



the weekly INSIDER



ZAFFIRINI ELEMENTARY *National Blue Ribbon School!*

The U.S. Department of Education announced today that Senator Judith Zaffirini Elementary School has been recognized as a 2019 Blue Ribbon School. Zaffirini Elementary is one of 362 public schools across the United States to garner this prestigious distinction. Zaffirini Elementary has been nominated for Exemplary Achievement-Gap-Closing Schools. This performance category recognizes that the campus is among Texas' highest-performing schools in closing achievement gaps between a school's student groups and all students. Top education officials in each state nominate public schools for this esteemed award.

Blue Ribbon Schools, founded by the U.S. Department of Education in 1982, is a program that recognizes schools where students perform at

very high levels or where exemplary progress has been made toward closing achievement gaps among subpopulations while also maintaining high achievement levels among all students in the public and private elementary, middle, and high school level.

United ISD is honored to congratulate Zaffirini Elementary on this prestigious award. United ISD will honor Zaffirini Elementary School and Principal Claudia I. Benavides with a ceremony that will observe the school's 20th Anniversary celebration, as well. The special ceremony will take place at Zaffirini Elementary on December 6, 2019, at 10:30 a.m. Congratulations to the students, staff, and administration at Zaffirini Elementary for earning the 2019 Blue Ribbon School Award.

Superintendent's Corner

Greetings, United ISD Employees

The fall season is finally upon us and our 'A-Rated' District is shining brighter than ever. Our students are flourishing under the guidance of our top-notch educators and their successes are evident in the stellar performance of each of our campuses.

Zaffirini Elementary School has been recognized as a 2019 National Blue Ribbon School for Exemplary Achievement Gap-Closing Schools. I would like to extend a sincere congratulations to Ms. Benavides, her students, and staff for working so hard to garner such a prestigious accolade. Zaffirini Elementary is one of only 362 schools nation-wide to have earned this distinction. United ISD is incredibly proud of their accomplishment.

This Saturday, October 5, the United ISD Fine Arts Department will be hosting a Marching Band Festival featuring high school marching bands from Laredo and surrounding areas. The Festival will take place at the SAC and gates open at 5:30 p.m. The extraordinary talents of our high school musicians and color guard will be on full display. I highly recommend that you go out and support our students, as our marching band festivals always prove to be a thrill to watch.

In closing, I want to emphasize how crucial your role is to our district. If not for the dedication you put forth every single day, our students and our District would not be the beacon of excellence that we are.

Warm Regards,

Roberto J. Santos
Roberto J. Santos



◆Remember to use **#WeAreUnitedISD** our official hashtag on everything you share on your school's social media; the community would love to know what their children are achieving.

Freedom Elementary Show Support For Childhood Cancer Awareness



Freedom Elementary teachers, staff, and students came together and wore Gold/Yellow shirts to show their support for the GO GOLD campaign. The GO GOLD campaign supports the fight against childhood cancer. Each day, the students were presented with a short video that dealt with a child cancer case. The students were able to

see the effects of the disease through the different perspectives of doctors who are working towards finding a cure, families that are hoping for a cure, and children battling the horrible disease. Through their support of this program, Freedom Elementary was able to raise \$525.00 to support the fight against childhood cancer.

Muller Elementary School A.R. Kick Off Reading Rocks! Dr. Seuss Tribute



Muller Elementary welcomed Julian Franklin Productions for the 2019-2020 A.R. Kick Off. Students participated in an exciting show full of magic, reading and fun! The show paid tribute to children's author and illustrator, Theodor Seuss Geisel, popularly known as, Dr. Seuss.



John B. Alexander High School Performance Ensemble Earns Top Spots in Regional Competition



AHS Drum Majors Kristopher Montemayor and Katherine Garcia

John B. Alexander High School Outdoor Performance Ensemble competed in the prestigious Bands of America South Texas Regional hosted at the McAllen, Texas Memorial Stadium. After performing in preliminaries

among 27 other band programs, the Alexander ensemble scored 1st place in their Division along with the caption of General Effect.

Next came an opportunity for the ensemble to perform in the finals competition, where they took the #1 spot on a roster of 10 ranked bands. Overall, the John B. Alexander High School Outdoor Performance Ensemble earned the title of Grand Champion of the South Texas Regional Championship. This accomplishment is the first of its kind by any Laredo school. Furthermore, this accolade is the first of its kind for any South Texas School since 2005.

