



1991-2026



# ASSOCIATION OF TEXAS SMALL SCHOOL BANDS

In our 35th year of service to small school bands in Texas

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## ATSSB NEWSLETTER

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### President's Column

by Angie Liss



Congratulations, everyone—we did it. We survived another marching season. Give yourselves a round of applause or even better, a nap! To all the bands who competed at the UIL State Marching Contest—from 1A through 4A, Open Class and Military—well done. The excellence on

display with each performance truly had me in awe! What we are able to accomplish in our small schools is quite a feat!

And a special shoutout to EVERY director who kept their cool when the weather ruined a rehearsal, a prop exploded, half the brass section forgot their flip folders and their long black socks. You didn't just survive—you thrived. You're the real MVPs!

On a personal note, I had the genuine honor of assisting with the trophy presentations at the 1A-4A Open Class State UIL Marching Contests. Standing on that field, shaking hands with every student

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(President's Column, continued from Page 1):

representative, and sharing in the joy and celebration will forever be a highlight of my career. I was genuinely impressed by every performance, and I loved being a small part of your students' big moment. Thank you for letting me represent ATSSB and celebrate alongside you.

Special congratulations to our gold medalists:

Military Class: 1A/2A – Beckville HS (Josh King), 3A – West Rusk HS (Grady Haffner), 4A – Gilmer HS (Eric Gray)

Open Class: 1A – Cross Plains HS (Jesus Perez), 2A – Rivercrest HS (Elliott Ayo), 3A – Mineola HS (Jim Best), 4A – Celina HS (Jon Weddle)

Now, because the universe has a sense of humor, we immediately pivot to the next season: All-Region auditions, concert and sight-reading contests, UIL Solo & Ensemble, winterguard and all the other things that dominate our calendar. If you're already calculating how many late nights you'll survive between now and summer break...congratulations, you're in good company.

Before we drown completely in the chaos, take a moment to reconnect with your "why." I know—everyone's favorite in-service question—but it matters. Even when teenagers give their classic "whatever" responses, you're there to help them navigate life, grow, and build skills they'll use long after they forget the fingering for that tricky scale. Music is just the tool, but the impact can be priceless.

Thank you—for your patience, your humor, your flexibility, and your ability to not throw something across the room when someone says, "You must be relieved to be done with band for a while." I am honored to serve alongside each of you, and I can't wait to see your students shine in this next wonderfully chaotic stretch of the year. I hope to see you at TMEA in February. Reach out if I can help—seriously, I mean it!



The ATSSB Newsletter is the official publication of the Association of Texas Small School Bands. Articles of interest to small school band directors will be published. Letters to the Editor from members will be published if signed, although writers may remain anonymous by request. Send all inquiries to ATSSB, 2117 Morse Street, Houston, Texas 77019; fax them to 713-874-1151, or email them to the Executive Secretary at [atssb@att.net](mailto:atssb@att.net) with appropriate attachments. Advertising is accepted for the Newsletter. See the Advertising Policy on our website:

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## President-Elect Column

by Brian Sours

In the September newsletter this year, I ended my column by writing: “I hope you all have a great year full of goal achievements and growth! Know that ‘success’ is relative... One person’s definition of success is different from another. Also, remember to continue to find time to ‘relax, reflect, and rejuvenate’ even during the school year!”

Three months later and these words are still true. Reading them again reminded me to always maintain prospective of marching season in relation to the entire year, that success is not definitive, and that I must find time for myself even during the very busy fall semester. If you missed a goal this marching season, reflect upon it now while it’s fresh on your mind and begin planning on different approaches towards meeting your targets in the future. Call a mentor or close colleague and see what suggestions and strategies that they might have to help you next marching season. Ask others in our field what they have done to achieve the goals you are currently seeking. Inquire about available professional development opportunities at the TMEA and TBA conventions that can help you grow as a music educator. If you met your goals this season, then you should still take time to reflect upon on how you were able to achieve them, how you will build upon them in the future, and how you could help other directors reach similar goals. Regardless of how marching season turned out, it is important to remember that the entire year should not be defined by the level of success you had during marching season.

I do want to take some time to say congratulations to all the Texas small school marching bands in 1A-4A that performed this season. I’m amazed at how the level of quality improves each year. Texas marching bands continue to set the standard for what is possible in the small school world. This is a testament to the time and resource investments the directors, students, administration, and parents put into the activity. I know that marching season and football games in tandem make for a long, stressful and exhausting time for all involved, but the memories created make it worth it! Celebrate that journey and cherish those memories. Also, be sure to thank your students, staff, parents, chaperones, administration, community members, mentors, clinicians and anyone else that help make marching season possible.

With that said, soon we will clean and store away our marching equipment in exchange for concert instruments. This gives every program a chance for a “reset.” After all, we must move forward and prepare for region auditions and concerts, holiday concerts, parades, UIL Solo & Ensemble, and UIL Concert & Sight Reading Evaluation. There’s plenty of work left to do! I personally consider concert season be the “meat and potatoes” of every band program. It’s a chance to slow down and focus on fundamental playing and a deeper understanding of musicality. I hope you had some time during the Thanksgiving break to relax and rejuvenate so you that you can navigate your students through these upcoming events with physical energy and mental clarity. You will need the physical energy for the long days and the mental clarity for all the paperwork and planning!

Lastly, if you have any suggestions for the SARC committee related to potential errata discoveries, suggested alterations to the ATSSB All-State audition music, or any recommended adjustments to the audition procedures (PAL), please reach out to me at [bsours@atssb.org](mailto:bsours@atssb.org). I hope you have a great end to your semester and a relaxing holiday season!



