Diana Camargo is an eighth grade student at Katy Junior High. She has been in the Katy school district since third grade. Diana is an exceptional student and excels academically, but what you may not know, is that Diana is blind. She was born with micro-ophthalmia with optic nerve agenesis bilaterally. Instead of reading print like other students, she reads Braille. She uses current technology such as her Braille Note (a computer for individuals who are blind and/or visually impaired), iPad, and iPhone. Diana’s English teacher states, “Diana is incredible, very resourceful, and will do whatever it takes to get the job done!” All of her teachers have enjoyed having Diana in their classes and have taught them to not be fearful of the unknown.

Another teacher states, “I was anxious of the unknown and not sure what it would be like to teach a visually impaired student. What I found is that it is not a problem at all.” Along with technology, Diana uses a white cane for safe and efficient travel. Diana attends all academic classes including Pre-AP history. Her favorite subject is Science and she is passionate about Art. Last school year, Diana won a judge’s choice award for her art display. She painted a picture of a horse. The art teacher was able to bring her visual image to life by accommodating her art frame through tactile outlining. The image was outlined in glue thick enough to where Diana could paint while maintaining the color inside the image.

Diana has participated in many community activities with her family and friends. She has had many experiences as her sighted peers. Diana has participated in camping, fishing, swimming, horseback riding, riding in a gondola, ice skating, roller skating, and bike riding. She attends camp regularly with her church.

Diana will be going to Katy High School next year. She is excited to participate in the FFA program with an interest in raising animals. She plans on advancing her artistic ability in the area of ceramics. Diana feels a little anxious about the math curriculum, but knows with her resources and knowledge of technology, she will be successful. Diana is excited to explore her options in a variety of clubs and organizations that are offered through the school.

When asked about her future, Diana states, “I want to attend college at Texas A&M and study medicine.” She sees herself working at a hospital where she can impact all aspects of life. Diana is an intelligent and outstanding young lady with an amazing future ahead of her. The sky is the limit!
Synergy is alive between the teachers at Mayde Creek High School! Mayde Creek High School is one of many Katy ISD campuses participating in the collaborative teaching practices. The goal is establish processes and structures to support students in special programs in order to receive access to instruction within the general education classroom.

At Mayde Creek High School, the campus administration helped to select a strong team to help train and support collaborative teaching practices on the campus. This year, Mayde Creek’s collaborative teaching training team includes Denise Majewski (Student Support Principal), Celaina Huckeba (Social Studies Instructional Coach), Belinda Martinez (English Teacher), and Debi Schneider (Special Education Department Chair). These educators attended district training and took the information back to their campus. Together, they developed a dynamic plan to implement collaborative teaching practices on their campus. They focused on the partnership of support between the general education teacher and the special programs staff members including English as a Second Language and Special Education services.

The training team organized training in the morning and through a working lunch so that teachers and their support staff had time to plan in the afternoon. They had follow up conversations through email, after school meetings, and another half day so that participants implementing collaborative teaching practices could truly reflect and plan their instruction. Individual partnerships of teachers and their support staff continued to meet during common PLC periods, in between class periods, or after school. The teachers collaborating together, also had the opportunity to be filmed so they could reflect on their implementation of instructional practices and plan areas to continue growing their partnerships and instructional practices. The training team is planning one last whole group planning session at the end of the year for teachers who are participating in Collaborative Teaching next year.

The Collaborative Teaching partners have experienced comfort in identifying their role in providing instruction to students in a seamless team. They enjoy working together and having two staff members in a classroom who are each knowledgeable in their field, plan, and deliver lessons that reach all students. This has led to positive differences in student’s academic behaviors.

When bumps arrive, Mayde Creek High School continues to look at innovative ways to problem solve. They are thinking outside of the box and are getting creative in order to align the master schedule so that special programs staff can better communicate and plan with the general education teachers. It is clear that Mayde Creek High School is providing a supportive and engaging learning environment for all students.
When Kaitlin Ryan graduated from Cinco Ranch HS in 2011, she never dreamed she would return to teach in the newest high school in Katy ISD. It was only a few months after she received a Bachelor of Science Degree in Multidisciplinary Studies from Texas Tech University (Go Red Raiders!) that Kaitlin accepted a special education teaching position at OD Thompkins HS for the 2015-2016 school year. Kaitlin Ryan is one of two LIFE Skills teachers at OTHS and excels at teaching students with an intellectual disability. She enters the campus every day with a smile and positive attitude that is appreciated by staff, parents and students, so it came as no surprise when Kaitlin was awarded “First Year Teacher of the Year” at OTHS. Prior to her college graduation, Kaitlin worked during the summer as a teaching assistant at Extended School Year for students with disabilities in Katy ISD. Looking back, she feels that the summer experience gave her an insight into the class she would teach at OTHS. Kaitlin has a passion for helping others and seeing the potential in all her students. What may seem as a small accomplishment to some are celebrated big in Kaitlin’s class. One of her favorite memories is when her student initiated a good morning greeting after months of instruction and prompting from staff. She advises all first year teachers to “go in with a positive mind because negativity aspects give negative outcomes”. Kaitlin enjoys volunteering at her church and the local assisted living centers. She has 2 dogs and loves to binge watch Netflix. She is most looking forward to the 2016—2017 school year, as a teacher with one year experience, meeting her new students, watching them grow and accomplish new milestones.

Congratulations to Kaitlin Ryan, OD Thompkins HS First Year Teacher of the Year!
Ann Lalime, Ed.D began her career in education 26 years ago as a PE teacher in Waco ISD. She then moved to Cypress Fairbanks ISD to teach 4th grade English Language Arts and Social Studies. During her time in the fourth grade classroom, she was also the inclusion teacher. Dr. Lalime became an instructional specialist and eventually promoted to the position of assistant principal. She moved to Katy ISD in June 2009 to become the head principal of Golbow Elementary School.

