

# TEXAS

## Athletic Administrator

### June 2025 Newsletter



# Message from Executive Director

Rusty Dowling

Welcome to the Kalahari Resort & Convention Center and the 54th annual Texas High School Athletic Directors Association State Conference. This will be a very rewarding State Conference, and your attendance and participation will continue to make our annual Conference successful. The State Conference allows all athletic administrators the opportunity to network with other state athletic administrators, visit and continue to do business with our Exhibitors and THSADA sponsors as well as listen to our line-up of excellent speakers, participate in our professional development sessions, and take advantage of all resources provided to continue to effectively do the work of an athletic administrator. CPE hours are again available for all the Professional Development activities. The theme for this year's State Conference is, "*Elevate your Leadership*." This theme adequately reflects the conference agenda that will be predominant at this year's State Conference. Professional Development will again be the focal point of the State Conference as we will have wide selection of professional development sessions along with our QUAD A program in addition to our other successful academic curriculum which is our JHAMS program – Junior High and Middle School program for athletic administrators.

The 2025 State Conference will kick off with our annual THSADA-PBK Hall of Honor Celebration honoring Ray Zepeda-UIL, Todd Vesely-Fort Worth ISD and Brenda Marshall-Corpus Christi ISD followed at 4:30 p.m. on Sunday, June 1st with a keynote address by Dr. Chris Allen-Superintendent of Schools-Midway ISD, followed by Mr. Jim Walsh of the firm: Walsh, Gallegos, P.C., and our annual Sunday Night Kickoff Reception hosted by Paragon Sports Constructors to end the day.

Monday will be a full day of professional development featuring UIL presentations, a panel featuring University Athletic Directors, a State Championship Coaching Leadership panel moderated by THSCA, QUAD A sessions and a wide variety of sessions offered throughout the day.



This conference will be the largest attended event we have hosted and there will be numerous times when we offer up to five concurrent sessions. A change for this year is we will host an afternoon Tradeshow for lunch then break into our professional development sessions followed by our Daktronics Tradeshow that will be open from 4:00 p.m.-6:00 p.m. with our Exhibitors, food, and beverage along with the camaraderie that is always present at these functions.

Tuesday morning the annual Hellas Construction-Benny Carter Memorial Golf Tournament will be held at the Golf Club at Star Ranch as well as another new addition to the schedule that will be a morning Tradeshow featuring a light breakfast menu. Our JHAMS program will kick off the day along with our continuing QUAD A programs. An expanded feature of the Tuesday agenda is a Resume Review Session followed by a Mock Interview Session conducted by ISD Superintendents. We will end the business day with our Tuesday PBK Tradeshow Festival.

Wednesday is the last day of the State Conference and will feature THSADA Committee reports, introduction of the new THSADA Board of Directors followed by presentations of our Whataburger Scholarship recipients, introduction of the Texas Cup program, various THSADA announcements and rounding out the morning the State Conference Cash Drawings event.

The new THSADA Board of Director/Chairs/Ex-Officio members will officially be installed at the Wednesday morning session. Taking over as President of the THSADA is Andre Walker-Director of Athletics-Houston ISD. Andre has served the THSADA as a Committee member, Region Director, President-elect and now as the President. Serving as the new President-elect will be Rob Davies-Director of Athletics-Harlingen CISD. We welcome a new Region Director to Region 7-Gilbert Leal-Director of Athletics-Brownsville ISD and a new Ex-Officio member, Dr. Charles E. Breithaupt, former Executive Director of the UIL. We thank the previous Board for their services and look forward to collaborating with the new members. The Committee Chairs and Ex-Officio members will remain the same.

Take advantage of everything the State Conference has to offer. Again, welcome to the Kalahari Resort and Convention Center and enjoy the Conference.



# Associate Executive Director Update

Bob DeJonge

Well, the day is finally upon us! The THSADA 54th State Conference begins today. The Kalahari Resort and Convention Center will be full of THSADA's finest and their families. This year's event promises to be the most educational, entertaining and electric event we have ever offered. By the time conference registration is over we will have welcomed over 750 Athletic Administrators and families along with over 400 exhibitors representing 150 companies. At the closing of the event attendees will have had the opportunity to attend more than 30 professional development sessions specifically designed for today's athletic administrators, Aspiring Athletic Administrators, and Junior High and Middle Coordinators. Attendees can choose from fifteen TAAC sessions, five Quad A sessions, four JHAMS sessions, UIL updates and training, opportunities to participate in a Resume Review session and experience a Mock Interview with Superintendents. Additional conference highlights include a session by Dr. Chris Allen from Waco Midway ISD, two presentations on Educational Law, AD Round Tables and Stephen Mackey on the Texas Way! If that isn't enough, we'll offer several opportunities to enjoy some quality social time. Sunday night Paragon Sports Constructors will host the Kick-off Reception, we'll offer four tradeshow, featuring breakfast, lunch as well as two afternoon opportunities to interact with all 150 vendors in the exhibit hall. New this year will be the Quad A / JHAMS reception and the exciting new Innovative Showcase offering attendees a complimentary lunch and a special opportunity to meet several vendors offering unique state-of-the-art products!

On Tuesday morning we'll hit the links for the **Benny Carter Memorial Golf Tournament** which remains a staple of the THSADA's annual State Conference and again presented by Hellas Construction. Participants in the golf tourney are both athletic administrators and members of the THSADA and attendees of the State Conference, as well as sponsors or exhibitors of the THSADA. The event is named for Benny Carter, a member of the THSADA Hall of Honor. Proceeds of the golf tournament benefit the Whataburger Scholar-Athlete of the Year Awards.

Sunday afternoon the conference will start with our signature event, the PBK / THSADA Hall of Honor Celebration. The event is scheduled for 1:30 PM Sunday afternoon and will be held in the Kalahari Ballroom. Tickets are going fast so if you still need one on game day, just check at the door



and we'll take care of you. This year's HOH class feature three true all Stars – Brenda Marshall from Corpus Christi, Todd Vesely Fort Worth ISD retired and Ray Zepeda UIL Director of Athletics! The remainder of this year's award winners are listed below. We would like to say a special thank you to our friends at Balfour Awards for providing all of the awards!

We are so glad that you joined us for the largest State Conference for Athletic Administrators in the Country – We look forward to seeing you again next year and make plans to join us for our annual Fall Forum on October 5-6 at Northside ISD and Landmark Embassy Suites and then back to Margaritaville on February 22-23 for Spring Sponsor Showcase.

