

TEXAS

Athletic Administrator



CONTINUE THE JOURNEY

Executive Director's Report — Rusty Dowling



Welcome to the 52nd annual Texas High School Athletic Directors Association State Conference and Trade Show. This is our 3rd consecutive year of hosting this event at the fabulous Kalahari Resort and Convention Center and we look forward to several more years as the THSADA Board of Directors just recently approved an extension of our current contract to run through 2029. This year the State Conference will feature a wide variety of professional development and special programs that will align with all the duties and responsibilities of a Texas Athletic Administrator.

Sunday will kick off with orientation sessions for our QUAD A attendees along with our first-time attendees. This will allow those individuals who are attending for the first time to get a sense of where they might need to be and want to be along with the general format of what takes place, when and where. Our QUAD A orientation will address over 100 attendees along with the presentation of QUAD A specific sessions throughout the State Conference. The QUAD A program has proven to be very successful and well attended as we prepare the next generation of Texas athletic administrators. The State Conference also features our annual PBK Sports-THSADA Hall of Honor Celebration, a wide variety of TAAC courses, Trade Show, and the Hellas Construction-Benny Carter memorial Golf Tournament.

The 88th Texas Legislative session has provided some anxious moments as it always does. THSADA teamed up with THSCA to address legislation that could affect high school athletics as we know it. There was an NIL bill filed and through the cooperative efforts of both associations the NIL bill was not able to advance. A house bill HB4460 regarding the ability of a student-athlete to transfer without a parent residency move and the opportunity to transfer one time for athletic purposes was also addressed

in a late-night session by THSADA, THSCA and members of both association. As of this writing there are still some bills that are active, but we know that the UIL will give our attendees an update during the Conference.

The new THSADA Board of Directors and Committee Chairs will have their terms begin at the State Conference. New members to the Board are as follows:

*Region 1 Director: **Toby Tucker**, Canyon ISD*

*Region 3 Director: **Valerie Little**, Prosper ISD*

*Region 6 Director: **Jason Dean**, Georgetown ISD*

*Region 7 Director: **Rob Davies**, Harlingen CISD*

*Policy Committee Chair: **Silvia Salinas**, Dallas ISD*

New THSADA Athletic Administrators

***Lonnie Jordan**-to Director of Athletics-Highland Park ISD from Richardson Lake Highlands High School*

***Jerod Womack**-to Director of Athletics-Waxahachie ISD from Stephenville ISD*

***Lance Carter**-To Executive Director of Athletics-Katy ISD from Assistant AD-Katy ISD*

***Fred Anthony**-Senior Executive Director of Athletics-San Antonio ISD from Harlandale ISD*

***Micah Wells**-to Director of Athletics-Killeen ISD from Shoemaker High School*

***Veronica Flores**-to Executive Director of Cy Fair ISDS from Assistant Athletic Director-Cy Fair ISD*

Retiring THSADA Athletic Administrators

***Debbie Decker**, Executive Director of Athletics-Katy ISD*

***Todd Vesely**, Executive Director of Athletics-Fort Worth ISD*

***Tawni Angel**, Director of Athletics-Del Valle ISD*

***Bruce Consier**, Director of Athletics-Hyde Park Schools*

***Richard Ocanas**, Assistant Director of Athletics-Corpus Christi ISD*

THSADA Publications Committee

***Andrea Fluhman**, Chair-Amarillo ISD*

***Grace McDowell**, Frisco ISD*

***Michael Mackeben**, Clint ISD*

***Dena Scott**, Fort Bend ISD*

***Armando Jacinto**, Spring ISD*

***Henry Cantu**, Rio Grande City ISD*

***Deena Bosier**, Pflugerville ISD*

***Sonia Almanza**, Northside ISD*

***Scott Campbell**, Stephenville ISD*

THSADA Staff

*Executive Director: **Rusty Dowling***

*Assistant Executive Director: **Bob DeJonge***

*Director of Administrative Services: **Ellissa Unger***





2022 State Conference TAAC session

Director of Finance: **Diane McKay**
 Director of Exhibits: **Bill Daws**
 Director of Strategic Partnerships: **Dave Stephenson**
 Director of Convention Services: **Lisa Stephenson**
 Director of Professional Development: **Johanna Denson**
 Director of IT and Operations: **Stuart Raty**
 Event Technology Coordinator: **Keith Kilgore**
 Assistant Exhibits Coordinator: **Joe Barnett**

Technology Coordinator: **Jeff Lillibridge**
 Interns: **Kaitlin Sterner, Nicholas Neuman, Alysia Watts**

Texas High School Athletic Directors Association Board of Directors/Chairs 2023-2024 Board of Directors

