott Taylor (TMEA Band Division

Vice-President) appointed a “Small-School All-State Band Committee” which met in February prior to the Band Division meeting. Because this committee brought a negative report to the Band Division (8 were against, 6 for, and 2 abstained), it was quickly set aside. Before the issue could be dismissed, Kenneth Griffin from Van High School made a motion that a committee be named to “study the feasibility of creating an All-State Band specifically for students from 1A, 2A, and 3A classification schools” and that the findings of this committee be reported to the band division for their consideration at the 1991 convention. The motion was quickly seconded and the motion resoundingly passed, so Taylor subsequently appointed members to the All-State Band Reorganization Study (ASBROS). Mike Marsh (one of the appointees) had sent out a questionnaire asking who in small schools was for or against the creation of a small-school All-State Band. He received 210 responses - 202 for and 8 against.

Frank Coachman took over as Band Division Vice-President (Scott Taylor moved on to TMEA President) and guided the ASBROS committee to come up with the proposal concerning the small-school All-State Band. However, Coachman added the inclusion of CCC students - something no one had ever proposed in initial discussions. In the ensuing 1991 Band Division meeting, several directors spoke for and against the proposal. Kenneth Griffin made a motion that the vote be taken to include only A, AA and AAA schools. His motion was ruled out of order by Frank Coachman and ballots were cast. The vote was 554 to 372 against the creation of a small-school All-State Band as presented by the ASBROS committee.

The frustration small-school directors experienced at that February meeting inspired John Gibson from Ballinger to immediately write a letter to several small-school directors asking if they would be interested in forming a small-school band association. The positive responses he received led him to invite directors across the state who had expressed an interest in small school bands to meet in Abilene.

The meeting was held in the Wylie High School band hall in Abilene, Texas, on Saturday, March 16, 1991. In attendance were: Rick Ball, West Texas High School in Stinnett; Mike Bendiksen, Montgomery High School; Dwayne Bishop, San Saba High School; Dale Cook, Whitewright High School; Lonnie Dooley, Hawkins High School; Jim Gibson, West Texas High School in Stinnett; John Gibson, Ballinger High School; Kenneth Griffin, Van High School; R. Michael Hardy, Mason High School; Barry Hurt, Sundown High School; Michael G. Marsh, Eldorado High School; Fred Pankratz, Canadian High School; Elmer Schenk, Howe High School; Derek Spitzer; Troopers Drum & Bugle Corps; Louis Thornton, Wylie High School in Abilene; and Jennifer Willison, Canadian High School.

A long afternoon of discussion centered around several topics, including: 1) the need for such an organization; 2) its purpose; 3) its philosophy; 4) its function - including the possibility of creating and maintaining an A-AA-AAA All-State Band; and 5) the need for immediate funds (it was decided that each one present would contribute \$100 to cover the expenses of getting started). It was agreed that the purpose of the association was not in defiance of or opposition to already established organizations, but was to more fully disseminate information to, and educate and refine the unique role of, small school bands in the state of Texas.

The organization was named the “Association of Texas Small School Bands.” In discussion regarding the organization of ATSSB, it was decided that a Region Coordinator should be named to represent the association at the region level. These were either named from directors in attendance at that meeting or were to be secured at a later date.

Officers were elected for 1991-92:

Michael G. Marsh, President

Frank Pankratz, Vice-President

Kenneth Griffin, Executive Secretary

Mr. Griffin was directed to establish and maintain a checking account in the name of the association, to develop a professional rendition of the logo as adopted by the association, and to have letterheads and envelopes printed. Mr. Griffin was also directed to seek legal counsel regarding incorporation, tax-exempt status, our statement of philosophy (when completed and approved), the constitution and by-laws (when completed and approved), and liability insurance. Membership fees were then discussed and the annual fee was established at \$25 with two classes of membership: Active and Associate.

It was decided that the Association would make plans to have an All-State Band clinic in San Antonio February 5-8, 1992. After objections about it being in conjunction with the TMEA convention, it was argued that it was also in conjunction with the Fat Stock Show and other lesser conventions, but that it would be difficult for small school directors to take off from school for the two events, and that most would remain as members of TMEA in addition to belonging to and participating in the activities of ATSSB. Motion carried. The consensus was that if at least 100 directors would participate the first year, the organization and the ensuing All-State Band would be successful. Actually, 380 directors joined that first year.