The group has advanced to compete at the U.I.S.D. Marching Festival on October 5th at UISD's S.A.C. Field,

U.S. Bands Marching Festival on October 12th at the D. W. Rutledge Stadium in Converse, Texas, U.I.L. Marching Contest on October 19th at the UISD S.A.C. Field, and at the Bands of America Super Regional Competition scheduled for November 1st at the Alamodome in San Antonio, Texas.

Directors for the John B. Alexander High School Outdoor Performance Ensemble are Joshua A. Martinez, Ricardo Fuentes, Diana Gonzalez, and Jacob Thompson. Visual Ensemble Instructor is Abraham Armendariz. Marching Technicians are Luis Angel Gomez, Alejandro Gutierrez, Alexis Piña, Kevin Piñeda, Carlos Najar, Jose Larrañaga, Emilio De Leon, David Larrañaga, Raul Labrada, Naomi Alvarado, and Jada Larrañaga.

Los Obispos Middle School Takes a Stand Against Childhood Cancer



In support of Childhood Cancer Awareness Month, Los Obispos Middle School staff are selling lemonade and popcorn treats every Friday during the month of September. Visitors to the snack station can also make individual monetary donations. All proceeds will be directed to our local Childhood Cancer Society. Childhood Cancer Awareness

Month is recognized every September by childhood cancer organizations around the world. "Our campus participates in fundraising efforts every year, and we hope to exceed the \$500.00 we raised last year. All donations can make a big difference to cancer-stricken children and their families," said Principal Jessica C. Salazar.

Middle School Principal's meeting, we visited the food production Center



United ISD Middle School Principals recently toured the District's Child Nutrition Department to gain insight as to how meals are prepared, and how



campus-based decisions affect meal requests. The department currently prepares healthy meals for over 43,000 students, and employs dietitians to



develop nutritious menus that meet Texas Department of Agriculture guidelines.

Peter Piper Pizza Donates Dictionaries, Hosts Pizza Party For Third Graders at Zaffirini Elementary

Peter Piper Pizza donated dictionaries to every third grade student at United ISD. Third grade is the first year that students take the STAAR Assessment exam, so Peter Piper makes this donation annually in an effort to encourage the first time test-takers. This year, Peter Piper Pizza kicked-off their annual donation with a pizza party for the third grade students

at Zaffirini Elementary School. Melissa Compean-Ysaguirre, Peter Piper Pizza Field Marketing Representative, and Rocky the Dinosaur were on hand to give out pizza and dictionaries to the students. United ISD would like to thank Peter Piper Pizza for their continued support and generosity to the students of the district.



Third grade students at Zaffirini Elementary enjoy their pizza while reading their new dictionaries.

Third grade students at Zaffirini Elementary pose with their teachers and representatives from Peter Piper Pizza.



Salinas Elementary School



Salinas Elementary recently recognized Lauren Canales, 5th grade student at Salinas Elementary. Lauren has been fighting the good fight against cancer and is winning! She is seated to the right of her 4th grade teacher Mrs. Maribel Luna along with her classmates and Salinas office staff.

SOMETHING ABOUT U.



• **Meet Martha Perales**

Q&A

How many years have been with United ISD?

I have worked with the district for 9 yrs.

Describe your job in three words?

Rewarding, Inspiring, Blessing

What has been the best advice you have ever given your students?

It is okay to make mistakes because that is when we learn the most.

What is one skill or talent that people would never guess you have?

I choreograph dances.

Who has influenced you in life?

Mother Teresa has been very influential because of her caring and compassionate heart.

U BELONG EVOLVE ACHIEVE

Quote of The Week

Each day is a new beginning, the chance for your life to be winning.

Catherine Pulsifer



Aplauso!

Cheers from your peers



San Isidro Elementary

September
2019

Selina A. Sanchez

San Isidro Elementary
5th Grade



1. Why did you become a teacher?

I became a teacher to help every scholar reach their fullest potential, find their passions, and develop their love of learning.

2. How many years have you taught at United ISD?

This is my 15th year of teaching at United ISD.