President: **Philip O'Neal**, Mansfield ISD
 President-elect: **Leslie Slovak**, Richardson ISD
 Region 1: **Toby Tucker**, Canyon ISD
 Region 2: **Jerod Womack**, Waxahachie ISD
 Region 3: **Valerie Little**, Prosper ISD
 Region 4: **JJ Calderon**, Socorro ISD
 Region 5: **Andre Walker**, Houston ISD
 Region 6: **Jason Dean**, Georgetown ISD
 Region 7: **Rob Davies**, Harlingen CISD
 Region 8: **Melanie Hinson**, Southwest ISD
 at-Large: **Dr. Roland Hernandez**, Corpus Christi ISD
 at-Large: **Dr. Joe Young**, Brownwood ISD
 Membership: **Tom Lee**, Sharyland ISD
 Awards: **Russ Reeves**, Rockwall ISD
 Policy: **Silvia Salinas**, Dallas ISD
 Publications: **Andrea Fluhman**, Amarillo ISD
 Athletic: **Stan Leech**, Boerne ISD
 Officials: **Mike Bass**, Alvin ISD
 TAAC: **Johanna Denson**, THSADA
 NIAAA: **Brenda Marshall**, Corpus Christi ISD

From the President— Philip O'Neal

What an honor it is to be in the position to serve the Texas High School Athletic Directors Association in the role of President. I am looking forward to serving along side newly elected Vice President Leslie Slovak. I also want to thank Debbie Fuchs for serving in the role of President during this past year. It was an honor to serve as Vice President during her tenure.

The association has implemented several initiatives during the past year. One of those includes adding two Superintendents to the Board of Directors. This will assist with broadening the perspective of the role of athletic administration as the board makes decisions that affect how we operate and serve our membership. We welcome Dr. Joe Young, Superintendent of Schools, Brownwood ISD and Dr. Roland Hernandez, Corpus Christi ISD Superintendent of Schools, to the

Board. They will be great additions as they share both their background as a Superintendent and their passion for Athletic Administration.

Additionally, THSADA has strengthened their relationship with the Texas High School Coaches Association (THSCA) by partnering with them during the current Texas Legislative session. Partnering with THSCA has allowed our associations to share a unified alliance to Texas Legislatures. This partnership has strengthened how communication flows to members of both associations, mobilizing support of only those bills that allow Athletic Directors and Coaches continued opportunities to influence the student athletes we all serve.

Once again, I am honored to serve you as President of the THSADA. I look forward to working with



Vice President Leslie Slovak, the Board of Directors and Executive Director Rusty Dowling and his team. Together, we look forward to creating additional initiatives allowing THSADA to better serve the membership and grow Athletic Administrators.

Philip O'Neal
 Executive Director of Athletics
 Mansfield ISD



Assistant Executive Director's Update – Bob DeJonge

Welcome to the Annual THSADA State Conference! This is the 52nd time we have celebrated this professional development opportunity together. This year, June 11-14, we'll gather at the Kalahari Resort and Convention Center in Round Rock Tx. Our State Conference is built on the concept of providing exceptional professional opportunities for our 1600 members. This year's course offerings include 30 classes and learning opportunities throughout the course of the 4-day conference. Some of the topics that will be addressed are Legal guidance, UIL's State of Athletics in Texas, multiple panels featuring several Texas Superintendents, and Athletic Directors, facility renewal, social media, as well as the popular sessions for Aspiring Athletic Administrators. Members will also benefit from a general session presented by our Executive Director Rusty Dowling on the state of our association.



While attending the conference we encourage you and your families to take advantage of some additional entertainment opportunities including all the amenities that the Kalahari Resort has to offer – Tom Foolery's arcade and rides, indoor and outdoor water park, and several great restaurants. If you

are interested in a round of golf be sure to sign up for the Hellas Construction / Benny Carter Memorial Golf tournament on Tuesday morning.

The Conference features three tradeshow opportunities, Monday evening, Tuesday Mid-day (lunch provided), and Tuesday Afternoon. Be sure to attend the Tuesday shows for a chance to win some big cash prizes! Be sure to visit the over 100 tradeshow booths,

sample the F & B around the tradeshow and be sure to watch your conference APP for prize drawings!

Sunday afternoon we'll kick off the conference with our PBK Sports – THSADA Hall of Honor Celebration. This is the ultimate opportunity to recognize some of our All-Star Athletic Administrators. This year's award winners include:

THSADA offers two additional professional development opportunities. October 10-11 we'll offer our Annual Fall Forum in San Antonio at the Estancia Del Norte with sessions being held at Northeast ISD facilities. In March we'll host our annual Spring Sponsor Showcase at a site to be determined. We hope to see you at our three annual events and at region meetings around the state!

Region Directors

Our State Association is divided into 8 regions, each of which are great conduits of information coming from the State Office. Our elected Region Directors do an outstanding job leading their respective regions. We do have 4 outgoing Directors to recognize and thank for their service.

Region :1 **Max Kattwinkel**, Region 3: **Leslie Slovak**, Region 6: **Lynn Pool** and Region 7: **Rey Ramirez**.