One of the things that Dr. Lalime loves most about her job is that it is ever-changing. “What I really like about my job is that every day is a new day! There is always something new to learn.” Dr. Lalime loves her staff, who work hard and love their students. Whether working collaboratively in staff development or doing community outreach, the Golbow staff definitely knows how to have fun. She loves working with kids, which is what first led her into the field of education.

Dr. Lalime takes an active role with the special education team at Golbow. When she began her tenure at Golbow, she worked with her staff on creating more inclusive classrooms for special education students. Golbow became a model of inclusion for Katy ISD. The entire team meets once a month to communicate about the students. They have set up protocols for parent communication, ARD paperwork and the ARD process. Dr. Lalime loves having LIFEskills and PPCD on her campus, stating that it is always an adventure!

As a parent of a student serviced in special education, Dr. Lalime has a strong connection to the students on her campus. She can relate to parents because of her past experiences with her own child.

Dr. Lalime is an advocate for the students at Golbow. “I think it is important to look at the needs of each individual child and make sure we are meeting those needs appropriately”, Dr. Lalime says.

Golbow Elementary school participated in the collaborative teaching district initiative this year. She participated in the collaborative teaching trainings with her special education staff. “We have multiple classrooms utilizing the collaborative teaching model effectively. We have seen a very positive change in the way our students are being educated in our inclusion classrooms.”

Dr. Lalime has a collaborative leadership style. She likes to get staff input and make decisions based off staff feedback.

When Dr. Lalime is not at work she enjoys reading, socializing with friends, and spending time with her husband, 3 children, and 2 year old grandson. But, being the principal of Golbow Elementary is her favorite thing of all.
Jennifer Onezine received her undergraduate degree in Business Management and has continued her education in pursuit of a master’s degree. She worked in the higher education field for 10 years. Jennifer explains that she stepped out on faith and decided to fulfill her dreams of becoming a teacher. Her journey started in primary education as a full-time substitute teacher in Katy ISD for a year and later accepted a job as a paraprofessional. During her time as a paraprofessional and with inspiration and guidance from others, she decided to earn her certificate in teaching.

Working as a paraprofessional at Raines High School, the assistant principal, Russell Chadwick, asked her if she ever considered getting certified in special education because he saw something in her that he felt would be able to teach and make a difference in students’ lives. He said, “You have the right kind of heart for it!” The more she worked with her students, the more she knew she served a purpose and made a difference in their lives as they were making one in hers. Ann Meyer, the Student Support Specialist at BTP, mentored Jennifer during her time there encouraging and helping her problem solve in a structured environment. Jennifer shares how she was fortunate to work with some of the best teachers in the program and how that helped shape and mold her into the teacher she is today. She shared, “I truly found my calling. I then pushed myself to get certified as a special education teacher.”

Today, she is a K-2 Adaptive Behavior Teacher at Franz Elementary. Her role is working with students in a highly structured classroom setting designed for students with emotional and behavioral difficulties.

Jennifer reveals that the most challenging part of her position is balancing the paperwork and scheduling ARD’s, student’s transitions, and lesson planning. However, her amazing team and two paraprofessionals help the classroom run as smoothly as possible, and her Behavior Specialist, Adrienne Thompson, has given her a wealth of information.

In her free time, she loves spending time with her family, traveling, and doing energy-filled dance workouts.
Brittan Vega Named First Year Teacher of the Year at Cinco Ranch JH

Being a first year teacher can be a bit daunting, but not for Cinco Ranch Junior High’s First Year Teacher of the Year, Brittan Vega. With a smile as big as Texas, she eagerly describes her passion for teaching in the LIFE Skills program. “I was really drawn to LIFE Skills,” she said. “I love it!”

Vega graduated from Cinco Ranch High School and then attended the University of Houston in the Psychology department. She envisioned herself working with adults in a psychiatric hospital. However, her mother had always told her she would be a great teacher, and when Vega began to substitute teach in the Katy ISD special education classrooms while in college, she realized her mother was right. “I fell in love with it,” she said. Last year, Vega worked as a paraprofessional in one of the district autism programs while attaining her teacher certification.

One of the things that has surprised Vega this year is how little most people know about what happens in a LIFE Skills classroom. “We work on all of the skills tied to daily living, but we also teach academics. I teach academics for each of the content areas.” The students in Vegas class have varied skill levels in Reading, Writing and Math. She uses Science and Social Studies themes to address those individual skill levels. This year alone, Vega and her students have studied the solar system, natural disasters, rock and water cycles, leadership and presidents, civil rights and historical figures such as Thomas Edison and Martin Luther King Jr.

Watching her students learn and apply their learning has been very rewarding. Many of her students will choose to look up videos she has shown in lessons during their free time. One student made a model of planets and stars at home, then brought it to school to show the class. “When I look back at all of the things we have done this year,” she said, thinking about the many activities her students have accomplished, “It’s really amazing.”

Another aspect of teaching that Vega loves is the “one-to-one, personal interaction” she has with her students and their families. She will be attending the ballet recital for one of her students soon, and will be going to dinner with her 8th grade students before the 8th grade dance.

Vega grew up travelling across the United States with her family. That experience has translated into a love for travel that continues to this day. Vega has travelled in Europe, Budapest, Hungary, Scotland and Mexico. This summer, she will cruise the Caribbean, visiting Cozumel, the Cayman Islands and Jamaica. Once or twice a year, she returns to S. Padre, her “home away from home”, to visit family.

Congratulations to Brittan Vega, Cinco Ranch Junior High First Year Teacher of the Year!
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