## THSADA Awards

### Hall of Honor

Todd Vesely – Retired Ft. Worth ISD

Brenda Marshall – Corpus Christi ISD

Ray Zepeda – University Interscholastic League

### THSADA Regional Athletic Administrators of the Year

Region 1 Andrea Edwards, Amarillo ISD

Region 2 Grant Freeman, Wichita Falls ISD

Region 3 Jennifer Frazier, McKinney ISD

Region 4 Martin Segovia, Ysleta ISD

Region 5 Dena Scott, Fort Bend ISD

Region 6 Lynn Pool, Austin ISD

Region 7 Gilbert Leal, Brownsville ISD

Region 8 Melanie Hinson, Southwest ISD

### THSADA Joe Bill Fox Award

Jeff Lillibridge – Lillibridge Digital

### THSADA Outgoing Regional Directors

Region 1 Toby Tucker – New Home ISD

Region 3 Jennifer Frazier – McKinney ISD

Region 6 Jason Dean – Georgetown ISD

Region 7 Rob Davies – Harlingen ISD

### THSADA Dr. Charles E Breithaupt Award

Andrea Edwards – Amarillo ISD

### THSADA Superintendent of the Year

Richard Kilgore – Bruceville Eddy ISD

### PBK Athletic Director of the Year

Leslie Slovak – Richardson ISD

### National Recognitions

NFHS Citation Mike Bass – Alvin ISD

NIAAA Bruce Whitehead DSA Dr. Lisa Langston – Ft Worth ISD

Kelly Reeves SAM Melanie Hinson – Southwest ISD

Frank Kovalski P.D. Award Dena Scott – Fort Bend ISD

NIAAA HOF Texas Nominee Sandra Howell – Ret Little Elm ISD

NIAAA Triple Legacy Award Sandra Mader – Aldine ISD





# Reflections from 50 years in UIL Athletics

**Dr. Charles Breithaupt**  
Executive Director, University Interscholastic League

**M**y coaching career began as junior high coach in my hometown. Coming right out of college I was thinking I was the next coming of Vince Lombardi and John Wooden rolled into one. It didn't take long to understand that having a whistle and a clipboard did not make any one a coach. Not knowing much, I was fortunate to have Head Coach & AD Bobby Goforth and Coach Rufus Williams serving as mentors. They helped guide me to the right path. Each of them spent a lot of time telling me what I couldn't or shouldn't do. It was a good thing because I didn't know a whole lot!

My passion for coaching has never ended. I still consider myself a coach. I think about the challenges and obstacles coaches face every day. I still draw X's and O's on napkins, move salt and pepper shakers around and get lost in that coaching fog from time to time. If you are a true coach, you know what I mean.

So why coach? I talked about these next three facets of coaching at THSCA Coaching School in 2024.

## PURPOSE

You have heard it enough. Coaching isn't about winning or losing. I say hogwash to that thinking. It is indeed about winning. Winning young people to positive attitudes and character traits and developing them into the citizens we want them to become is the primary purpose. But yes, it is okay to win. We know the purpose, but we must have a plan.

## PLAN

As a junior high coach, I lined out my career goals. I was intent on getting a head coaching job and winning a state championship. I kept my goals private and reviewed and revised them frequently throughout my career.



When I did get my first head coaching job, I learned it was important to plan for the entire year and not just for the season. I knew I had to develop an offseason plan as well. I wanted a program not just one successful year. During the season, planning the practices often took as much time as the actual practice. I developed a Master Plan that covered every aspect of the game, so that I would be certain not to neglect any situation that might occur in a game. I utilized the clock in every practice, so that players and coaches would realize that time is an important factor.

## PEOPLE

Student-athletes are our greatest resource. They are on loan from parents to coaches for development and safe keeping. I wanted to build up not tear down. Coaches must be tough but should also understand that players are human-beings, and they are not little machines.

I expected much out of my players, but I believed they all knew that I loved them even if I did not tell them. As one coach said many years ago, "They don't care how much you know until they know how much you care."

The two most important words in the English language are YES and NO! These are words that many students don't hear except from a coach. We can use

constructive criticism, followed by genuine praise.

But I didn't stop with communication just to the players. I made sure our coaches knew what we were doing in practice and in games and they were a vital part of the process.

Also, the parents knew what to expect from me and the assistant coaches. I think having a pre-season meeting with all parents to lay out goals and expectations is most important. This meeting should include information on how the varsity would be selected, team captains, schedules, practice dates and times, etc.

In this meeting I outlined our team expectations concerning behaviors. Simply using, "Do what is right," was utilized and generally accepted. What is right and wrong is determined by the coach. Whatever rules you have, must be enforced fairly, not necessarily equally.

Communication with administrators was also crucial. They were kept abreast of any conflicts or problems and were made to feel part of the team. I tried to get the faculty involved with our team as well. Custodians, teacher aides, cafeteria workers can all contribute to make your program special.

## POWER

It is my opinion that on game night the head coach is the most powerful person in town. The coach determines the makeup of the team, selects the starting lineup, selects the offense and defense the team will use. The coach makes substitutions, calls timeouts, decides whether to go for it on 4<sup>th</sup> down, who bats cleanup, who the anchor is on sprint relay, who will be the goalie. The coach makes the schedule and helps determine the officials. The coach has charge over all these things even though they might

*Reflections Continued on next page*



be parsed out to assistants. During this game the coach has more power than the superintendent, principal or athletic director, more power than the mayor or the governor or even the President. He might not have it next the next day or the following week, but tonight he is king.

Pretty heady stuff when you consider how many people in the stands are criticizing your offensive strategy, second guessing your substitutions and just don't like your starting lineup because their kid is not one of them. The head coach is responsible for each of these decisions and must live with the aftermath.

## REFLECTIONS

As a junior high coach attending my first coaching school I was overwhelmed with the number of coaches, including the vast number who were looking for jobs. The job room was full of coaches looking for the scant few jobs that were open. I felt privileged to have my job. For many years I returned to the job room just out of curiosity.

Attending the Balfour Hall of Honor banquet was a special occasion. Watching the luminaries being inducted into the Hall of Honor back in the early 70's made me understand, "I will probably never be able to get there." But as I watched the coaches get their state championship rings, there was a glimmer of hope for maybe getting one those one day. I am still in shock that both of those honors came true for me.

Fast forward after 17 years in coaching, 14 as a head coach, to a position as Assistant Athletic Director of the UIL. I was blessed to work for two great men, Dr. Bailey Marshall, Director of the UIL and Assistant Director and Athletic Director Dr. Bill Farney.

I really didn't want to get out of coaching. When it came down to making my decision, Dr. Farney said, "Look, you are making a big difference for students in your own 3A high school, but if you come to UIL you will have a chance

to have a greater influence on thousands of students in the state." That sealed the deal for me.

I missed coaching those first couple of years. When asked what it was that I missed so much about coaching I said, "Three things. Number one the feeling of being needed, 'Coach could I borrow a dollar for lunch; Coach could I get a ride home after practice, Coach, could you help me with a personal problem?' Number two, I missed the locker room and coaches' office. The informal times after practice when stories were told, and legends were built. Only the players and coaches could be in that club. Thirdly, I missed the bus rides home after a big win. There is nothing better than riding on the euphoria of the celebration of winning after putting in the hard work. It is difficult to capture these feelings outside the coaching profession.



Having coached most of my career when only one team advanced to the playoffs, it was interesting to hear the logic and rationale from the UIL office regarding how an additional team was added to the playoff bracket in 1982 and then a third in 1990 and a fourth team in 2006. Reclassification and Realignment and the playoff structure continue to be a daily conversation with UIL staff.

After 33 years at the UIL, 14 as the Director of Athletics and the final 16 as Executive Director I look can look back with pride at some of the things our team has accomplished. We have employed many amazing men and women who have carried the banner for UIL. I am pleased to have been associated with of each of them.

While I would like to take credit for some of the major policies, procedures or changes we have made to our championships, it is the UIL Legislative Council (the rule making body) and the superintendents across the state who have made

the UIL what it is today. The superintendents, administrators, athletic directors and coaches have been magnificent throughout my years in Austin.

It has been my great fortune to work with 17 different Chairpersons of the UIL Legislative Council. Starting with Dr. Curtis Culwell, who gaveled in the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of UIL in 2010 to our current Chairman Dr. Roland Hernandez there have been many of the best public-school leaders in the country leading the UIL Legislative Council. Mark Henry, Greg Poole, Rick Reedy, Thomas Randle, Dan Troxell, JoAnn Bludau, Keith Bryant, Robin Ryan, Cody Moree, Shannon Holmes, Rusty Marshall, Kay Waggoner, Dan Troxell, Linda Henrie, Jim Waller Johnny Pineda and Curtis Rhodes have served with distinction as Chair of the Council during my tenure as Executive Director.

