New Certificated Employee Bios 17-18

District:

Cristina Cortes - Cristina is excited to be a part of the Jefferson School District family as a school psychologist. She was born and raised in Turlock, California. Cristina attended CSU Stanislaus where she graduated with a BA in Psychology and a minor in Spanish. She also attended Brandman University and graduated with a Doctorate in School Psychology and master's degree in Educational Psychology. Cristina has worked in education for 8 years and is fluent in English and Spanish. She has a very large, loving, and supportive family. She is looking forward to the 2017/2018 school year!

Monticello:

Jamie Watson – Jaime will be teaching 4th grade at Monticello this year. She obtained her bachelor's degree in psychology from San Jose State and her teaching credential from Cal State Monterey Bay. She has been working with children since she was 18 years old. Jamie spent many years working primarily with children who had ADHD and Autism and then started as a teacher's assistant in a 4th grade classroom at a private school in Palo Alto. She then moved back to her home town, Tracy, where she was hired at Tracy Learning Center as a 1/2 combo class teacher. Jamie I looking forward to working at Monticello. In her free time she enjoys taking her dog on walks, reading a good book and going to the beach with my husband, Nick.

Casandra Baker – Casandra will be teaching Kindergarten at Monticello School. Casandra is originally from a small town called Arkport, in New York State (near Buffalo NY). She married her high-school sweetheart, Kyle, in August 2004 and moved to Virginia because he is in the Marine Corp, and it was there that she started her journey teaching Kindergarten. In April of 2012, he was re-stationed to Camp Lejeune, NC and Casandra taught Kindergarten there for 5 years. In January of this year her husband received new orders, which brought them here. In August 2015, they had their baby boy, Kaden Daniel, and this September they will welcome his little sister! Casandra is beyond excited for this new adventure. She loves spending time with family along with their English Bulldog, Bentley, and watching hockey. (Go Caps!!)

Cassandra Beal – Cassandra will be teaching Resource at Monticello this year. Cassandra is married and has two children, one boy and one girl. She attended Jefferson School District from 3rd grade to 8th grade. I graduated with both my bachelor's and master's degree from Grand Canyon University with full honors. Outside of teaching Cassandra is passionate about fashion and is a LuLaRoe consultant. She has lived in Tracy for 21 years and likes to get involved around the community.

Marina Mihov – Marina will be teaching 3rd grade at Monticello this year. Marina grew up in Pleasanton and then attended Cal Poly San Luis Obispo as a Liberal Studies major. She just finished Cal Poly's Multiple Subject Credential Program in June. Through that program, Marina had the opportunity to student teach in a 4th grade and kindergarten class. She grew up competing in acrobatic gymnastics, so when she moved to San Luis Obispo for college, she began coaching a competitive team. This summer Marina traveled with her team to Wisconsin, where her athletes competed at the National Championships. In her free time Marina likes to spend time outside, hiking and boating on lakes.

Beilynda Sembrano – Beilynda will be teaching Kindergarten at Monticello this year, and it is her first year teaching. She graduated from UC Santa Barbara in 2016 and then went on to the UC Davis credential program. This past school year Beilynda was student teaching in a 1st grade classroom in downtown Sacramento. She is excited to be teaching for the Jefferson School District because she grew up in Tracy and attended the Jefferson School District from the 3rd-8th grade.

Jefferson:

Rachel Geiszler – Rachel will be teaching 7th grade science at Jefferson this year. Rachel grew up in a small town northeast of Stockton and received her Bachelors of Science in Exercise Physiology through California State University, Chico. Before pursuing a teaching career in science Rachel traveled to the Czech Republic to obtain her TEFL (Teaching English as a Foreign Language) certificate. She then returned to the United States and began substitute teaching. When she's not teaching Rachel enjoys spending time outdoors and traveling to new places.

