Archer Johnson is a Senior at Morton Ranch High School. As a student at McRoberts Elementary, Archer focused on his behavior, communication, and social skills by participating in the Young Children’s Autism Program. The staff at McRoberts realized very quickly that there was something special about Archer. After accessing less restrictive settings, Archer quickly became a “favorite” amongst the McRoberts students and staff. As he moved into Junior High, Cardiff staff members saw the same thing. Archer was friendly, kind, hardworking, and his social and communication skills flourished. For the past few years, Archer has been an active learner at Morton Ranch High School. He attends and enjoys Art class. In addition to his academic classes, Archer participates in the Work Based Learning Program. Throughout the week, in addition to his academic and Art classes, Archer visits job sites through Katy ISD’s Work Based Learning Program. He works in the mailroom at the Katy Educational Support Complex, sorting and delivering mail within the building. He spends time at Marshalls and Papa Murphy’s, through a variety of experiences at a multitude of job sites, Archer found that he enjoys working retail. After he graduates in June 2017, Archer hopes to work at TJ Maxx or Kroger; however, before graduating, Archer had one more thing to do. It was time to attend the MRHS prom. When it was time to announce Prom King, the crowd of MRHS students began chanting Archer’s name. The announcement for King and Queen were made. Archer was voted Prom King alongside his sister, Liana, as she was named Prom Queen. What a beautiful ending memory of high school for these siblings! Congratulations Archer and Good Luck in your future endeavors!
Anna Fedewa is a junior at SLHS. She is on the Seven Lakes Sapphires dance team and a member of several clubs at SLHS including National Honor Society, Student Council, Spartans out Serving, Republicans of SLHS and of course Best Buddies. Anna is the current President of Best Buddies and President Elect for 2017-2018. In addition to school activities, Anna has served on Congressman Pete Olson’s Youth Advisory Council, Mr. Vierling’s Principals Leadership Council and volunteers regularly at church youth ministry programs and summer camps serving students with disabilities. She is currently involved in an Independent Study course through Texas Virtual School and is researching transition services for students with disabilities.

Anna became interested in special education at an early age. In kindergarten she was placed in the gifted and talented program where once a week she spent time in an alternate classroom to work on research and projects. For years she was the only girl in the program and never really had a group of friends, but in the third grade Anna was invited to start spending lunches and recesses in the PPCD classroom. From that day forward she fell completely in love with special education. The time she spent in the SPED classrooms in elementary school and later in junior high and high school, opened her eyes to how she wanted to spend the rest of her life. That path has brought Anna to the special education area of transition. Through the Texas Virtual School Independent Study course and with the support of two mentors (Katie Hilliard SLHS LIFE teacher and Katie’s former education professor at Texas A & M) Anna developed a website and brochure detailing transition services and supports available to students with disabilities. Anna has also presented information on transition services at the Katy ISD special education parent advisory meeting. Anna is looking forward to her senior year. She will add the PALs program to her list of SLHS school activities and plans to enroll in the Miller Practicum in Education program for 2017-2018. After High School graduation, Anna plans to pursue a special education degree at Vanderbilt University or Texas A&M University. She knows she would like to teach LIFE Skills, but has not decided at what specific level. Whether she teaches elementary, junior high or high school we hope Anna Fedewa will make Katy ISD her educational home. Thanks for all you have done for the students and families in Katy ISD!
Elizabeth Moreland-Mason receives a leadership award from Texas A&M Dean’s Roundtable

We have distinguished staff here in Special Education in Katy ISD! Elizabeth Moreland-Mason was honored at Texas A & M University for being a transformational leader in Education on Friday May, 5th. The 2017 Dean’s Roundtable honorees include superintendents, principals, classroom teachers, professors, counselors, and other professionals who have devoted their careers to helping others. Sharon and James Tays were also identified amongst the 29 honorees.

Elizabeth has dedicated 35 years to education. Her career in education started when she was 19, a Journalism major at University of Houston, and needed a part time job. One of her professors shared that they were looking for “happy people who love children” to work at their Home Based Program and she took the job. She felt inept at the end of her first day on the job, but after telling Ashley, the child she had been working with that day, that she was leaving for the day, that feeling quickly changed. Ashley, was a child with Rhett’s syndrome. When Ashley heard Elizabeth say “goodbye”, she showed much disappointment on her face and eagerly leaned forward and gave Elizabeth a memorable kiss. That was the beginning of a life of working with children with unique needs.

