



# NEWSLETTER

## JUNE 2025

Volume XXXIV

No 4

Updated June 3, 2025

**OUR 34TH YEAR OF SERVICE TO SMALL SCHOOL BANDS IN TEXAS**

## PRESIDENTS COLUMN

ANGIE LISS



As we wrap up the 2024-25 year, I would like to extend congratulations to all our band directors and students for another incredible year of music-making! From region auditions to All-State performances and concert/sight-reading evaluations to community parades, the dedication you've shown to your students and your programs has once again exemplified the spirit of excellence that defines small school bands across Texas. I continue to be amazed by the incredible things happening in our programs!

Now, as you close your band halls for a well-earned break, I encourage you to take some time for yourself. Reflect on the achievements of the past year, the challenges you overcame, and the countless moments that made it all worthwhile. I always love the time to reevaluate what worked well and what didn't and start again with fresh eyes and a clean slate. Most importantly, take time to recharge. You deserve it.

I would also like to extend my deepest gratitude to Marc Nichelson for his outstanding service to ATSSB. His leadership and commitment to the mission of this organization have been invaluable, and I am genuinely thankful for the time, energy, and wisdom he has shared with us all. I know we all wish him the best of luck at his new school. He leaves some very big shoes to fill!

At the same time, we're pleased to welcome Jay Sutton, who has graciously agreed to complete the vacated term as the Class 4A Representative. Thank you, Jay, for your willingness to step in and serve!

Speaking of serving—ATSSB thrives because of the passion and service of its members. As we look ahead to the upcoming school year, I would like to invite you to consider how you can continue to support this incredible organization. Whether you've served before or are looking for a new way to get involved, we would love to hear from you. There are numerous volunteer opportunities available—whether it's committee work, All-State band and percussion organizing, All-State judging, or sectional work —there is much to be done, and your voice and experience are invaluable.

If you're interested in serving in any capacity, please don't hesitate to reach out to me. Together, we can continue to build on the strong foundation that makes ATSSB such a vital part of the Texas music education community.

Thank you for all you do. Here's to rest, renewal, and the promise of another great year ahead.



# JUNE 2025 NEWSLETTER

## PRESIDENT-ELECT COLUMN

BRIAN SOURS

And just like that, we are in June! Time always seems to fly by during the spring semester, as there are numerous activities taking place simultaneously. It's easy to forget that we need to slow things down sometimes and enjoy the present day ("carpe diem"). Luckily, with State Solo & Ensemble officially in the rearview mirror, we have a little bit more downtime available to us. During June, we can "take the foot off the gas pedal," relax, and reflect on the many positive events that happened during the school year as we also strategize about how to correct the few things that did not go as planned.

Small school programs are juggling more now during the spring semester than at any other time in the past. We begin the spring semester by preparing students for area tryouts and region clinics/concerts over multiple weekends and then quickly transition to region solo and ensemble contests. We do this all while also beginning or continuing preparations for the concert and sight-reading contests.

Additionally, we now have more small school programs than ever, participating in winter guard and indoor drum line contests. Many of us also go to the TMEA convention in February for professional development and to see great performances (including all-state concerts). Then, as the end of the semester approaches, we transition back to preparing for the fall marching band, traveling to spring trips and festivals, performing at spring concerts and banquets, and finally, concluding with State Solo & Ensemble. Whew! There really does seem to be something every week and weekend in the band world during the spring semester. Now, just imagine you're a student who participates in UIL academics, soccer, track, basketball, tennis, and/or OAP. We are busy as directors during the spring semester, but so are most of our students and families! Spring is crazy for everyone! That's why we all need a break!

We should all take time for ourselves this summer to downshift. Let's do something we haven't had time to do. Let's find a place to travel that we've never been. Don't allow yourself to say "no" to a chance to experience something new. Yes, we still have to work this summer to ensure we take care of our official duties and are ready for students to return. However, we must take time for ourselves to recuperate. The band hall will still be there waiting for us after we take a chance to get away. Burnout is real, and we must take preventive measures to ensure that we don't fall victim to it.



I want to wish our outgoing 4A State Representative (Marc Nichelson) the best of luck on his next journey as the Director of Bands at Highland Park High School. Unfortunately for ATSSB, Highland Park High School is a 5A school, which means Marc will no longer be able to fulfill his many roles for ATSSB. Marc is currently serving in several integral assignments for ATSSB, including 4A representative, area coordinator, region coordinator, newsletter editor, webmaster, OPS assistant, and likely many other roles that are unseen. Thank you for your service, Marc! There will be many voids that Marc will leave behind that will be hard to fill. With that said, we would like to congratulate Jay Sutton on being appointed 4A representative. We appreciate your willingness to step in to fill the role until elections can be held in 2026.

