

Special Education Department

138 Avenue F

Sugar Land, TX 77498

(281) 634—1143

[Website](#)

Volume 1

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## FBISD School Board

### 2017 All Star Team *Champions for Kids*

The 5.3 million students in our Texas public schools depend on the adults in their communities to see that their educational opportunities are the best they can be. Our schoolchildren can't vote in bond elections, can't debate testing or vouchers, and can't run for the school board. They are totally dependent on us to provide for them.



It is absolutely critical that we, as adults take this responsibility seriously. We must be the guardians who ensure that we have excellent, nurturing, inspirational schools for our children—all of our children. We can't focus solely on our own children; we are responsible for them and for the others who will make up their communities in the future.

In Texas, more than 7,100 generous people have offered to help through board service. Fort Bend Independent School District is very fortunate to have 7 dedicated individuals that have taken on the responsibility to help guide and direct the vision of FBISD. They receive no pay for their dedicated efforts. They not only volunteer their time and effort for our local schools, but they also speak up for our system of public education on a statewide level. They are your neighbors, and they care about the children, faculty and staff of FBISD.

These public servants sit through meetings, read detailed reports, listen to parents' concerns, and do the hard work to benefit the students and the community at large. They bring a variety of skills and backgrounds to their task, and they take their responsibilities seriously. The whole community benefits from their vigilance in providing good schools.

Each January, we pause in our regular activities to say thank you to these dedicated volunteers. We appreciate their generous sharing of time and energy on behalf of our children and our community. Local school board members are an all-star team, focused on our schools. Join the Special Education Department in celebrating School Board Recognition Month this January by expressing your support and gratitude to them. For additional information on the function of the FBISD School Board, click on the following Texas Association of School Boards [brochure](#).

### FBISD Board Members

(as pictured below from left to right)

**Kristin K. Tassin**

President

**Jason Burdin**

Vice President

**Addie Heyliger**

Secretary

**Grayle James**

**Jim Rice**

**KP George**

**Dave Rosenthal**

Take a moment to say thank you to your fellow citizens who have stepped up to serve as trustees for our public schools. For additional information on our FBISD Board of Trustees visit the following [website](#).



JANUARY IS SCHOOL BOARD RECOGNITION MONTH

# UPDATE

## From the Executive Director

Over the last four months, the *Houston Chronicle* published a special series that focused on special education services in Texas and the 8.5 percent target for the number of students served in special education. This target is set by the Texas Education Agency, and the *Chronicle* investigation centered around a perceived under-identification of students as a result of the target. In the TEA accountability system, if districts are significantly above the 8.5 percent target, they could receive a performance level rating feeding into an overall district special education performance rating. If that is too high, it could lead to corrective action plans or on-site TEA monitoring visits. Critics of this target say the TEA does not have any research to support why it was set at 8.5 percent, as it is below the percentage of other states in the country.

Since joining Fort Bend ISD in June of 2015, I have been very transparent about the low percentage of identified students. I believe there are several reasons for this, including misconceptions about Response to Intervention, or RTI. Since RTI was mentioned in IDEA back in 2004 and implemented in Texas over the last 10 years, Districts have had challenges regarding the appropriate time to refer a child for a special education evaluation. There have also been changes to the criteria for the determination of whether a child has a learning disability (LD). The TEA criteria changed approximately seven years ago, and Districts had to change their procedures. As part of this change, there was a ripple effect as test vendors changed their tests and there have been several updates since then and this impacts the evaluation process.

Fort Bend ISD has put changes in place over the last year to ensure we are appropriately identifying students. This includes the restructuring of the special education department, with an increase on improving our evaluation process. Last March, a Lead LSSP position was created, and the Board also approved four new LSSP positions in preparation for additional referrals. We also increased training to parents, campus staff and evaluators to ensure there is an understanding that RTI is *not* required before a referral for special education.