*Brian Sours*

## Immediate Past-President Column

by Rodney Bennett

This fall marching season was fast and furious and just flew by this year. Hopefully it was a successful one for you and your bands. Congratulations to all the bands who advanced the UIL Area Contests and then qualified to the UIL State Marching Band Championships in San Antonio. This has been another exciting marching season with all classifications advancing to the UIL State Marching Band Champions. There were two weeks of outstanding and inspiring performances to see and hear! A special shout-out to the 1A UIL State Marching Band Champions – Cross Plains High School – Jesus Perez – director, 2A UIL State Marching Band Champions – River Crest School – Elliot Ayo - director, 3A UIL State Marching Band Champions – Mineola High School – Jim Best - director, and the 4A State Marching Band Champions – Celina High School – Jon Weddle - director (4 Consecutive State Champions!). Every band who participated at the UIL State Marching Band Championships are winners and represent the very best of what we all strive to do with our band programs. The artistry – musically and visually, continues to rise to new heights. Bravo and well done!



Thanksgiving break has come and gone and Christmas break is fast approaching. I hope each of you had a good pause in your routine and spent time with family, getting some needed rest to recharge for the final days of the fall semester. When we return from the Thanksgiving break most of us will have only 3 weeks before the Christmas break because of the late Thanksgiving date this year. Do your best to stay healthy and energetic for your students. There are some of you who still have upcoming marching band performances with your football teams in the playoffs. Enjoy supporting your teams and continue to make great memories with your kids. Knowing the challenges of preparing for region band auditions, Christmas concerts, and marching band all at the same time can be a real energy drainer.

Make sure you stay on top of the dates, deadlines and procedures for your region auditions. This will ensure that you get the students entered correctly in a timely manner and ultimately save you time and money. Late fees can become expensive and you may have to answer questions as to why the students entered late. I bring this to your attention only to reinforce that there are possible consequences for not following audition entry procedures.

I hope we all realize how fortunate we are to have the opportunity to teach at our respective schools and have positive impact in students' lives. This year has continued to be a challenge with student behavior, classroom decorum and what seems at times to be an overall lack of commitment to excellence. We must press on to create meaningful musical experiences in our daily rehearsals with an emphasis on making music for the sake of music. The translating of what we do in our daily work into outstanding performances for our students and audiences.

I am honored to continue serving ATSSB as the Immediate Past President and with the esteemed colleagues on the Executive Board. It is my sincerest hope that ATSSB continues to meet your needs as small school band directors of Texas. If I can ever be of assistance to you or your students, don't hesitate to ask.

Please be sure to check out your region website for all the information regarding your region auditions. Also refer to the ATSSB website for audition music errata.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Rodney Bennett". The signature is stylized and cursive.

## Executive Director Column by Kenneth L. Griffin



I hope the region audition process went well for all of you and that your students who advanced to Area are preparing for an even better audition for Area January 7. Make sure you have paid the \$25 Area fee (most regions collect that and send one check).

The clinician for the ATSSB All-State Symphonic Band is Dr. Richard M. Heidel from the University of Iowa. The ATSSB All-State Concert Band clinician will be Randall D. Standridge, composer and clinician. ATSSB has commissioned Mr. Standridge to write a piece to be premiered by this ensemble. We also look forward to Tito Carrillo from Texas State University working with the ATSSB All-State Jazz Ensemble. ATSSB has commissioned Mr. Tito to write a piece for the 2026 ATSSB All-State Jazz Ensemble.

There are no forms needed for Area. Students selected to State will receive an email regarding housing, the Medical Release and a Code of Conduct (needing signatures) that they must bring to registration on Wednesday of the clinic February 11, 2026. Students making ATSSB All-State (including the 20 ATSSB Jazz Ensemble students) need to make housing plans for the clinic. See the 2026 ATSSB All-State Housing Quick Guide in this Newsletter which needs to be completed immediately after Area January 7.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank Christina Smith for her service to ATSSB the last two years as Class 2C/3C Representative to the ATSSB State Board of Directors, to Justin Mauldin for his service this past year to ATSSB as appointed Class 2A Representative and to Jay Sutton for his service to ATSSB this past year as appointed Class 4A Representative. A State office is a time-consuming but necessary role to keep our Association strong and current for our small schools. These outgoing officers also contributed as members of the Executive Committee as it met to accommodate the needs of students and their directors in the interim between State Board of Director meetings.

Please make an effort not only to thank our Licensees for their support, but also to use their services. These companies have paid a fee and are under contract to use the ATSSB logo and marks on their products. They pay a portion of their receipts to the ATSSB All-State Band Scholarship Fund. Please consider using them before any other companies offering the same or similar products. See the list elsewhere in this Newsletter. Also, be sure to ask anyone selling items at ATSSB activities (region concerts, etc.) if they are official ATSSB Licensees. This brings up a point regarding recorded examples of ATSSB audition music. The only officially approved recordings are those by Licensees. We realize some college and university faculty members make recordings, but you need to be careful they do not use their own editions or interpretations utilizing individual editorial changes that might confuse the student when auditioning. Check to be sure the recordings are provided by official ATSSB Licensees before purchasing them. Not only will you be maintaining consistent recording and performing standards, you will also be supporting our Scholarship Fund since Licensees pay a royalty on all sales to the Fund.

A reminder about piccolo and E $\flat$  clarinet: If your flute player makes the All-State Band at the Area auditions January 11 and would like to play piccolo, have them bring their piccolo to San Antonio. After regular chair auditions are completed for flute, we will hold separate auditions for piccolo in each band from among those students interested in it that were selected for their respective bands. No E $\flat$  clarinet will be used in either Concert or Symphonic Band this year. A notice concerning this policy will be placed in the flute and clarinet links they will receive at Area this year if they are selected for the All-State Band. Piccolos players will audition on the actual piccolo parts and chair placement in their

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(Executive Secretary's Column, continued from Page 5):

respective bands will have nothing to do with who is selected to play piccolo.