For the next two years our Region Director roster includes Region 1: **Toby Tucker**, Region 2: **Jerod Womack**, Region 3: **Valerie Little**, Region 4: **J.J. Calderon**, Region 5: **Andre Walker**, Region 6: **Jason Dean**, Region 7: **Rob Davies**, Region 8: **Melanie Hinson**

THSADA / PBK Sports Hall of Honor Award Recipients National Awards

NFHS Citation: **Dr. Susan Elza**, Former UIL Executive Director of Athletics

NIAAA Bruce Whitehead Distinguished Service Award: **Sandra Howell**, formerly of Little Elm ISD

NIAAA Frank Kovaleski Professional Development Award: **Pam Lea**, formerly of Cleburne ISD

NIAAA State Award of Merit: **Ray Zepeda**, UIL Executive Director of Athletics

THSADA Regional Athletic Administrators of the Year

Region 1: **Bryan Gerlich**, Frenship ISD

Region 2: **Rodney Chant**, San Angelo ISD

Region : **Leslie Slovak**, Richardson ISD

Region 4: **Scott Brooks**, Canutillo ISD

Region 5: **Mike Bass**, Alvin ISD

Region 6: **Jason Dean**, Georgetown ISD

Region 7: **Luis Solorio**, Harlingen CISD

Region 8: **Stan Leech**, Boerne ISD

Outgoing Region Directors

Region 1: **Max Kattwinkel**, Lubbock Cooper ISD

Region: **Leslie Slovak**, Richardson ISD

Region 6: **Lynn Pool**, Austin ISD

Region 7: **Rey Ramirez**, Rio Grande City ISD

THSADA-PBK Sports Athletic Director of the Year

Debbie Fuchs, retired Clear Creek ISD

Joe Bill Fox Distinguished Service Award

Jim Walsh – Shareholder Walsh, Gallegos

THSADA Hall of Honor

Rodney Chant – San Angelo ISD

David Kuykendall – Retired Frisco ISD

Shawn Pratt – McKinney ISD

Dr. Susan Elza – former UIL Director of Athletics



Dr. Susan Elza: 2023 THSADA Hall of Honor Recipient

By Scott Campbell Stephenville HS

The THSADA will recognize Dr. Susan Elza at the 2023 Hall of Honor Banquet in conjunction with the THSADA State Conference this June. Dr. Elza served as long time UIL Executive Director of Athletics and former Executive Director of Athletics for Northwest ISD. In addition to her time in Northwest ISD she served in administrative and coaching roles in Allen ISD as well as Garland ISD. Dr. Elza replaced Dr. Mark Cousins in 2015 as the Director of Athletics and served in that role until January of 2023.

Dr. Elza's role with the UIL marked the first time a woman had held that position. The all encompassing leadership role with the UIL included oversight of the UIL Athletic Department as well as the athletic activities for its member schools. During her time with the UIL, the number of member schools increased to over 1,500 statewide and 14 sports. Student participation has increased and saw the addition of water polo as a UIL sport. The single-site state football championship has grown to include crowds of over 50,000 for single



Dr. Susan Elza

game attendance and over 200,000 combined attendance for the four day event. Television rights and sponsorship packages have also benefited UIL athletics. In 2015 UIL basketball championships shifted to the Alamodome in San Antonio as basketball fans flocked to the Alamo City.

For some time now many other states have looked to Texas as the model for organization and administration of high school athletics. Dr. Elza has spoken around the country about the structure of UIL Athletics and always made a point to brag on the administrators, coaches and kids who make the UIL first class. Other states have modeled Texas in regards to TASO (sports officials) as well the Medical Advisory Committee, two areas of emphasis under Dr. Elza.

Dr. Elza was a direct link for athletic directors across the state to the UIL. Open communication and honest answers was a trademark of Dr. Elza. Rusty Dowling, the Executive Director of Athletics for the Texas High School Athletic Directors Association

contributed "Dr. Susan Elza was an outstanding representative of the UIL as her work ethic and character were of the highest degree and she worked tirelessly to continue to raise the bar for high school athletics in the State of Texas. Dr. Elza was highly respected by her colleagues and established a UIL career conducive to that respect". Dr. Elza presented the annual UIL Updates to the THSADA State Conference each year and kept administrators in the loop on all information related to realignment, legislative council, issues and concerns. In a time of great uncertainty Dr. Elza helped everyone navigate the UIL COVID protocols put in place to ensure fan and student safety. As the UIL gathered information from TEA and other regulating agencies regarding COVID protocols, Dr. Elza and her staff communicated on those expectations.

Dr. Elza has paved the way for women desiring to advance in their careers in athletic administration. She continues to do so in her new role as Chief of Staff for Coach Matt Rhule and the Nebraska Cornhuskers; where she continues to be an ambassador for Texas high school athletics. The THSADA is excited to recognize Dr. Susan Elza for her accomplishments and contributions to the State of Texas.

Interview with UIL Athletic Director: Ray Zepeda

The UIL announced Ray Zepeda as the new UIL Athletic Director in April, following the departure of Dr. Susan Elza, who served in the role for eight years. UIL Executive Director, Dr. Charles Breithaupt, shared that Susan was "dynamic and energetic and became a well respected member of our staff. The opportunity for her to serve as Chief of Staff for the University of Nebraska football was unique and groundbreaking.