In April of 1991, a letter was sent to all A, AA, and AAA band directors in Texas inviting them to join the Association. They were told that ATSSB would: 1) be a non-profit organization dedicated to the needs of students in Texas A, AA and AAA programs; 2) support and recognize excellence in A, AA and AAA band programs and the students involved in them; 3) be dedicated to the promotion and advancement of A, AA and AAA band programs; 4) promote music education in Texas A, AA and AAA schools and their supporting communities through their band programs; and 5) make every effort to organize a AAA All-State Band to recognize the individual excellence of A, AA and AAA band members in Texas.

The second meeting of the Association was held in Abilene on June 8, 1991 with the following in attendance: Rick Ball, Region I Coordinator; Ron Behrends, Region V Coordinator; Mike Bendiksen, Region IX Coordinator; Dale Cook, Whitewright High School; Lonnie Dooley, Region IV Coordinator; Glenn Doyle, Region VIII Coordinator; John Gibson, New Deal High School; Kenneth Griffin, Executive Secretary; R. Michael Hardy, Mason High School; Barry Hurt, Region XVI Coordinator; Ray Lashaway, McCamey High School; Howard R. Lewis, Jr., Timpson High School; Michael G. Marsh, President, Region VII Coordinator; Scott Mason, Region VI Coordinator; Bobby Overall, Region XXI Coordinator; Fred Pankratz, Vice-President; Elmer Schenk, Howe High School, Region III Coordinator; Gregory J. Siewert, Region XXII Coordinator; David G. Smith, Region XIV Coordinator; Don Stockton, Region X Coordinator; Louis Thornton, Region II Coordinator; and Jennifer Willison, Canadian High School. State Board members not in attendance, but secured for their role as Coordinator for their region, were: Mark Watley, Region XI Coordinator; Craig Hunt, Region XII Coordinator; Dan Frehls, Region XIII Coordinator; Ray Garza, Region XV Coordinator; Travis Hobson, Region XVIII Coordinator; and Jim Smith, Region XIX Coordinator.

Mike Marsh and Kenneth Griffin reported on their trip to San Antonio to determine if there was a site for rehearsals and housing for the proposed All-State Band. After checking with area hotels (cost-prohibitive and unavailable ballrooms for rehearsals - Beethoven Hall too small and the Majestic Theater booked), they were directed to the Scottish Rite Auditorium. After visiting with the staff and

booking space for the rehearsal and performance, they stepped out of the auditorium and noticed the Ramada Emily Morgan Hotel in the next block adjacent to the Alamo. Entering the hotel and visiting with the Sales Manager, they booked rooms for the all-state students during the clinic.

Final arrangements were completed regarding the organization of the Association, including the adoption of the Constitution and By-Laws, region alignment, area alignment, audition procedures, color instrument taped audition procedures, selection of the Prescribed Music List for auditions for 1991-92, and the establishment of a quarterly Newsletter.

During the summer and fall of 1991, several meetings were held with the TMEA Executive Committee and officers to discuss: 1) using TMEA region band auditions to certify ATSSB Area students - denied; 2) using the state of Texas for ATSSB All-State Band patches (required no permission); and 3) allowing students to audition for both TMEA and ATSSB at the Area level (it was decided that ATSSB would hold Area auditions on the same date as TMEA but in different locations). Since that summer and fall, continuing discussion with successive leaders in TMEA leadership has: 1) allowed ATSSB All-State students access to TMEA exhibits and clinics for a fee which was dropped in 1999; 2) allowed ATSSB meetings and All-State Band rehearsal schedules and concerts listings in TMEA programs; and 3) given the ATSSB membership the opportunity to hear candidates for TMEA office. ATSSB and TMEA agreed to align their audition processes in 1999-2000, using identical rules and procedures for auditions, but allowing ATSSB to maintain the use of its own Prescribed Audition List and separate funding for all activities.

Since its inception, ATSSB has not only kept its ever-increasing number of members informed of small-school band activities across the state, it has also sponsored the ATSSB All-State Band:

The first ATSSB All-State Band met in rehearsals in San Antonio under the direction of Gary Lewis from the University of Michigan in February of 1992. There were 123 students in the band from 76 different A, AA and AAA high schools in Texas. There were 380 members of ATSSB the first year.

In 1993, the clinician was Myron Welch from the University of Iowa. The 123 students came from 84 different schools. There were 493 ATSSB members.