We plan to hold our ATSSB Business Session Friday, February 13, 2026, in CC214 of the convention center at 2:00. Elections for Class 2C/3C, Class 2A and Class 4A Representatives to the State Board of Directors will be held at that time. This ballot will have the top two vote recipients in each class should no one receive the majority of votes in the electronic ballot held in the first week of January. If you do not get a link to vote by the end of the first week in January, contact the Executive Director for a link. A short biographical sketch and picture of each candidate for state office who has submitted documentation can be found in this Newsletter. If any are missing, check back because biographies and/or pictures will be added if and when the candidates have submitted the information to this office.

When you get a chance, be sure to thank our Region and Area Coordinators for their efforts in securing audition panels, planning and executing region clinics and concerts, meetings, etc. Be sure to visit with your Region Coordinators about issues you wish addressed at the State Board meeting coming up. Make your opinions about issues confronting ATSSB known to your representatives to the State Board so they can be discussed with a consensus from the membership.

Thanks to all of you for your continued diligence and hard work on behalf of the students in our small school programs. Keep up the great work.



## OPS State Chair Column by Collin Anderson



“It’s the most wonderful time of the year” – that point between football season and Christmas concerts and Christmas parades and All-Region Band and solo & ensemble and concert/sight reading preparations... It never seems to end, does it? I do hope that you all will take time to slow down and rest during the holiday season as much as possible and be refreshed for the spring semester.

With February not too far away, I want to remind all of our 2025 Outstanding Performance Series winners (1st place and runner-up march and 1st/2nd place and runner-up concert selections) that awards will be presented during the ATSSB general session at the TMEA annual convention. I hope that each of you will be able to attend and receive your winner’s plaque during the presentation. Do remember that anyone who may have changed schools during the summer will still receive the award you earned within your previous position. I would like to offer my thanks to all of the judges at each level of this year’s competition, especially for giving your time during the hecticness of the end

of school, while you are on your off time during the summer, or taking time away from your TBA convention. Having great judges at the region, area, and state levels ensures that the most outstanding performances advance and then rise to the top at state. I want to still offer thanks to Frank Coachman for setting up our new online portal for entries and adjudication, saving me and all our coordinators a lot of time and energy this year. And, of course, thanks to all of the fine bands and directors who make the Outstanding Performance Series such a great success by accepting the challenge to strive to create such amazing, musical performances.

Wishing you all the best in your Christmas, solo/ensemble, and spring UIL season preparations! Look for any possible updates to the OPS process in the March newsletter.



## State Jazz Coordinator Column

by Brian Donnell (bdonnell@atssb.org)

There are three items for you in this newsletter article – the personnel for the State Jazz Band, upcoming SARC recommendation, teaser for Set A audition music.



### 2026 ATSSB All-State Jazz Band members

#### Alto Saxophone

Wayland Hedrick, China Spring HS, 12  
Carson Seabolt, Brock HS, 12

#### Tenor Saxophone

Gunner Simon, Aubrey HS, 12  
Luis Arturo Mojica, Hargrave HS, 12

#### Baritone Saxophone

Julio Guerrero, Venus HS, 12

#### Trumpet

\*\* Caleb Atkins, Davenport HS, 12  
Ashton Garcia, Early College T-Stem Academy, 11  
Brian Rayner, Rio Hondo HS, 10  
Ethan Golden, Commerce HS, 12  
Adan Sixtos, Bandera HS, 12

#### Tenor Trombone

Xavier Wolff, Davenport HS, 11  
Haven Hardy, Sulphur Springs HS, 11  
\*\* Larkin Tyler, Grandview HS, 12

#### Bass Trombone

Luke Orendorff, Sunnyvale HS, 9  
Fabian Reyes, Raymondville HS, 12

#### Drums

Micah Danielson, Van Alstyne HS, 12  
\*\* Leon Guzman, Raymondville HS, 12

#### Jazz Piano

Aiden Adams, Fairfield HS, 12

#### Bass Guitar

Brady Wyatt, St. Mark's School of Texas, 12

#### Jazz Guitar

Abell Perez, Wharton HS, 12

\*\* 2nd year in the ATSSB All-State Jazz Band

### SARC

In February, I will make a presentation to the SARC and State Board of Directors that changes the organization of judging panels for Area jazz recordings. Currently, there are 7 panels from across the state that adjudicate the recordings – one region does alto sax, one region does trumpets, etc. – and these regions are rotated each year so all areas are represented. The recommendation I will make is to move the responsibility of hiring judges from the region coordinators to the area coordinators. My proposal will ensure that each of the 7 panels will have representation from all 5 Areas, all judges will be experienced judges, and the chances of having knowledgeable directors of each specific instrument will be much higher. Contact me if you'd like to chat about this.

### Set A changes

The audition music for the 2026-2027 school year will be available for purchase in February, following the TMEA convention. The set has been modified slightly for ease of use for students and directors, and there's also a change to the improvisation piece. If you already own Set A, you will not be required to purchase the modified set. But you might want to!

The audition for Set A will be "Hotfoot Down", "Big Easy Parade", "Three Meter Skeeter", and "Bags' Groove" (this replaces "Blooizin Elf" from the previous Set A). We will make the lead sheet music for "Bags' Groove" available for download on the jazz page in February. All copyright permissions have been secured to use this for our audition process.

I hope you have a wonderful holiday season. It's an honor to serve.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Brian Donnell".