She served the 1,500 high schools in Texas in great fashion and I am certain she will do us proud in Nebraska." Ray was selected by a committee to be the 14th Athletic Director in the 113 year history of the University Interscholastic League. Dr. Breithaupt stated that while they "received many high quality and exceptional applications for the position, Ray possesses the intelligence, the work ethic and the poise it takes to manage

all aspects of the athletic program. After serving in a large district with 12 high schools he has developed a high capacity for leadership. His work as a coach and an AD at schools of varying size will be of great service to our membership."

When asked what the UIL leadership was looking for in a candidate for the role, the UIL Deputy Director, Dr. Jamey Harrison, shared that they

Zepeda Continued on next page



were looking for a candidate “who has immediate respect. Ray certainly brings that with his history and reputation as a great thinker, person of high character, and solid work ethic. His reputation is impeccable. Additionally, we need a person who can connect and work with a wide range of constituency groups. UIL literally touches every square inch of the 265,000 square miles that is the great state of Texas. We serve schools, clearly. Additionally, we also serve kids, parents, coaches, officials, school leaders, and have to work closely with many different state officials. Ray has a grace about him that serves very well when it comes to working with all of these different constituency groups.”

Ray’s path in life has certainly prepared him for this position. Ray’s father, Charles, was a teacher, coach and administrator. His mother also worked in public education. He grew up hanging out at the stadium with his dad. Zepeda played football and baseball at Flour Bluff High School in Corpus Christi before getting his bachelor’s and master’s degrees from Texas A&M and Texas Southern, respectively. When asked why he chose teaching and coaching as his profession, he shared that he really set out to attend Texas A&M after high school and work towards a degree in political science with the goal of going to law school. “After entering Texas A&M as a freshman, I realized that I greatly missed the competitive environment of interscholastic athletics. Being an athlete in high school was a huge part of my life and identity and I missed being a part of a team and being around athletics. This caused me to refocus my future on being a coach and teacher. The initial decision made so long ago to enter the “family business” has paid off in so many ways and I am eternally grateful for changing course and spending my time on courts and fields and not in a courtroom.”

Ray began his career as a middle school football coordinator when he was 23 years old. He had coaching stints with the Corpus Christi, Houston, Mathis and



Ray Zepeda

Galena Park school districts before moving into athletic administration full time. In 2013, he left Galena Park ISD to take an assistant athletic director’s position in Cy-Fair ISD under Ed Warken. Three years later in 2016, Ray took over as Athletic Director when Warken retired. Zepeda shared that he made the move into administration because he “was ready for a new challenge. My skill set was better suited for long term success as an administrator. I feel that I was a very good coach but that I could be a great administrator. This feeling coupled with a great opportunity to join a great school district like Cy-Fair ISD encouraged me to make the jump from coaching to full-time athletic administration.”

Zepeda’s passion for high school athletics is rooted in his experience as a high school athlete. “I know how special and foundational it was for me to be a high school student-athlete. Providing quality experiences for students is what drives my passion for this profession. Right along with that is the love that I have for coaches and athletic administrators. There is no group of individuals that work as hard or as long as our coaches and athletic administrators here in Texas. I have the deepest of respect for this group of professionals and that fosters a passion for service to them so that they can more effectively serve our student-athletes.”

When pressed to share what he considers his biggest success as an athletic director, he reluctantly spoke about the

very complex situation that we found ourselves in during the COVID pandemic. “We were the first entity to bring students back to the school environment with our summer athletic programs in the summer of 2020 and welcomed back approximately 10,000 athletes back to our campuses. I really believed that our management of the situation created confidence in our community and school system that kids could indeed be brought back for in person activities for the 2020-2021 school year.” Just as a true servant leader would, he attributed this success “to the hard work and attention to detail of so many coaches, athletic trainers and other administrative personnel. I am proud of our combined efforts and positive response to adversity.”

Ray’s desire to serve others in our profession drove him to pursue the position of UIL Athletic Director. He shared that he was drawn to the role to “serve a large number of people that I care about. This starts with the many student-athletes across the state of Texas followed by the coaches and athletic administrators that serve our athletes. I coached in a variety of roles in this great state for twenty years and know how important and consequential the UIL is to what we do as practitioners on a daily basis. Further, in my last decade of being strictly an athletic administrator you could say that the UIL has been even more consequential and foundational to what I do. So with all of that in mind, I jumped at a chance to serve the people that make interscholastic athletics go in our state.”

When asked how he wants to have influence through this position, Ray stated that “I feel that competitive interscholastic activities are foundational to the growth and development of so many student-athletes and also for creating a positive sense of collective spirit in our schools and communities. I hope that I can help to promote the many positive benefits of athletic participation from this position and continue to protect the integrity of our games that mean so much to so many people. I also would like to be able to influence the idea of what it means to be an athlete in Texas



schools and better utilize our platform and influence to redefine the many positive benefits that come with athletic participation. Athletics help to improve academic achievement and can serve as the basis for the holistic development of students in a way that is unique and special. I hope to expand that conversation surrounding athletics in Texas and utilize this approach to protect the many advantages that we have in Texas regarding interscholastic athletics.”

