



Jennie Moore Elementary
School

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Media Release

Karen Felder celebrated for 45 years of being an educator

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Karen Felder
Principal

Mount Pleasant, SC – Jennie Moore Elementary School (JME) Principal Karen Felder has the home team advantage when it comes to serving students there. Not only did she likely attend school with the grandparents of some of her students, she probably taught their parents.

Felder is no stranger to the Lowcountry. She attended Charleston County School District (CCSD) schools, and graduated from Wando High School as a student athlete in 1976, she went to college to become a physical education (P.E.) teacher.

“I was so strongly influenced by the coaches I had in high school and college,” said Felder. “I was drawn to education after witnessing first-hand the respect coaches had for their students and the respect students and athletes had for their coaches.”

It has been just over 40 years since she was first hired as a P.E. teacher at her alma mater after receiving a B.S. in Physical Education from Appalachian State University.

Felder began her teaching career in Greenwood, and returned to Charleston County at the beginning of the 1981- 82 school year. Felder earned her master’s degree from The Citadel in Special Education, and after her daughter was born in 1989, she transferred to Mount Pleasant Academy where she taught elementary physical education.

During that time, Felder went back to The Citadel and became certified in School Administration. She was an assistant principal at Orange Grove Elementary School and came to Jennie Moore as the principal during the summer of 2004. Felder has been there ever since.

“Jennie Moore was and has been a good fit for me,” said Felder. “I love my job.”

Jennie Moore has been a staple in the East Cooper community for many years and has grown to be the largest elementary school in CCSD. With just about 1,000

students, Felder has worked tirelessly to make sure it feels like a small, welcoming environment.

"Most of our students start out here in Kindergarten and continue through until the fifth grade," said Felder. "It begins to feel like home to them. My front desk staff makes every person who walks through that door feel welcome."

The school is a partial magnet school that provides art integration into a rigorous curriculum. Children attend classes in music, visual arts, dance, and drama, and fine arts teachers collaborate with classroom teachers to provide arts-infused lessons within the regular classroom.

"Art is a part of our school's identity and it has brought a lot to the way our students learn," said Felder. "Art is fun and the infusion of it has proven to be a natural way to teach and learn."

Making it easy for teachers to do their job

"There's probably not a harder job in the world than being a teacher," said Felder. "As an administrator, my job is to take the extra burdens off of my teachers so they can do their job and teach."

Felder ensures teachers have the resources they need so that they love to teach and want to teach.

"I want to make their job easier so that they love coming to school to do what they love," said Felder.

Additionally, Felder's own daughter and grandchild have gone through the CCSD system.

"It was so important to me that my family be in a learning environment where teachers make learning fun and where teachers have the ability to do their job," said Felder. "I am a big picture person and I lean on my team to help me make teaching easier for our educators at Jennie Moore."

Even after 20 years at JME, Felder is not focused on retirement.

"I want to continue to support our teachers, families, and students as long as I possibly can," added Felder.

Natausha May is a CD-Blend teacher and has been at JME for three years. She values Felder's leadership and friendship.

"Mrs. Felder is welcoming, kind, and her door is always open," said May. "She knows about me and my personal life and makes me feel appreciated and valued. She takes time to get to know us and you don't find that often."

Pam Thompson is a fifth grade teacher with 16 years at JME. She said that not only does Felder know her staff on a personal level, she knows the names of every single student and 99 percent of the parents' names.

"She is very visible in this building and in the community," said Thompson. "She attends student athletic events as well as things staff and faculty have going on. People flock to her when they see her out and about because she is so well known."

Both May and Thompson agree that Felder goes above and beyond to support her teachers.

May referenced the frequent classroom visits where Felder provides support or a quick break to the teacher. Thompson is grateful for the professional development provided to teachers so they can be the best they can be for the students.

"Mrs. Felder 100 percent handles our concerns, gets us the materials we need, and is there to help in challenging times," said May. "She is there all the time, every time."

Caring, hardworking, a great problem solver

The students at JME have nothing but kind words to describe Felder. Jayson McNeil, a fifth grader, has been at JME for six years. He knows Felder well and appreciates how she treats everyone fairly.

"She has rules, but she's not that strict and the rules are the same for everyone," said McNeil.

Fifth grader Serenity Lewis appreciates Felder's warm greetings and huge smile every morning for students.

"She is very welcoming and has a special bond with each student," said Lewis. "We see her connecting with parents and the community and that makes me feel comfortable that I could easily communicate with her."

Most of all, her students love that Felder likes to have fun.

"It's more than just learning here at Jennie Moore," said Lewis. "It's about fun, too. Mrs. Felder really enjoys being a principal and it shows."

McNeil agreed.

"She participates in all our activities like dance parties and drama performances," added McNeil.

In fact, Felder has been known to double-dutch at the jump-a-thon in heels.

“School is supposed to be fun, and a place where children want to be,” said Felder. “I do my best to make it that way, every day.”

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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.