The clinician for 1994 was composer Jared Spears from Arkansas State University and ATSSB commissioned him to write ELDORADO specifically for the All-State Band (it was very well received and subsequently published by Counterpoint Music Publishing Company). The 123 students came from 74 different schools. ATSSB had 564 members that year.

James Curnow conducted the 1995 All-State Band and ATSSB commissioned him to write LONE STAR CELEBRATION (published by Curnow Publications). Three students were recognized at the concert for making the ATSSB All-State Band all four years. The 123 students came from 85 different schools. ATSSB had 592 members.

Robert Foster from the University of Kansas conducted the 1996 All-State Band and ATSSB commissioned him to compose ELEGY FOR SELENA (published by Wingert-Jones). One student was recognized for making the ATSSB All-State Band all four years and was given a \$1000 scholarship for the achievement (the fund was started in April of the previous year as the ATSSB 4-Year All-State Band Scholarship). The 123 students came from 87 different schools. ATSSB had 646 members that year.

1997 saw the addition of a second all-state band for ATSSB: the Symphonic Band was led by Dr. Tim Lautzenheiser and the Concert Band was led by Dr. Gary Garner from West Texas State University. Fred Allen was commissioned by ATSSB to write ROMANZA SEMPLICE (published by TRN). One student was recognized for making

the ATSSB All-State Band all four years and was given the \$1000 scholarship. Additionally, the ATSSB State Board of Directors voted to award the \$1000 scholarship to the original three students who had made the ATSSB All-State Band all four years. The 230 students came from 128 different schools. ATSSB had 661 members.

Clinician for 1998 Symphonic Band was Dr. Anthony Maeillo from George Mason University. Dr. Ed Huckleby (from whom ATSSB commissioned NEW MILLENNIUM published by Barnhouse) was the clinician for the Concert Band. Four student were recognized for making the ATSSB All-State Band all four years and each received the \$1000 scholarship. The 230 students came from 133 different schools. ATSSB had 736 members.

Col. Alan Bonner was the clinician for the 1999 Symphonic Band and John O'Reilly was the Concert Band clinician (O'Reilly was commissioned to write A YORKSHIRE FANTASY published by Alfred Music). One student was recognized with a \$1000 scholarship for making the ATSSB All-State Band for four consecutive years. The 230 students in the 1999 All-State Band came from 143 different schools. ATSSB had 813 members.

David Holsinger was the clinician for the 2000 Symphonic Band (Holsinger was commissioned to write RIDING WITH THE FRONTIER BATTALION published by TRN for the Symphonic Band) and Dr. Jack Delaney from Southern Methodist University in Dallas was the Concert Band clinician. Six students were recognized with a \$1000 scholarship each for making the ATSSB All-State Band for four consecutive years. The 241 students in the 2000 All-State Band came from 148 different schools. ATSSB had 824 members.

Col. Arnald D. Gabriel was the clinician of the 2001 Symphonic Band and Bobby Francis from Texas Christian University was the Concert Band clinician. Robert Sheldon was commissioned to write HILL COUNTRY HOLIDAY published by Barnhouse for the Concert Band. Four students were recognized with a \$1000 scholarship each for making the ATSSB All-State Band for four consecutive years. The 240 students in the 2001 All-State Band came from 145 different schools. ATSSB had 867 members.

Clinician for 2002 Symphonic Band was Dr. Anthony Maeillo from George Mason University. Robert W. Smith (from whom ATSSB commissioned THE STAR OF DREAMS published by Warner Brothers) was the clinician for the Concert Band. Three students were recognized for making the ATSSB All-State Band all four years and each received the \$1000 scholarship. The 240 students came from 136 different schools. ATSSB had 914 members.

Clinician for 2003 Symphonic Band was Francis W. McBeth from Ouichita University. James Barnes (from whom ATSSB commissioned A SOLEMN PRELUDE published by Southern Music Company) was the clinician for the Concert Band. The Scholarship program was expanded, increasing the 4-year scholarship to \$2000 and adding a \$500 scholarship to seniors who made all-state three years. Nine students were recognized for making the ATSSB All-State Band all four years and each received a \$2000 scholarship. Fifteen students were recognized for making the ATSSB All-State Band three of their four years in high school and each received a \$500 scholarship. The 240 students came from 140 different schools. ATSSB had 924 members.

