



Texas Association of Community Schools

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THE LEAST SHALL BE THE GREATEST

I grew up in a very small west Texas community in the 1950s and 1960s. Every day of my childhood could have literally been a **Leave It To Beaver** episode! When I reached high school age, my friends and I became rabid about sports. Because it was Texas, football was the primary thing that interested the boys and seemed to bind everyone in the community together, young and old.

Fielding an eleven man football team was never difficult in my hometown, but having enough bodies for a robust practice was always challenging. In fact, during my freshman year of high school, it was a common practice for our coaches to suit-out with us to scrimmage during practice. Fortunately, only relatively young men coached football that year!

In the summer between my freshman and sophomore years a family moved to town that completely changed our football team and the way a group of teenaged boys in a small west Texas town perceived the game. Our Lutheran church gained a new minister. With the minister came a wife and several children – if I remember correctly there were four boys and three girls. The family had spent many years serving as foreign missionaries in Africa, but looking back now, I suspect that the only thing foreign to them that year was life in a small Texas town.

Three of the boys were high school aged, and on the first day of two-a-day football practice all three of them reported. Of course, none of them had ever played a game of football in their lives, but we knew that our coaches were happy. By just counting the heads that first day, they knew that we had enough players to scrimmage, so they would not have to suit up that year!

The oldest of the brothers was a senior. He was 6'3" tall and weighed 235 pounds. He was the biggest body on the team, and we all knew that he was going to play somewhere. Sure enough, he turned out to be a wonderful athlete and started on the offensive line and as a strong safety on defense. I mention that he was big, but I forgot to say that he could run like a deer. The next brother was a junior. He was of slight stature, very quiet, and meek. In an athletic world where all of us wanted to be "bigger, faster, and stronger", he was "smaller, slower, and weaker". Also, he was not a big fan of contact. The youngest of the three brothers was a freshman. Even as a freshman, he was bigger than the middle brother, and he became an asset to the team.

During two-a-days none of us knew it, but that season was going to be one to remember for that little town. Our first game was with Eldorado High School. After a long bus ride, we players were ready for battle. We were brimming with the confidence a new season can bring. After a hard fought contest, my team was on the short end of the scoreboard, 13-12. We missed **both** extra point tries. On the bus ride home, our coach informed everyone that we **would** find a place kicker before the next contest!

Monday's practice began with everyone, and I mean everyone on the team, getting a try at kicking extra points. Regretfully, not many of us had any kicking talent. I am sure the coaches already knew that because they would have found us during two-a-days if we did. After all, there were only twenty-five of us. The last player to try kicking an extra point was the "new" boy with the meek and mild demeanor. Being game for the opportunity to contribute, he stood behind the holder, and it was all the rest of the players could do to keep from laughing. Poor fellow, he didn't even know how to line up to kick an extra point. He was standing at an angle to the ball instead of directly behind it. But, the center snapped the ball, the holder placed it on the tee, and the lad boomed it through the goal posts and out of our stadium. Did I mention that our school had a very small enrollment and that we were really poor? I guess that we had only one practice football because I remember someone running outside the gate to the parking lot to retrieve the ball so that he could try again. Another try, another good kick, another trip to the parking lot to get the ball. Eventually, Coach placed someone in the parking lot to speed up practice. We kept backing up further and further to see how far this young man could kick a football. Eventually we stopped when he kicked a fifty yard field goal!

The Bulldogs had found a kicker! That season our team did not miss another extra point, and we did not lose another game all year. One player made all of the difference in our team and in our success! Our kicker was a novelty; the first soccer-style kicker any of us had ever seen. In fact, the first soccer style kicker to kick in a professional football game did so two days after our players' debut. So, the player that looked the least like a football player became our Most Valuable Player. He went on to receive a four year scholarship to kick for the SMU Mustangs!

Over the next ten months TACS will be contacting each of you for your help. This school year there will be two big events in which **educators must become involved**, and as the superintendent, education in our state needs for you to lead. First, Texas schools **must** create a culture of voting among educators. If there is an election, Texas educators **must** vote. Those elected to the Texas legislature have the greatest influence on the working conditions of educators than any other group in our state! Second, during the legislative session, do not hesitate to contact your representative and senator with your opinion of legislation that is before them. I read today that the only time many of our elected officials stand up to the lobbyists who are helping to finance their campaigns is when they have to say, "My folks back home won't stand for my support of your bill." The only way legislators know what the "folks back home" want is for the "folks back home" to tell them. Do not be too meek to speak up!

I know that there are lots of reasons for inactivity: you are busy people; your interest is in educating children, not influencing legislation; many are uncomfortable before legislators. However, if one small, meek, and mild sixteen year old can change the course of a football season for one high school team, just think what over 1,000 superintendents working in unison on these two projects can do for our state!!

ARE YOU READY FOR 21ST CENTURY TECHNOLOGY?

Bandwidth is growing: Is Your School District Prepared?

Governor Abbott, TEA, and the ESCs have partnered with the nonprofit organization EducationSuperHighway to launch the [Texas Classroom Connectivity Initiative](#) and ensure every classroom in Texas has access to high-speed broadband that can support digital learning. This fall, EducationSuperHighway's team of network and procurement experts is available to work with you, at no cost, to find affordable solutions to connect every campus to scalable infrastructure and upgrade bandwidth speeds.

More than 30 school districts across the state have already launched upgrade projects through the Classroom Connectivity Initiative. If your district needs support getting schools connected to fiber infrastructure or high-speed broadband, [sign up here](#) for an introductory call with EducationSuperHighway network consultants and join the ranks of school districts in Texas upgrading their networks to support growing bandwidth demands.

If you have any questions, please contact Ellen Goldich from EducationSuperHighway at ellen@educationsuperhighway.org.

AMLE2016

AMLE2016 is a powerful conference for middle level educators that will be held at the Austin Convention Center on October 9th – 12th. A world-class program has been planned to completely revolutionize the way many on your staff view their work. This is a chance to visit and learn from thousands of educators who are dedicated to middle school students and their growth. Why not send a delegation? Don't miss this great opportunity! You may register by clicking amle.org/annual. Also, schools in ESC Regions 12, 13, and 20 can save a little by registering through their ESC. TACS will see you there!

TACS LEGAL CONFERENCE

Join us in Waco at Region 12 on Tuesday, October 11th for the TACS School Law Conference presented by Walsh Gallegos Treviño Russo & Kyle, P.C. The conference will be from 8:15 a.m. until 1:00 p.m., and a light breakfast and a delicious lunch is provided. Topics to be discussed are Cameras in the Classroom, Student and Employee Conduct on Social Media, and Boosters: the Good, the Bad, and the Dangerous. You and any staff who may benefit from this conference is welcomed to attend. **THERE IS NO COST!!** Registration can be found on the Region 12 website at www.esc12.net. The conference session number is 108510. See you in Waco!!

ALGEBRA-READINESS INTERVENTION

Do you have 7th graders who need additional tutorial help to be really successful in mathematics? If you do, you may be interested in the **Algebra-Readiness Intervention Modules for Students Who Need Math Help**. Provided by the education department of the University of Texas, this program will help your students develop conceptual awareness, computational fluency, problem solving ability, and self-regulation skills to improve math performance. The University will provide materials and progress monitoring materials, professional development for the staff, and a stipend for each staff member who works with the program. If this sounds like a program that may benefit some of your students or to gain more information, contact **Dr. Diane Bryant** at dpbryant@austin.utexas.edu.

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