The State Executive Committee has also done a sterling job in the adjudication of the rules passed by the Council Chairman Mike Motheral has served with great distinction as chair of this committee for the past 23 years. Committee members such as Darryl Wade, Paul Galvan and Johanna Denson have represented the Athletic Directors' perspective with wisdom and grace. Decisions from this committee have become increasingly difficult because of the changing demographics in our state.

The UIL Medical Advisory Committee has been a significant contributor to the health and safety of our students. They analyze current trends in sports medicine and review each protocol. Dr. Jessie DeLee has chaired this committee since 2001.

If I take any credit for the success of the League, it would be necessary for me to accept blame for those things that did not go as planned. I certainly have made some mistakes. But, rehashing them is a fruitless effort as I learned in coaching. I spent far too much time dwelling on the losses rather than enjoying the wins. I don't want to end my career carrying any

**Reflections** *Continued on next page*



baggage!

We should all take pride in the State Football Championships that are being played at a common site. Having over 250,000 in attendance for 12 games was a spectacular and historic feat. This remains one of the largest attended sporting events in the country.

The THSCA and the THSADA helped create this incredible gathering of talent. State Football has become a virtual coaching clinic and a place where coaches can learn from one another while socializing and watching the best football in the nation.

Also, during the past 16 years in athletics, we have ramped up emphasis on health and safety protocols for our participants, created National Summit for Football, implemented a six-conference alignment, summer strength and conditioning programs for athletes with coaches along with additional time during the school year out of season strength conditioning, Coaches Certification Program (CCP), Officials Compliance Program (OCP), fortified rules regarding recruiting and changing schools for athletic purposes and new activities such as Water Polo. In a historic move the UIL began crowning two state champions in each team sport in each conference in 2024-25.

In one of the greatest challenges in the history of UIL we all worked together to recover from COVID. It took ingenuity, patience and great care to get back to normal. Without our coaches and school administrators we would have struggled to restart. But the cooperation and dedication made the comeback special.

It is hard to describe what we do at UIL. Most people don't know about us until Reclassification and Realignment is released every two years. Or there might be a case in which a school has forfeit a game or even a state championship.

UIL staff doesn't enjoy a Monday through Friday 8-5 jobs. We are 24/7, 365 with have more than a million contests being conducted each year. In every one of those contests, more than half of the contestants did not win are a seeking

an alternative result. That is where the conflict comes into play.

When a staff member gets a call after 10 pm it is usually not one congratulating us on a great state tournament! On the other end of the call is someone with a concern, a complaint or an allegation. Or it could just be an innocent question about a rule or regulation. The best way to describe what we do is that we are generally in the mode of conflict resolution. We are tasked with more than making policies or rules, we are called on the unravel sticky and often complex problems

Yes, I am proud that we can boast we are the biggest and the best in the nation because of the strength of our coaches' associations. The UIL works with 12 separate athletic associations, representing different sports and the Texas High School Athletic Directors Association stands tall in their space providing quality work for their membership. Executive Director Rusty Dowling has turned a small association of ADs into a grand and highly influential organization. He has done a marvelous job creating a space for new AD's and for initiating numerous committees and study groups who tackle difficult scenarios. He has been closely aligned with UIL throughout his tenure. Coach Dowling has a vision for THSADA and is doing a fantastic job moving the association in a positive fashion.

There are so many great names of THSADA Past Presidents such as Jerry Comalander, Phillip O'Neal, Debbie Decker, Joe Rodriguez, Cliff Odenwald, Ed Warken, Ruth Meridith, David Kuykendall, Shawn Pratt, and Kelly Reeves along with current President Leslie Slovak and Vice President Andre Walker are just a few of the outstanding men and women who have led the organization forward with great resolve since I have been with UIL. There are many more, several of whom have become lifelong friends, that have helped develop the association into a vital force in the state of Texas.

Executive Director Joe Martin from the Texas High School Coaches Associ-

ation has been a dynamic leader and a strong force in the phenomenal growth of his association. He has overseen the expansion of the Coaching School & Convention and thus expanded membership. The nearly 28,000 members of THSCA have a great influence politically and strategically and their mission and goal to help coaches help kids is unique and highly successful.

I have had the great pleasure to work with former leaders of the THSCA who are truly, legends of the game. Coach Eddie Joseph, Coach D.W. Rutledge and my friend and colleague, the late Eddie Wolski are just a few of the men who have help make the THSCA such a sterling and dynamic organization.

I will not mention each the associations, but I do wish to give a word of praise to my good friend Sam Tipton, Executive Director of the Texas Girls Coaches Association, The TGCA has stood in the gap from 1951 until the present, representing the coaches of girls' sports. Texas has prospered in many ways because of the work of the TGCA.

Also, because I once served on the board and as President the Texas Association of Basketball Coaches, I should mention their new Executive Director Johnnie Carter who took over for his predecessor Rick Sherley last year.

I would be remiss if I did not give a shout out to the Texas High School Baseball Coaches Association and Director Rex Sanders. Their UIL liaison John Carter has been a good friend of the UIL through the years.

Finally, my hat is off to Mike Fitch and Bill Theodore with the Texas Association of Sports Officials. These men also have complex jobs, and they are outstanding in leading 18,000 officials. We didn't always agree however, we have always worked for what we believed was best for the game, the athletes and the coaches.

All this reminiscing makes me sad because I am leaving a profession filled with many outstanding individuals and associations. I will miss the give and





take of debate on issues and the professional integrity that is absent in other lines of work.

I congratulate and commend Dr. Jamey Harrison, the newly appointed UIL Executive Director. He has served faithfully these past 14 years as Deputy Director. He will continue to do marvelous and courageous work in this new role.

Coach Ray Zepeda has proven to be what we all expected him to be as the State Director of Athletics. He has been a significant player in the THSADA and represents that organization well. He is intelligent and hard-working, and we are blessed by his presence. He has put together a terrific athletic staff in A.J.

Martinez, Grace McDowell and Joseph Garmon. They are simply the best at what they do each day.

I want to also mention the former Directors of Athletics who worked alongside me prior to hiring Coach Zepeda. Dr. Susan Elza, Dr. Mark Cousins and Cliff Odenwald. Each provided quality leadership and excellent service to the UIL. I miss them every day.

One more shout out must go to Kim Carmichael the Chief of Staff of the UIL. She has been with us since I became Executive Director in 2009. She has an incredible work ethic and is smart, effective and efficient.

We have a great team at UIL. Each staff member is dedicated to excellence. They are committed to doing what is best for the student-athletes and coaches

in this great state.

I never dreamed of being the leader of the UIL. It was not on my list of goals. I thought I would coach 50 years and simply step aside. Instead, God had a better plan. Because of my faith in Him through my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ I know that I should listen to him more. I hope I can do better in retirement.

My heart will always be with coaches and with the UIL. I still try to coach a little bit every day. Perhaps I will write more books that will showcase the outstanding talent and abilities which exist in our coaching profession. Coaches' never stop learning or loving the game. I appreciate all that our coaches and athletic directors are doing to help kids. As I step aside on August 31, 2025, I wish you great success! Good luck and Godspeed!

## THSADA Professional Education

*Johanna Denson, THSADA Senior Director*

### "Every Opportunity to Succeed"

**T**exas High School Athletic Directors Association is committed to providing current athletic administrators with the "tools of the trade" to be a success in their school district, while preparing the aspiring athletic administrator and the middle school or junior high administrator the opportunity to prepare for the next phase of their career. With three outstanding programs that meet the needs of our members, THSADA offers a smorgasbord of learning opportunities no matter where you are in your career. It is important however, that as a THSADA member, you take advantage of the many opportunities for self-improvement and professional growth provided by the Association.