# ELECTION

Class 2C/3C, Class 2A and Class 4A Representatives to the State Board of Directors will be elected by electronic ballot during the first week of January. If no clear winner is determined in that electronic ballot, the top two vote recipients will be on a secret ballot at the ATSSB General Session February 13, 2026, in CC214 at 2:00. Nominees who submitted a biography and/or picture by the time of publication follow below. Only current Retired and Active Members actively involved in 2C/3C middle schools (including the high directors involved) may vote on 2C/3C Representative. Only current Retired and Active Members actively involved in Class 2A high schools (including their feeder school directors) may vote on 2A Representative. Only current Retired and Active Members actively involved in Class 4A high schools (including their feeder school directors) may vote on 4A Representative.

## Class 2C/3C Representative

**Justin Miller** is the head band director at Krum Middle School in Region 2. Now in his eighth year of teaching in Texas public schools, Justin has dedicated his career to creating meaningful musical experiences that empower students to grow artistically, socially, and personally.



His service to ATSSB Region 2 demonstrates his commitment to supporting music educators and strengthening small-school band programs across the state. Justin served as the ATSSB Region 2 Secretary from 2022–2024 and currently serves as the Region 2 Middle School Coordinator. These leadership roles have allowed him to collaborate with directors, organize events, and help ensure that students and teachers alike receive high-quality opportunities.

Justin believes deeply in the power of music education. Music provides artistry, creativity, structure, and countless opportunities to excel. Through the discipline of music, he has learned the values of teamwork, high achievement, and joy - values he now strives to instill in his students. He is passionate about guiding young musicians to discover confidence and fulfillment through music-making.

In the classroom, Justin is known for providing the ideal balance of structure,

encouragement, discipline, and inspiration. Students respond to his high expectations and supportive approach, and his programs' accomplishments reflect his effective teaching methods. He finds great joy in fostering a team-centered environment, collaborating closely with colleagues, and building a culture of shared excellence within the band program.

Justin also prioritizes strong communication and positive relationships with parents and administrators, ensuring that the band program is a valued and well-supported part of the school community.

As a candidate for ATSSB 2C State Representative, Justin brings passion, experience, and a sincere dedication to serving the directors and students of Texas small-school bands. He looks forward to advocating for meaningful opportunities, strengthening connections across regions, and continuing the legacy of excellence within ATSSB.



**Christina Smith** is the band director at Center Middle School in Region 21. "I am seeking re-election to the office of 2C/3C State Representative for ATSSB. I have served the students and membership for the past 9 years, and



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(Nominees, continued from Page 8):

I would like to continue to serve.

As your 2C/3C State Representative, I chaired the Inclusion Committee which created a rule change which now allows for accommodations for students who need them. I served on the Executive Committee that planned the All State Experience at Melissa ISD in June 2021, and chaired the Constitution Committee which presented amendments in February 2022, which ultimately passed. I chaired the Patch Committee and presented options to the State Board for updates to the Area Patch, and I have coordinated sectionals for the All State Bands since 2020. In January 2025, I chaired the committee to review all ATSSB's rules and procedures to ensure documents are user friendly, and procedures are clear and consistent. This was an extensive review, which was presented to the State Board of Directors in July 2025, and went into effect this audition season.

I earned my National Board Certification for Music in December 2024. Board Certification is held by 3% of teachers in the United States, and just .37% of teachers in Texas.

I am the band director at Center Middle School, where I have served for 21 years. Before teaching in Center, I taught 7th grade band for 2 years at Henderson Middle School. I have taught in ATSSB schools for 21 years, and all my experience is at the middle school level. The bands at Center Middle School consistently earn "Sweepstakes" Awards at UIL Concert and Sightreading Contest. The band program in Center has a 98% retention rate across all the bands, and the MS program has over 350 students.

I would appreciate your vote so that I can continue to work to serve you and your students."



**Kevin Sutton** is the band director at Pleasant Grove Middle School in Region 4. He is a dedicated music educator with 13 years of teaching experience. He has spent most of his career serving small-school band programs at Henderson ISD, New Boston ISD, and currently Pleasant Grove ISD. At Pleasant Grove Middle School, Kevin conducts the 8th Grade Band, teaches beginner flute, saxophone, and euphonium, and assists with all other performing ensembles. His bands are consistent sweepstakes award winners, and the PGMS Band is a perennial top performer in the ATSSB North Zone Middle School All-Region auditions.



A 2009 graduate of Pleasant Grove High School and a 2013 graduate of Henderson State University, Kevin now resides in Texarkana with his wife, Anna—also a band director at PGMS—and their two children, Caleb and Caroline. He remains active as an adjudicator, clinician, and performer, and plays with both the First Baptist Church Mount Vernon Orchestra and the Texarkana Jazz Orchestra.

Mr. Sutton's professional affiliations include: ATSSB, TMEA, TBA, TMAA, and the Four States Bandmasters Association. He has previously served as the ATSSB North Zone Middle School Coordinator and the TMEA Region 4 Middle School Coordinator, and currently serves as President of TMEA Region 4.

"I am humbled to be nominated by my outstanding Region 4 colleagues to serve as the ATSSB 2C/3C State Representative. ATSSB has had a profound impact on me as

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(Nominees, continued from Page 9):

both a student and an educator, and I would be honored to serve this organization.”



**Robin Weatherman**

is the band director at Burkburnett Middle School in Region 7. She is in her 31st year of teaching and 18th year as Director of Middle School Bands at Burkburnett ISD. A native Texan, she earned her Bachelor of Music from Angelo State University and is a proud parent of a son working in the aerospace industry.