In terms of the challenges ahead, Zepeda feels that the biggest challenge will be the “current climate surrounding public education in Texas right now. There is a focus on the rights of the individual versus the obligations of the individual and that creates great difficulty for those of us responsible for fostering systems that are designed to teach kids to

be team and group focused.”

The UIL and THSADA leadership have full confidence in Ray Zepeda. Dr. Breithaupt stated that “Ray will face the same challenges that all of the previous UIL Directors of Athletics have faced. There will always be requests for new and improved playoff brackets, championship sites and realignment policies.” He followed up by saying that he is confident Zepeda will be an “incredible addition to our staff. He loves the work and he has a passion for students and coaches. We look forward to the days ahead as he assumes his role as the UIL Director of Athletics for the state of Texas.” Dr. Harrison added that he is confident that “Ray will be a great ambassador for UIL. He has the technical knowledge and problem solving skill this job requires. And, he has the personal traits to connect with and

build trust with people.” Rusty Dowling, THSADA Executive Director, stated that Ray’s “skill set is of the highest caliber, and he models all of those traits essential to effective leadership, character and vision. He is an outstanding selection as the Director of Athletics for the UIL and one that will be a tremendous representative for our student-athletes, coaches, athletic administrators, and all Texas UIL athletic programs.”

To sum it all up, what is Ray Zepeda’s biggest hope for high school athletics in Texas? It is that “we can continue to remain at the forefront of interscholastic athletics in the United States. We all take such pride in Texas athletics and I hope that we can continue to effectively serve and create positive competitive opportunities for kids that allow us to be the best of the best!”

Dr. Joe Young, Superintendent Brownwood ISD, THSADA Board Member

By: Sonia Almanza, Northside ISD

Dr. Young is one of our newest THSADA board members and is currently the superintendent of Brownwood ISD. Dr. Young started his career in education in 1995 and has held several roles in education such as being a teacher, coach, and Athletic Director.



Dr. Joe Young

Dr. Young moved to Corsicana ISD where he served as Director, Executive Director, Assistant Superintendent, and Deputy Superintendent. Dr. Young was able to answer questions pertaining to his role in THSADA and some of the current issues we are facing as Athletic Directors. We look forward to having Dr. Young on the THSADA board and excited about the experience and knowledge he can provide.

What led you to become a member of the THSADA board?

Born into a family with a deeply rooted history in athletics, including a coach and future president of the THSA-

DA, I’ve been fortunate to witness the incredible impact athletics has on our society throughout my life. From my experiences as a son, player, coach, athletic director, and now a superintendent, I’ve observed the transformative effect of athletics not only on my own life but also on those around me. Membership in organizations such as THSADA, THSCA, and TGCA is essential for empowering coaches with the necessary understanding and tools to excel in their roles.

Initially, my career aspiration was to become an athletic director. Transitioning to a superintendent role was a challenging decision, as I often find myself reminiscing about the camaraderie and rewarding work that came with being an AD. Nevertheless, when the opportunity to join the THSADA board presented itself, I eagerly accepted, driven by the desire to contribute to the profession that has given me so much over the years.

What are your primary roles as

a superintendent on the THSADA board?

As a superintendent on the THSADA board, my primary roles include providing insight and perspective on the administrative side of school athletics, promoting a strong connection between academics and athletics, and advocating for the needs of student-athletes and coaches within our state. Additionally, I work to collaborate with fellow board members to develop and implement policies and programs that promote the growth and success of high school athletics across Texas.

Should NIL be part of Texas HS athletics? What do you see as potential benefits for NIL? What are some downsides to having NIL?

The introduction of Name, Image, and Likeness (NIL) rights in Texas high school athletics is a complex issue. Potential benefits of NIL could include opportunities for student-athletes to monetize their talents and fund their future education, as well as increased exposure

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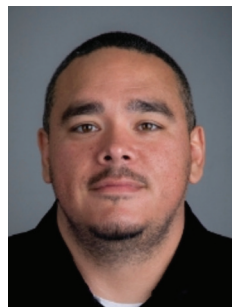


QUAD A: THSADA Offers Aspiring Athletic Administration Courses for Professional Development, Networking, and Growing the Profession

By: Dena Scott, CMAA, Director of Athletics, Fort Bend ISD

The Texas High School Athletic Directors Association has created a new program designed to present a pathway for coaches who would like to eventually pursue a career as an Athletic Administrator in the State of Texas. This program is called the **QUAD A (Aspiring Athletic Administrators Academy)** and is essentially a precursor to the TAAC program. The QUAD A program will provide an introduction to those duties and responsibilities specific to becoming a Texas Athletic Administrator at any classification level. A QUAD A certificate verifying professional development hours will be available.

Several members have already started taking the courses at the Spring Showcase and State Conference.



“As a first-year AD, I was advised by a mentor to attend the state conference. While there I discovered the Quad A (Aspiring Athletic Administrators Academy) courses.

