

Special Education Department

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Special Education NEWS

Volume 1

Issue 7

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Fort Bend ISD Special Education Department joins the district and our nation in celebrating the many accomplishments and contributions of African Americans, during Black History Month. African American history makers, both past and present, have made a great impact in education, government, medicine, music, sports, and other walks of life.

In Fort Bend ISD, we are proud to have several of our schools/facilities named after notable African Americans who have made lasting impressions on our lives either nationally and/or locally. In December 16, 2016, FBISD announced that the lasting legacy of acknowledging the notable African Americans in our community continues. The new middle school, set to open Fall 2018, will be named after one very deserving man that made a significant contribution to our community.

Ronald Thornton Middle School, located in Sienna Plantation

Mr. Thornton served as band director and Fine Arts Department Chair at Willowridge High School from 1989 until his passing in December 2009. Under his leadership, the WHS band excelled in numerous competitions and was invited to participate in the Rose Bowl and Orange Bowl. Those who nominated Thornton described him as an exemplar of honor, pride, discipline and excellence. These words hung on a banner in his band hall as he taught his students to play with their heart and soul. Having Mr. Thornton's name associated with the new middle school will certainly add both prestige and honor to the school and community as a whole. To read more about the Campus Naming Process and the names of the other campuses opening Fall 2017, visit the attached FBISD website [link](#).



Mr. Ronald Thornton ~ WHS band director &
Fine Arts Department Chair 1989—2009

A very special ed... 2017 Teacher of the Year Finalist



Mission Glen
Elementary

Chastity Gonzalez is a Special Education Reading / Writing K-4 teacher at Mission Glen Elementary. In November 2016, Chastity Gonzalez was named Teacher of the Year at Mission Glen Elementary. The FBISD Elementary and Secondary Teacher of the Year Judging Committee met and reviewed all campus entries. In December 2016, Chastity was notified that she was selected as one of six Elementary Teacher of the Year (TOY) Finalist! The FBISD Elementary and Secondary Teacher of the Year winner will be announced at a banquet on April 20th at Texas Safari.

Ms. Gonzalez's story is continued on the following page.

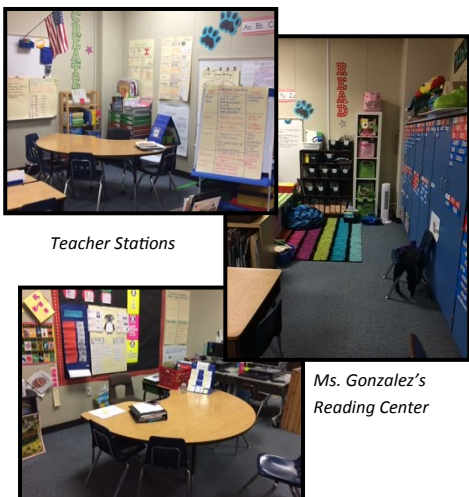


Ms. Chastity Gonzalez ~ MGE Special
Education Teacher of Reading & Writing K-4

The Fort Bend Independent School District, an Equal Opportunity Educational Provider and Employer, does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, gender, sex, national origin, disability and/or age, military status, genetic information, or any other basis prohibited by law in educational programs or activities that it operates or in employment decisions. Additionally, the District does not discriminate against an employee or applicant who acts to oppose such discrimination or participates in the investigation of a complaint related to a discriminatory employment practice. Employment decisions will be made on the basis of each applicant's job qualifications, experience, and abilities. Policies DAA, DIA

A very "special ed" 2017 T.O.Y. continued...

Chastity Gonzalez has been teaching special education at Mission Glen Elementary for 12 years. Prior to that, she served as a special education paraprofessional at Townewest Elementary. She is certified as general education, special education, and ESL. Ms. Gonzalez strongly believes that every student can learn and grow, but each journey has a different starting point and progresses at different rates. Every year, she works diligently to build a strong classroom community. When her students enter the welcoming, structured classroom she has created, they feel safe to participate and communicate with one another free of judgement. She works tirelessly, advocating for all students, to ensure they receive high quality instruction and the supplemental intervention they may need to access their curriculum.