Clinician for 2004 Symphonic Band was James Keene from the University of Illinois. Kevin Sedatoleis scheduled to be the clinician for the Concert Band. Added in 2004 was the ATSSB All-State Jazz Ensemble with Shelly Berg from the University of Southern California as the clinician. The Association commissioned Elliot Del Borgo to write FORTRESS VARIANTS, published by Carl Fischer. Three students were recognized for

making the ATSSB All-State Band all four years and each received a \$2000 scholarship. Twenty-one students were recognized for making the ATSSB All-State Band three of their four years in high school and each received a \$500 scholarship. The 260 students come from 145 different schools. ATSSB had 904.

Clinician for 2005 Symphonic Band was Richard Floyd, State Director of Music for the University Interscholastic League. Fred J. Allen (from whom ATSSB commissioned EXHILARATION) was the clinician for the Concert Band. H. David Caffey from California State Polytechnical University was the clinician for the Jazz Ensemble. Nine students were recognized for making the ATSSB All-State Band all four years and each received the \$2000 scholarship. Ten students were recognized for making the ATSSB All-State Band three of their four years in high school and each received a \$500 scholarship. The 260 students came from 145 different schools. ATSSB had 948 members.

Clinician for the 2006 Symphonic Band was Col. John R. Bourgeois (USMC, Ret.). Paula Crider from the University of Texas at Austin was the clinician for the Concert Band. ATSSB commissioned Gabe Musella to write FROM ANAHUAC TO SAN JACINTO for the Concert Band, a grade 2+ concert march. Rick Stitzel from Tarrant County College was the Jazz Ensemble clinician. Five students were recognized for making the ATSSB All-State Band all four years and each received a \$2000 scholarship. Fourteen students were recognized for making the ATSSB All-State Band three of their four years in high school and each received a \$500 scholarship. The 260 students came from 150 different schools. ATSSB had 969 members.

Clinician for the 2007 Symphonic Band was Jerry Junkin from the University of Texas at Austin. Bill Brent from Northwestern State University (Natchitoches, LA) was the clinician for the Concert Band. ATSSB commissioned David Holsinger to write ON THE OVERLAND STAGE TO EL PASO for the Concert Band. Jeff Hellmer from the University of Texas at Austin was the Jazz Ensemble clinician. Eight students were recognized for making the ATSSB All-State Band all four years and each received a \$2000 scholarship. Nineteen students were recognized for making the ATSSB All-State Band three of their four years in high school and each received a \$500 scholarship. The 260 students came from 144 different schools. ATSSB had 1003 members.

Clinician for the 2008 Symphonic Band was David Holsinger from Lee University. Robert Sheldon, Concert Band Editor for Alfred Music Publications was the clinician for the Concert Band and ATSSB commissioned him to write CHOREOGRAPHY for the Concert Band. Dr. Lou Fischer from the Capital University Conservatory of Music was the Jazz Ensemble clinician. Four seniors were recognized for making the ATSSB All-State Band all four years and each received a \$2000 scholarship. Sixteen seniors were recognized for making the ATSSB All-State Band three of their four years in high school and each received a \$500 scholarship. The 260 students came from 146 different schools. ATSSB had 1003 members.

Clinician for the 2009 Symphonic Band was John Whitwell from Michigan State University. William K. Wakefield from the University of Oklahoma was the clinician for the Concert Band and ATSSB commissioned Phillip Sparke to write TOWARDS THE WESTERN HORIZON for the Concert Band. Mike Vax, International Artist for the Getzen Corporation, was the Jazz Ensemble clinician. Six seniors were recognized for making the ATSSB All-State Band all four years and each received a \$2000 scholarship. Twenty-one seniors were recognized for making the ATSSB All-State Band three of their four years in high school and each received a \$500 scholarship. The 260 students came from 135 different schools. ATSSB had 1008 members.

Clinician for the 2010 Symphonic Band was Mark Camphouse from George Mason University in Fairfax, Virginia. Dr. Sarah McKoin from Texas Tech University was the clinician for the Concert Band which premiered Eric Rath's PARAMOUNT PARK, winner of the 2010 ATSSB Composition Competition. Glenn Kostur from New Mexico State University was the clinician for the Jazz Ensemble. Seven seniors were recognized for making the ATSSB All-State Band all four years and each received a \$2000 scholarship. Seventeen seniors were recognized for making the ATSSB All-State Band three of their four years in high school and each received a \$500 scholarship. The 260 students came from 142 different schools. ATSSB had 1013 members.

