Working with children with disabilities is my passion. My teaching career in Katy ISD has been a blessed one with opportunities to help develop the LIFE Skills, TIP (medically fragile) & SCIP (deaf blind) programs at Cinco Ranch High School over the past 18 years. This year, I began a new stage in my career as a Homebound teacher working with students from both LIFE Skills and TIP programs who are receiving services in their homes due to their medical needs. I am excited about now taking my years of experience into the homes of my students who are unable to come to school and helping to open up their worlds.

I am particularly passionate about meeting the educational needs of our most involved students. Students who may be multiply disabled, orthopedically impaired, non-verbal and with significant sensory deficits. I have been in the unique position of having a LIFE Skills classroom and specialized programs where the majority of my students were multiply disabled. These opportunities helped me to develop specialized programming and multisensory activities to allow even the most involved child to be actively engaged in learning.

It can be very challenging for both new and seasoned teachers to meet the needs of their most involved students in classrooms where there are diverse functioning levels and types of needs. How do you include a student in your lessons and classroom activities who is responding at a sensory level, who is non-verbal, who has very limited physical abilities? The answer is different and unique to each child.

The great news for teachers is that you are not alone in figuring this all out!

Contributed by: Carolina Conn
Special Educator
Homebound teacher

Special thanks to our Katy Students:
Liam and Katheryn
Often as Special Education Teachers, we feel alone in our classrooms. We try to figure things out on our own. What I have learned over the years is that we have a team! The therapists (OT, PT, SLP), specialized teachers (Music, APE, Vision) and Assistive Technology (AT) Team members are our team members to help us meet the needs of our students and to develop our skills as teachers. They are our connection to equipment, resources, and new innovative ideas. They have the expertise in their discipline and can help us see things from a different perspective. I owe my success in working with my students in large part to the skills that I have learned from my related services team over the years.

Some important things I have learned from working with my team over the years are the following:

- Believe in each student & their ability to learn.
- Develop a multi-sensory approach – think of all the senses, all of the time.
- Make activities as interactive and hands on as possible.
- Include opportunities for communication & choice making throughout the day.
- Communicate with your team about the needs of your students & any challenges you are facing in making activities accessible to them.
- Be open to trying new ideas and strategies that are suggested.
- Ask your team if there are any available resources and equipment that can help you.
- Observe team members working with your student to learn from them.
- Take on the role of the leader of your student’s team – collaborate regularly by email or by calling a staffing if needed. Get everyone’s insight & ideas to help you.
- Include team members in developing IEP goals that address all areas of need of your student and that are attainable, at their functioning level.

Most importantly HAVE FUN! The more fun we have with our team & our students…the more learning will happen!
Williams Elementary houses the Vision Team including our Braille Transcribers, Teachers of the Visually Impaired, Orientation and Mobility Specialists, and Paraprofessionals. Six times a year Williams Elementary has an activity called “LASSO,” Linking Adults and Students in Self-awareness Opportunities in conjunction with their PTA. Each grade level has a unit of study. On October 13th, 2017, the first grade unit was “Health and the Human Body.” One of the stations was “Senses.” Our Vision staff offered to become an additional station for sight. Principal, Angel Batemen, said, “It was completely organic on how it happened and the Vision staff were able to share what they do on a first grade level. It tied in perfectly with what we were doing with the 5 stations for the senses.” All the students move from station to station in small groups and Braillists, Mrs. Vicky Diers and Mrs. Debbie Pattison, showed the students what braille and tactile materials were like. They asked the students questions such as, “How would you be able to read if you could not see? Close your eyes and imagine.”

Ms. Diers and Ms. Pattison excitedly spoke with the first grade teachers and the wonderful parents that were teaching the “Body Part Lesson” about being part of the activity. Mrs. Diers shared, “We set up a demonstrating hands on work center and the students had so much fun learning our ‘secret code’ braille. They learned what it was like to not have sight and that a blind friend can be a student in school just like them. They were able to hear and observe our graphic machines coding a graphic pumpkin with a smiling sticker on it. They were thrilled to be able to take it home and share with their families.”