Robin has spent 25 years in small school settings, including Robinson, Tom Bean, and Burkburnett ISDs. Her bands have earned 21 consecutive UIL Sweepstakes Awards, and in 2017, her varsity band placed 6th in the State OPS Competition.

She is an active member of ATSSB, TMEA, and TMAA, and regularly serves as a UIL judge in Regions 8 and 30.

“If elected, I will bring my passion for student success and deep understanding of small school programs to represent Class 2C/3C with dedication and integrity.”

## Class 2A Representative

**Justin Mauldin** is the band director at Sundown High School in Region 16. He is a 2000 graduate of Dumas High School, and after graduating from Texas Tech University in December of 2004,



he met the girl he would be with forever in May of 2005 and married her as quickly as he could in July of 2006. Justin and Amber have three boys: Daniel, Carter, and Will, and wouldn't trade them for anything in the world.

In 2005, Justin accepted his first teaching position as the assistant band director at Canadian High School (2A at the time). He spent the following two years as the assistant at Abernathy High School (2A at the time), and then four years as the assistant at Terra Vista Middle School in Frenship ISD (4A at the time, and then became a 6A). In 2012, Justin accepted his first head director position at Smylie Wilson Middle School in Lubbock, which fed into Lubbock Coronado High School (5A), and spent three years rebuilding the program there. Longing to get back into a small school, he spent the next two years as the assistant director at Levelland High School (4A) and then took over the program at Ropes High School (1A at the time). Mr. Mauldin is now serving in his 7th year as the Director of Bands for Sundown ISD (2A).

The experience Justin has gained in the various larger and smaller classifications serves him well today in his 21st year as a band director. He has an appreciation of the very different “worlds” that exist, and of course the unique challenges of small schools. As a proud member of ATSSB and TMEA, Mr. Mauldin served as the TMEA Region 16 Middle School Chair from 2012-2014, a member of the State Audition Review Committee from 2022 to 2025, is in his 7th year as the organizer for the ATSSB Region 16 A/AA All-Region Band, served as the Organizer Apprentice for the ATSSB All-State Symphonic Band in 2025, and will be the Organizer for the ATSSB All-State Symphonic Band in 2026.

Justin is the current ATSSB 2A State Representative and would be honored by your vote to continue to serve in this capacity.



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(Nominees, continued from Page 10):

**Crystal Senzig** is the band director at Riesel High School in Region 8.



“ I am a proven advocate for small school bands, currently serving as the Head Band Director at Riesel High School (Region 8). For seven years, our Riesel bands have consistently achieved Superior Ratings, a testament to my commitment to excellence in small school music education.

A graduate of a 2A high school myself, I have a deep, personal understanding of the unique environment of small school programs. I am an active member of ATSSB and TMEA, and I have a strong commitment to service of fellow directors and programs. I am a provisional member of TMAA for Concert/ Sight Reading and for Marching Band, and for five years, I have served as Chairman of the CENTEX Honor Band, which provides another local honor band experience for around 350 1A, 2A, and 3A band students each year in Waco and the surrounding area.

My dedication to providing positive, quality competitive experiences for our small school bands is further demonstrated by hosting 2A UIL Region Marching Contest, two Invitational Solo and Ensemble Contests each spring, and the Riesel Invitational Marching Band contest.

I hold a Bachelor of Music degree from Hardin-Simmons University and have been married to Eric Senzig for 22 years. We have three children, Ryan, Richie, and Maelynn. Richie and Maelynn are active leaders in the Riesel Band, which provides me with a direct, current connection to the student experience.

I believe that every band student

deserves the chance to perform and compete at the highest level, fostering the pride and accomplishment that comes with success. If honored with the role of 2A State Representative, I will be an active, vocal advocate, ensuring the strong tradition of excellence in our smaller schools continues to thrive across the state.”



**Zachary Sims** is the band director at Shiner High School in Region 18.



“As a proud product of ATSSB, I understand firsthand the positive influence ATSSB and music education have on students from small schools.

I seek to continue and build upon the tremendous work started by past ATSSB board members and dedicated band directors across our state.

This is my fifteenth year in education and my tenth year as head band director at Shiner ISD. Under my direction, the Shiner Comanche Band has consistently earned UIL Sweepstakes awards and multiple State Marching Contest appearances. The Comanche Band has been a UIL State Marching Contest finalist in four of the last five years, including a 2nd place finish in 2021, 1st place in 2022, 4th place in 2023, and 5th place in 2025. The program has also advanced to the finals of the TMEA Honor Band Series, placing 8th in 2022 and 4th in 2024. Before Shiner, I served as head director at Sabinal ISD, where the Yellowjacket Band was regularly a finalist in the Outstanding Performance Series, appeared at the State Marching Contest, and earned UIL Sweepstakes recognition.

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(Nominees, continued from Page 11):

I am regularly invited to clinic bands and adjudicate across Texas in both marching and concert settings. I have presented clinics at the Texas Bandmasters Association and Texas Music Educators Association conventions and served as an All-Region band clinician in Regions 7, 8, 12, 13, and 16. My leadership roles include junior high region band organizer and secretary for ATSSB region 18/26, ATSSB All-State Symphonic Band organizer apprentice (2023), and All-State Symphonic Band organizer (2024). I was honored to be appointed to serve on the SARC committee three times and have enjoyed seeing the committee’s positive impact on student auditions.

