



**C.E. Williams Middle School -
North Campus**

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For Immediate Release
October 18, 2023

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Media Release

Maite Porter celebrated during National Principals Month

Charleston, SC – Principal Maite Porter has held several roles in education including special education teacher, assistant principal, principal intern, elementary principal and now middle school principal at C.E. Williams Middle School – North Campus.

According to Porter, she learned a good majority of everything she needed to know in the special education setting which resulted in Porter being a proven turnaround educator with a specialty in working in underserved populations.

Porter came to Charleston County School District (CCSD) in 2019 to lead West Ashley Middle School (WAMS). Bookkeeper Angela Davis sat on the interview panel assigned to review Porter's credentials.

"When I heard her background, I knew she was the perfect person for the job," said Davis. "Her leadership style is unique in that she includes everyone in the decision making. It's a collaborative effort."

Porter's time in small rural schools also shaped her philosophy that staff must pour into every child.

"My special education background shaped my beliefs of inclusivity," said Porter. "Every person in this building plays an important role on the team. It is the only way to succeed. I am a passionate educational leader who believes all learners should have the opportunity to a high quality education regardless of race, socioeconomic status, location or background."

That philosophy has paid off for everyone at C.E. Williams North where gains are being made and celebrated.

Porter's arrival to CCSD was expected to be like any other incoming principal. However, Porter was required to make an abrupt pivot when mid-year, the school board voted to merge WAMS with the original C.E. Williams Middle School. It was also decided that the WAMS campus would serve sixth grade students and be called the North Campus.

Porter eagerly transitioned and felt blessed to take on a new challenge, and then the world was hit with the COVID-19 Pandemic.

"It was a challenging year and a huge transition," said Porter. "It helped me grow as a leader and lean into the talents and strengths of my team. I really relied on them."

Pamela Childress-Altman has been at the school for four years. She has been a part of all the changes but watched with admiration, as Porter was willing to try new things to get through those times.

"She was a perfect person to be here for all of the transitions," said Childress-Altman. "She knows how to build a team. She knows who brings what to the table."

Porter came to CCSD with a three-year improvement plan in mind.

"My plan was to make gains one year at a time," said Porter. "We created education plans for each student and I was easily able to earn buy-in from staff to trust and believe in the process."

Porter explained that she wanted the school to be one percent better each year.

"We've surpassed that goal," said Porter. "We are seeing proof of all our hard work with our SCREADY scores. The seeds we planted are growing. We have grown as a team, as a community, and as a school. All the academic pieces are now also coming together."

Over the course of Porter's tenure, C.E. Williams Middle School North campus increased the number of students scoring in the meets and exceeds categories to reflect the following:

- ELA 32.1% (2020) to 61.6% (2023)
- Math 27.3% (2020) to 37.6% (2023)
- Science 34.2% (2020) to 50% (2023)

Community is the heart of it all

At C.E. Williams North, it is all about community. Porter explained that the community created within the building reflects West Ashley as a whole.

When Porter first arrived in Charleston from Florida, she made it her mission to get to know the community of West Ashley and the families she would be serving.

"I came in as a newcomer and I knew it would be important to listen to the viewpoints of our community members and take into consideration all of their

experiences," said Porter. "This enabled me to look at things from a different lens and build our school community in a better way."

To build relationships with her sixth grade students, Porter has created micro-communities within the school where every student has one adult they know they can come to and count on.

"We've built strong support systems for our students," said Porter. "Every team member is ready to step in at any time but the relationships we're purposefully building here are key."

Tucker Barfield said he appreciates how Porter greets him every morning.

"She creates bonds with us by getting to know us and checking in on us," said Barfield. "It makes you feel good that out of the 430 students here she pauses for a minute to say hello to me. I feel like she cares for me as a person and not just a student."

Porter models relationship building by visiting each classroom every day at some point in the day, just to say hello and check on everybody.

Porter's father was from Spain and her mother was American. She spoke both languages at home so she did not quite know where she fit in at school. Porter hopes to make C.E. Williams North a place where everyone feels welcome and where everyone feels special, loved, valued, and appreciated in their own way.

"As an educator, my purpose is to be of service to others," said Porter. "Whether it is the adults, the children, or the community, I want to be a part of making their lives more meaningful."

A small, but meaningful example of that is Porter's interactions with families in the carpool line every morning. She is fluent in Spanish and able to communicate with non-English speaking families.

"Those interactions make all of our families feel comfortable and welcome," added Childress-Altman.

Barfield loves being at C.E. Williams North because it is preparing him for middle school.

"Here we are all in the same boat because we are all sixth graders," said Barfield. "Things are easier to handle because we're all doing it together."

Another community aspect of the school is the Ron Clark House System which features "houses" also known as learning and leadership communities for students. Each house has unique properties such as its own color, symbols, nation of

heritage, history, and more. Over time, each “house” also starts to take on its own values and personality-driven by the culture of the students and staff within it.

“We all have a little fear of the unknown but our school community has embraced this new house system and we have all gotten to really know each other and learn about our own selves,” said Porter. “We’ve come a long way since the early trial and error days. We have no fear of failure here at C.E. Williams North because we pilot all sorts of ideas to create buy-in.”

Porter and her team pilot ideas knowing that there will be grace along the way.

“Not everything is going to work but as long as we are growing and expanding opportunities here for our students and each other, we are succeeding,” said Porter.

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About the Charleston County School District

Charleston County School District (CCSD) is a nationally accredited school district committed to providing equitable and quality educational opportunities for all its students. CCSD is the second-largest school system in South Carolina and represents a unique blend of urban, suburban, and rural schools spanning 1,300 square miles along the coast. CCSD serves approximately 50,000 students in 88 schools and specialized programs.

CCSD offers a diverse portfolio of educational options and specialized programs delivered to the students of CCSD through neighborhood, magnet, IB (international baccalaureate), Montessori, and charter schools and programs. Rich educational opportunities for students include programs in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM); music and other creative and performing arts; career and technical preparation programs; military; dual credit; and many more.