

# **Ensuring Fairness in UIL 1A Marching Band Advancement**

## **The Issue**

UIL 1A marching bands advance from Region to State. However, advancement is capped based on the number of Division 1 (superior) bands in each region. This results in superior bands being denied advancement solely because of geography, rather than merit. Larger classifications do not face this issue because advancement at Area is based on performance.

## **Why it Matters**

- Punishes Certain Regions: Regions with high participation are disproportionately penalized by this advancement system. Smaller regions always advance every band.
- Big Impact for Small Numbers: Over the last three championship years (2024, 2023, 2021), 7 out of 54 superior bands (13%) were left out.

## **Quick Data**

- Total number of participating bands at Regionals (2021-24): 96
- Total number of superior bands: 54
- Bands denied due to rule: 7 (13%)
- Total number of Regions: 9
- Number of Regions affected by rule: 3 (Regions 6, 7, and 16)
- State results: All excluded bands come from regions that have medals (top 3)

## **Feasibility for Change**

- At most, changing this rule will add 2-3 bands to State Championships
- This number is manageable for scheduling purposes

## **Proposed Solutions**

- Advance all Division 1 bands: Equitable across regions; minimal impact on scheduling.
- Advance bands with Division 1 from every judge: Fewer bands would advance, but advancement would be determined by stricter performance criteria.
- Mini-Area Contest: Regions with high participation could compete locally to earn State advancement, though smaller regions would still advance based on Regional performance.

## **Conclusion**

The current advancement rule denies opportunities to students who made the same rating as their peers. It creates inequities based on geographic location. UIL should adopt a reform that ensures all superior 1A bands have a fair chance to perform at State Championships.

## **1. Current Rule/Background**

1A marching bands currently go from Region to State. Unlike the larger classifications, 1A does not have an Area contest. The rule outlined in Section 1105(k)(2) [1A Region Advancement Rule] caps the number of bands that can compete at State Championships. This rule is directly linked to the number of competing bands that achieve a Division 1 rating [superior]. According to said rule:

“(A) Should three or fewer 1A varsity bands in a region receive a division 1 rating [...] shall be certified for advancement to the state contest.”

“(B) Should four or more 1A varsity bands in a region receive a division 1 rating, all 1A varsity bands in the region receiving a division 1 rating shall be ranked using the procedures outlined on the UIL website and the three 1A varsity bands receiving the highest ranking shall be certified for advancement to the state contest. In Addition, one band for each two bands receiving a division 1 rating ranked below third place shall be certified for advancement to the state contest.”

This means that even a superior band may be denied advancement if its Region reaches that threshold. High-performing bands in bigger Regions do *not* receive the same treatment as other high-performing bands in smaller Regions. Under the current 1A Region Advancement Rule, a band’s likelihood of attending State not only depends on performance but also on the size and competitiveness of its region. This demonstrates that geography plays a role in advancement, as well as in musical and marching achievements.

## **2. Statewide Findings (2021-2024)**

Across the last three championship years (2021, 2023, and 2024), 96 1A bands have competed at UIL Regionals (texasmusicforms.com). Of those 96, 54 achieved a superior rating. 47 out of 54 bands (87%) went on to compete at the state level (Figure 1). This is a relatively insignificant number of cuts when considering the entire picture. Because bands are compared only within their region, some high-performing bands may be denied advancement, even when comparable bands from smaller regions advance.