How I will support 2A directors and small-school programs:

- Work with ATSSB to increase visibility and recognition for small-school achievements through awards, spotlight features, and expanded performance opportunities
- Listen to local directors through regular surveys and open forums, then bring their concerns to the state board to pursue policy changes or support programs that address scheduling, contest formats, and staffing challenges
- Build upon the tireless work of previous ATSSB directors and bring creative new ideas to propel ATSSB for the foreseeable future

I earned my bachelor’s degree in Music Education from Texas Tech University. My professional affiliations include TMEA, TBA, TMAA, and Phi Beta Mu. I enjoy traveling in my free time when I am not teaching, exploring new places and bringing fresh ideas back to my program. My wife, Whitney, and I proudly live in Shiner with our sons Hudson and Griffin and dogs Libby and Dolly.

If elected as your Class 2A representative, I will use my experience and statewide connections to be a responsive advocate for our unique needs, help build

practical support for directors, and strengthen opportunities for our students. I appreciate your consideration and would be honored to serve as the ATSSB class 2A representative.”



**Andy Thompson** is the band director at Union Grove High School in Region 4. He is currently in his eleventh year at Union Grove ISD and 17th year overall. During his tenure at Union Grove, Mr. Thompson’s band’s have won multiple HS & JH



UIL Sweepstakes Awards. This year marked the 35th consecutive year the UGHS Band earned the sweepstakes award; currently the longest small school streak in Texas. The UG Band has consistently participated in the UIL State Military Marching Contest since its inception. His bands at Union Grove have been named TMEA Honor Band finalists twice. The UG Band has also earned eight ATSSB Outstanding Performance Series HS & JH Awards during his time.

Mr. Thompson is a 2009 graduate of Henderson State University and is an active member of: ATSSB, TMEA, TBA, and TMAA. He serves as a clinician and UIL judge throughout the East Texas area. Andy lives in Longview, TX with his beautiful wife Sarah and two children: Emily(7) and Brady(newborn). The Thompson’s are also members of Mobberly Baptist Church in Longview.

“I am honored to be nominated to serve as the 2A state representative. As an ATSSB All-State product of 2005, I have truly been impressed by the resilience of all

(Continued on Page 13)

(Nominees, continued from Page 12):

ATSSB schools. I am dedicated to helping both directors and students thrive and enjoy a rewarding band experience. It would be a privilege to serve and represent my Class 2A colleagues.”



**Jeff Van Oort** is the band director at Collinsville High School in Region 24.



“My family includes my wife (Dani), two children (Will and Addy) and two pugs (Bowser and Loki). I graduated from North Dakota State University with a B.M. in music education (2009) and an M.M. in trombone performance (2012). My first teaching job was as the Instrumental Music Director in Oakes, ND, where I taught K12 band and elementary music for five years. During my last year in North Dakota, I also taught trombone as an adjunct professor at Valley City State University. We moved to Texas in 2017, and the last nine years of my career have been as the Head Band Director in Collinsville, TX. Go Pirates!

I am a member of ATSSB, TMEA, TMAA, and the International Trombone Association. I have also served as the 2A Region Representative in ATSSB Region 24. I also play tuba in Smokin’ Aces Brass Band, which was selected to perform at TMEA in 2025. In my time at Collinsville, I have helped lead the program in growth, community, and success at UIL events. I have successfully petitioned Collinsville ISD for new band uniforms, a new band trailer, and a second director who also started the elementary music program in our district. The band has

more than doubled in size and earned multiple accolades in marching, concert, All State, sightreading, Solo Ensemble, and TSSEC contest. The HS band also earned its first sweepstakes award in 2025.

I am running for the State Board of Directors because every division needs a voice, and I believe I can proudly represent the directors of 2A bands. Having taught in a state that is smaller in population than the DFW metroplex, I can tell you from personal experience that the Texas bands are different. I know how hard it can be to work in a smaller district, and my experience with developing programs and mentoring other directors would be an asset to my role as the 2A Representative. If selected for this position, I look forward to helping ATSSB to the best of my professional abilities. Thank you for this opportunity!”

## Class 4A Representative

**Richard Cole** is the band director at Pecos High School in Region 6. He has served as Director of Bands at Pecos High School since 2018, leading the Pecos Wind Ensemble, Marching Band, and the Pecos Band Cluster.



Under his direction, the band has earned multiple UIL Sweepstakes awards and advanced to the UIL 4A State Marching Contest five times. The Pecos Marching Band has competed annually at Bands of America Regionals, winning five Class 1A and one Class 2A titles, and earning two Class 1A Championships at the BOA San Antonio Super Regional.

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(Nominees, continued from Page 13):

He serves as Director of Fine Arts for Pecos-Barstow-Toyah ISD, supporting district-wide Fine Arts programs and overseeing the development of the new Pecos High School Performing Arts Center.

Richard Cole holds degrees from the University of North Texas and Sul Ross State University. He is active in TMEA, TBA, TMAA, and ATSSB, where he serves as Region 6 Secretary. He resides in Pecos with his wife, Brittany, their 2 cats Siri and Alexa, and their dog Jo.

“I am truly honored to be nominated for the Class 4A State Representative. For the past 11 years I have proudly served and taught in ATSSB with 10 of those years being in Region 6 out in West Texas. If elected, I would be proud to continue ATSSB’s mission of advocating for and advancing small-school music programs throughout the state as your Class 4A State Representative.”



