Jacob Edwards, a 4th grader at James Williams Elementary (JWE), has many plans for the future. "I want to be a movie maker, world tour rock star, video game maker, YouTube maker," he said, naming off just a few of his future aspirations.

"There are lots of things I want to be," Principal Angel Bate-man said that she has told Jacob he can be anything he wants to be! Jacob already has a plan for his first movie, an adventure, called, The Jacob and Kelton Movie. Kara Goldblum, one of Jacob's teachers added, "Jacob is very artistic. Very talented. He loves to write."

Jacob enjoys his friends at school. This year he and his friends opened a classroom store. "We work at the store," Jacob said. "The whole class buys things. I look up prices on my IPad to decide what to charge." Jacob and his friends make the items to sell. Recently, Jacob made a phone and a poster.

"Recess and lunch and playtime," he said. Family time with his parents and three brothers is important to Jacob. He especially enjoys watching television with them and having family dinners at La Finca, where he orders the red salsa, chips and queso. He already has a dinner planned at La Finca to celebrate the last day of school.

Jacob just celebrated his 10th birthday. He received many wonderful gifts, but his favorite was the Bissell power vacuum cleaner from his mother. "It's turbo!" he exclaimed. Jacob enjoys shopping on EBay and is looking forward to spending his birthday money.
Work Based Learning

Work Based Learning (WBL) at Katy High School has a long tradition of helping students maximize their career potential. The program is staffed by one WBL teacher and three WBL job coaches who support students on campus and out in the wider Katy community. These dedicated teachers are passionate about providing students with career skills that last a lifetime. The program is given strong leadership support by Instructional Officer Annie Bryan, Director Christopher Rigdon, and Executive Director Brian Malechuk.

WBL Teacher Angela Angel said, “I have been the Work Based Learning teacher at Katy High School for 8 years now and am still in awe of the growth and progress I see in students gaining various job skills and transferring those skills to other job training sites, to paid employment, to volunteer employment opportunities, as well as using those skills in other areas of their lives.” She added, “The main goal of the Work Based Learning program is to provide students, who may not otherwise have the opportunity, to learn to work in a competitive workplace and become productive citizens who live life with a purpose. The joy and pride the students feel in getting their job done well is an absolute pleasure to behold!”

Angel has a great team of WBL Job Coaches who work directly with students to instill successful work habits. Job Coach Mary Maltz said, “After my 23 years with the WBL program I am always so impressed with the successes of my students. It is so rewarding, for me as well as them, to see how they advance from feeling so conflicted about their abilities to feeling confident in how well they have improved.”

Job Coach Kim Starkey knows what WBL can do to support student growth from a parent perspective, “Having my own child be a part of the Work Based Learning program, I have seen such a difference in her maturing intellectually. This program has provided the students the ability to be comfortable in the working world.”

Newest KHS Job Coach Lorna Benton is excited by what she sees in WBL. “This is my first year in the Work Based Learning program. I am amazed at how well this program works and how well the students thrive with this program,” she said. “It helps the students learn work skills and helps them develop the confidence they need to succeed in their community. I am very honored to be part of this program.”

“This year, at Katy High School,” Angel said, “we have had the opportunity to train at various community businesses, work in the Outdoor Learning Center garden, and spruce up our campus by planting some flowers around our outdoor cafeteria area, as well as the opportunity for two students to shadow the Cosmetology program at Miller Career Center to further explore their interest in working in a hair salon after high school. We’ve been very busy this year gaining new skills and working on appropriate behaviors to gain and maintain employment and I can’t wait to see what next year has in store for us!”

All high school campuses have strong WBL programs with dedicated teachers and staff. This program allows Katy ISD to meet student transition needs by adding new community training sites such as vet clinics, major hotel chains, hair care salons, and local restaurants. If you know of a great place for our WBL students to learn and work, let us know!
“Never underestimate what kids can do—anything is possible,” said Jill Windle, KISD Auditory Impairment (AI) Itinerant Teacher. Her career started after graduating with a focus on speech pathology from the University of Arkansas. Windle moved to Houston and worked at the Houston School for Deaf Children. There she developed inclusive practices for students with hearing loss. The relationships with students and their families were important to her and she is still in touch with many of them today.

Throughout her career, Windle has experienced the innovation of better technology to improve hearing. “Technology has changed so much.” Thirty five years ago, she worked with the first child in this part of the country with cochlear implants. Jill worked with one of the first doctors who was trained in cochlear implants. This doctor helped to educate her and the child’s family on the implants.

This, along with an audiologist, inspired her to develop the Developmental Approach to Successful Listening (DASL) program, a curriculum that develops listening skills for students with cochlear implants. For 26 years, Windle traveled around the country conducting professional development on this curriculum and working with students with cochlear implants.

When her family moved to Katy, Windle began working at Hutsell Elementary part-time and transitioned to a full time speech pathologist. After many years, she became a part time speech pathologist and spent part of her time working with students across the district with hearing loss. At one point in her career she even traveled to small districts around Katy to work with students with hearing loss as part of a co-op. She later took her current position as one of the district’s AI itinerant teachers.

Currently, she is the case manager for approximately 30 students around the district. She assists with accommodations to help students make progress in the general curriculum and provides individual therapy. She gets great joy from working with students and their families. Prior to a student’s ARD meeting, she works with the student to develop an auditory portfolio, even for students as young as first grade. Windle helps students create a portfolio to communicate their interests, strengths, an explanation of their hearing loss, accommodations they need, outside activities of interest, how they help others, and future goals and dreams. Students then share their portfolio at their ARD meetings, developing self-advocacy and displaying growth in communication skills. For the ARD committee it shows the powerful voice that students have in planning their own future.