3. Who was your best teacher growing up?

My 2nd grade teacher, Mrs. Gonzalez always went above and beyond for her students. She planted many memories that have impacted my life till this day.

4. Describe your job in three words.

Enjoyable, Challenging, and Rewarding

5. What is one thing that you wish someone had told you when you were a first-year teacher?

Not everything will go as planned. Control what you can control, and let go of the rest. Take it one day at a time.

6. What's one thing your students have taught you about being a better teacher?

My students have taught me to applaud every academic milestone and they have shown me that through hard work and diligence we can succeed.

7. Why is teaching an incredibly important job?

Teaching is the foundation of all professions. We have the opportunity to shape young minds into scholars and make a positive impact in their lives and our community, ultimately creating a better future.

8. What has been the best advice you have ever been given?

Learning is ongoing; for when we stop learning, we stop growing.

9. What is the one skill or talent that people would never guess that you had?

My experience as a former Larriette has enabled me to choreograph many dance routines.

10. Who has influenced you most in life?

The most influential people in my life are my parents. My dad taught me the importance of hard work, respecting all individuals you encounter, and to take pride in my job. My mom taught me the value of an education. Her independence and strength to persevere through any obstacle taught me to never give up. My children have inspired me to work hard and always strive to be a better person.

Yadira Guzman

San Isidro Elementary
Second Grade



1. Why did you become a teacher?

I desired a career that impacted people's lives. What better choice than children. I also have a passion for teaching and seeing children grow to be successful in life.

2. How many years have you taught at United ISD?

I'm starting my 10th year as an Elementary teacher with United ISD.

3. Who was your best teacher growing up?

My 3rd grade teacher Mrs. Arizola at Kazen Elementary. Her passion and dedication continues to inspire me today.

4. Describe your job in three words.

Inspiring, Fulfilling, Life-changing

5. What is one thing that you wish someone had told you when you were a first-year teacher?

One thing I wish they would have told me is that teaching is challenging, but the end result is worth all the hard work.

6. What's one thing your students have taught you about being a better teacher?

Every child is capable of greatness.

7. Why is teaching an incredibly important job?

Teaching is a job that keeps on giving. As a teacher if we invest our knowledge, love, and dedication into our students, we will create a better world of educated citizens.

8. What has been the best advice you have ever been given?

Be kind to every child, you might be the only positive force in their lives.

9. What is the one skill or talent that people would never guess that you had?

I have great organizational skills, and I'm good with technology.

10. Who has influenced you most in life?

My family has always been the most important influence in my life. They motivate and support me in everything I do.

We  Our Teachers!





Aplauso!

Cheers from your peers



Nye Elementary School

September
2019

Juana Alfaro-Pena

Nye Elementary School
3rd Grade



1. *Why did you become a teacher?*
I became a teacher to be a positive influence in the lives of my students.

2. *How many years have you taught at United ISD?*
14.

3. *Who was your best teacher growing up?*
My mother.

4. *Describe your job in three words.*
Hard, rewarding, changing.

5. *What is one thing that you wish someone had told you when you were a first-year teacher?*
You will get better.

6. *What's one thing your students have taught you about being a better teacher?*
Never give up!

7. *Why is teaching an incredibly important job?*
You are an influence in a person's life.

8. *What has been the best advice you have ever been given?*
Trust in God.

9. *What is the one skill or talent that people would never guess that you had?*
Singing.

10. *Who has influenced you most in life?*
My students.

Noemi Vargas

Nye Elementary School
4th Grade/Reading



1. *Why did you become a teacher?*
I became a teacher because I felt that through teaching I could help many students not only with academics but also with other facets in life.

2. *How many years have you taught at United ISD?*
I have taught at United ISD for 15 years.

3. *Who was your best teacher growing up?*
Growing up, I had two teachers in elementary who impacted me the most. Mrs. Alfaro (2nd grade teacher) and Mrs. Reyes (3rd grade teacher).

4. *Describe your job in three words.*
Acquire, Absorb, Amaze.

5. *What is one thing that you wish someone had told you when you were a first-year teacher?*
One thing I wish they had told me my first year was to be gentle with the copy machine.

6. *What's one thing your students have taught you about being a better teacher?*
One thing my students have taught me that has made me a better teacher is that each and every one of them are unique. No two are the same.