The Texas Athletic Administrators Certification (TAAC) has now expanded to seven sections of content that range from Governance to Leadership, with an additional section that catches the current issues that affect a Texas athletic administrator. By completing 30 TAAC courses for State certification, it shows

the perseverance and commitment to improve your performance and expand your knowledge of athletic administration. It is the focus of THSADA to continue to grow the certification program and gain support and recognition from school district superintendents across the State.

The Aspiring Athletic Administrators Academy (QUAD-A) aligns with the State certification program with similar topics as the TAAC courses, but at an entry level of depth. As the THSADA member completes the program content of the QUAD-A program, they will have a greater depth of understanding of the TAAC course content. A member can simultaneously participate in both programs of study when they attend the three THSADA events offered throughout the year: Fall Forum, Spring Sponsor Showcase and State Conference.

The third THSADA program of study, JHAMS (Junior High and Middle School) has sky-rocketed to success and fills the void that is apparent and

the need to educate the junior high and middle school athletic administrators. This program of study focuses on the issues that affect the athletic administrator on the junior high and middle school campuses. The program aligns with the QUAD-A and TAAC course content, with the focus on the 6-7th grade athletic administrator. Program content is specific to the population of athletic administrators that work in this genre. Any member registered for the JHAMS program can also participate in the TAAC and QUAD-A programs offered at any THSADA event.

As you look at your career and future opportunities in athletic administration, remember you hold the key to your future and THSADA is the door. As comedian Jonathan Winters said, "Don't wait for your ship to come in, swim out to meet it." Prepare for the career you see in your future, through participation in the THSADA professional education programs.



# Change in Leadership

*Sonia Almanza, Northside ISD*

As the 2024-2025 school year comes to end, we also have several Athletic Directors putting an exclamation mark on their careers in education. The following three retiring Athletic Directors are just a few of our leaders who have left their mark on Texas Education and Athletics. These amazing Athletic Directors have paved the way for their district for many years to come.

## **Brenda Marshall, Senior Athletic Director, Corpus Christi ISD**

Brenda Marshall's journey in the realm of athletics is marked by a trail-blazing spirit and a relentless dedication to her craft. With a career spanning over five decades, Brenda's impact as an athlete, coach, and administrator has stretched across the Texas sports landscape.

Brenda went to the University of Texas at Arlington in 1974 to play softball, as softball had just begun in Texas colleges in 1973. She was part of two teams to play in the AIAW College World Series. Her success in athletics helped to lay the foundation for a career defined by determination. In 1986, Brenda became the first female athletic administrator in Corpus Christi Independent School District. At this time, there were only five female administrators in Texas. In 2005, she ascended to the role of the first female Athletic Director for CCISD.

Throughout her tenure, Brenda's leadership has helped transform the landscape of athletics within CCISD. From spearheading the inception of various sports programs to helping oversee the building of many state-of-the-art sports facilities. Brenda's commitment to excellence has earned her recognition on the state and national stage. She has been a dedicated member of the Texas High School Athletic

Directors Association (THSADA), Texas High School Coaches Association (THSCA), Texas Girls Coaches Association (TGCA) and the National Interscholastic Athletic Administrators Association (NIAAA). Her accolades stand as a testament to a career defined by passion, perseverance, and a pioneering spirit. She hopes her journey serves as an inspiration to aspiring athletes and administrators.

## **Stan Laing, Assistant Superintendent for Athletics, Northside ISD**

The 2024-2025 school year will be Stan's 40th and final season in public education. Thirty-one of those seasons were in Northside ISD where he served as a teacher, coach, campus principal, and assistant superintendent for athletics. With the influence of both his high school and college coach, Stan embarked on his long journey as a high school basketball and football coach with stops at Bridgeport High School, Abilene High School, John Jay High School, and O'Connor High School. His administrative career had stops at O'Connor High School and Clark High School before becoming the Assistant Superintendent for Athletics in Northside ISD.

During his administrative tenure as Principal, his high school staff was recognized by Newsweek Magazine as a top performing high school nationally multiple year. As Athletic Director, the Texas High School Athletic Directors Association has recognized him as a Regional Athletic Administrator of the Year multiple times, and the Texas High School Coaches Association has recognized him with the Grant Teaff Coaching Beyond the Game Award.

During Stan's fifteen-year tenure as Northside ISD Athletic Director, fifteen State Championships were won.

Most importantly for him, was the Beyond the Game culture that he aspired over 600 coaches to become servant leaders, that went Beyond the Game to make what they coached relevant to life. Mile One was their obligations, Mile Two (Second Milers) was their opportunity to be Hope Dealers and Love Distributors, and to be F.A.M.I.L.Y. (Forget About Me I Love You). This Servant Leadership Culture will be his legacy to be Paid Forward for many years to come.

## **Kelly Parker, Executive Director of Athletics, North East ISD**

Kelly grew up in Carthage, Texas and graduated from Texas A&M - College Station. He began coaching in 1993 for Jourdanton ISD followed by stops at Wimberley High School, LEE High School in San Antonio, Alamo Heights High School, and Claudia T. Johnson High School in San Antonio as well. While coaching at Alamo Heights High School he was fortunate to coach in the 2003 4A Division II Football State Semi Finals and was part of the Football State Championship team in 2006 in 4A Division I. At Johnson High School he was part of the 2013 Football State Semi Finals for 6A Division II and had the privilege to coach in the 2016 6A Baseball State Championship.

In 2016, Kelly became Director of Athletics in North East ISD overseeing football, track, and baseball. In 2020 he became the Executive Director for Athletics in the North East ISD. In the 32 years in education, and Kelly has been blessed to work with some of the best coaches and directors in the business. Kelly has been married for 34 years to Stephanie Parker and have two grown daughters and one granddaughter.





# Aspiring Athletic Leaders at LFISD

David Cantu – Los Fresnos ISD Athletic Director

My name is David Cantu, Athletic Director of Los Fresnos CISD. During the spring semester of 2024, the idea for professional learning sessions for those middle and high school coaches interested in becoming head coaches or athletic administrators led our athletic department, in conjunction with our District's Talent Development and Support office, to create our Aspiring Athletic Leaders sessions.

The first Aspiring Athletic Leaders session took place on July 30th at our District Board Room and it was a fantastic success! All the coaches pictured volunteered/sacrificed their own time in the summer to learn and share. Liberty Memorial Middle School Assistant Principal Vanessa Rodriguez assisted with the hands-on and interactive presentation. Topics that day included:

- The Importance of Leaders to our team/organization
- Defining leadership
- Identifying primary factors of a good leader
  - Character
  - Power of Decision
  - Wisdom to Plan and Order
  - Courage to Act
  - Capacity to Manage
- Identifying marks of a good leader
  - Must Know His Job
  - Be a Good Teacher
  - Display Courage
  - Display Capacity to Get Things Done
  - Know the People to Lead
  - Set the Standard
  - Be Determined
  - Possess Foresight
- Read & Open Discussion regarding the chapter of Nick Saban's book, entitled 'How Good Do You Want to Be?'



In mid-March, our LFCISD Aspiring Athletic Leaders reconvened at our Los Fresnos PLC (Professional Learning Center). This time, Mrs. Kathleen Hollon, M. Ed., who is our District's Executive Director

of Talent Development and Support, led the majority of the presentation entitled 'Leadership In Action: Coaching & Mentoring – Empowering Coaches, Building Future Leaders'.