They are not only for aspiring AD's but beginning ones as well. The panels put together were able to provide insight into the position that would have probably taken me years and many mistakes to learn on my own. The showcases are additional opportunities to learn more throughout the year. Not only are the lessons learned instrumental for an aspiring/developing administrator but the professional connections you can make are priceless. Veteran administrators are more than happy to lend a helping hand and exchange contact

information for future questions or assistance.”

— Ricky Torres, Athletic Director/
Head Football Coach, Itasca ISD



“By participating in THSADA and the Quad A courses, I've gained a network of top professionals in the field I can call upon for advice or insight. In the Quad A

courses, we are encouraged to network, exchange ideas, and build relationships with others so that we are supported and gain impactful connections. I plan to be a lifelong member and encourage others to do the same. It's been extremely impactful, and I hope to do the same for others in the profession.”

— Kylie Kunefke, Alvin ISD



“The Quad A courses have given me direction in terms of how to become an Athletic Administrator. In addition to giving me direction and

knowledge, these courses have also given me an opportunity to network with a community of aspiring, current, and retired Athletic Administrators who are more than willing to help in any way possible.”

— E.J. Hairston MS, ATC, LAT,
FST II, Director of Sports Medicine,
Waxahachie ISD

The QUAD A is under the direction of David Kuykendall-Past President of the Texas High School Athletic Directors Association and Former Director of Athletics-Frisco ISD along with Debbie Fuchs-President of the Texas High School Athletic Directors Association and Former Director of Athletics-Clear Creek ISD.

“We are honored and excited to lead the Aspiring Athletic Administrators Academy or QUAD A for short. It started at the 2022 Spring Sponsor Showcase, and we continued classes at the State Convention. It has grown in popularity with our number of attendees increasing each year. We use our sessions to introduce every aspect of being an Athletic Director, including staffing, budgeting, scheduling, and how all that connects with our governing body - the University Interscholastic League. We look forward to our upcoming state convention where we will present 3 sessions, along with an orientation and wrap-up, and a new piece to Quad A. There will be a resume/cover letter review for attendees who met the deadline for that session. We look forward to seeing you in one of the upcoming courses!”

— Debbie Fuchs

One must be an Active/or Associate member of the THSADA to attend any THSADA event including the Spring Showcase and State Conference. Virtual options are available to those who sign up for the event, so we encourage you become a member and take advantage of the QUAD A courses.



Hiring Practices for Texas Coaches

By Michael Mackeban, Director of Athletics Clint ISD

Schools across Texas have struggled to fill positions from bus drivers to teachers. This challenge has also affected the availability of qualified coaches for athletics. A simple Google search of “coaching shortages” brings post after post about the challenges athletic departments are facing. In Texas, we have some very simple guides provided by UIL, TRS, TASB, and the Fair Labor Standards Act to help us navigate hiring coaches both inside and outside our school doors.

The University Interscholastic League (UIL) Constitution and Contest Rules (C&CR) for Athletics provide the requirements for high school coaches under **Section 1202: Employment of Coaches**. A partial list of the main points includes:

- All high school coaches must be full time employees of the school district
- The exception being: a retired teacher/administrator who has 20 or more years of experience may serve as an assistant coach in all athletics and as a head coach for golf, tennis, team tennis, cross country, track and field, and swimming
- Student teachers can volunteer while they are student teaching as an assistant coach in all athletics at the school they are assigned to. They cannot be paid in this capacity.
- Pay cannot be with gate receipts, from booster clubs, or other sources within the school district.
- Coach’s salaries must be fixed from the beginning of the year and cannot have provisions for bonuses. Coaching salaries must be dispersed just like all employees in the district
- A district may employ a full-time non-exempt employee as a coach by paying them overtime, provided the rate is set prior to the school year and remains at the same rate throughout the school year. The district must comply with the Fair Labor Standard Act. This means the coach doesn’t

have to be a certified, but if they teach an athletic period where the athlete is getting a PE credit the instructor must be certified through the State Board of Education (SBEC).

The Texas Association of School Boards HR Services provides an informative Q&A by April Mabry on [Coaches Employment Requirements](#) from 2018, which defines what a full-time employee definition is and the four exceptions to the rule that coaches must be full-time employees:

- Under contract to the school board of the school which the athletic team represents for the whole scholastic year; and
- Has enough contractual duties to be considered a full-time employee by the Teacher Retirement System (TRS) and state law.

The four exceptions to the rule that TASB lists are:

- A board may hire a coach who is not a teacher and whose regular duties don’t qualify for a contract of employment if the employment meets the hourly and salary requirements in UIL rules.
- A board may hire a retire teacher or administrator who has 20 years or more of experience.
- Student teachers may volunteer as assistant coaches at the school they are student teaching at.
- A full-time substitute who has coached during the year is allowed to continue coaching until the UIL competitive season has ended (such as state play-offs).

It should be noted that UIL doesn’t govern the employment or certification of cheer or drill sponsors.

The Teacher Retirement System only allows the following “employment after retirement” (EAR) exceptions to service retirees:

- Substitute employment
- One-half-time or less employment (92 hours per month or 11 days)
- Full-time employment (after a 12 full,

consecutive-calendar-month break in service)

- Non-profit tutor employment
- COVID-19 surge personnel employment

There is less restriction for an employee who retired before January 1, 2021 and it is advised anyone considering work after retiring consult with TRS.