Elizabeth’s career includes time at Houston’s West University School, Spring Branch’s Bendwood School, Cy-Fair’s Life Skills, Special Opportunity School, and 5th grade classroom, as well as joining Katy ISD in 1999 as a Self-Contained/In Class Support Teacher at Nottingham Country Elementary. Elizabeth opened up Williams Elementary as a Life Skills Teacher, as well as taught YCAP at Schmalz. Her knowledge, passion, and talent moved her into a leadership position in Katy’s Special Education Department, where she started as a Lead Teacher for Elementary Life Skills, then became Elementary Program Specialist, and now Instructional Officer for Curriculum and Instruction K-12. Her role as an Instructional Officer is to support the Program Specialists and campuses with being able to implement high quality programming for all students.

Elizabeth has more ties to Katy than just her career. Her children, now young adults, are graduates of Katy High School and she is forever grateful to the well balanced education her children received that gave them a good foundation for college. In her free time, she enjoys reading, cooking, writing educational books related to working with students with significant disabilities, and spending time with her family through travel and enjoying life’s beautiful nature.

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Liz presenting to teachers and administrators during district collaborative teaching training.
Congratulations to all the 2016-2017 Special Education Teachers Awarded Katy ISD Teachers and First Year Teachers of the Year!

Jessica Garza-Casso, Fielder Elementary

Michelle Dowling, Mayde Creek Elementary

Michaela Davis, Stanley Elementary

Courtney Elliott, Bear Creek Elementary

Kyndal Stevens, Bear Creek Elementary

Krista Saldivia, Kilpatrick Elementary

Brette Kuretsch, Shafer Elementary

Janet Tippen, Katy Elementary

Jennifer Angel, Memorial Parkway Junior High

Glynn Newton, Wood Creek Junior High

Devona Joseph, McDonald Junior High

Lisa Phillips, Katy High School

Patricia Christoffersen, BTP

Teddy Cops

Officer Santiago wanted to build bridges with students in special education, so he began giving Build-a-bear Teddy Bears in police uniforms to students in special education programs. He has given bears to students in LIFE Skills and Autism programs for 22 schools on the north side and 15 on the south side. Over 900 bears have been given out so far.

In the photo: Student- Matthew C., Officer Santiago, Teacher Jessica Villa, Principal Yvette Sylvan
Andrea Alford is currently working as a Teacher of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing at Memorial Parkway Elementary. When asked what made her decide to become a Teacher of the Deaf, she responded, “I remember how my deaf education teachers and interpreters played a significant role in my life. I wanted to do the same with my students today. I still keep in touch with many of my former students.”

“Ms. Alford is a leader and goes above and beyond in everything that she does. We are so fortunate to have such an excellent role model for our students on our team. Her passion for teaching deaf and hard of hearing students is evident every day in her classroom. As a hearing impaired person herself, she is able to relate to her students in a very special way. She is a gift to Katy ISD!” -Elaine Robertson, Instructional Officer for Deaf Education, Vision and Assistive Technology.

When asked about being educated herself in a deaf education program she stated, “During my freshmen year in high school, I was having trouble understanding the politics and jargon that was discussed in the Honors World History classroom due to lack of background knowledge. I was struggling to comprehend the literature with advance language I had never heard before. The history literature didn’t make any sense. I was an avid reader, but it was as if I was reading all these words, but couldn’t put the puzzle pieces together to comprehend. I’d watch the nightly news as we were quizzed on our knowledge. I lacked the background knowledge of what was happening around the world and in history, which affected my grades drastically. Mr. Frith, my freshman Honors History teacher, worked with my sign language interpreter to help me by taking the time outside of the classroom to explain and encourage me to read other literature that would give me knowledge that I lacked! He didn’t doubt me or lower his expectations; he saw my potential and my ambition, and was very persistent with me while I was struggling. He changed my way of thinking from concrete to abstract by analyzing our history and providing the necessary language tools I needed. I cannot say I had one specific person that had the most significant impact in my education. The influence came from educational interpreters who made time for me, deaf education teachers who had high expectations by accessing grade level curriculum, and my parents who always supported me through my school activities.”