7. *Why is teaching an incredibly important job?*

Teaching is an incredibly important job because it allows me to interact with so many young lives. Hence giving me an opportunity to impact them in a positive manner.

8. *What has been the best advice you have ever been given?*

The best advice that has been given to me is that when talking to parents about their child, it is best to be completely honest with them. This paves the way of our communication.

9. *What is the one skill or talent that people would never guess that you had?*

One skill I have is that I know how to use the sewing machine.

10. *Who has influenced you most in life?*

The one person who has influenced me most in my life has been my mother. Her caring and nurturing ways are always present when I work with my students.

We  Our Teachers!





Aplauso!

Cheers from your peers



Arndt Elementary School

September
2019

Nancy Castillo

J.W. Arndt Elementary
4th/5th Grade



1. *Why did you become a teacher?*

As the oldest sibling of 7, I saw the impact that one can have on others. I knew special education was where I could make the greatest difference in helping my students achieve their fullest potential.

2. *How many years have you taught at United ISD?*

8 years.

3. *Who was your best teacher growing up?*

My third grade teacher Mrs. Gutierrez was my favorite teacher. She was always so motivating that she made you want to be in school.

4. *Describe your job in three words.*

Challenging, Rewarding and Life-Changing.

5. *What is one thing that you wish someone had told you when you were a first-year teacher?*

I wish someone had told me that you don't need to work long hours if you know how to manage your time wisely.

6. *What's one thing your students have taught you about being a better teacher?*

My students have taught me that a disability doesn't define their capabilities. I've seen the majority of my students surpass obstacles and attain goals that they didn't think were possible. It makes me want to push myself everyday.

7. *Why is teaching an incredibly important job?*

We are not merely teachers. We have the opportunity to lay the foundation that will enable our students to become productive citizens in our societies.

8. *What has been the best advice you have ever been given?*

One day at a time.

9. *What is the one skill or talent that people would never guess that you had?*

I'm good at organizing events in a short amount of time.

10. *Who has influenced you most in life?*

My children are my motor. I try to do the best in everything I do and transmit that to them.

Claudia Palacios

J.W. Arndt Elementary
4th Grade



1. *Why did you become a teacher?*

My mom always told me to become a teacher. She thought it suited my personality. I never really gave it much thought when I declared a major. I went through the program never questioning my choice. It wasn't until I went through my blocks that I discovered that I was in the right profession. Having the opportunity to work with children, helping them achieve their goals and being able to be part of their education is truly rewarding.

2. *How many years have you taught at United ISD?*

I have been a teacher with United ISD for twenty years.

3. *Who was your best teacher growing up?*

I was very fortunate to have many outstanding teachers growing up. If I had to choose one, I would say Cynthia Ramon. She was my theater arts teacher, and it was in her class that I learned to stand in front of an audience and perform. It definitely prepared me for what I do now.

4. *Describe your job in three words.*

Adventurous, Rewarding, Fun.

5. *What is one thing that you wish someone had told you when you were a first-year teacher?*

I wish someone would have told me that the job is never ending. You're constantly thinking about your students. You're always figuring out the best way to help each individual child that sits in your room.

6. *What's one thing your students have taught you about being a better teacher?*

Resilience. Kids are very resilient. They are willing to try new methods and are not afraid to fail and try again.

7. *Why is teaching an incredibly important job?*

Education provides people with opportunities and choices for life.

8. *What has been the best advice you have ever been given?*

Observe before you speak. Before you are ready to give your opinion, you should take the time to observe the situation.

9. *What is the one skill or talent that people would never guess that you had?*

I wouldn't consider this a skill much less a talent, but I really enjoy assembling puzzles.

10. *Who has influenced you most in life?*

My own children have been the biggest influence in my life. Having school age children has given me a greater understanding of the struggles and insecurities that children face each day. I try to help my students feel safe to take chances and remind them that it's okay to make mistakes.

We  Our Teachers!





Aplauso!

Cheers from your peers



Centeno Elementary

September
2019

Martha Guerra

Centeno Elementary
Reading Intervention Teacher



1. *Why did you become a teacher?*

I became a teacher because I love to teach, love working with kids and enjoy the reward of seeing how the students grow academically and overall within a year.