I hope you all have a wonderful summer break! Take a moment to relax, reflect, and rejuvenate this summer. Say "yes" to new adventures and take that trip you've always wanted to take. Carpe diem!



TAKE A  
MOMENT TO  
RELAX,  
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THIS SUMMER.

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The ATSSB Newsletter is the official publication of the Association of Texas Small School Bands.

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

You may also contact us on our Web Site ([www.atssb.org](http://www.atssb.org)) or email the Editor (Marc Nichelson) at [mnichelson@atssb.org](mailto: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

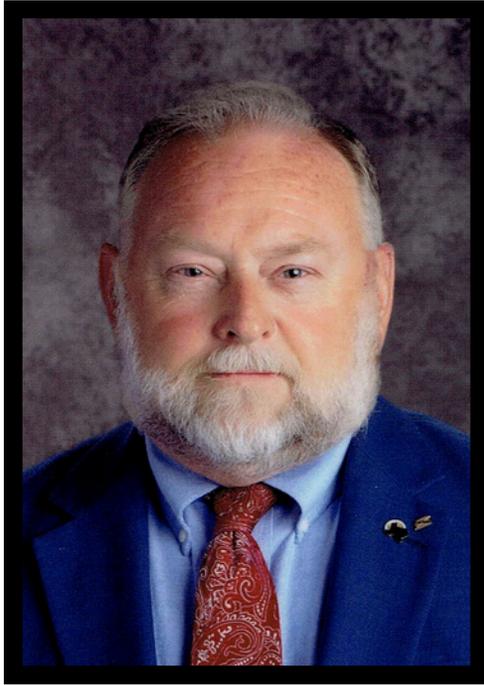
each September, December, March, and June. See our advertising policy and costs:  
<https://www.atssb.org/files/execsec/AdPolicy.pdf>.



# JUNE 2025 NEWSLETTER

## PAST PRESIDENT COLUMN

RODNEY BENNETT



Where did the 2024-2025 school year go? This school year was just a blur and incredibly busy. I hope all of your spring performances and activities 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, UIL TSSEC will have been completed, and the final UIL music event of the 24-25 school year will be in the books. Congratulations to all who had students at the State Solo and Ensemble Contest. Hopefully, it was a positive and inspiring event for the students.

This school year was challenging, with numerous overlapping events taking place school-wide. We all know that sharing students is a way of life in a small school. It takes patience and understanding to help our students be successful in all their endeavors. We all work daily to share the gift of music with our students and create meaningful and satisfying musical experiences. I know 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 and friends, or spend some quiet time alone to reflect. This will help you recharge physically and emotionally. I personally still struggle with not being at the band hall (there's always something that needs to be done), but I'm making plans to get away from school and recharge.

Again, it cannot be stressed enough about getting away for some R&R. It will help you be ready for the summer marching camps and pre-band activities before we dive into the 2025 fall semester. Best wishes for a safe and relaxing time away - the fall semester will be here all too soon.

Thank you for the honor of continuing to serve ATSSB as Immediate Past President and a member of the Executive Board. If I can ever be of assistance to you or your students, please don't hesitate to ask.