**Eduardo Gonzales**

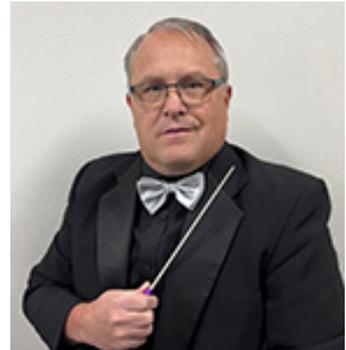
is the band director at Canyon Lake High School in Region 12. He currently resides in San Antonio with his husband. He is a UTSA alumnus and has performed with the Black Gold Drum and Bugle Corps, Heart of Tx Concert Band, San Antonio Wind Symphony and the Alamo City Symphony Viva. He served as Asst. Director at Ed White MS (1995-1999) and New Braunfels HS (1999-2014), and Head Director at NBNGC. Accolades include 5 TECA State Divisional Titles and performances at Carnegie Hall. Currently, He is the Director of Bands and Color Guard Director/Choreographer at Canyon Lake HS, earning multiple UIL Sweepstakes awards and most recently, performing at the Tobin Center as a selected



ensemble for the YOSA Invitational. He is an active adjudicator, clinician, member of TI:ME, TMEA, and TECA, and served as a TECA Board Member from 2008-2014 and TMEA Region 12 Secretary from 2006 to 2022.



**Brandon Huff** is the band director at Krum High School in Region 2.



“I am honored to be nominated for the office of 4A Representative to the ATSSB State Board of Directors. For the past eleven years, I have had the privilege of serving as the Director of Bands and Director of Fine Arts for Krum ISD. Prior to my work in Krum, I served as the Director of Bands at Irving High School and as the Assistant Band Director at R.L. Turner High School. I am also currently serving as the ATSSB Region 2 Jazz Coordinator.

While I may have joined the small-school community later than some, I can confidently say that doing so has been the best decision of my career. I inherited an incredibly successful program in Krum, and together our students and staff have continued to build on that tradition with achievement at the state, national, and even international levels. Most recently, the Krum Band was awarded the Sudler Shield for marching excellence. In 2024, we were honored as the runner-up in the TMEA 4A Honor Band contest. Our program proudly represented small schools nationwide at the 2023 Music for All National Festival in the small school division. We are seven-time Bands of America Regional and Super Regional Class Champions, and our program recently competed at the 4A UIL State Marching Contest for the first time in school

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(Nominees, continued from Page 14):

history.

Beyond our competitive success, I have been fortunate to present professional development sessions for districts across the state on topics such as vertical alignment, climate and culture, and recruiting and retention. I enjoy collaborating with fellow directors to learn more about the great things happening in their programs—and to share what has worked well in ours.

As the 4A Representative, my goal is to serve as an agent of positive change. I believe deeply in preserving the high standards established by those who have shaped our profession, while also championing ideas that help us meet the needs of today’s small-school band students.

Our programs deserve strong representation—someone willing to listen, advocate, communicate clearly, and work collaboratively to ensure that every director and every student feels valued, supported, and heard.

Thank you for your consideration. It would be my privilege to serve as the 4A Representative for the Association of Texas Small School Bands.”



**Joe Sanchez** is the band director at Gatesville High School in Region 8. He is in his 17th year of education and currently serves as Director of Bands and Fine Arts Coordinator for Gatesville ISD.



Since joining Gatesville ISD in 2016, Mr. Sanchez has led the Fightin’ Hornet Band to consistent UIL Sweepstakes Awards and multiple appearances at the UIL State Marching Band Contest, including

Finals in 2024 and preliminaries in 2022 and 2023. In 2024, the program was a TMEA 4A Honor Band State Semi-Finalist, an ATSSB Outstanding Performance Series (OPS) State Finalist, and was selected as the 2025–2026 TMEA Program Spotlight.

He directs the high school marching, varsity concert bands, beginner brass classes, and oversees curriculum and events across all fine arts. In 2025, he was named Gatesville ISD’s Educator of the Year. His leadership emphasizes excellence, collaboration, and program growth.

Mr. Sanchez has served as ATSSB Middle School Honor Band Organizer since 2017, Region 8 Lead Band Organizer since 2023, and currently serves as Region 8 Vice-Coordinator.

Before Gatesville, he was assistant band director at Robinson ISD, helping lead the band to the 2015 UIL State Marching Contest and the 2015 TMEA 3A Honor Band title. He also directed programs at Wortham and Rosebud-Lott ISDs, leading Wortham to its first UIL Sweepstakes since 1996 and an OPS March Category second place finish in 2013.

Outside the classroom, he co-hosts band yap, a podcast with his wife, Alexa, focused on supporting music educators. He is a graduate of Baylor University and an active member of TMEA, TBA, ATSSB, and TMAA. He is a proud father of three children, twins-Eleanor and Jonah, and one year Joel (who was born on Area Marching Contest Day).

“The 4A classification encompasses an expansive range and size of school districts who all face an array of challenges. Most importantly, this position must be able to represent the full spectrum of schools within the classification. With my wide range of teaching and administrative experience, I would be able to promote the needs of not only the larger 4A school districts, but also take into account smaller school districts that are on the cusp of classifications and

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(Nominees, continued from Page 15):

divisions. There are vast disparities between 4A programs across the state, and as the representative for the classification I know that I could advocate for all.”



**Jay Sutton** is the band director at Pleasant Grove High School in Region 4. He is running to advocate for fair auditions, strong director support, and meaningful student opportunities while empowering small-school bands across Texas.



Mr. Sutton has been a Texas band director for 14 years and currently serves as Director of Bands at Pleasant Grove ISD in Texarkana, Texas (2022–Present). Under his leadership, Pleasant Grove has been a perennial UIL Sweepstakes Award-winning program and qualifier for the UIL State Marching Band Championships (2024). Previously, Sutton served as Director of Bands at Redwater ISD (2015–2022), where his ensembles earned multiple Sweepstakes Awards and were UIL State Marching Band Championships finalists (2019, 2021).

Sutton’s service to ATSSB includes his current roles as 4A State Representative (2025) and Region 4 Coordinator (2019–Present). He also served as All-State Band Organizer (2020–2022).