When employing retirees there are surcharges for employees as outlined directly from the: **2022 Teacher Retirement System of Texas Employment After Retirement: How it Works for You** document:

Surcharges are additional contributions that TRS-covered employers must pay to TRS for employing TRS retirees who retired after Sept. 1, 2005 and who work more than one-half time during a month. There are two types of surcharges: pension surcharges and health care surcharges. The amount of the pension surcharge is equal to the amount of both member and state contributions on the compensation paid (currently 15.75% of payroll). The health care surcharge only applies for employed retirees who are TRS-Care participants. The amount of the health care surcharge is determined by TRS (currently \$535). Please keep in mind: These amounts are owed by your employer, not you. Effective Sept. 1, 2021, surcharges may not directly or indirectly be passed on to you through payroll deduction, fees or other means designed to recover the cost.

Middle school coaches do not have the same requirements as high school coaches, so there is more flexibility in filling the middle coaching positions. Many districts use a “co-op” model where they hire college students part-time and pay them the stipend. This can be a slippery slope as the Fair Labor Standard Act (FLSA) requires employees to make minimum wage. The Administrator’s Guide to The Fair Labor Standards Act has a section on extracurricular assignments that should be a must read.

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Team Sports Officiating in Texas Classrooms

By Enrique Cantu (Assist. Director of Athletics –RGCGISD)

One constant truth that has plagued most UIL sanctioned sports in Texas has been the decline of available TASO officials stemming from the end of the Covid pandemic. Numbers previously published in our THSADA newsletter reported a 10.5 % decrease of officials in comparison to 2018. These numbers do fluctuate based on the sports and regions but it has definitely been a struggle to adapt to a reality of smaller officials crews from middle school, sub-varsity and even some varsity games due to the consequences of the pandemic. Even local TASO Chapter presidents from each sport have visited regional meetings to explain the state of officiating in our areas and the need to push for new membership has been a new focal point.

Districts throughout the state, including Region 7, have begun to be proactive in this fight against the diminishing number of referees. In a joint effort, our Districts have begun to promote TASO by making announcements to join the association during football and basketball games including having contact information highlighted on our digital scoreboards. However, a very promising alternative to these modes of advertisement for new TASO membership has been availability of the TEA approved Team Sports Officiating class offered at our local high schools.

This innovative course (TEAMPFF) must meet certain criteria before it's introduced as a credited class in our high schools. Local school board must first approve to implement innovative courses as is criteria for any new course offered. In addition, school districts must provide instruction in all essential knowledge and skills identified in this innovative course in accordance with Texas Administrative Code (TAC) §74.27. Lastly, this Innovative course may only satisfy elective credit toward graduation requirements. According to

the course overview, “student’s enrolled in Team Sport Officiating learn rules and regulations of selected team sports, developing skills in the area of communication, decision-making, and conflict management, which are needed to officiate team sport competitions. Working with coaches, players, other officials, and parents, the expectation is that by the end of the course students will have the ability to officiate at various levels and manage responsibilities that come with the role. Students will be introduced to the rules of the games and officiating mechanics based on approved University Interscholastic League (UIL) association specifications, which will form a foundation for a lifetime advocacy in officiating.”

In Region 7, Brownville ISD was the first district to begin with this initiative in 2019. Team sports officiating was not only seen as an available avenue to assist local TASO chapters with new recruits, but as an incentive for high school students to continue to be engaged with the sports they enjoyed plus getting income. Coach Delma Rodriguez from Pace HS (Brownville ISD) was the first teacher who accepted this challenge. “It was tough at first, don’t get me wrong, because there is a lot of information to cover in one semester including taking the students to evaluate the officials during seasonal games”. “But students who continue with the class will benefit as a credit and financially as they begin to officiate with the city or with TASO. “Students follow an approved curriculum, which entails evaluation of live or recorded games, presentation from TASO officials, NFHS rule book assessments, and modeling from the teacher. Coach Rodriguez has seen that having students actively involved by evaluating live games has allowed for more in-depth knowledge of the rules and the game itself. Varsity sports such as football, volleyball, basketball, baseball,

and softball are the ones taught during each semester class.

Coach Juan Aldape (RGCGISD) was part of the first cohort introducing team sports officiating in Rio Grande City High School this year. “At first, we did not know what to expect in terms of student participation and interest. Students who have prior knowledge on the sports are quicker to comprehend but working through their self-confidence of being the center of attention as officials, has been an additional area of focus. As a basketball coach, I was able to use our previous night’s games as a resource with my students which also allowed for a unique perspective to use.” I have really enjoyed the process so far and expect that our students benefit as intended.” Coach Aldape expects the class to develop more interest once students themselves begin to promote it with their peers.

