



For Immediate Release

July 6, 2023

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Media Release

Pulse of CCSD – Wendy Anderson is teaching students that they deserve success

Laing Middle School

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Mount Pleasant, SC – Laing Middle School's assistant principal Wendy Anderson's name is sprinkled throughout athletic record books at Clemson University. She was a standout volleyball and basketball player there in the late 1980s. Her name is also sprinkled throughout the history of Charleston County School District (CCSD). She is known by many and loved by all for her passion for serving children.

Anderson decided she wanted to be an educator in her sophomore year of college. It was in her senior year, when she finally got to be a student teacher, that she was positive she wanted to be an educator.

"I loved working with my first grade class in Seneca, so I was thrilled to take on my first job at St. Stephen's Elementary School," said Anderson.

That was short-lived. An offer too good to turn down came Anderson's way and she worked with her principal to ensure a smooth transition for her classroom before she headed off to become the head volleyball coach and assistant basketball coach at Converse College in 1991. All the while, her own athleticism never waned. She was offered the opportunity to join USA Team Handball and travel the world. This fulfilled her passion for travel and sports, but it meant leaving Converse.

Anderson was again pulled back into teaching by friends who encouraged her. She couldn't deny the ever-present urge to serve children. She was hired at CCSD at the former Alice Birney Middle School as a math interventionist. She worked alongside some of the district's seasoned educators and fell in love with the school and the notion that she could truly make a difference.

Often, opportunities that were too good to pass up fell in Anderson's lap. When she was asked to start the first women's volleyball team at The Citadel, she could not decline. She took on that challenge in 1999 and served as head coach until 2006.

"My friends again convinced me to go back to teaching," said Anderson. "I too knew that being an educator was what I was called to do."

This time, Anderson landed at Hanahan High School, where she developed a successful program that helped seniors who were struggling academically.

"The curriculum was designed to give them that extra nudge and the extra help that they needed to graduate," said Anderson. "It was very successful, and I really enjoyed working with my kids."

In just a few short years, a temporary assistant principal position became available, and Anderson was hand-picked to fill the spot. She agreed to do it with just one request.

"I wanted my replacement to be as compassionate about my students as I was, so the principal let me choose the person who took over my role," said Anderson.

Anderson fell in love with the job because she learned she could touch even more kids.

"In this role, I got to spend time with them, listening to their stories, and truly making connections," said Anderson. "I also liked the teamwork aspect of administration."

There were no permanent positions available for Anderson in the upcoming school year at Hanahan, but a position did become available at Laing.

"When Principal Jay Whitehair called, his offer was for the 240 Assistant Principal interim position," said Anderson. "I've been at Laing for the last eight years."

Anderson loves Laing and the connections she has made with the students and her team.

"We are all on the same page and able to have those tougher conversations without disrupting our relationships," said Anderson. "Most importantly, everyone's goal in this building is to include every student, every day."

As an assistant principal, Anderson deals with discipline, attendance, and everything in between. She said it is all about connecting and meeting students and families where they are.

"I also bring teachers in so they are on the same page as the administration," said Anderson. "Laing is not only a great place for students, but it is a great place to be if you want to be on a team of collaborators who all have the same goal."

According to Anderson, creating "families" within an institution creates a foundation of community and culture.

"At Laing, we cultivate a culture of respect, belief in yourself, comradery, and communication," said Anderson. "We encourage each other and celebrate each other and that is what makes Laing so special."

Principal Jay Whitehair said that Anderson is someone he can always count on to help navigate the school to develop academic success and a culture of respect and accountability.

"She is willing to tell me to look at things differently when needed, even more importantly, she is the first in line to help dive into a problem-solving situation," said Whitehair.

Anderson has worked with all age groups and considers middle school her favorite.

"This is the age where the kids need you the most," said Anderson. "This is where you help students choose the direction they will go in their life. In these formative years, a child can go either way, and it is my job to help guide that decision-making."

A series of attempts

A friend once told Anderson that "Life is a series of attempts. Whether the attempt goes well or not, you choose how you will react."

"You can react in a way that will set you back, or you can react in a way that will continue to push you forward," said Anderson. "If you consistently choose to react in ways to push yourself forward, you will continue to master your craft."

Anderson is thankful for all the series of attempts that have formed who she is as an athlete, professional, mother, and wife.

"I love my job, even on the hard days," said Anderson. "I like what I do because I am helping to make a difference. I tell my students that the best investment you can ever make is the one you make in yourself. Don't just believe wanting something is enough. For example, every athlete wants it. You have to know in your heart you deserve it, and then you work hard to get it done. That applies to everything in life."

Whitehair is glad to have Anderson by his side.

"She has been wonderful at using the lessons she learned playing and coaching volleyball and basketball over the years to become a leader of people at Laing," added Whitehair. "I am very thankful that Wendy has been with me over the past eight years."

Anderson and her wife Emilie are proud to say that their children are all products of CCSD. The youngest is a recent Early College High School graduate and is heading off to college to become a teacher and is in the Call Me MISTER program, the middle child is an engineer, and the oldest is in graduate school studying to become a social worker.

"They worked hard to get where they are because they knew in their hearts they deserved it," said Anderson.

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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 of 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; and military; dual credit; and many more.