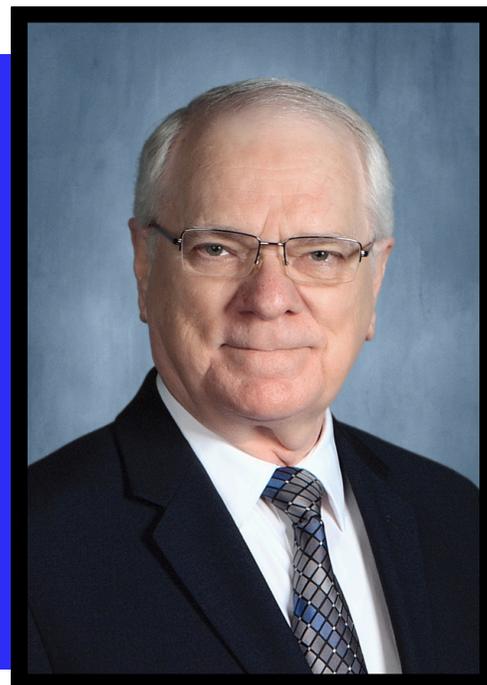


# JUNE 2025 NEWSLETTER

## EXECUTIVE SECRETARY COLUMN

KENNETH GRIFFIN

If you would be interested in serving as an All-State Band Organizer (Jazz Ensemble, Concert Band, Symphonic Band), please consider volunteering to serve a two-year term – first as an Apprentice Band Organizer (3A or 4A or Jazz) where you would shadow the appointed Organizer to "learn the ropes." You would receive a small honorarium for your troubles but would have to fund your way to the convention (or your school pays your way). The following year, you would become the appointed Organizer, and ATSSB would pay your expenses (above what your school would pay for you to attend TMEA) along with a small honorarium. If you are interested in volunteering your services, please send an email to the ATSSB President, Angie Liss ([aliss@atssb.org](mailto:aliss@atssb.org)), expressing your willingness to serve.



If you are proficient in WPForms and WordPress and are comfortable with web design and access, please consider volunteering to help with the ATSSB website. We will need a Webmaster to oversee the website in the future. If you have the technical skills to assist, please send a message to Angie Liss, ATSSB President, and/or Kenneth Griffin, ATSSB Executive Secretary, offering your services.

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 2025-26 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's budget year begins - or go ahead and send in the check or school Purchase Order now while you're 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 will email a copy of your card as soon as I receive payment of dues, so please ensure we have an accurate email address for you and that your school does not block mail from this office. (Attachments can trigger spam filters). 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](https://align.tmea.org/align_2426/index.php)

Refer to the following link to view how ATSSB has organized the 33 regions into 22 regions and 5 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 Nichelson ([mnichelson@atssb.org](mailto: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 Class 2C/3C Representative, a Class 2A Representative, and a Class 4A 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 but may be held electronically should the Executive Committee call for it to be so.

The Prescribed Audition List Update (Use Year E) is now available online: <https://www.atssb.org/files/PAL-Files/YearEUpdate2026.pdf>.

This coming year, Dr. Richard M. Heidel (University of Iowa) will be the clinician for the Symphonic Band. Randall D. Standridge (Composer and clinician)) will be the Concert Band clinician. We have commissioned Randall D. Standridge to write a piece for the Concert Band this year. Tito Carrillo (Texas State University) will be the clinician for the Jazz Ensemble. The Jazz Ensemble will debut a piece commissioned by ATSSB, written by Mr. Carrillo.

Numerous commercial audio and videos of the ATSSB Area etudes are available for purchase. Jordan Sound Productions ([JordanSP@aol.com](mailto: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 E available, but please verify 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 provide input on matters related to ATSSB policies and procedures, contact your Region Coordinator (or any state officer) and share your concerns so they can advise the full Board. One item up for consideration is the appointment of the Executive Secretary for a two-year term. If you have concerns about or an interest in this position, please contact a member of the ATSSB Executive Committee, which is charged with evaluating the position for appointment.

I hope you all have a great summer and that I get to visit with many of you in San Antonio at TBA.



# JUNE 2025 NEWSLETTER

## STATE JAZZ COORDINATOR COLUMN

BRIAN DONNELL

Audition music for jazz band Set E is available for purchase on our website. Visit [www.atssb.org/year-e-jazz-music/](http://www.atssb.org/year-e-jazz-music/) to purchase a set. If you already own Set E from 2020-2021 then you'll only need to obtain the Alto Sax corrected part for Blue News and the Funk Among Us backing track for winds. Both files are on the jazz page ([atssb.org/jazz](http://atssb.org/jazz)).

Committee work continues to look at potential improvements and enhancements to the audition music and resources available for our students and directors. From cleaning up the readability of the music to adding educational videos to our YouTube channel, the committee will propose any additional changes to the State Board in February. There are no plans to replace the current audition music.

New to process as a director or region coordinator? You can find checklists and helpful documents on the jazz page. [atssb.org/jazz](http://atssb.org/jazz)

I want to hear from you!

Did your region have an exceptionally outstanding region jazz clinician? I'd like to know!

Does the thought of teaching jazz music make you anxious or confused? Reach out. There are many directors who can help. I can put you in touch with someone to lean on.

What would you like to see added to our YouTube channel or website?