In 1996, Ronnie Page decided to promote an idea he gotten from Mac Miller, owner of American Band Instruments in Tyler. His notion was that ATSSB has many good bands playing great literature that should be of interest to public radio stations and he felt ATSSB was the perfect organization to carry that out. In November of 1996, Ronnie began nurturing a plan and called both Kenneth Griffin and ATSSB President Don Stockton with the idea. Both thought it worth pursuing and Don asked Ronnie to form a committee of the three Class Representatives (Shannon Dow, Eric Wharton and Don Thoede) and formulate a proposal. The meeting was held at Don Thoede's house in Clifton. The Outstanding Performance Series was presented to the State Board of Directors in February of 1997 which approved the plan for that year with Don Thoede named as OPS State Chair (a position he has held through the present day). Since that time, 5010 individual submissions have been made in the series. There have been thirteen CD production runs for the thirteen years of the series with fifteen performances on each CD. The CDs produced after the 2004 Series are only made for free distribution to all eligible high schools in Texas, sent with the September Newsletter (which is the only edition of the quarterly Newsletter not exclusively distributed online).

Elected officers for the Association over the years included the following:

#### PRESIDENT

Mike Marsh	1991-1993
Fred Pankratz	1993-1995
Don Stockton	1995-1997
Ronnie Page	1997-1999
George Strickland	1999-2001
Gary Robbins	2001-2003
Ed Lowes	2003-2005
Steven Moore	2005-2006
Jim Jones (Pro Tem)	2006-2007
Rob Toups	2007-2009
Robert Vetter	2009-2011

#### VICE-PRESIDENT

Fred Pankratz	1991-1993
John Gibson	1993-1994
Bryant Harris	1994-1995

#### PRESIDENT-ELECT

Ronnie Page	1995-1997
George Strickland	1997-1999
Gary Robbins	1900-2001
Darin Jolly	2001-2002
Ed Lowes	2002-2003
Steven Moore	2003-2005
Rob Toups	2005-2007
Robert Vetter	2007-2009
Brandon Brewer	2009-2011

#### EXECUTIVE SECRETARY

Kenneth Griffin	1991-1997 (elected) 1997-2011 (appointed)
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#### C/CC REPRESENTATIVE TO THE SBOD

John Canfield	1995-1997
Sherry Poteet	1997-2007
Brandon Garmon	2007-2011

#### A REPRESENTATIVE TO THE SBOD

Rodney Bennett	1993-1995
Gene Conway	1995-1996
Shannon Dow	1996-2001
Rodney Bennett	2001-2002 (appointed)
Randy Hunsaker	2002-2006
E. Zane Polson	2006-2008
Mike Glaze	2008-2009
E. Zane Polson	2009-2010 (appointed)
Carroll Rhodes	2010-2012

#### AA REPRESENTATIVE TO THE SBOD

Elmer Schenk	1993-1995
Eric Wharton	1995-1997
Darin Jolly	1997-2001
Lonnie Baker	2001-2003
Lonnie Baker	2003-July 2003
Carl Idlebird	July 2003-2005 (appointed)
David Rollins	2005-2011

#### AAA REPRESENTATIVE TO THE SBOD

Ben Hoaldrige	1993-1995
Don Thoede	1995-1997
Wayne Smith	1997-1998
Rob Toups	1998-2004
Jim Jones	2004-2006
John Young	2006-2012

(Contributors to this history include Lonnie Dooley and the first elected officers of the Association: Mike Marsh, Fred Pankratz, and Kenneth Griffin)



## Epilog 1

I remember the day that the band division took the vote on the small school All State proposal. I was for having a small school All State; however, I did not like the way the proposal was written. It would have eliminated my students from participation in the same All State as the big schools. I have always had a lot of students in the TMEA Region and Area. At that time, I had only taught two students who made All State. My own children were in band and I wanted them to be able to be in the top All State if they were good enough. When Kenneth Griffin called me to ask if I would consider being the Region 10 ATSSB Coordinator, my first question was, "Will this in any way interfere with TMEA?" His answer was no. He explained that ATSSB was going to work for the kids and would be compatible with TMEA. I said yes and my life was changed for the better ever since. That first year, Warren had three in ATSSB All State. Matt Riley made it on tuba. Robby Fleebe was the very first 1st chair Clarinet. My son Trent was the very first 1st chair trombone. My students in Warren went ATSSB crazy. All I heard is, "I'm going to be All State." They started practicing for results. Until I retired Warren always had a few in ATSSB All State each year. We also had some TMEA All State students. Even though the music was different, I insisted that they do ATSSB All Region. The success of the All State students caught on with the rest of the band and we just got better and better. ATSSB gave my students prestige that they would have never known. From this they gained the "I can" attitude. ATSSB became the lifeblood of my bands.

