Bonnie Holland

Beloved mentor and Katy school namesake has mastered the art of educating by making a lasting impact on students and faculty throughout Katy ISD

Written by Anna-Catherine Rose | Photography by Melinda Feild

Bonnie Holland, namesake to Katy's Bonnie Holland Elementary, decided to pursue her life's work after a special project she took on when she was in high school. She was asked to work with a 5-year-old girl who still hadn't been able to speak. Holland worked with her for several hours every morning, and just when she began to worry it was all a waste of time; she received a phone call the next evening. Elated, the girl's parents relayed the child had exclaimed she wanted, "More of that!" From that moment Holland was set on her path to enrich the lives of students.

A Style All Her Own

With more than 50 years of experience in public education and 34 within Katy ISD, Holland is a rare breed. She began her career as a speech pathologist and now has a wide breadth of experience and trusted knowledge in diagnostics, special education, college instruction, executive administration, and governance.

As the current associate superintendent for administration, governance, and legal services, she is a go-to resource for both administration and parents.

Blessed by Bonnie

A few words from people whose lives have been touched by Bonnie Holland

"I know no one who has contributed more to the successful growth of Katy ISD than Bonnie Holland."
- Leonard Merrell, Ed. D.

"Bonnie is a dedicated professional and student advocate. You can always trust she'll promote what's in the best interest of Katy ISD students."
- Keiko Davidson, Namesake, Davidson Elementary School

"Each year, Bonnie Holland welcomes new staff with a personal note. She attends campus events and mentors students who are in need of a positive influence."
- Linnea Griffith, Principal, Bonnie Holland Elementary School

"Ms. Holland's impact is felt across Katy ISD, from the classroom to the boardroom."
- Dr. Tory C. Hill, Assistant Superintendent for Instructional and Administrative Support

"Bonnie has an ability to make anyone feel special. She possesses a wealth of knowledge and the ability to analyze problems from multiple perspectives."
- Dr. Rick Hull, Principal, Katy High School

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Bonnie Holland regularly visits her namesake campus where she interacts with students and provides support to teachers and Principal Linnea Griffith

In fact, according to Ted Vierling, principal at Seven Lakes High School, it's a running joke around the district that if you're in need of guidance, you'll almost immediately be asked, "Have you checked with Bonnie's office yet?"

Her heart for students and allegiance to servant leadership is even more impressive. She is often overheard saying, "There's no such thing as 'I,'" when referencing her department. In speaking with her colleagues, it was her focus on "we" versus "me," and her reluctance to ever take credit, that has fueled her influence and ultimately her accomplishments.

An Impressive Portfolio

Several key programs she launched more than three decades ago still flourish today, including the Response to Intervention, Professional Advancement through Career Education, Teach Your Kids Early, and Helping Teacher, now known as "In-Class Support" initiatives.

In her current role, she and her team manage a phone helpline for the district, all campuses, and parents. Despite a demanding schedule, she treats everyone as if they are her only customer. "I'm so blessed to work with many quality educators, invested administration, and parents. I love the people I get to work with, and here, children are always at the center of everything," says Holland.

An Eye for What Matters Most

When asked about the moment she learned she was being honored as a namesake, she smiles and reflects, "It was surreal - I'm not sure I can really describe it. It's so very humbling. The greatest honor an educator can have is to think that in some way, you'll be able to provide for children well into the future."

Her favorite quote is one by John Steinbeck that likens great teachers to great artists, as they impact both a student's heart and mind. In that spirit, she says, "You never know which life you've touched. An educator can truly be a life-changing force." **KM**

ANNA-CATHERINE ROSE lives in Katy with her husband and 5-year-old son. She hopes to grow up and be like Bonnie Holland someday.