Ms. Bateman noted, “It was interesting that the students have now started noticing all the braille around the building on the signs for different rooms, while they were unaware prior to our LASSO activity.” Ms. Shanda Barzilla thought, “This really took learning about visual impairments a step further than what we could have done in a regular classroom activity.” Ms. Bateman believes that the students “have more awareness and understanding in order to become more empathetic” towards students with visual impairments.
Fine Motor Activities
From Carlene Bexley, MOT, OTR

Fine motor activities can be seamlessly embedded in daily activities. Remember, practice makes progress! Here are some ideas:

First, it is important to make sure the child has a solid base of support. Strong trunk muscles stabilize the body, so fine motor muscles can do their job. Also, feet must be flat on a surface while a child is participating in fine motor activities; this combination provides a stable support. Some ideas for strengthening the trunk:

Think vertical plane: Tape a piece of paper on a window or cabinet and let the child draw/write/paint. Use window markers to practice writing/drawing pictures. Enlist his help to wipe the chalkboard/Smart Board/window/mirror. Let him help put away groceries/dishes, reaching above his head to put them away.

Play, play, play: Ensure your child or student plays on the playground using his large muscles. Swinging, climbing, sliding, and running all help to build strong trunk muscles.

Secondly, simple activities can be added without causing more work for the teacher/parent:

Encourage independence: Encourage your student to open his own supplies/belongings/packages. Insist that your child dress himself/put on his own shoes/buckle the seat belt/twist the lid off the toothpaste. This allows continued practice for the fine motor muscles.

Ask for assistance: Let the child help pass out papers, sharpen pencils, erase the Smart Board, stack chairs, etc.

Involve your child in home tasks: Let him help in the kitchen (snip green beans with scissors, pour, stir, scoop, pour, peel oranges, cut fruit with a plastic knife, open containers, scoop food onto plates, help put leftovers away, clear dishwasher/put away silverware). Help with cleaning (wipe windows and tables, scrub the tub, spray non-toxic cleaning agents). Help with folding laundry and other chores.

Pick free time options wisely: With the advent of electronic tablets and video games, children spend less time using their hands and imaginations. While using technology is not bad, balance technology use with toys/games that use hands and imaginations. Legos, crafts, science kits, building sets are good options. Games such as Operation and Lite Brite provide fine motor practice opportunities. Tongs or clothespins can be added to pick up objects to promote a fine motor work-out. A quick search online for toys/activities that build fine motor muscles will provide a wealth of ideas.
The West 10 RDSPD is one of 61 deaf education cooperatives throughout the state of Texas along with the Texas School for the Deaf, a Charter school for the deaf and private schools for deaf and Hard of Hearing students. Katy currently has a Parent-Infant program, PPCD program, Itinerant program and three site campuses. Our site program for elementary is at Memorial Parkway Elementary and has been for many years. We have many students attending school at their home campuses who receive direct support or consultation services from an Itinerant teacher for the Auditorily Impaired.

If a student uses sign language or needs intensive services from a Teacher of the Auditory Impaired, the ARD committee determines the possibility of the student attending one of our site campuses. In the past, our secondary site students needing these services attended the Northwest Harris County Cooperative in Cy-fair ISD.

We are happy to announce that we now have secondary site programs at West Memorial Junior High School and Taylor High School to serve our students in Katy ISD. Our students are being served closer to home and receive their services in Katy ISD! In addition, we have other districts who are part of our deaf education cooperative including: Brazos ISD, Hempstead ISD, Royal ISD, Bellville ISD, and Sealy ISD. We serve as the programs’ fiscal agent, which means that we provide the space for education, acquire staff to provide service to students and handle the daily instruction for students coming from our member districts.

We are excited to be able to provide this program also in the event one or more of our member districts has a student who needs to access our site programs.

We were able to hire an amazing teacher of the deaf and hard of hearing for the program at West Memorial Junior High School. Jill Cleveland, former American Sign Language Teacher and Deaf Education teacher from the Dallas area has joined the West 10 RDSPD. She came in with a bang! She is well liked by the other staff, quickly educating them on how to interact with deaf and hard of hearing students and adults and she fosters an amazing learning environment with the general education staff in the building. She also serves as an amazing role model for our students as she is deaf herself.

Additionally, she was selected as the “Jaguar of the Week” for the first week of August.