Mrs. Hollon led our enthusiastic group of coaches through a variety of group activities, Question & Answer sessions, and ended the afternoon with a "hot chair" Athletic Leader Panel in which Athletic Coordinator Neil Schuster and I took various questions from the group. On this day, the topics covered included:

- Transition from Coach to Athletic Leader

- Coaching Coaches: Developing Your Staff
- Mentorship: Developing Future Athletic Leaders
- Strategies for Effective Mentorship
- Athletic Leader Panel (Hot Seat Q & A)

Moving forward, our vision with our 'Aspiring Athletic Leaders' group, is to try to include more coaches who would like to participate and continue to include both middle and high school level. The real-life conversations of relevant athletic topics were, indeed, inspiring and motivating. I genuinely feel that those who missed out need to receive this training as, in reality, it put our coaching profession in proper perspective and allowed us to empathize better with each other's important roles in athletics. This summer we will be planning our next session with continued improvement in mind.





In maintaining the mission of the Texas High School Athletic Directors Association of encouraging and promoting Professional Development, the THSADA, at the 2024 State Conference, introduced the newly designed JHAMS (Junior High and Middle School) Professional Education curriculum. The initial turnout for this program was very good so the Association decided to take another step and offer this program to all THSADA members and even non-members. This program was developed by Bill Daws of THSADA and Kyle Green-Assistant Director of Athletics-Katy ISD. In the development of this program, we also created a Junior High Committee that would assist in guiding this endeavor as it relates to those who would benefit directly from this type program. Un-

derstanding that ISD's are limited in professional development funds it was decided to take the JHAMS program "on the road" and at no cost to the attendees.

The first JHAMS event was held in Houston at Katy ISD Legacy Stadium where 197 attendees participated in the daylong event. This event consisted of presentations, a panel of JH Athletic Coordinators and a round-table discussion. These sessions were facilitated by both Bill Daws and Kyle Green. Breakfast and lunch were served and the day ended around 2:30 p.m. Again, no cost to the attendees.

The 2nd JHAMS event was held in the Dallas-Fort Worth-area at the McKinney Community Event Center. Attendance for this event (on a very cold day) was 138 and essentially fol-

lowed the same programming as was used in Katy ISD.

THSADA saw 335 total JHAMS attendees go through two events and provided some great networking and professional development opportunities for all who participated. The THSADA will also be offering JHAMS at the 2025 State Conference and as of this writing over 50 attendees have pre-registered.

The THSADA plans to expand this outreach program to three events next year at sites to be determined. Along with the TAAC and QUAD A programs, this newly created JHAMS curriculum will add more professional development opportunities for all THSADA members.

## 2025 Spring Sponsor Showcase Recap

*Jody Hormann, Assistant Executive Director- THSADA*

The 5th Annual THSADA Spring Sponsor Showcase was held on Monday, March 3 and Tuesday, March 4 at Margaritaville in Lake Conroe and was attended by over 250 athletic administrators. The location was not the only new thing about this year's Showcase. For the first time, Resume Reviews were offered to anyone attending the event. This was an incredible opportunity for registrants to meet with either a superintendent or athletic director one on one and get instant feedback regarding their resumes. Another new addition that several attendees took advantage of were the free professional headshots compliments of VYPE. Pat Kohan CEO of Kohan Content had an impressive set up for interviews he conducted with various athletic administrators as well as interviews with the 2025 Hall of Honor

inductees Ray Zepeda, Brenda Marshall, and Todd Vesely. These Director's Cut interviews kicked off THSADA's launch of the official podcast!

Monday began with several THSADA committee meetings, followed by QUAD A mentors meeting their mentees. Rounding out the presentation portion of the day was an outstanding panel of superintendents that really drove home the power of athletics and the importance of athletic administrators. Although the weather Tuesday morning caused some challenges, our presenters did a fantastic job of adapting and getting their messages delivered. Several TAAC and QUAD A courses were offered throughout the day addressing documentation, evaluations, athletic training programs, budgeting, implementing an officials training course,

and how to conduct a thorough UIL investigation. To end the day, UIL Athletic Director, Ray Zepeda, provided a very informative update. We always appreciate the time UIL and Ray carve out of their busy schedules to attend THSADA events and keep our athletic directors up to date.

The Sponsor Tradeshow was one of the largest yet at a Spring Sponsor Showcase. Located in the Del Lago Ballroom with over 120 people representing 50 companies, athletic administrators were able to easily interact with THSADA sponsors, enjoy lunch and win door prizes all at the same time.

The next THSADA event will be the 54th Annual State Conference held at the Kalahari Resort and Convention Center in Round Rock on June 1-4, 2025. See you there!

# Athletics Making Community Connections

Megan Symank, College Station ISD Assistant Athletic Director

For over 100 years, the UIL has provided Texas high school and junior high students with positive educational experiences through athletic competition. For many coaches throughout the state, school athletics has been a huge part of the world in which they grew up. Athletics is not only part of the high school and junior high experience, but it is entrenched in the community with various community members as competition spectators. As a way to provide even greater experiences for younger students, Athletics is finding ways to expand their role through community service projects.

## College Station ISD Little Olympics

College Station ISD hosted the second annual CSISD Little Olympics on Wednesday, May 7, 2025. The Little Olympics is a community-connecting service event that promotes competition through track and field related activities for elementary schools. The College Station ISD track programs at A&M Consolidated HS and College Station HS joined together to organize the following events with valued sponsorships from the College Station ISD Education Foundation, Physicians Premier ER, and Highpoint Signs & Apparel. Each CSISD elementary campus competed to be named the 2025 Little Olympics Champion.

Events were facilitated with the schedule of events shown below. Students were selected to represent their schools through activities during their PE class. Each student could only be selected to represent the school in one event. The elementary campus PE

teacher notified students and families about the selection criteria

## Schedule of Events

4:50 PM Welcome Parade  
5:15 PM Field Events: Shot Put & Broad Jump  
5:45 PM 200 M Dash  
6:15 PM 100 M Dash  
6:30 PM 800 M Run  
7:00 PM \*Community Fun Run 400M  
7:10 PM 400 M Dash  
7:40 PM 400 M Relay (3rd/4th only)  
8:00 PM Team Awards

This event was a massive collaboration between the high school athletic programs and elementary campus administration and PE teachers. Logistical conversations included mapping, bus transportation, school nurse roles, sponsored team shirts, snacks & water, registration & awarding process, volunteering, and checking out. For more information, view the district webpage for Little Olympics or email Assistant AD Megan Symank at [msymank@csisd.org](mailto:msymank@csisd.org).

## Magnolia ISD Pre-Athletics & Intramurals

Magnolia ISD has created a 6th grade Introduction to Athletics class designed for students who want to pursue athletics in junior high. Part of the enrichment opportunities for this class includes after school intramurals for each sport unit covered during the school year. Each intramural sport unit will be divided

into three to four week increments including one day a week after school practice from 3:30-4:30. Boys' sports include basketball, cross-country, soccer, football and track. Girls' sports include basketball, cross-country, soccer, volleyball and track. The coaching for each of these afterschool activities is conducted outside of the regular high school season and is lead by the coaches and current high school student athletes. Below is the description on the flag football intramural parent permission letter.

## Conclusion

In summary, Athletics is truly an integral part of our communities and when considering the impact, it is important to recognize it does not have to be limited to students in junior high and high school. If trying to create programs with positive educational experiences, part of those experiences should be teaching student athletes the value of service. And, there is no better way to give back to the community than investing in the students who will follow in their footsteps.



### Introduction to Athletics Intramurals

#### Unit 2: Flag Football

Flag Football will be our next intramural sport and will focus on individual skills and techniques. We will cover passing, catching, route running, and handoffs. Below is important information for you and your student in regards to the football schedule. If you have any questions please feel free to email me at [edwards@magnoliaisd.org](mailto:edwards@magnoliaisd.org).