Recent data indicates our efforts are paying off as we have approximately 550 more students identified as receiving special education services from October 2015 to October 2016, with our current special education rate at 6.9%. Although we believe we are making improvements, we acknowledge we still have work to do and will continue to focus on improving our special education evaluation process. If you know of a parent that is struggling to get their child initially evaluated for special education, please encourage them to contact me directly at [deena.hill@fortbendisd.com](mailto:deena.hill@fortbendisd.com). Additional information on the FBISD Special Education referral process can be found on our [website](#).



Parents should monitor their student's posture while typing and playing computer games. As with everything, it is important to not only teach our children good posture, but to model it ourselves. Below are some quick reminders you can give your student (and yourself) to help develop the ideal typing posture.

1. **Sit up straight and tall.**
2. **Put both feet on the floor (if you can).**
3. **Keep elbows by your sides and bent (at 90 degree angle).**
4. **Pull the keyboard to the edge of the desk or table.**
5. **Now, hold your hands with curved fingers above the home keys.**

Adapted from WebMD.com ~ Proper Sitting Posture for Typing

## Parent Resource

Learning to type while young will help kids develop proper typing skills and posture that will benefit them for the rest of their lives. Kids typing software is loads of fun for all ages, but mainly for our younger students. As the kids get involved with the games, they will be so excited about all the fun they are having that they will forget they are learning! Click on the image below to access some free typing games for your student from KidzType.



# Department Highlights...

## 2017-18 Project SEARCH Application

Project SEARCH is a one-year, school-to-work internship program that prepares students with disabilities for competitive, integrated employment. Selected student interns receive training in social and independent living skills while acquiring real-life work experience. Additionally throughout the internship, those selected participate in job coaching, career exploration and employment planning in preparation for job placement at the conclusion of the internship. For additional information about Project SEARCH, visit their [website](#)).

FBISD is accepting applications for the 2017 - 2018 Project SEARCH internship January 9th through January 30th 2017.

[Application Download](#)



## Parent Education Workshop

Please join us on January 17, 2017 at the MR Wood Center for Learning from 6 p.m. to 8 p.m. to learn more about FBISD's services. We will have a Services Open House with several of our direct and related service personnel. Parents will hear a brief description of the service and participate in a small sample lesson from:

Occupational Therapy  
Physical Therapy  
Adapted Physical Education  
Vision – Orientation & Mobility  
Music Therapy



Child care is available to those that register in advance. Click on the Child Care link to the left or call 281-643-1143.



Bowie  
Middle School



(2016-17 school photo)

## Employee Spotlight

### Jackie Lamberti

Mrs. Lamberti is the Resource ELA teacher at James Bowie Middle School. She is known by her co-workers and students as someone who consistently goes above and beyond so her students succeed. After a successful career in settling insurance litigation claims resulting from fatalities and amputations, Jackie felt the calling to a "new career". She was a PTA volunteer while her boys were in elementary at Pecan Grove Elementary and ultimately became the PTA President for Davey Crockett Middle School. While serving in the PTA, Jackie was inspired by the wonderful faculty she encountered, specifically noting Mr. Michael Yelvington (now assistant principal at Bowie Middle School).

Mrs. Lamberti started her teaching career five years ago at Bowie as the Resource ELA teacher. Over these five years, she has experienced great student success using the Read 180 program, and follows the program with fidelity. Mrs. Lamberti stated that a part of her heart breaks when her students face difficulties in the general curriculum as a result of their current reading and writing challenges. To provide her students with the tools they need to be successful in their general education classes, she offers her students six different tutorial times (either before school or after school). These tutorials are not just for the content she teaches, but instead for all subjects (Social Studies, Science, and Math). During this time, Mrs. Lamberti is able to break down the challenges her Reading students have in their other classes. Her willingness to come in both before school or stay after hours typically results in her working a 9 to 10 hour day.