In a recent survey sent out to athletic directors from all eight THSADA regions, on district participation of such a class, seven school districts are currently offering this course including Aldine ISD, Clear Creek ISD, Crowley ISD, Spring Branch ISD, Brownsville ISD, Rio Grande City Grulla ISD and Texas City ISD. Within these seven districts, 14 high schools are on the frontline of this new initiative and alongside those results, 85% of total responses were interested in providing this course in their local district in the near future. Although there might be additional reasons that factor in to the decline of officials in Texas, we are excited for the possibilities to being to develop a healthy participation of officials due to Team Sports Officiating being offered throughout the classrooms in our Texas schools.

Reference: TEA Website: <https://tea.texas.gov/sites/default/files/team-sport-officiating-2022.pdf>



for high school athletic programs. However, there are also potential downfalls, such as creating a competitive imbalance between schools, fostering a “pay-for-play” culture, and distracting student-athletes from their academic pursuits. Ultimately, careful consideration and regulation would be required to ensure that any implementation of NIL rights in high school athletics is fair and beneficial to all parties involved. Personally, I’m proud of the ‘amateur’ nature of Texas high school athletics and hope it remains intact.

Currently House Bill 4460 is pending, this will allow student athletes to transfer one time for athletic purposes with (out any penalty) to another high school outside their attendance zone/district. If it is passed, how do you think this will affect high school athletics?

If House Bill 4460 is passed, it could have a significant impact on high school athletics. In theory, it may provide student-athletes with greater opportunities to find a school that best fits their athletic and academic needs. On the other hand, it could potentially lead to a more competitive and uneven playing field, with some schools becoming “powerhouses” and others struggling to retain their top talent. Additionally, concerns about recruiting and the potential loss of community-based athletics could arise.

In the current economic climate and inflation rates, how do you manage

your athletic budget to meet the needs of your students and your schools?

Managing an athletic budget in the current economic climate requires creativity, flexibility, and a focus on prioritizing resources. We continually assess our programs to ensure they align with our district’s mission and values, and we make data-driven decisions to allocate funds effectively. This may involve seeking alternative funding sources, such as grants or sponsorships, and collaborating with community partners to share resources and facilities. It’s essential to maintain open communication with stakeholders, including coaches, parents, and student-athletes, to ensure their needs are being met while working within our budget constraints.

When preparing for school bonds, a standalone athletic facility has to be on a separate proposition, what factors are considered before proposing for a vote on a new athletic facility?

Before proposing a vote on a new athletic facility, several factors are considered, including:

Current facilities: Assessing the condition and capacity of existing facilities to determine if they can continue to meet the needs of our athletic programs and student-athletes.

Projected growth: Analyzing demographic trends and projected enrollment growth to ensure that the proposed facility will accommodate future needs.

Community support: Engaging with

community members, parents, and stakeholders to gauge their support for the proposed facility and to understand their priorities and concerns.

Financial impact: Evaluating the cost of the proposed facility and its impact on the district’s overall budget, as well as the potential tax implications for community members.

Equity and access: Ensuring that the proposed facility will provide equitable opportunities and access for all student-athletes and athletic programs in the district.

Long-term planning: Considering how the proposed facility fits into the district’s long-term strategic plan and vision for athletics and academics.

Other

Serving as a superintendent and a member of the THSADA board provides me with the opportunity to contribute to the growth and success of high school athletics in Texas. I am committed to fostering a strong connection between academics and athletics and ensuring that our student-athletes, coaches, and administrators have the resources and support they need to thrive both on and off the field. By working collaboratively with fellow board members, coaches, and stakeholders, we can continue to enhance the positive impact that athletics has on our students, schools, and communities. This is one of the biggest honors of my career and I appreciate the opportunity.

Paying stipends to nonexempt employees or to a coach who is not a full-time employee of the district, needs to have advance planning and measures in place to insure the coach doesn’t exceed the hours the stipend pays for. In simple terms the stipend must pay the coach no less than minimum wage for the hours they coach.

Prior planning should cover:

- Estimated hours it will take for practice, preparation, dismissal, and games
- Divide the stipend by the number of hours
- Verify the stipend hourly rate meets or exceeds minimum wage

- Calculation of the regular rate for a non-exempt employee’s primary job rate and the extracurricular rate must be done to determine the overtime rate.
- Time records must be kept to record if the employee goes over the 40-hour work week and overtime pay or compensatory time (at time and a half) must be given.

A great way of evaluating your stipends is to create a spreadsheet with each sport, start date, finish date, total weeks, hours per week, total hours, stipend amount, and the hourly rate. Don’t forget the year-round sports like cheer more than likely fall below the minimum wage

threshold.

The information presented should not replace the advice that your Human Resources and Payroll Departments can provide to athletics, but there are many resources available to athletic directors to help us look for creative ways that are compliant and legal. As teacher shortages grow our coaching vacancies increase and our pool of candidates shrink. Our Texas legislature has indicated they want to target the teacher shortages, so we can only hope that this will help us to provide our athletes with a continued pool of outstanding coaches.





2023 HALL OF HONOR INDUCTEES



Dr. Susan Elza
Former Director of Athletics, UIL
Nebraska Football Chief of Staff



Shawn Pratt
Superintendent of Schools
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