If you are interested in **FLAG FOOTBALL** our first practice will be Tuesday, January 28<sup>th</sup> from 3:30-4:30. The students will be released to the 6<sup>th</sup> grade gym after buses and once attendance is taken, will be released to go home. Pick up will begin immediately after practice in front of the school in the car rider line (under the Bear Branch Intermediate sign). A bus **WILL NOT** take students home after practice. Parents should arrive **BY 4:30** to pick up their student. Students have been told if they are failing classes at grade check (progress report or report card) or have been assigned ISS during the flag football unit, they will not be allowed to continue participating in flag football. We are preparing them for sports in the future. No pass, no play and discipline issues should not occur with student-athletes. As a reminder, this is flag football and there will not be any tackling permitted. Students have been told several times and will be removed from the intramural unit if they were to tackle another student.

The practice dates for **FLAG FOOTBALL** are the following:

Tuesday, January 28<sup>th</sup> 3:30-4:30  
Tuesday, February 4<sup>th</sup> 3:30-4:30  
Tuesday, February 11<sup>th</sup> 3:30-4:30  
Thursday, February 20<sup>th</sup> 3:30-4:30

**\*In the case of inclement weather, we will have practice inside the gym\***

**\*\*Discipline issues in any class can also result in removal from intramurals\*\***

Please join our Remind to get information regarding intramurals: Boys Remind: Text the message @bbisboys25 to 81010. Go Bears!!

Coach Edwards





# The Key to Success: Onboarding for New Coaches

Dena Scott, CMAA and Lyndsay Watts, CMAA

In the dynamic world of athletics, success hinges not only on the talent of student-athletes, but also on the guidance and leadership provided by coaches. Recognizing this, athletic departments across the nation are re-imagining their approach to coach onboarding, support, and development. This transformative process involves key components such as centralized onboarding and fostering a thriving team culture, all aimed at empowering coaches for long-term success.

**Centralized Onboarding Process:** At the heart of every successful coaching journey lies a well-structured onboarding process. A centralized approach ensures that new coaches are seamlessly integrated into the athletic department, equipped with the knowledge, resources, and support they need to hit the ground running. From administrative tasks to compliance education and technical training, every step is meticulously designed to set coaches up for success from day one. The following are key components of a successful onboarding process:

- Greet new coaches with a warm welcome and introduce them to the department's mission, values, and goals.
- Educate new coaches about district, league, and state rules, regulations, and compliance requirements.
- Provide specific training and professional development related to coaching techniques, methodologies, and strategies.
- Pair new coaches with experienced mentors to guide them through the athletic department's culture and expectations.
- Set clear expectations and performance goals for each new coach.
- Establish and share evaluation criteria and a timeline for performance reviews.

- Create a streamlined reporting structure for issues or concerns, ensuring transparent and accountable communication.
- Implement a centralized onboarding process to ensure new coaches are well-prepared, supported, and equipped for success in the athletic program.

**Clear Expectations:** Setting clear expectations is paramount to the success of any coaching endeavor. Coaches are entrusted with the development and well-being of their athletes, and as such, they must embody commitment, expertise, effective communication, and ethical conduct. This includes demonstrating dedication to the holistic development, well-being, and success of the student athletes in their care, aligning with the purpose of education-based athletics. Below are several integral parts of setting clear expectations for new coaches.

- Emphasize the importance of clear and effective communication for building trust and rapport with stakeholders.
- Foster a positive and open communication environment.
- Clearly communicate the importance of ethical conduct to the coaching staff.
- Uphold the highest ethical standards, including honesty, integrity, and respect for the rules of the sport.
- Avoid conflicts of interest and maintain the trust of student-athletes and their families.
- Lead by example as administrators, demonstrating what is important to the Athletic Director.
- Outline expectations upfront to provide a roadmap for coaches to navigate their roles effectively and uphold program values.

**Educational Focus:** In the realm of education-based athletics, maintaining an unwavering educational focus is not just beneficial; it's imperative. By anchoring coaching endeavors within the framework of the institution's vision and mission, a multitude of benefits emerges that are pivotal for the success and sustainability of athletic programs. Several significant elements of educational focus for new coaches are listed below.

- Foster a shared sense of purpose, driving coaches towards common goals with synchronized efforts.
- Enhance motivation as coaches understand the significance of their roles in contributing to the department's broader aspirations.
- Provide clarity on the department's direction and strategies, enabling coaches to make informed decisions and prioritize effectively.
- Maintain consistency in coaches' actions through a firm understanding of the mission and vision.
- Foster accountability, compelling coaches to align their performance and contributions with the organization's goals.
- Enhance recruitment efforts by attracting individuals who resonate with the institution's values.
- Foster a culture of innovation, inspiring coaches to devise creative solutions that propel the department closer to its envisioned future.
- Nurture a strong sense of community and teamwork among coaches.
- Cultivate a holistic environment where coaches are empowered to shape the educational journey of student-athletes in alignment

*Onboarding Continued on next page*



with the institution's broader educational mission.

**Ongoing Support:** The journey of coaching is not a solitary one but rather a collaborative endeavor supported by a robust network of mentors, peers, and resources. Athletic departments play a pivotal role in providing ongoing support to coaches through mentorship programs, professional development opportunities, and access to essential resources. By nurturing a culture of support and collaboration, departments empower coaches to thrive in their roles and contribute to the overall success of the program. Listed below are several ways an athletic department can provide ongoing support to new coaches.

- Establish mentorship programs pairing experienced coaches with newcomers, offering invaluable insights, advice, and a support system.
- Encourage attendance at coaching clinics, workshops, and conferences for continuous education on the latest techniques and strategies as well as stress management and work-life balance.
- Conduct regular performance evaluations to provide constructive feedback, identify areas for improvement, and track growth over time.
- Ensure access to necessary resources, including equipment, facilities, and technology, by providing budgetary support.
- Foster collaboration among coaches to create a sense of community within the department.
- Organize team-building activities and meetings to facilitate communication and idea exchange.
- Address conflicts or issues promptly and effectively, providing guidance on conflict resolution strategies.
- Encourage coaches to engage with the local community, building positive relationships with par-

- ents, students, and stakeholders.
- Provide leadership training and opportunities for coaches to develop as leaders within the department.
- Offer sports psychology services to address the mental and emotional aspects of coaching and performance.
- Implement initiatives like coaches' book studies to provide valuable insights and strategies.
- Establish an open-door policy for coaches to approach the athletic director with concerns, ideas, or requests for support.
- Recognize and reward coaches for their hard work and achievements, motivating them to excel in their roles.
- Stay informed about the latest trends and issues in coaching and athletics, sharing relevant information with the coaching staff.
- Facilitate networking opportunities for coaches to connect with peers within and outside the department.
- Empower new coaches to thrive in their roles, contribute to the success of the athletic program, and grow both professionally and personally.

**Building Team Culture:** A positive team culture is the bedrock of athletic success, nurturing camaraderie, resilience, and sportsmanship among athletes and coaches alike. By prioritizing academic performance, discipline, and participation, coaches contribute to a thriving team culture that extends beyond the playing field. Through their leadership and example, coaches inspire their athletes to embody the values of teamwork, respect, and integrity, laying the foundation for lifelong success. Listed below are positive outcomes from building a strong team culture.

- Enhances team cohesion and unity, leading to improved performance and collaboration.
- Boosts player morale and moti-

vation, fostering a positive and supportive environment.