Ms. Gonzalez attributes much of her students' success to the efforts of the entire staff at Mission Glen Elementary. She feels that everyone works together for the sole purpose of positively impacting student achievement: academically, socially, or behaviorally. Ms. Gonzalez was quick to state that she has been truly blessed to have worked with the same paraprofessional for the past 12 years. Her long time paraprofessional and friend, Jackie Rudich, has been a special education paraprofessional at Mission Glen Elementary for 20 years. Over the past 12 years, both Ms. Gonzalez and Ms. Rudich have developed a productive work relationship which has created an effective work team. They view themselves as equal stakeholders in their classroom; both being committed to seeing not only the students they directly work with but all students at Mission Glen Elementary succeed.

The Teacher of the Year program honors excellence in teaching by acknowledging outstanding educators whose efforts and example have inspired their students, their colleagues, and the communities they serve. The FBISD Special Education Department is honored to have Chastity Gonzalez represent us as well as Mission Glen Elementary, as she continues her journey to becoming the Texas Teacher of the Year 2018!

Parent Resource

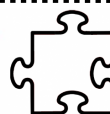
The Value Of Reading In Your Native Language

Parents ask if it's okay if their child continues to read in their native language while they are learning English in school. The answer is YES! In fact, research shows that children who read in their native language will have an easier time learning to read in English. According to McGill University (2002), when a child's brain is exposed to language at a very young age, the brain develops a life-long capacity to learn language, including foreign languages. So what can parents do to help their child become good readers? Here are a few ideas:

- Read to your child and let them read independently in your native language daily.
- Encourage your child to write in their native language.
- Encourage your child to use their native language to tell stories.
- Expand your child's vocabulary by teaching him/her new words in their native language.
- Have fun with native language rhymes and games.

(For more information on this topic, go to www.colorincolorado.org)

Adapted from FBISD's Department of Multilingual Services Winter 2016 Newsletter



Teach Piece

Valentine's Day can be a confusing time for children who are suddenly bombarded with hearts, cards, candy and valentines. It can also be emotionally confusing if they are exposed to advertising and friends who suggest that valentines are an opportunity to establish social status, when those who don't receive a certain number or type are seen as inferior. As with every holiday, we encourage you to take time to explain the true meaning of Valentine's Day while incorporating some life-long lessons on self-worth and the importance of giving.

History of Valentine's Day

Valentine's Day originated thousands of years ago as a Roman festival practiced annually on Feb. 15. Christians later used this day to honor one of their heroes, a man named Valentine. According to legend, the emperor tried to stop Roman soldiers from getting married, but Valentine married them in secret. For this, the emperor had Valentine imprisoned. Some legends add that Valentine cut hearts out of parchment and gave them to soldiers to remind them that they were loved. He was also rumored to have signed his letters from prison with "Your Valentine".

Valentine's Day Activities & Games

Below are just a few of the many online educational games that are available this month to celebrate Valentine's Day.

[Free Online Valentine Games](#) & [Valentine's Day Puzzle](#)



Dulles
High School

One of the best co-teaching partnerships can be found at Dulles High School! Kellyn Burke, General Educator, and Hayley Boasman, Special Educator, both have educational backgrounds in English. They are considered lifelong learners, always seeking ways to expand their knowledge, and it's evident that they have a strong passion for teaching.



From Left to Right: Kellyn Burke and Hayley Boasman.

Ms. Burke comes from a family of teachers. However, she was not certain if teaching would be a choice she would take, until she substituted in a classroom. "I fell in love with the dynamic of the classroom and the potential for growth in my future students and myself. I want to be able to influence the students' next steps and have student led discussions that inspire learning for everyone in the room, including me."

Ms. Boasman's journey into education is different. She studied Psychology and worked at a children's therapy clinic as well as the Parish School in Houston. During this time, she "fell in love with teaching." She went back to school to get her Special Education certification and became a Licensed Dyslexia Practitioner and Academic Language Specialist. "My journey did not start out in teaching, but as I was able to experience the impact and fulfillment of working with children in the classroom, I could not see myself doing anything else. I knew that education was my calling."