A proud member of ATSSB, TMEA, TMAA, TBA, and Phi Beta Mu – Alpha Chapter, Sutton resides in Texarkana with his wife, Kim, and their sons, Reid and Benjamin.

“I am running for 4A Representative to the ATSSB State Board of Directors to ensure that small-school directors and students have a strong, unified voice at the

state level. I am passionate about preserving ATSSB’s mission to serve Texas small-school musicians through fair, transparent audition and adjudication processes, practical director support, and meaningful educational opportunities for students.

As 4A State Representative, I pledge to advocate for consistent audition and judging standards statewide, expand mentoring, professional development, and clinic opportunities for directors, strengthen communication between the State Board and regional directors, and promote student-centered opportunities that make the ATSSB experience both meaningful and inspiring. I am committed to representing 4A programs with integrity and transparency, keeping the focus on what truly matters — empowering students and directors to achieve musical excellence across Texas.”



**Jeff Valperts** is a band director at Calallen High School in Region 14, a position he has held for the last ten years. During his time at Calallen, the band program has seen a great amount of success including six straight trips to the UIL State Marching Band Finals.



Mr. Valperts has also served as a judge and clinician during his time at Calallen. He has been the High School Region Clinician for Region 11 as well as a clinician for many region and area bands around South Texas. He has served on the judging panel for UIL Region Concert and Sight-Reading and also several UIL Area Marching Band Contest Panels.

Mr. Valperts is a member of TMEA,

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ATSSB, and TMAA.

He studied at The University of Illinois and Southern Illinois University. Mr. Valperts was a member of the University of Illinois Marching Illini and also a member of the Phantom Regiment Drum and Bugle Corps.

Mr. Valperts has served as contest host for the Annual Bay Area Pre-UIL Marching Contest, The Region Fourteen Marching Contest, The UIL Area E Marching Contest, the Drum Corps International Corpus Christi Contest, and is also the host of the ATSSB Area Auditions.

Mr. Valperts is originally from Illinois but has been a Band Director in Texas for almost 20 years. He has served as an assistant director and head director during his time in Texas.



Watch your email inbox the first week of January for a link to vote.

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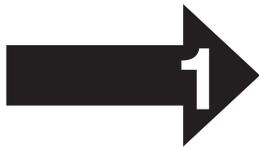


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KyleMacMusic@gmail.com  
817-680-6043

## Online Entry: January 12–13, 2026



### Log In

January 12–13: Go to [www.tmea.org/AShousing](http://www.tmea.org/AShousing).

Log in to the housing system using your TMEA record (your email and password).



### Enter Billing Information

Enter credit card data to secure the reservation. *(This can be changed at check-in).*

Click **Save**.



### Verify Your Students

Click **My Student List** from the Navigation Links and verify that each of your All-State students is listed and their submitted gender is accurate.

*If incorrect, contact Andrew Denman-Tidline, [adenman@tmea.org](mailto:adenman@tmea.org), 512-452-0710, x109.*



### Create Rooms

Click **My Room List** from the Navigation Links

Select gender for the room occupants and click **GO**.

Your student list will display. Select students for the room **and** enter the chaperone's TMEA Member ID or 0 for a non-member.

Click **Create Room**.

*To find more students, click the drop-down to display students from your campus, district, region or Area. Click **GO**. To select someone who is not your student, contact the director listed to gain agreement.*



### Create Your Chaperone Room **(DON'T SKIP!)**

Go to the **Create a Room** section. Select Chaperone. Click **GO**. Enter your TMEA Member ID. You can enter other TMEA IDs or non-member names for this room.

Click **Create Room**.

***One chaperone room per division per school is allocated.** TMEA will place at least one chaperone from a school district in the same hotel housing students from that district.*

***Note:** If another director entered your students, and you aren't sharing their chaperone room, create your own chaperone room! A room will not be assigned for you.*

**You MUST complete this step to have a chaperone hotel reservation!**



### Print Your Room List

Go to **My Room List** and use your browser Print to print this page for your records.

You will be notified by Jan. 20 of room assignments. **Log Out of My TMEA.**

### **Don't Lose \$50!**

When you submit your chaperone room via All-State Housing, a room will be reserved for you. If you previously made a reservation through the TMEA housing system, you **must cancel it by January 14** or you **will be subject to a \$50 cancellation fee.**

# Room Planning—Complete before January 12!

1. Work with other directors *before January 12* to plan rooms, each with four students.
2. Decide who will enter these rooms on January 12–13, and take this page home to complete that entry.
3. Log in January 12 to enter students into rooms and provide billing information.

*The housing system will allow you to select students assigned to you, or, from your campus, your district, Region, or Area. To select students other than yours, obtain agreement from their directors (their contact information will be listed with their students in the housing system). **The system does not automatically create chaperone rooms. See the other side for details.***

## Hotel Assignments

TMEA will create reservations for the students and chaperons submitted in the **Hyatt Regency Hotel**.

The maximum base rate (not including taxes) in this hotel is \$200 per room per night. When you receive room reservation confirmations from TMEA, they will specify this hotel, its room rate, and the total amount that will be due.

## Combine Students for 4-Person Rooms

*If you are working with other directors to fill rooms, agree on who will enter the room and document who will be housed together to help facilitate that entry to the housing system. You will need the Member ID of each student's hotel chaperone (or enter 0 for non-members).*

Student	School/ISD	Chaperone ID

Student	School/ISD	Chaperone ID

Student	School/ISD	Chaperone ID

## Combine Members for a Group Chaperone Room

*If you are sharing a chaperone room with other directors, decide who will enter the chaperone room and note the directors' Member IDs here. You will enter the Member ID of each director sharing the chaperone room with you.*

Member ID	Name	School	District