- Encourages mutual respect and trust among team members, strengthening relationships.
- Promotes a sense of belonging and loyalty, reducing turnover and improving retention.
- Facilitates effective communication and conflict resolution, maintaining a harmonious team dynamic.
- Instills shared values and goals, aligning efforts towards common objectives.
- Encourages accountability and responsibility, leading to higher standards of conduct and performance.
- Fosters innovation and creativity by creating an open and inclusive environment.
- Improves overall team resilience and adaptability in the face of challenges.
- Contributes to the personal and professional development of both coaches and players.

**Student-Athlete Welfare:** At the heart of every coaching endeavor lies a commitment to the welfare and well-being of student-athletes. Athletic departments must prioritize student-athlete welfare by establishing clear policies, providing training and support for coaches, and fostering open communication channels. By creating a safe, supportive environment, coaches empower their athletes to thrive both on and off the field, nurturing their holistic development and success. Athletic departments can provide coaches with some of the following to help support student-athlete welfare.

- Develop a set of expectations outlining the department's commitment to student-athlete welfare.
- Include guidelines for coaching conduct, athlete safety, and ethical behavior.
- Provide ongoing training and



education on topics related to student-athlete welfare to include concussion management, injury prevention, bullying prevention, child abuse reporting, and mental health awareness.

- Encourage coaches to attend coaching clinics, workshops, and conferences focusing on athlete welfare and coaching best practices.
- Ensure coaches are aware of available resources supporting student-athletes, such as counseling services, athletic trainers, and academic support.

**Long-Term Goals:** As coaches embark on their journey, setting clear, achievable goals is essential for success. Whether it's fostering a positive team culture, developing players' skills and confidence, or achieving competitive success, coaches must chart a course that aligns with their vision and values. By remaining adaptable, open to feedback, and committed to continual improvement, coaches empower them-

selves to navigate the complexities of coaching and achieve their long-term goals.

- Set long-term goals to establish a clear direction and work towards achieving success over time.
- Lay out clear objectives aligning with the team's vision and mission for new coaches.
- Create a positive and inclusive team culture fostering unity, sportsmanship, and a strong work ethic.
- Focus on developing players' skills and confidence.
- Strive for competitive success within the team's capabilities.
- Remain flexible and open to adapting goals throughout the season based on team needs, allowing for continual growth and improvement.

The success of athletic programs heavily relies on the effective onboarding, ongoing support, and long-term goal setting provided to coaches. By implementing centralized onboarding processes, athletic departments ensure that new coaches are equipped

with the necessary tools and support to thrive. Clear expectations set the foundation for coaches to understand their roles and responsibilities, emphasizing commitment, expertise, effective communication, and ethical behavior. Additionally, maintaining an educational focus aligns coaching endeavors with the institution's vision and mission, fostering accountability, motivation, and innovation among coaches. Ongoing support, including mentorship programs, professional development opportunities, and resource provision, empowers coaches to continuously grow and contribute to the success of the athletic program. Finally, setting long-term goals, such as fostering a positive team culture, developing players' skills and confidence, and achieving competitive success, provides coaches with a roadmap for success while allowing for adaptability and growth. By prioritizing these key elements, athletic departments can create a supportive and thriving environment where coaches are empowered to lead their teams to success both on and off the field.





# Self-Reflection: The Underrated Skill Every Athletic Director Needs

Dr. Chivonne Kiser, Assistant Athletic Director – Denton ISD

This past February, I had the privilege of speaking at the THSCEF Leadership Summit about the importance of self-reflection in leadership. The feedback I received was overwhelmingly positive — many coaches shared that my presentation challenged them to think differently about their leadership. Although the biggest takeaways from the Leadership Summit were geared toward coaches, this article focuses specifically on how athletic directors can incorporate self-reflection techniques into their professional lives.

As ADs, we are constantly making decisions that impact our coaches, their athletes, and their programs. But how often do we pause to evaluate ourselves? How often do we take the time to assess our leadership style, adjust our approach, and ensure we are growing alongside the programs we oversee?

Great leaders don't just direct others; they lead themselves first. Self-reflection isn't about self-doubt or negative self-talk—it's about self-awareness. It's the ability to take a step back, analyze our decisions from a macro perspective asking ourselves: *Am I leading authentically? Am I managing emotions effectively? Am I adapting to challenges? Do I communicate clearly and effectively?*

## The Wake-Up Call: A Lesson in Self-Reflection

Last spring, I found myself in a heated conversation with a head coach who was frustrated about a scheduling change. I was prepared to defend my decision—after all, I considered multiple factors. While the change may have slightly inconvenienced his program, it was ultimately the best decision for the

district.

But as I left the conversation, something didn't sit right. The frustration in the coach's voice wasn't just about the schedule; it was about not feeling respected. I had been so focused on logistics, long-term goals, and the bigger picture that I failed to acknowledge the coach's immediate concerns and emotions.

That night, I sat down to critically reflect on the situation and asked myself a tough question: Did I handle that the best way possible? The honest answer? No. I was **efficient**, but I wasn't **effective**. That small moment of reflection reshaped how I approached conversations moving forward. Self-awareness won't necessarily change my decisions, but it will change how I lead through them.

## How ADs Can Use the L.E.A.D. Framework

At the Leadership Summit, I introduced the L.E.A.D. framework as a tool for coaches to evaluate their leadership. But this framework is just as valuable for athletic directors. It provides a structured way to assess how we lead, how we communicate, and how we grow.

### Lead Authentically

- Challenge for ADs: Conduct a personal leadership audit—write down your core values and evaluate if your daily decisions align with them. Are you leading based on principle or convenience?

### Enhance Emotional Intelligence

- Challenge for ADs: After a tough conversation with a coach, reflect on your emotional response. Did you listen more than you spoke?

Did emotions cloud your judgment?

### Adapt Effectively

- Challenge for ADs: If a long-standing policy isn't working, be willing to change it. For example, if a strict practice schedule leads to athlete burnout, explore flexible options.

### Decide Clearly

- Challenge for ADs: Before making a major decision, list the key factors influencing your choice. Are personal biases creeping in? Are you considering input from key stakeholders?

## The Daily Self-Reflection Challenge

Self-reflection isn't just an annual exercise—it's a daily habit. Small moments of self-evaluation lead to big transformations. I challenge every AD to take at least five minutes at the end of each day to ask:

- *What went well today?*
- *What could I improve?*
- *What will I do differently tomorrow?*

Athletic directors set the tone for their programs. If we commit to growth through self-reflection, we empower our coaches, our athletes, and ultimately, ourselves. As I concluded at the Leadership Summit: **Leadership isn't about being powerful—it's about being empowering!** Let's continue to lead first from within.



# From Surveys to Support: Using Feedback Strategically

Cecilia Kellar

As Athletic Directors, one of our core responsibilities is to lead, support, and grow the coaches who serve on the front lines of our programs. Our coaches shape the student-athlete experience every day, yet too often, we don't give them structured opportunities to share their perspectives, reflect on their work, or help shape the direction of our athletic departments. In Texas, where athletics are as much about community identity as competition, gathering meaningful feedback from your coaching staff isn't just smart; it's essential.

## The Power of a Coaching Voice

When coaches feel heard, valued, and empowered, they're more likely to buy into your vision, stay committed to the district, and continuously improve. Feedback opportunities aren't just administrative checkboxes; they're a chance to reinforce a culture of trust, reflection, and shared ownership.

## Strategic Times to Gather Feedback

To make feedback meaningful and manageable, it's important to build it into the natural rhythm of the year. Here are key moments to consider:

### 1. Pre-Season

Purpose: Assess readiness, understand needs, and set expectations. What to Ask:

- What support do you need going into this school year?
- How clear are your goals and expectations?