2. *How many years have you taught at United ISD?*

I have taught for 15 years and I'm now starting my 16th year.

3. *Who was your best teacher growing up?*

It is hard to choose one because several instilled different knowledge that I have appreciated throughout my career.

4. *Describe your job in three words.*

Rewarding, active, evolving.

5. *What is one thing that you wish someone had told you when you were a first-year teacher?*

Plan ahead and take things one day at a time because it can be overwhelming.

6. *What's one thing your students have taught you about being a better teacher?*

They have taught me to look at the world through their eyes. In order to help them, I must understand how they see things to be able to achieve growth from there on.

7. *Why is teaching an incredibly important job?*

Teaching is the job that builds the foundation needed for our students to become successful in the future.

8. *What has been the best advice you have ever been given?*

Don't ever stop learning and growing as a person.

9. *What is the one skill or talent that people would never guess you had?*

I can sing a song or two.

10. *Who has influenced you most in life?*

The teachers I had growing up influenced me the most, for they showed me how valuable it is to be educated and earn a degree.

Vanessa L. Tiznado

Centeno Elementary
5th Grade/Math-Science



1. *Why did you become a teacher?*

I became a teacher to make a difference in our world but most importantly, our community.

2. *How many years have you taught at United ISD?*

10 years.

3. *Who was your best teacher growing up?*

Angela Jasso, Alexander High School

4. *Describe your job in three words.*

Fun, challenging, rewarding.

5. *What is one thing that you wish someone had told you when you were a first-year teacher?*

You'll laugh, you'll cry, but you will become better because of it!

6. *What's one thing your students have taught you about being a better teacher?*

Every child is gifted in their own unique way.

7. *Why is teaching an incredibly important job?*

Teaching is important because we have the ability to shape young minds and produce productive citizens of the world.

8. *What has been the best advice you have ever been given?*

You only live once, so enjoy to the fullest and with no regrets!

9. *What is the one skill or talent that people would never guess that you had?*

I love to sing!

10. *Who has influenced you most in life?*

My greatest influence in life has been my mother, Adriana Velasquez. She has molded me to be the person and teacher I am today.

We  Our Teachers!





Aplauso!

Cheers from your peers



United South Middle

September
2019

Samanta Y. Beltran

United South Middle School
8th Grade/Math



1. Why did you become a teacher?

As a teacher, I can impact a student to thrive and explore greater things. I want to motivate students to be involved in academic or other activities like sports or clubs. I know how easy it can be for a child to get off track, and maybe I can prevent that just by motivating. I am especially proud of teaching in the same school I attended during Jr. High years.

2. How many years have you taught at United ISD? I have been teaching at United ISD for 12 years now. Mostly here at USMS in 7th and 8th Grade Math.

3. Who was your best teacher growing up?

I will always be thankful to Mrs. Diana Lopez (2nd), Mrs. Rocha Morales (7th Math USMS) and Ms. Tijerina (USHS) for believing in me. Also, I want to thank Mrs. Yvette Miranda, Mr. Miranda, and Mr. Carlos Gil (USHS) for their dedication.

4. Describe your job in three words. Innovative, extreme, and rewarding.

5. What is one thing that you wish someone had told you when you were a first-year teacher? I was told, don't worry, you will slowly learn. There is nothing I could have been told to prepare me. One thing for sure, I was told it would be challenging, but at the same time FUN. I totally agree with that.

6. What's one thing your students have taught you about being a better teacher?

I have learned from my students that my job has more importance than teaching challenging math skills. More than any academic skill, teachers need to motivate, encourage, believe, and build confidence in their students.

7. Why is teaching an incredibly important job?

Teaching is an important career because we help build our future community. We want high school graduates to be ready for real world careers and college readiness opportunities. Teachers have the opportunity to motivate and encourage students, parents, and the community to achieve this goal.

8. What has been the best advice you have ever been given?

The best advice I have ever been given was from my aunts, uncle, grandmother who are retired teachers. Their advice is to be patient and to get to know each student individually.

9. What is the one skill or talent that people would never guess that you had?

Creativity in teaching and strong leadership I have the innate ability to involve and motivate students/staff by building an exciting school environment all year long.

