



Texas Association of Non-Public Schools

The Public Voice of Private Schools in Texas

Support SB 1214

Board of Directors

Officers

Bill McGee

President

Dr. Larry Taylor

Vice President

Dr. Joyce Ellis

Secretary

Eddie Lee

Treasurer

District Directors

Andy Broadus

Arlington

Keith Currivean

Bryan

Rob Devlin

San Antonio

Jay Ferguson

Tyler

Ricki Komiss

Houston

Eddie Lee

West Texas

Bill McGee

Austin

Evan Peterson

Fort Worth

Dr. Larry Taylor

Plano

Dr. Jeff Williams

Houston

At-Large Directors

John Craig

ACSI

Rhonda Durham

ISAS

Dr. Bonnie Eder

TSDA

Dr. William Hinz

LSAC

Marquita Moss

NCSA

Connie Wootton

SAES

Executive Director

Charles T. Evans

Contact: Charles Evans, Executive Director 512.289.1010

The Texas Association of Non-Public Schools (TANS) has represented the interests of private schooling and educational quality in Texas since 1967. There are 850 accredited private schools in Texas, serving approximately 300,000 students and their families. Private schools provide variety and depth to the educational landscape of our state, they improve the quality of life in their communities, they provide jobs and commercial investment in local economies, and they save Texas taxpayers billions of dollars each year.

The parents of Texas private school students have elected to educate their children, in addition to their tax support of local public schools, in a manner that they believe to be best for their families and their children's futures. This is a vital right, endorsed again and again by this Legislature. In fact, Texas ranks among those states that interfere the least with the independence of private schools.

At the same time, Texas often takes little active interest in private school students. Private school families are citizens of this state, they pay their taxes just like everyone else. As a matter of fairness, voluntary participation in UIL activities would be one way for this Legislature to affirm the importance of these students to our state.

But, why? you ask. Public schools have their activities, private schools have theirs. True enough, but private school UIL membership offers at least three substantial benefits.

First, is student safety. Grace Community School in Tyler enrolls 1,005 students in grades K-12, making it the largest private school in East Texas. The Texas Association of Private and Parochial Schools (TAPPS) requires them to travel to either Dallas or Waco for every district game. In other sports, four of the six schools Grace plays are in Dallas or Waco, making almost every away game a long road trip. The liability of much late night, mid-week travel puts pressure on the school and their students.

At the smaller Brazos Christian School in Bryan, head of school Keith Currivean would like to see more of an artistic and academic exchange through UIL. For private and public school students to interact in competitions of imagination and intellect would be an even greater demonstration of the collective public mind developing in our schools. Apart from either UIL or TAPPS, the state bar association sponsors a statewide mock trial competition, including both public and private schools. And it works very well.

Third, I am sure that everyone in this room believes that competition is good. It is good for the economy, it is good for innovation, and it should be good for schools. In Tyler, Grace Community plays 2A and 3A UIL schools in pre-season match-ups. They trade wins. Last year, one of the two private schools currently participating in UIL, Strake Jesuit in Houston, won the UIL 5A soccer title. Smaller public schools in rural parts of the state could benefit from more robust seasons in a variety of activities. School communities would grow closer together, rather than spread wider apart.

I have heard the objection that private schools are more susceptible to the temptation to recruit student-athletes inappropriately. That may be, though we all know of circumstances in our local school districts of large, fast students curiously living with families who are not their parents. But that is what rules are for, and UIL is a professional, experienced organization fully up to any challenge. SB 1214 also ensures that transgressing schools cannot just skip back and forth between TAPPS and UIL as a matter of convenience.

Texas is one of a small handful of states that does not provide for public and private schools to come together in competition. We lead in so many other ways. It is time for Texas to become a leader on this. Please support Senate Bill 1214.

Texas Senate Education Committee, March 29, 2011