

Schools Transforming Learning Application

Michelle Gaskamp, Principal PI-13

Katy Independent School District, James Randolph Elementary

5303 Flewellen Oaks Lane Fulshear, TX 77441

MichelleCGaskamp@katyisd.org 713-530-6342

James Randolph Elementary's Story

Overview and Background

James Randolph Elementary (JRE) opened in 2014 in the Cross Creek Ranch community of Fulshear, Texas, serving approximately 865 students in Pre-Kindergarten through 5th grade. Our campus reflects a richly diverse student population and a strong sense of community.

Our school is named after Coach James Randolph, a beloved Katy ISD educator known for recognizing the unique strengths in every child and helping students feel valued, respected, and capable. He instilled in students the importance of perseverance, hard work, and respect for others—values that continue to guide and shape our campus culture today.

At JRE, our mission is to ensure every student understands their full potential. We are committed to *"Unleashing the Star"* in every child by intentionally developing both learners and leaders. Over the past several years, our campus has experienced meaningful growth in student achievement, leadership capacity, and student ownership, and we remain dedicated to doing whatever it takes to support student success.

Focus Areas

James Randolph Elementary is deeply committed to developing the whole child. Our work is grounded in the belief that learning should cultivate curiosity, imagination, and leadership while honoring the diverse talents of all students. When students are empowered to take ownership of their learning and data—and when leadership opportunities are accessible to every child—growth occurs far beyond what is captured by standardized assessments.

Through reflection and data analysis, we identified a longstanding inequity in student leadership opportunities. Historically, leadership roles were often filled by the same students—those who were high-achieving, outgoing, and well known among peers. While these students benefited greatly, many others were never given the opportunity to lead. We recognized that leadership potential exists in every child and that it is our responsibility to intentionally uncover and develop it.

This realization led us to reimagine student leadership at JRE with a clear and ambitious goal: every student deserves the opportunity to lead before leaving elementary school, and students should experience multiple leadership roles to discover where their strengths and interests truly lie.

Student Leadership Transformation

This work began with a bold shift in mindset and practice. While introducing new systems often brings hesitation, our staff embraced the challenge, stepping forward without having all the answers and committing to learning together (Visioning Document, Article V: Organizational Transformation). Through collaboration, reflection, and continuous feedback, we refined the structure of our leadership program.

One key improvement was extending leadership rotations from one month to a full nine weeks, allowing students adequate time to build confidence, develop skills, and experience authentic leadership. Today, fifth-grade students eagerly anticipate the announcement of their next leadership role, which is proudly posted in our hallways. The excitement and sense of ownership students display speaks volumes about the impact of this work.

JRE now offers 12 distinct leadership roles, and every fifth-grade student serves in four different leadership opportunities throughout the school year. We are proud to be the first elementary school in our district of 49 campuses to ensure that 100% of fifth-grade students hold an active

leadership role at all times. This work has been shared with district principals and has already influenced leadership structures on other campuses.

Student-Led Data Analysis

In addition to leadership development, JRE has prioritized student ownership of data (Visioning Document, Article IV: Accountability for Learning). When students understand where they are academically and what they need to improve, they become more motivated, reflective, and engaged learners. While this work continues to evolve, all students in grades K–5 actively track their progress in age-appropriate ways.

Even our youngest learners can articulate what they have mastered, identify goals, and celebrate growth. This practice has shifted our culture of learning from teacher-driven to student-empowered, reinforcing the belief that students are capable partners in their own success.

Results

The impact of this work has been transformative. Within a single semester of implementing the expanded fifth-grade leadership model last year, discipline incidents—rather than increasing as they traditionally do toward the end of the school year—were reduced by an extraordinary 50%. This shift reflects more than improved behavior; it represents a fundamental change in student ownership, responsibility, and campus culture.

Beyond the data, the most meaningful outcomes are reflected in student experiences. Through the Principal’s Advisory Crew, students engaged in authentic dialogue with the District Lead Nutritionist. Their thoughtful feedback led to a school-wide taste test and ultimately resulted in the addition of steamed rice with vegetables—replacing an unpopular option with a healthier choice now enjoyed by students across the district. This experience reinforced that student voice matters and can lead to real change.

Similarly, the Community Service Group modeled servant leadership by organizing a donation drive for a local animal shelter and participating in a citywide cleanup effort. These experiences taught students that leadership extends beyond the classroom and carries a responsibility to uplift others and care for the community.

Perhaps the most powerful example of this work’s impact is seen in individual student growth. One fifth-grade student, who had been selectively mute throughout much of elementary school, gradually found their voice through intentional leadership opportunities and a culture rooted in safety and belonging. By the end of the year, this student voluntarily spoke at fifth-grade graduation, confidently addressing peers, families, and staff—an outcome once unimaginable and a testament to the life-changing power of belief and opportunity.

Conclusion

Collectively, these efforts have fostered a culture where students lead with purpose, empathy, and integrity. The impact reaches far beyond academics—shaping confident leaders, strengthening community, and creating lasting change. Today, 100% of students in grades K–5 track and reflect on their learning data, and while long-term outcomes continue to be monitored, the daily increases in engagement, ownership, and confidence affirm the enduring success of this work.