Windle loves to spend time with her son, daughter, and first grandbaby, Hunter. When she retires, she plans to spend lots of time with Hunter and write children’s books. For Windle, it’s all about the kids. “Put yourself in the child’s world to teach them. Teaching will be fun and kids will be excited about learning.” Her passion for relationships and connections, keeps her in contact with former students and their families. She enjoys seeing families believe in students. “Kids are doing more than anyone ever thought was possible.”
During the summers of her high school years, Erinn Hengst worked at a physical therapy clinic in her hometown of Victoria, Texas. While there, she discovered that the limited resources of her small town were forcing the mother of a special-needs boy to make a four-hour round trip to Houston so that her son could receive the speech therapy he needed. Interest piqued, she researched the specialty … and she was sold.

Soon thereafter, she received a communications degree from Texas A&M University. From there, she went on the graduate from the University of Texas at Dallas with a degree in Communication Disorders.

Previously with Plano ISD, Hengst is now in her third year with Katy ISD, working at Stephens Elementary and now with Schmalz Elementary. While in Plano, she was part of the Language Curriculum Referenced Assessment (L-CRA) revision team. “The original L-CRA was written in the 1990s, so the information was outdated. The TEKS had been updated, so the measure needed to reflect those changes. Our team worked for two years to get the revision completed,” she said. “I learned so much about how ‘school’ worked outside of the speech therapy world.”

Hengst currently serves as the Programming Co-Chair under the Vice President for Scientific and Educational Affairs with the Texas Speech-Language-Hearing Association. Leading up to the convention, her committee reviews submissions, and reviews and edits all publications for the convention. During the convention, they ensure all presentations run smoothly.

When not at school, Hengst enjoys cooking, shopping, traveling and spending time with her husband Chris and her son Grey.

May is Better Hearing and Speech month! Help us celebrate all of our Speech Pathologists!
Elizabeth Kuylen

Elizabeth Kuylen has given Katy ISD 29 years of her passion for educating students. After graduation from Texas A&M University in 1986, Kuylen was hired by Principal Roosevelt Alexander to teach math at Katy Junior High. Kuylen has served as Assistant Principal at both McDonald Junior High and Alexander Elementary, and as Principal of Nottingham Country Elementary and Exley Elementary with the last 6 years at Cinco Ranch Junior High. It was at KJH that Kuylen had the opportunity to work with 5 of Katy ISD’s most recognized employees. It is one of her fondest memories to have been on the faculty staff with Roosevelt Alexander, Rodger Beck, Sue Creech, OD Tompkins and Jamie Wolman. She was honored to have opened 2 Katy ISD campuses as the Assistant Principal of Alexander Elementary and again as Principal of Exley Elementary. Her collaborative leadership style and support for campus staff and families make her an excellent choice for supporting special education programs in Katy ISD. Kuylen has housed several district special education programs on her campuses: Pre-School Program for Children with Disabilities (PPCD), Early Children’s Autism Program (ECAP), Young Children’s Autism Program (YCAP), Junior High Children’s Autism Program (JCAP), Autism Support and Interventions Program (ASIP) and LIFE Skills; however, it is her personal experiences as a sister of a brother with Down Syndrome that allows her to connect with families and offer advice. She beams with pride as she tells his story and shares his success. Kuylen is an avid reader. She enjoys creating projects from Pinterest and spending time with her husband and their 3 dogs. Her son and daughter are graduates from Katy ISD and currently attend Texas State and Texas A&M Universities. Kuylen states that “Katy ISD is an amazing place to work”. She is appreciative of the fantastic job she holds and feels that “every day is the opportunity to make someone’s life better”.

Devona Joseph

Devona Joseph is the Positive Approach to Student Success (PASS) teacher at McDonald Junior High. Her inspiration to work with students in the PASS program stems from personal experiences as a student. Having a mother who’s been an educator for over 30 years delivering patience, dedication, compassion, and understanding to every student has had a significant impact on her. Devona states, “I often sit back and think about how teachers took the time with me to make sure I understood what I needed to do, how to do it, and how it would make a difference in my life someday. Every day I take those thoughts and feelings and use them to deliver a positive impact on the students at MDJH.” Her goal for her students is to help them understand that we all face challenges from time to time, but from those challenges we learn valuable skills that help us be a CHAMP not only in the classroom, but throughout life.

In Joseph’s spare time, she enjoys being a wife and a mother to her 5 year old kindergartener, who keeps her very busy. She also loves spending time with her family, shopping, watching football, and going horseback riding. Her personal goals are to continue to help make a difference in the life of the individuals she meets, and to remember to put her best foot forward in all her experiences. When the time presents, she would like to one day be an administrator on the secondary level.
Katy Independent School District, the leader in educational excellence, together with family and community, provides unparalleled learning experiences designed to prepare and inspire each student to live an honorable, fulfilling life...to create the future.

Katy Independent School District Department of Special Education

Mission Statement

The Special Education Department exists to provide leadership and service to equip campuses with knowledge and skills in order for students to create their own future success.

Department Values

Excellence
Service to Campuses
Students as Individuals
Teamwork and Collaboration
Importance of Servanthood and Leadership