In that first year I remember hearing band directors criticize ATSSB with concerns about the quality of the ATSSB All State Band. In fact it was so good that I cried at the first concert. My students and bands have accomplished many things in which I can take a great deal of pride. However, none of it compares with my involvement with ATSSB. As Region Coordinator, Area Tape Coordinator, Area Coordinator, and President I have been utterly amazed at the spirit of camaraderie and cooperation shared with the membership. As more and more small school directors became involved with leadership roles the quality of the small school bands skyrocketed. I take great pride in being a part of this growth.

Of equal importance to the Small Band All State is our Outstanding Performance Series. This was the brainchild of Mac Miller and has been run by OPS State Chair Don Thoede since its start. OPS gives the band that is able to perform one song in an outstanding manner an opportunity to be recognized state wide. What the small school All State has done for the quality of students, the OPS has done for the quality of the small school bands. The bottom line is that ATSSB has raised the standards of the small schools of Texas. The vision of our (ATSSB) founding members is being realized.

Don Stockton  
Region 10 Coordinator  
Area East Coordinator  
ATSSB President 1995-97

## Epilogue 2

My initial reaction to ATSSB was probably like many of yours. I had a long and what I felt was a personal relationship with TMEA. I believed that a few disillusioned directors were over-reacting to the sound defeat we received at the band division meeting in San Antonio. I, too, felt frustrated and let down. However, this was TMEA, and I had a difficult time accepting the fact that there may be another way. I even went so far to discuss this “new dissident organization” with my superintendent, asserting that Overton would not be involved!

After several weeks of soul-searching and introspect, I came to the realization one day that this organization was for my students, and that I should not make a decision that would affect them based on my personal tenets. From that moment forward I have been an avid supporter of both the ATSSB concept and organization. My first meeting with the SBOD as region XXI coordinator that summer corroborated my feelings. I did not meet a group of dissidents, but the most professional and compassionate leaders one could hope for. I was sold within five minutes of entering the room, and the meeting had not even begun!

That fall the last Overton student to attend a TMEA audition made the Region XXI Junior High TMEA Band. She was the only Overton student involved. Even though I, like you, carry a current TMEA membership card in my pocket, I have not had a student involved in the TMEA process since that fall. That young lady graduated this past May after having been an ATSSB area qualifier her junior and senior years. Many things have changed since the year she and I attended a region clinic/concert by ourselves.

The past two years Overton region qualifiers have ridden a bus to the clinic/concert, and there were no spare seats. From the one seventh grade flute player to about 40 students a year in the high school and junior high region bands, the numbers have grown by 4000%! Each student that auditions improves the quality of the band, as well as their confidence and self esteem. Those that are successful in the audition and return for the clinic obviously acquire more of the same. In addition, roughly 10 students a year are progressing to the area level. What an incentive for the rest of them, and this is in addition to the skills the area qualifiers develop beyond regional competition.

Then there is the supreme accomplishment of being chosen for an all-state band. This has come to pass for four students in Overton. Three of these students are still in the band program. The benefits of an all-state experience extend far beyond the young men and women who make the trip to San Antonio. The skills they can acquire in three short days are incredible, and they each come home with renewed enthusiasm which spreads throughout the band. They are always eager to teach others what they have learned. These benefits are like interest on money in a savings account, the power is in the compounding, and these students are the compounding force.

Obviously I have found the band growing each year in maturity and ability. I am sure, like myself, you have found the same with the small school bands in your area. I attribute this in a very large part to their active participation in the ATSSB tryout process.

If it were not for ATSSB, my students would have a very limited all-region experience, and in all probability only a rare area experience. The all-state experience would be something we could only talk about. My students would have missed the boat entirely had I not made an early commitment to ATSSB. Like most of you I am thankful I did, and am grateful to those “dissident few” who had a vision from which Texas small school band students benefit daily.

Ronnie Page

ATSSB President-Elect 1995-97

ATSSB President 1997-99