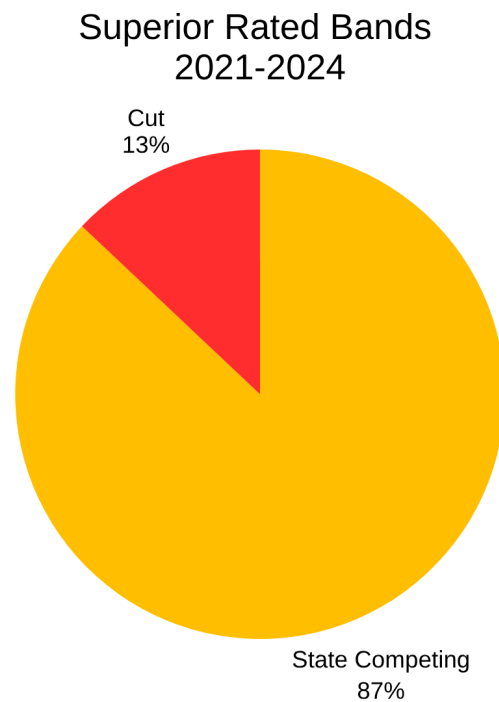


Figure 1: Percentage of 1A Bands Denied Advancement from 2021-2024

### 3. Regional Data (2021-2024)

Out of the nine total Regions (1, 6, 7, 8, 11, 12, 14, 16, and 26), only three have been affected by the 1A Region Advancement Rule (<https://smbc.uiltexas.org/archives.htm>). Those are Regions 6, 7, and 16. Those Regions have the highest number of superior Bands, averaging roughly 5 ([texasmusicforms.com](https://texasmusicforms.com)). The others average about 3. Region 6 had two bands denied, Region 7 had four bands denied, and Region 16 had one band denied. It is worth noting that Region 7 has had more denials than Regions 8, 12, 14, and 26 have had Division 1 bands, as seen in Figure 2.

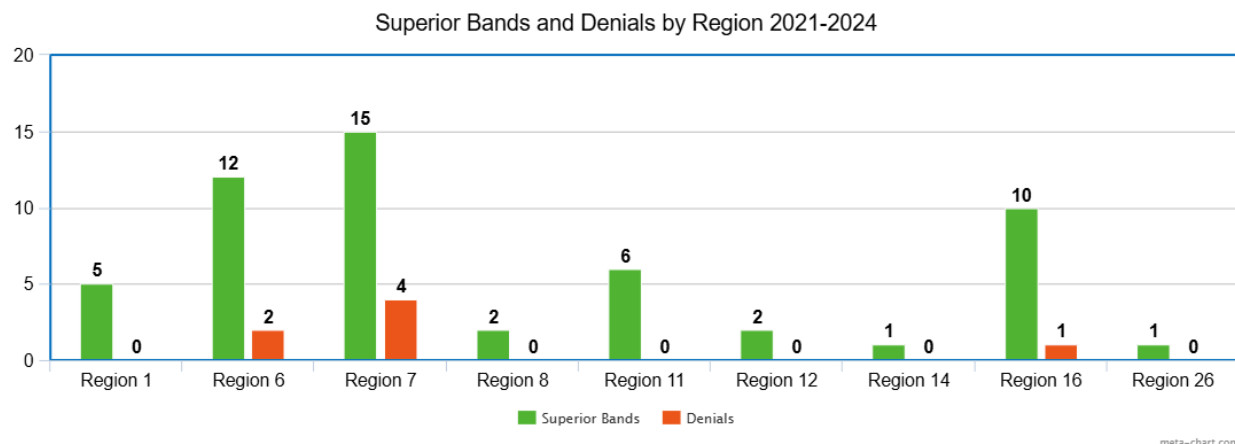


Figure 2: Superior Bands and Denials by Region 2021-2024

Region 16's record is 9/10 (90%); Region 6's is 10/12 (83%); and Region 7's is 11/15 (73%). These Regions make up almost 69% of the total Division 1 bands across the entire state and about 65% of all 1A competing bands, so they are the only ones to have less than a 100% advancement rate. That is a pattern based on geography rather than merit.

#### 4. State Championship Results (2021-2024)

Examining the regions that medal at State Championships also points us to Regions 6, 7, and 16 (<https://smbc.uiltexas.org/archives.htm>). They are the *only* three Regions that have medaled in the last three Championship seasons (Figure 3). What if we examine state finalists? There have been seven state-finalist bands every year since 2021. Out of those twenty-one bands, seventeen come from Regions 6, 7, and 16. 17/21 (almost 81%) of all state finalists have been from the same three Regions, the same regions where bands have been cut (Figure 4). These regions not only have the largest number of bands, but also the highest success rate.