10. Who has influenced you most in life?

My parents have influenced me in all levels of my life. They are humble, honest, supportive, hardworking people. They have taught me the best things in life, to be caring, responsible, honest, happy, dedicated, to be good to others and to always do the best for my family. I always want to make them proud.

Elizabeth Ramirez

United South Middle School
6th and 7th Grade/Mathematics



1. Why did you become a teacher?

I became a teacher to make a difference in my students' lives. I hope to inspire and encourage students to become lifelong learners.

2. How many years have you taught at United ISD? 12 years.

3. Who was your best teacher growing up?

My high school math teacher, Ms. Rebeca Reyes.

4. Describe your job in three words. Challenging, rewarding, FUN!!

5. What is one thing that you wish someone had told you when you were a first-year teacher?

That it's okay to make mistakes. Through your mistakes, you also learn many things... adapt, compromise.

6. What's one thing your students have taught you about being a better teacher?

My students have taught me that relationships matter.

7. Why is teaching an incredibly important job? Teachers make all other professions possible!

8. What has been the best advice you have ever been given?

The best advice I have been given is to never stop learning and to be consistent.

9. What is the one skill or talent that people would never guess that you had?

I love baking!

10. Who has influenced you most in life?

My husband. He has always encouraged and supported me in anything I do.

We  Our Teachers!





Aplauso!

Cheers from your peers



Troutman Middle School

September
2019

Lazaro Cantu

Troutman Middle School
6th Grade/Social Studies



1. Why did you become a teacher?

Education is where I felt I could do the most to make a difference in children's lives. I wanted students to learn in a fun and safe environment. That has been and will continue to be my goal.

2. How many years have you taught at United ISD?

I have proudly served the United Independent School District for 25 years. Furthermore, I worked summer school for 22 consecutive years and have truly enjoyed my profession.

3. Who was your best teacher growing up?

My favorite teacher ever was my 2nd and 4th grade teacher at Buenos Aires Elementary school-Mrs. Catalina Montemayor. She taught with an amazing love, which I truly admire. I was very blessed to have her as my teacher twice.

4. Describe your job in three words.

Fun, exciting, inspiring.

5. What is one thing that you wish someone had told you when you were a first-year teacher?

I wish I was told to enjoy the ride, for that is what I have been doing in this career. Every day is a blessing in this profession.

6. What's one thing your students have taught you about being a better teacher?

Something my students have taught me, amongst many things, respect. I've learned that each child is different and we must treat each one with respect and individualism. No two children are alike.

7. Why is teaching an incredibly important job?

Teaching is an important job for the reason that we as educators shape lives of our future. We have the power to influence children in a positive way every day.

8. What has been the best advice you have ever been given?

The best advice that I have been given is to teach with your heart. One has to teach with lots of love. If you do that, you enjoy your teaching career.

9. What is the one skill or talent that people would never guess that you had?

I believe that my sense of humor is a skill that I have and have utilized in my classroom. People do not think that I am humorous since I am a former Marine. People tend to think that I am serious and extremely strict.

10. Who has influenced you most in life?

The person that has influenced me the most is my mother. My father left her with five children and she held two to three jobs. Thanks to her sacrifice four of my siblings are nurses and I am a teacher.

Mirella Sanchez

Troutman Middle School
8th Grade/Mathematics



1. Why did you become a teacher?

To share my passion for math with my students. I believe all students can and will learn, and I enjoy helping students learn.

2. How many years have you taught at United ISD?

At least 14 years

3. Who was your best teacher growing up?

All Math teachers since I love the subject.

4. Describe your job in three words.

Patience, Rewarding, Challenging.

5. What is one thing that you wish someone had told you when you were a first-year teacher?

That you do not have to grade papers in the middle of the night.

6. What's one thing your students have taught you about being a better teacher?

To build positive relationships with them. Sometimes they just need that extra confidence, extra attention.

7. Why is teaching an incredibly important job?

We teachers have the ability to shape students' growing minds, to motivate, to inspire, and to be positive role models to our students.

8. What has been the best advice you have ever been given?

Be prepared and have plan B just in case.

9. What is the one skill or talent that people would never guess that you had?

Constructing jigsaw puzzles (1000+ pieces)

10. Who has influenced you most in life?

My parent.

We  Our Teachers!