Hawkins and Jefferson:

Kevin Garrison – Kevin will be teaching PE at Hawkins and Jefferson this year. Kevin is from Modesto. He attended CSU Stanislaus, earning his Bachelor's degree in Kinesiology and his single subject teaching credential. Typically for hobbies Kevin enjoys playing guitar, camping, hiking, working out and running. He is currently working on his Master's degree in Physical Education.

Hawkins:

Brenda Morgan – Brenda will be teaching 3rd grade at Hawkins this year. She taught 3rd and 6th grade for three years in Lodi and second grade for one year in Modesto. Brenda was recently married on July 15. Her husband and she were introduced by a mutual friend almost 7 years ago. Brenda is a huge baseball fan, especially of the A's and Giants. She and her husband have attended several A's baseball games this summer. She loves hiking and paddle-boating around Mt. Lassen. Brenda is an avid reader and loves anything to do with minions.

Kevin Eddings – Kevin will be teaching PE at Hawkins this year. He is a United States Air Force veteran. During his time in the military Kevin worked as a laboratory technician specializing in hematology. Upon leaving the military he began substitute teaching and earning his credential in physical education. Kevin has previous experience as a PE teacher at the junior high level and high school coaching experience at the varsity level for basketball and track & field. He loves the outdoors and spends much of his free time on the California delta or at the beach. Kevin loves learning how things work and enjoys working on and building cars. He has a passion for coaching/teaching no matter the subject matter and he is looking forward to a great school year.

Samia Merza – Samia will be teaching 8th grade science this year at Hawkins. She absolutely loves teaching!!! Samia loves learning new things and believes that ALL students, regardless of their socioeconomic status and home life, can learn when supported with well-prepared and trained faculty and staff. She has 15 years of experience in education. When Samia is not in school, she enjoys spending time with her family, volunteering, traveling, and playing golf.

Dena Pitta – Dena will be teaching 7th grade CORE at Hawkins this year. Her family recently relocated to the Tracy area from Sacramento due to a change in her husband's employment, and she is excited to start a new journey in her teaching career. Previously, Dena worked in the Sacramento area as a Resource teacher at Natomas Middle School and as a guest teacher at Folsom-Cordova Unified. Having this flexibility as a guest teacher allowed her to spend quality time with our son, Jac. Dena also previously lived in Concord, and taught SDC and Literacy to 6th and 7th grade students. She loves middle schoolers! As a family, she and her husband Kevin are the pit crew to Jac's Go-kart hobby, and she expresses her inner cheerleader without too much embarrassment to both of them.

Robert Brown – Robert will be the band director and music teacher at Hawkins this year. It is Robert's first year as a director, but not his first experience as a professional music teacher or conductor. Robert is a graduate of the University of the Pacific Conservatory of Music. He is a lifelong central valley resident. Robert enjoys camping, watching Star Trek, and reading cheesy science fiction novels.

Traina:

Rose Rios – Rose will be teaching 7th grade math, robotics, and a real life math elective at Traina this year. Rose grew up in the East bay and attended CSU Hayward for her BS in math and her single subject teaching credential in math. She also received her master's degree in Curriculum & Instruction with a minor in teaching math. She has only been teaching a short time but she is passionate about helping everyone understand math. Rose loves numbers and sports. She has been playing softball since she was 12 years old.

Kristin Kummer – Kristin will be teaching 7th grade CORE at Traina this year. Previously, Kristin taught 1st & 2nd grade at a private school in Hayward. After the school closed in 2016, Kristin taught 6th grade core as a long-term substitute, and discovered how much she enjoys working with middle schoolers! When she's not teaching, Kristin loves sports, music, and travel. She is excited to begin a new school year with a new team, and looks forward to getting to know everyone!

Marissa Smith – Marissa will be teaching Kindergarten at Traina School. . Marissa grew up in the central valley. She recently graduated in May from the credential program at California State University, Chico. Marissa has a bachelor's degree in Liberal Studies and a minor in Child Development. Furthermore, she was chosen to be a part of the Triad Project which allowed her to work very closely with the Next Generation Science Standards. This project also led Marissa to become a published author. Marissa is very excited to be working for the Jefferson School District!