If we look at the average placement in prelims, it tells a similar story. Region 7 has an average placement of 9th, Region 16 has an average of 8th, and Region 6 has an average of 4th (Figure 5). Region 6 has also taken home the gold medal all three years. In short, the bands from the most successful regions are the ones being excluded.

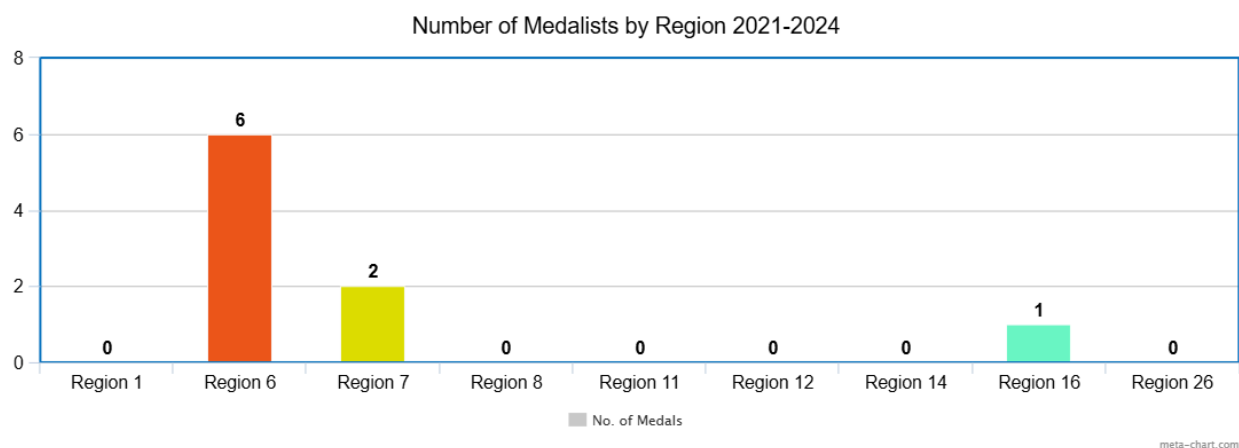


Figure 3: Number of Medalists by Region 2021-2024

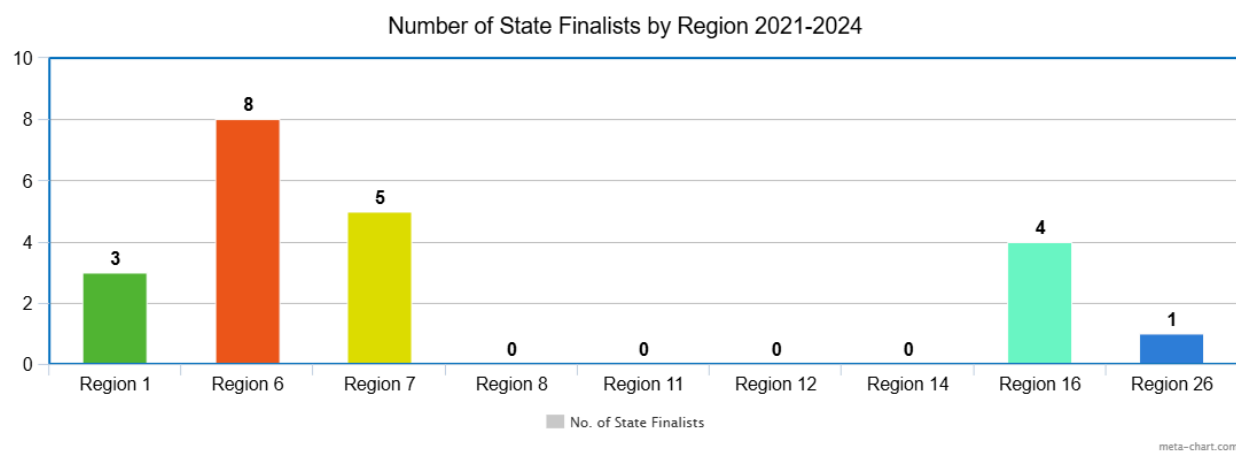


Figure 4: Number of State Finalists by Region 2021-2024

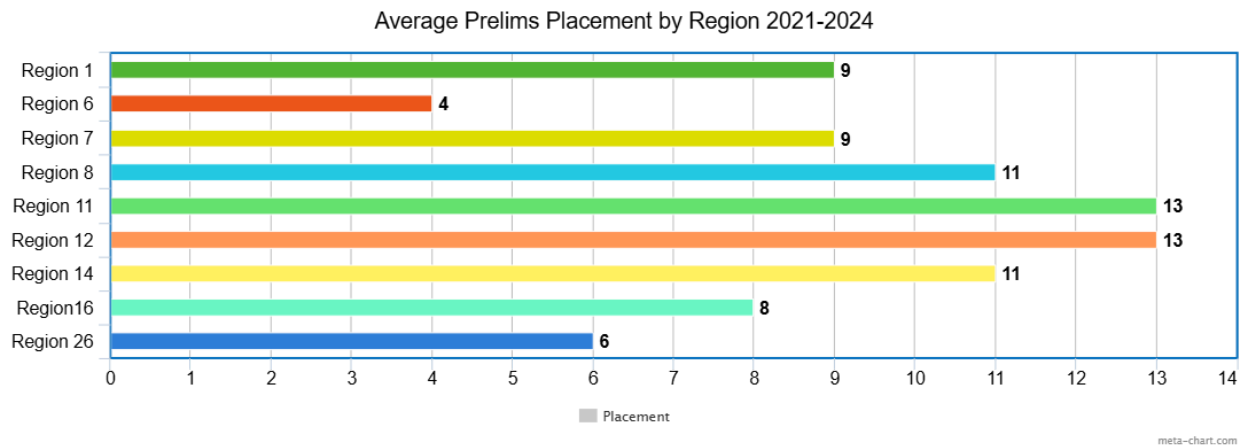


Figure 5: Average Prelims Placement by Region 2021-2024

## 5. Feasibility/Logistics

At most, only two to three additional bands would be added to the State Championships, resulting in a minor adjustment to the scheduling. Historically, advancing all bands would generally result in fewer than twenty total, making the current cap unnecessary. This change is manageable from a scheduling standpoint.

## 6. Proposed Solutions

The easiest solution would be to advance every band that makes a Division 1. It is equitable across all bands and all regions. This also provides parity with larger classifications and their respective Area competitions. This would result in at most twenty bands, which could slightly affect scheduling.

A second solution is to advance all bands that receive a Division I from every judge. This will make it more difficult to qualify for State Championships, but everyone will feel the impact. Fewer bands would be at State Championships if that were to happen; yet, this approach would result in a fairer method for determining cuts. If UIL wants to continue with cutting, this would be a good resolution.

A third solution is to introduce a mini-Area contest. This would cause another scheduled event, but regions with high participation could compete in a mini-Area contest at a nearby location. As of now, it is impossible to know how many bands will advance to State

Championships until Regionals are held, but a mini-Area would solve this problem. This approach could still disadvantage students in regions with high concentrations of 1A schools. Small regions will advance just on their performance at Regionals.

## **7. Conclusion**

Part of UIL's mission is to "provide healthy, character-building, educational activities carried out under rules providing for good sportsmanship and fair play" (<https://www.uiltexas.org/about/purpose>). The current 1A Region Advancement Rule penalizes students in large regions based on geography rather than performance, contradicting this mission. UIL should consider reforms to ensure all Division 1 1A bands have an equitable opportunity to advance to State Championships.