This is the first year for this dynamic-duo to work together, but after seeing them in action with their students, one would think otherwise. Should you observe this team, be prepared to see a fluid classroom where Ms. Burke and Ms. Boasman deliver instruction that is designed with varied ability levels in mind. With ease, they use technology for quick formative assessments to gauge students' knowledge and levels of thinking, as well as meaningful "talk" when students engage in conversations related to the task. The classroom management and organizational structure of routines, set by this partnership, are evident based on the behaviors and interactions of the students from the beginning of class until dismissal.

Both teachers use their common planning time to design instruction and add ways that they can incorporate different models of co-teaching. They often utilize team-teaching, station-teaching and alternative-teaching. They stated they would love to parallel teach more often, however, the size of their classroom has limited space. As they continue to collaborate together, they are becoming more familiar with the different teaching models.

When asked about collaboration and how they utilize each other's strengths and weakness it to benefit students, Ms. Burke stated they "combine knowledge and experiences to give every student the most relevant strategies...Ms. Boasman is great with vocabulary and structure, I love to facilitate discussion." She also believes in "being open and honest with each other about where we are comfortable and confident," which helps to guide their planning of instruction.

Ms. Boasman stated, "One important benefit for students in a co-teach classroom is that they [students] get to receive instruction from two individuals with different strengths and weaknesses, different experiences and different points of views. Co-teachers have the benefit of having another person step in and lead in areas that they may be stronger and vice versa."

Marilyn Friend, an innovator of Co-Teaching, once stated, "...co-teachers may overlap somewhat on their skills, but the extraordinary power of this instructional arrangement is the differences in the types of expertise the teachers have. As the partnership grows, the teachers learn from one another, but the goal remains complementing one another rather than doing identical work side by side."

Ms. Hayley Boasman and Ms. Kellyn Burke have the ideal partnership complete with the skills—strengths and weaknesses, to deliver an "extraordinary power of instructional arrangement[s]", which creates an impact that will surpass our lifetime as they impact our students daily. Well done Ms. Boasman and Ms. Burke!



From Left to Right: Secondary PM Tamara Walker, Elementary PM Kim Hrcirik, Dr. Marilyn Friend, Elementary PS Julie Holmes, Secondary PSs Kim Lehnhoff & Sherry Lott.

January 27th, FBISD sent several members of the Special Education Resource / ICS team to Region IV to hear from Dr. Marilyn Friend as she presented "Co-teaching in the Classroom" as part of the Access to the General Curriculum National Presenter Series. While they were there, they ran into a team from Rita Drabek Elementary. These teachers were eager to attend to extend their collaborative relationship to enhance their Co-Teach outcomes. The SPED Admin team was inspired by Dr. Friend and are looking forward to supporting Co-Teach as they plan for the 2017-18 school year.

For additional information on Dr. Friend's work, refer to the "Q&A on Co-Teaching with CEC President Marilyn Friend: Part I" by Christina Samuels on 2/28/11, Education Week at the following link:

[Education Week Spotlight: Dr. Marilyn Friend](#)



From Left to Right: Elementary PS Julie Holmes, Drabek Co-Teachers Monica Taylor, Rosie Valdiviezo, Sheeba George, and Elementary PM Kim Hrcirik.

The SAILS Class celebrated **Valentine's Day** by creating a personalized keepsake



1st



2nd



using their little handprints!



3rd



Ms. Garcia, the SAILS teacher at Ridgemont Elementary had her class get creative for Valentine's Day! Making handprint crafts is an excellent way for children to be creative and artistic, and a fun way for mom and dad to preserve precious memories of their growing children. Handprint crafts are also relatively inexpensive as the most vital handprint material (a hand) is free of charge...reminding us the best gifts in life are free!

BSS

Parent Support Meeting



Parents of students participating in our Behavior Support Services are invited for the first Parent Support Meeting. At this meeting, parents will have the opportunity to come together as we all work to provide students with emotional / behavioral challenges the appropriate interventions to be successful in the school setting. Parents will also be provided with program updates including information regarding the re-integration process, and have the opportunity to meet the Special Education Administrative staff for Behavior Support Services (e.g., Program Manager, Program Specialist, Lead LSSP, and BCBA's that support BSS programs at the campus level).