When asked why she thinks she is an effective Teacher of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing, Andrea stated, “My students lack incidental learning through their deafness, but it doesn’t mean they cannot be exposed to what their grade level peers are learning. We cannot decide how much they will understand. Providing them the same access to the general curriculum and instruction as their grade level peers with visual and language tools empowers them to compensate for their needs. My students enjoy interacting with their grade level peers and do not see themselves as different! They’re signing away as if their peers understand every word they’re expressing and amazingly, there’s a collaborative relationship of trying to figure it out among themselves without me intervening, a lifelong tool that I cannot teach. I love seeing this positive social experience within group activities, science experiments, and math centers. I love seeing that they’re learning the same information with tools that I provide. It gives them a sense of an ‘I can do’ attitude.” (continued on page 6)
Andrea Alford

A few years ago, Andrea received a cochlear implant and it has impacted her life. Andrea shared, “For one, I can catch my own children who are hearing, bickering behind my back. I’d look in my rear view mirror in my car and they’d smile at me, but when my eyes were on the road, I could hear yelling and bickering. Then I’d look back again and they would do their charming smiles again. They can no longer fool me. I teach my children to sign, but as any hearing children of a deaf adult, they know how to fool their parents.

Secondly, when I was young, I had a hearing loss of 50 dB which is moderate. I loved to listen to music. I’d sit in my bedroom and listen to all the 80’s-90’s music following the lyrics pamphlets from the cassette tapes. I had a progressive loss from spinal meningitis and my hearing loss became profound between the ages of 20-30. I wanted to hear music again. It was a very difficult decision as I have so much respect for the deaf community and identify myself as a Deaf individual. I use the cochlear implant as a tool, not to identify who I am. I take it off when I’m at home as my kids can be loud. It’s the best part of being deaf!”

Mrs. Alford stated that one of her favorite things about Katy ISD is that “I’m lucky to have the BEST students, a supportive deaf education team that’s cohesive like family, and administrators who encourage me to grow. I do not see myself any different than any other teacher at Memorial Parkway Elementary. My needs may be more noticeable than others, yet I compensate using my other abilities. Most of my coworkers know I need to see their faces to lip read, and some know I recognize their voices and can respond without looking.”

Andrea is a creative thinker and goes above and beyond in making a difference at MPE for her kids and all MPE students. For example, she implemented a weekly sign video that was shared with the entire school. This increased the use of sign with hearing students. Her passion for helping others understand hearing loss is evident in all she does.” – Sharlu Melville, Assistant Principal, Memorial Parkway Elementary.

I strongly believe all students CAN learn and are teachable.

Andrea is very successful as an elementary teacher but previously had worked for years as a secondary teacher. “As a secondary teacher, I had students with a variety of needs including life skills, oral deaf, deaf who use American Sign Language, those who needed general education support with academic language, deaf-blind, autistic, and students new to the country without any English skills. I strongly believe all students CAN learn and are teachable. It is our job as educators to navigate and find strategies for them to ‘get it.’ I set high expectations and the sky is the limit. I loved teaching high school and moving to elementary was one of the hardest decisions I had to make; however, being an elementary teacher helped me grow in ways I’d never realized. I am hoping these experiences will help me be an effective deaf education administrator someday. I enjoy seeing my students’ faces when they get excited and finally understand a concept. Watching them explain it back to me in their own way gives me the gratification that I’ve sparked their will of wanting to learn more. Let’s not forget how many hugs and smiles I get each day!”

“I have had the pleasure of working with Mrs. Alford for the past year in a variety of teaching settings, as I am the AI Speech Pathologist for the team. Mrs. Alford consistently collaborates with me regarding each student’s speech and listening goals in order to generalize these goals in her classroom, group therapy and general education settings. She has an innate understanding that true growth and development of a child requires a team approach to education. Additionally, Mrs. Alford has a thirst for ongoing growth and desire to increase her knowledge base for the betterment of each student. I am excited to continue our shared life-long quest to develop each student’s listening, speech and language potential to the maximum extent possible.” – Anita Zachariah Ed.D., CCC-SLP, LSLS, Cert. AVT.

Ms. Ungaro, Teacher at Memorial Parkway Elementary states, “Mrs. Alford is so creative and resourceful. I admire how she works with all students in the AI program and around the school. She is organized and knows her students well. She is a wonderful addition to our MPE community.”

Andrea also has her own personal aspirations for the future. She states, “I have completed two half marathons and I’d like to survive and complete a full marathon. It’s been on my bucket list. Professionally, I see myself serving God’s will wherever that may be, whether it’s as a teacher, an administrator, or in an area I didn’t think I’d be. I never thought I would be an elementary teacher and look where I am! ‘Trust what I say about the future, it may take a long time, but keep on waiting. It will happen!’ (Habakkuk 2:3) As Dr. Hindt says, ‘Be the legacy!’ Someday I hope to leave the same positive impact.”
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