Teaching is one of the most complicated jobs today. It demands broad knowledge of subject matter, curriculum, and standards; enthusiasm, a caring attitude, and a love of learning; knowledge of discipline and classroom management techniques; and a desire to make a difference in the lives of young people. With all these qualities required to be noted as an effective teacher, it's no wonder that Mrs. Lamberti's students and colleagues call her a great teacher. She is kind, compassionate, empathetic, positive and a daily inspiration to those around her. Seven years ago, Mrs. Lamberti was inspired by a group of teachers at Davey Crockett Middle School. Today, she serves as the person on campus that makes others want to be better teachers, better students and even better people. FBISD is very grateful to have uncovered this hidden treasure in our community and we are blessed by her continued devotion to her students and teaching as well as her willingness to go the extra mile on a daily basis.

*Go the extra mile. It's never too crowded.*



# Around Town...

FBISD is committed to increasing student achievement and supporting families by providing them with the best possible parent engagement resources. On this page, you will find several opportunities to increase your knowledge and skills as parents so that you can actively engage in your student's educational plan. Through full partnership, we can increase the achievement and success of every child!

Texana Center is a 501(c)3 public, not for profit, organization that provides behavioral healthcare and developmental disabilities services to residents living in Fort Bend County. They offer free parent trainings as one of the many services they provide to families. Mark your calendars for the winter 2017 trainings highlighted below!

## Texana Children's Center for Autism

### "Speaker Series"

<p><b>Saturday, February 11 9:00 a.m.-11:00 a.m.</b></p>	<p><b>Antecedent Interventions</b></p> <p>Learn different methods to reduce inappropriate behaviors and increase appropriate behaviors.</p> <p><b>Presenter: Teah Dennis, BS</b></p>
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To attend, please RSVP by phone, 281-239-1435, or by [e-mail](#) at least two days prior to the training.



**Conference**  
**Saturday, January 14th**  
**9 a.m. — 2:30 p.m.**

Building a Strong Foundation for the Future: The Benefits of Inclusion

## Keynote Speaker:

**FBISD's School Board President,  
 Kristin Tassin and her daughter,  
 Abigail Tassin**

Abigail is a 16 year old self-advocate who just happens to have Downs Syndrome. She is currently in her sophomore year at Ridge Point High School and enjoys all aspects of school. Kristen Tassin is Abigail's mother. She is a managing member of a local law firm, founder of the non-profit organization Father's Joy, and she is FBISD's current School Board President. Together, Kristin and Abigail will share their journey of Abigail's inclusion in all aspect of her public education experience. Join them to learn of the successes and obstacles they have encountered along the way.

**Cypress United Methodist Church** [Map](#)

**Register at [Lighthouse Learning](#)**



## Please Join Us!

**Annual Meeting**  
 January 17, 2017  
 5:30-7:00 pm

The Harris Center  
 9401 Southwest Freeway  
 Houston, TX 77074

Guest speaker will be **Brian Rosenthal**, Houston Chronicle Reporter, who investigated and wrote about Texas Education Agency's alleged special education numbers cap/mandate.

**FREE for Arc Members - RSVP at <https://arcannualmeeting.eventbrite.com>**

Interested in attending and joining The Arc?  
 RSVP at <https://annualmeetingnewmember.eventbrite.com>

If you have questions, contact Michelle at [michelleh@aogh.org](mailto:michelleh@aogh.org)




**SUNDAY, FEB. 12TH—TUESDAY, FEB. 14TH**

**ROYAL SONESTA HOTEL, GALLERIA AREA** [MAP](#)

The *Inclusion Works!* provides learning opportunities for parents, educators, and school administrators to improve skills in collaborating to educate students who qualify for Special Education services in the regular educational environment with supplementary aids and services. The ultimate goal is to offer families and school staff information and education about research-based practices so that eligible students are effectively prepared for further education, employment, and independent living according to the purposes of the I.D.E.A.



[Registration Link](#)  
[Stipend Information](#)



## Staff & Student Holiday Monday, January 16th

**Martin Luther King Jr. Day**