Lastly, I hope each of you has a wonderfully rested and enjoyable summer. I continue to be honored to serve our small school students and directors.

Best,

Brian

[bdonnell@atssb.org](mailto:bdonnell@atssb.org)

[www.atssb.org/jazz](http://www.atssb.org/jazz)





# JUNE 2025 NEWSLETTER

## 1A REPRESENTATIVE

JESUS PEREZ

Greetings, and congratulations on completing another school year! As you step into summer mode, I hope you take some time for yourself and stay away from the band hall to recharge your batteries. This is also a good opportunity to catch up on many of the things that get put off due to the rigors of the school year. I confess that I have put off catching fish at my favorite fishing spot for far too long; therefore, I will be more diligent in tending to that line on my to-do list.

Many of you teach in small towns with lots of miles between you and the closest Walmart. Whether you are in a situation like this or not, it is easy to feel isolated in our profession. As you sit by the pool, mow your lawn, or fish, as I intend to do, I encourage you to check out some wonderful band podcasts that have been both fun and informative for me.



The Ask Mike podcast features Mike Lunney, a West Texas small school legend. His wealth of knowledge and experience in various teaching scenarios and classifications will offer some nuggets of wisdom for many situations that we face in our small school band programs. The Band Yap podcast, which is hosted by Jose and Alexa Sanchez of Gatesville ISD, has been a fun and engaging way to learn the origin stories behind many phenomenal band directors, including some of our ATSSB officers. I've just started digging into Little Bandology, but I've enjoyed the discussions on establishing small school band culture through the lens of Josh and Michelle King, who teach at Beckville ISD.

Regardless of where you find yourself in your career or even geographically, there are ways to connect with outstanding band directors who are willing to share what they've learned from their successes and failures. I hope you'll take the time to listen and that it'll be of benefit to you as it has been to me.

Please also take the time to attend the various TBA clinics aimed towards ATSSB schools, including one that Zach Sims from Shiner ISD and I will be presenting on Saturday at 10:30 AM. We hope to see you there!

Lastly, I want to thank Marc Nichelson for all the hard work and dedication to ATSSB. We wish you the very best in this next chapter!



# JUNE 2025 NEWSLETTER

## LETTER FROM THE EDITOR *(and webmaster)*

As I write this final column as the ATSSB Newsletter Editor, I find myself reflecting on the journey – one filled with pride, gratitude, and deep appreciation for this incredible organization and the people who make it what it is.

When I first stepped into my role in Region 8, I knew I was joining a legacy of dedicated music educators who have long worked to give voice and opportunity to students across our state. What I didn't know was just how much I would grow personally and professionally through this position. From sharing the inspiring stories of our students and directors to spotlighting the tireless efforts behind the scenes, it has been an honor to help tell our story – the story of ATSSB.

I want to thank each of you who contributed, encouraged, proofread, sent photos, or simply took the time to read and stay connected. This newsletter has always been more than a publication; it's been a way to celebrate the unique magic that happens when passion, discipline, and heart come together through music education.

As I step away to begin a new chapter at Highland Park High School, I do so with a full heart. I carry with me the lessons and friendships forged through this community. While my day-to-day responsibilities may change, my support for ATSSB and its mission remains unwavering.

If you are someone interested in this role or my role as webmaster feel free to reach out! (MNichelson@atssb.org)

Thank you, ATSSB, for the privilege to serve. I'll always be cheering for you – and for every student who finds their voice in a Texas school band hall.

With gratitude and respect,  
Marc Nichelson  
ATSSB Newsletter Editor

## **Proposed ATSSB Constitutional Amendment for 2025-26**

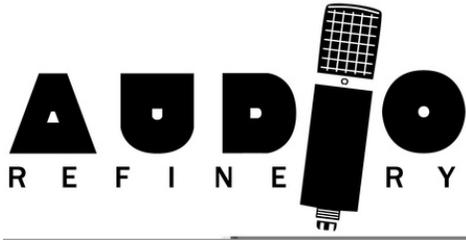
Change the title of the position of EXECUTIVE SECRETARY to EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR wherever it occurs in the Constitution.

### **Rationale:**

- 1) Most professional associations have an Executive Director (TMEA, TBA, etc.), so we would be more in line with parallel associations in our makeup.
- 2) When the position opens to possible candidates in the future, the title of Executive Director would possibly draw more candidates than would the title of Executive Secretary.
- 3) Nothing about the makeup of the position nor duties required would change.

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