

A Cy-Fair Magazine feature highlighting the hard work of Cy-Fair ISD principals

Principal Michelle Rice

Initiating success at Copeland Elementary School

Written by Emme Enojado | Select photography by Cody Keilers



Praised in a service-minded family that spent their lives giving back to the community, Copeland Elementary School principal Michelle Rice had no doubt that she would follow in her family's footsteps. "I have always loved working with kids and education was a natural fit," Rice says. "I wanted to be like the teachers in my life and have an impact on students in the same way."

Rice began her career in education in Magnolia ISD where she served as a teacher, G/T coordinator, and assistant principal at two elementary schools. In 2009, however, Rice and her family relocated to Cy-Fair ISD, and she became the assistant principal at Warner Elementary School. She was there for a year before being named principal of Copeland Elementary in 2010.

Copeland in the Community

With a caring, committed, and hardworking staff and students, Rice sets the school's goals high. "Our goal is the success and development of our students so they can grow to become leaders that make a difference now and in the future," Rice says.

Copeland is busy in the community, with students participating in Copeland Cares events throughout the school year and the Read, Deed, Run program, which

is open to fourth and fifth graders, encouraging the participants to read 26 books or read 2,600 pages, complete 26 deeds for their community, and run 26 miles. "During Copeland Cares events, students bring in needed items such as pennies for patients or toys for the giving tree," Rice says. "The Read, Deed, Run program focuses on three key areas that help bring about success. Part of leadership development is giving back, so this is engrained in our campus culture."

Building Connections

Despite the large numbers of 87 staff members and 1,048 students, Rice makes sure to build those vital connections with everyone on campus. "I love greeting kids in the hallways each morning and eating lunch with kids whenever I can," Rice says. "My principal leadership group allows me to meet with students one time a month and hear their voice."

Connecting with staff includes interactions in the halls, their classrooms, and the lounge or workroom. "I work hard to know their personal lives and text or call them to check on them throughout breaks and in the evenings," Rice says. "Special things are also planned for them throughout the year to create a fun working environment."



Principal Michelle Rice with Copeland Elementary students



Rice is duct taped to a wall during a school fundraiser

Copeland also extends its connections to parents through PTO and Watch DOGS, which was launched this year. This program is where dads volunteer their time to be on campus interacting with students in the classrooms. "At the kick-off meeting, we had 500-plus dads and students in attendance," Rice says.

Inspiring Innovation

After six years of serving as Copeland's principal, Rice has transformed the school by introducing innovative ways of learning through programs to help motivate students.

"Our focus is to put kids first and help them grow in their academic and leadership abilities," Rice says. "We utilize the seven habits of highly effective people each day through morning announcements, video reinforcement, leadership quotes, and lessons."

As part of this leadership focus, students interview for various jobs and roles throughout the campus. Some of the jobs they can apply for are principal leadership committee, safety patrol, anti-bullying committee, junior librarians, and the green team. If they are chosen for the position, they work hard to carry out their responsibilities.

"I think my highest accomplishment so far is seeing the growth in the leaders around me, both staff and students," Rice says. "It's amazing to look back over the last six years and see where individuals started and where they are now. I love the journey of cultivating growth and watching people go to the next level." CFM

EMME ENOJADO is a junior at Cy-Fair High School where she is an active member of the National Honor Society and leads as the school's newspaper co-editor-in-chief.



Copeland Elementary Facts

Mascot: Colts

Location: 18018 Forest Heights Dr., Houston

Motto: Colts L.E.A.D. (Learning excellent attitudes daily.)

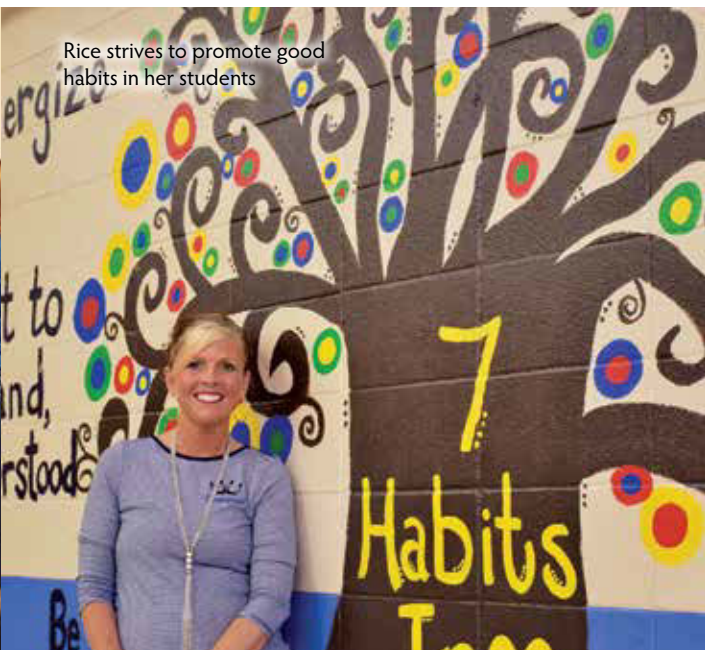
Year opened: 1992

Current enrollment: 1,048

Twitter handle: @CopelandCFISD

Hashtags: #coltslead #copelandkudos

Vice principals: Todd Sepulveda and Cathy Sharpe



Rice strives to promote good habits in her students



Rice with her administration team