We also were fortunate to have Ms. Lisa Mitchell move from Memorial Parkway Elementary School to Taylor High School to start our deaf Education program on their campus. Ms. Mitchell is a certified and skilled deaf education teacher, as well as a certified Sign Language Interpreter and serves in both roles for our deaf student at the high school.

We are thrilled to have our new program up and running. We are also so fortunate to have our programs at WMJH and THS! We have incredible administrative support including Mrs. Gina Cobb, Principal of WMJH and Mr. Chris Morgan, Principal of THS. Both schools have personnel to help guide us as we grow these new programs.

Gina Cobb is the principal of West Memorial Junior High School

Chris Morgan is the principal of Taylor High School
10 Simple Activities to Encourage Physical Activity in the Classroom.

Secret Password: Every day establish a secret password activity such as 5 jumping jacks, stand on one foot for 5 seconds, hop three times, etc. Then establish when the student needs to use the secret password - i.e. after a drink of water, before receiving a hand out, when entering the classroom, in between subjects, etc.

- Walkin Worksheets: Tape worksheets on wall, easel and chalkboard. Students move from worksheet to worksheet and answer the different questions.

- Opposite Hunt: Divide the class in half. Half of the class write a word on an index card. The other half writes the definition. Shuffle the cards and hand one card to each student. The students must move around the classroom and match the word with the definition. For younger students match up sight words, letter or numbers. Try math problems and solutions.

- Pencil Jumps: For a quick movement break in between lessons have each student place a pencil on the floor. Jump over the pencil a designated number of times.

- Race in Place; When reviewing material, have the students stand up and run in place by their desks. On the teacher’s signal, student stops running in place, listens to question and writes down the answer on paper.

- Daily Rule: Establish a new daily rule every day that includes physical activity, i.e. walk backwards to water fountain, tip toe to the bathroom, stretch before sitting in chair. See if you can catch the students forgetting the daily rule.

- Shredder: Cut up worksheets in quarters. Students can help scatter the worksheets around the floor face down. On the teacher’s signal, the students can crawl around the floor, find the four quarters of the worksheet, complete the worksheet and give it to teacher.

- Push Up Line Up: When the students line up against the wall to leave the classroom, have each student face the wall and perform 10 wall push ups. After all push ups completed the class can walk in the line.

- Mobile Math: Divide the class in half to review math problems. The students can stand at their desks (paper and pencil on desk). Call out a math problem such as 4+5=. One half of the class jumps 4 times and the other half jumps five times. Each student writes down answer on paper. Continue with other math problems. Vary movements.

- Q and A Stretchin : Provide students with paper at desk. Students can stand or sit. Ask a question and student writes down the answer (very large) on one sheet of paper. Each student holds paper up, with two hands overhead to stretch. Teacher checks answers. Multiple choice questions work best.
Kara Landgrebe began her career in Del Valle ISD in 2007 as a Special Education Co-Teacher. She then moved closer to home and began her career in Katy ISD. She has experienced a variety of positions in Katy, beginning with Woodcreek Junior High (WCJH). Kara’s experiences at WCJH include LIFE Skills, Co-Teacher, Science Teacher, and Special Education Department Chair. Kara earned campus teacher of the year while at WCJH in 2011.

Kara left Katy ISD in 2013 to become the first coordinator of student achievement in the accountability department with Lamar Consolidated SD. She returned to Katy ISD in 2014 in continuing her work impacting staff and students becoming the Assistant Principal at Memorial Parkway Junior High (MPJH). She along with Dr. Emily Craig, Principal, collaborated to improve the Special Education Department, in assuring student access in necessary supports and services. This has improved teacher morale as well as student success. Dedicated to the field of Education, Kara aspires to be a campus principal to widen the scope of student achievement for ALL kids!

Kara also has family working in Katy ISD as her husband is the Print Shop Manager and is working to earn his degree in communication and her father-in-law is the Theatre director at SLHS. Kara is dedicated to her family which include 2 children, Braeden and Blakeley. Braeden attends 3rd grade here in Katy ISD. Kara also teaches Blakeley’s Sunday school class. Kara loves spending time with her family including being a proud baseball Mom!

Kara through her own struggles with her son’s medical issues, has stated, “I believe that with the right people in a child’s life, all kids can do great things!” She added, “It takes being intentional in believing the best in people to make sure our kids have every opportunity to be successful in their own right.”
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