### 2. Mid-Season Check-In

Purpose: Take the temperature without waiting until it's too late to make adjustments. What to Ask:

- How is your team morale?
- What barriers are you currently facing?
- Is there anything you need from the athletic department right now?

### 3. Postseason Reflection

Purpose: Gather feedback on program operations, logistics, leadership, and support. What to Ask:

- What were your biggest wins and challenges this season?
- How supported did you feel by the department?
- What recommendations do you have for future seasons?

### 4. End-of-Year Review (Spring)

Purpose: Evaluate the overall department climate and coach satisfaction. What to Ask:

- What's one thing we did well this year?
- What professional development would benefit you this summer?
- What topic would you like to hear more about during professional development sessions?
- What's one thing we need to improve as a department?

### 5. Monthly Check-Ins

Purpose: A purposeful effort to continue to connect with your coaches even when everyone gets busy. What to Ask:

- What's your biggest accomplishment this month?
- What has been your greatest challenge this month?
- Is there anything we can help you with?

## Tools to Gather Feedback

Technology can make this process efficient and insightful. Here are a few platforms to consider:

- **Google Forms:** Easy to create and analyze; can be anonymous.
- **SurveyMonkey or Typeform:** More advanced analytics, clean user experience.
- **One-on-One Reflection Templates (Google Docs):** Encourage written personal reflection prior to in-person meetings.

## Making the Data Useful: Disaggregate & Act

Once you've collected the feedback, don't let it sit in a spreadsheet. Here's how to make it actionable:

### 1. Disaggregate the Data

Break responses down by:

- **Sport or Season:** Fall vs Spring sports may have different needs.
- **Coach Type:** Head vs Assistant, Middle School, varsity vs sub-varsity.
- **Campus/Division/Sport:** Especially useful in larger or multi-campus districts.

### 2. Look for Patterns

Track recurring themes—both strengths and concerns. If five coaches cite facilities as an issue, that's a signal. If only one does, it may be isolated.

### 3. Share Back

Respond individually when appropriate, create a template that can be used, and then personalize it to the coach's needs or voice. Create a "You Said, We Heard" summary. Let coaches know what actions are being taken based on their feedback. Even small changes build trust when coaches see that their voice has been heard and/or made a difference.

### 4. Use Reflection as Development

Don't just collect feedback, help coaches grow from it. Share feedback results in leadership meetings. Use individual surveys as a starting point for reflective end-of-season conferences.

## Final Thought: It's About Culture

Creating a culture of listening and reflection doesn't happen with a single survey. It happens when you build regular, intentional opportunities for coaches to speak, and then you follow through. In Texas, where coaching is often a long-term calling, not just a job, giving coaches a voice helps retain your best people, align your department, and elevate the entire student-athlete experience.

When we listen well, we lead better.



# Regional News Updates

## Region 1

- Andrews ISD hired 2001 graduate Mr. Ben Huddleston as the Andrews HS Campus Principal
- Addyson Bristow of Canyon High School in Canyon ISD is UIL 4A state champion in the 800m run also becoming the National Champion

## Region 2

- San Angelo ISD Athletic Department is excited to have passed its first bond to anyone's knowledge that specifically addresses athletic facilities on May 3rd. In the past any athletic facilities that were built or repaired has been done through the general fund. The bond encompasses the construction or replacement of 6 turf football/soccer fields at the high schools and middle schools, 2 turf softball and baseball fields, new competition gymnasium at Central HS, 2 additional new tennis courts and new lights at Lake View HS, new concessions/restrooms along with new lights and stands at Lake View HS football field. Additionally, a new Glenn Middle School will be built to replace the current one built in 1968. If you have never been to John Glenn MS, it was built in a circle as a planet, with the outside buildings being the moons and rings, and yes, the gyms are round!! To say we are excited is an understatement, we are so happy for the athletes, coaches, and community and look forward to seeing the result.

## Region 3

- Region 3 school districts had a successful election season with most of their proposed bonds passing this cycle. Several of these school districts including



Argyle, Desoto, and Red Oak, passed bonds that included athletic facility upgrades for their school districts.

- Region 3 has several new leaders who were hired over the past month and are now leading new school districts; Here are a couple of the names from Region 3 just to name a few who have begun new Athletic Director positions within the past few weeks.
- Greg Priest – Rockwall ISD, Lonnie Jordan – Richardson ISD, and Chris Birtch – Frisco ISD.

## Region 4

- The NFL, Dallas Cowboys, and Houston Texans partnered with the all of the El Paso school districts, charters, private schools, El Paso Sports Commission, and

local government entities to have a 3-week season and championship tournament for the 38 high schools that participated in girls flag football. Socorro ISD combined their Special Olympics flag football into the season.

## Region 5

- Region V is excited that our THSADA membership continues to grow. The current membership is over 560 and we are still receiving renewals along with signing up some new members!"

## Region 6

- Jeff Ables, Bowie HS: UIL Sponsor Excellence Award, Jeff Ables has been a coach at Austin Bowie High School for 37 years, serving as athletic coordinator and





head football coach for the past 23 years. During his time at the helm, he amassed a school record 151 wins, led his teams to four district titles, and named District Coach of the Year twice. Coach Ables has developed numerous student-athletes who have gone on to attend top universities such as Columbia and Stanford. He has played a significant role in his players' lives. As a testament to his impact, six of his former players now coach alongside him on staff at Bowie.

- Celester Collier, Bowie HS: Barbara Jacket Coach and Community Service Award, Texas Black Legacy Foundation, Celester Collier is the former Bowie HS boys' basketball coach for 31 years. This award is named in the honor and memory of the legendary Barbara Jacket for her significant achievements in coaching and opening doors for other Black coaches in the community.
- Jason Glenn, Executive Director of Athletics: Coach Glenn is now

a NIAAA Certified Master Athletic Administrator.

- Girls' Flag Football: Austin ISD has partnered with the Dallas Cowboys to bring girls' flag football to the area. Each high school is represented by a team of up to twenty girls. We already have 274 girls interested and schools will need to hold tryouts to select their twenty athletes. We will have a tournament in May and will host a Friday Night Lights Championship on Friday, May 23

### Region 7

- After a successful tenure in the education profession, a special congratulations to Rio Grande City Grulla ISD Athletic Director Rey Ramirez and La Joya ISD Athletic Director Victor Garza on their retirements. Coach Ramirez was an educator, coach, and administrator for 30 years. During his tenure, he coached track and football and led RG-CGISD as their AD for 18 years. Coach Victor Garza has dedicat-

ed 34 years during his journey as an educator, coach, and administrator. He coached baseball and football and has led the LJISD Athletic Department for the past 24 years with the last sixteen as their AD. Region 7 wishes the best of luck to Coach Ramirez and Coach Garza in their future endeavors.

### Region 8

- Several Executive Directors have retired from region 8: Brenda Marshall, Corpus Christi ISD; Kelly Parker, North East ISD, and Stanley Laing, Northside ISD.
- North East ISD and Northside ISD in San Antonio will host the UIL State Tennis Tournament May 15-16, 2025
- At the UIL Track and Field State Meet, Tate Taylor from Northside Harlan set a National Record in the 100 M running a 9.92. This time is also the world's second fastest time for U20.



# **THSADA 2025 Hall of Honor Class**



**Brenda Marshall**  
**Senior Director of Athletics**  
**Corpus Christi ISD**

**Todd Vesely**  
**Former Executive Director of Athletics**  
**Fort Worth ISD**



**Ray Zepeda**  
**Director of Athletics**  
**University Interscholastic League**