Child care is available to those that register in advance. Child care reservations can be made either [online](#) through the FBISD Special Education website or by calling 281-643-1143.



Date: March 2nd

Time : 6:00—7:30

Location: M. R. Wood Gym

**There will be a drawing for DOOR PRIZES
at the end of the evening!**

Parent Ed Workshop



We are changing the time of our next Parent Education Workshop to be during the school day, so that parents can drop off their students at school and then head over to M. R. Wood. On February 28th, parents are invited to M. R. Wood to hear a discussion on the topic of **Functional Communication** from two of our most experienced Special Education Administrative Team Members: Cheryl Little and Sherri Butters.

Functioning Communication Training is used to teach a communicative behavior that replaces an interfering behavior. This Parent Education Workshop is intended to give parents tips / strategies on how to replace their child's inappropriate behaviors with communication tools. This will allow the child to make his or her wants and needs known in a more appropriate manner. If your child does not have the communication skills to express their wants or needs, they may demonstrate inappropriate behaviors such as physical aggression or tantruming. This behavior can be replaced with different strategies that will be discussed at this meeting.

Justin Moehn, Austin High School graduate, will open up this workshop by sharing insight about his journey with Autism. Justin was diagnosed with Autism in the late 1980s. After completing school, he discovered a personal passion for spreading awareness about Autism, as well as offering encouragement to those living with Autism in our community through public speaking. We are excited about all of Justin's accomplishments and feel honored he is willing to share his time with us! You won't want to miss this.

Tuesday, February 28th from 8:30—10:30 a.m.

Around Town...

Spring 2017

Baseball is for ALL!



Many children in our community grow up playing baseball, watching it on television, or going to the ball park with their parents or friends where lasting memories are made. For families of children with disabilities, there are several opportunities in our community for you to create these memorable moments with your child while enjoying America's favorite pastime.

Challenger Division



The Challenger Division of Little League Baseball is designed so that children with mental and/or physical challenges get the full benefit of participating in a team sport tailored to their ability. Playing with the same equipment on the same fields, participants will experience the joys of pulling together as a team, being cheered by the crowd, and earning awards for their efforts and achievements. We have 2 Challenger Divisions in our community:

1. Lamar Little League's **League of Champions** is derived from the Challenger Division of Little League Baseball, where boys and girls ages 4 – 18 are offered the opportunity to participate in an organized game of baseball in their community and it is **FREE** to all wanting to play!

[Online Player & Buddy Registration open through March 1st](#)

2. First Colony's **Dream League** is First Colony Little League's Challenger Division. Player registration is closed for the Spring 2017 season, but they are still looking for teen and adult volunteers,

2017 Strike Out Autism



5th Annual Strike Out Autism
Sunday, April 23rd

Opening Weekend with the Sugar Land Skeeters
Family Registration or Volunteer Sign-Up,
click on this [website link](#).



2017 Texas Pageant

Research shows that girls and women with disabilities regularly face a harmful "double-dose" of stereotypes associated with two parts of their identity: being female and having a disability.

As a result of these widely held myths about their value, the self-esteem of girls and women with disabilities remains significantly lower than that of girls and women without disabilities, and our communities miss out on the contributions that girls and women with disabilities are fully capable of offering.

Miss Amazing wants to change that by nurturing a sisterhood, building life skills and increasing visibility so that girls and women with disabilities define themselves on their own terms and dispel stereotypes. Miss Amazing has grown into the nation's leading event circuit dedicated to providing opportunities for girls and women with disabilities to reach their fullest potential. Miss Amazing is much more than a pageant. Miss Amazing is a movement created by a collective desire to acknowledge the beauty and value within all people. Below are the Texas dates and locations for our area:

April 28, 2017
Sugar Land Baptist Church
16755 Southwest Fwy
Sugar Land, TX 77479

April 29, 2017
Manor House of Richmond
907 Morton St
Richmond, TX 77469

Email [Ms. Amazing ~ Texas Pageant](#) for
additional information on this unique opportunity.



President's Day

Student

Holiday

Monday,

February 20th



March 13th—17th