

**For Immediate Release**

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## Media Release

### **Pulse of CCSD- Kerry Sanders strives to be a person of value**

**Matilda F. Dunston  
Elementary School**

**Donald R. Kennedy, Sr.**  
Superintendent of Schools

**Jennifer Swearengin**  
Associate Superintendent of  
Elementary School Learning  
Committee

**Cheryl Savage**  
Principal, Dunston Elementary

**Charleston, SC** – Dedication and loyalty is not the only thing that has kept Lead Teacher Kerry Sanders at Matilda F. Dunston Elementary School for the last 22 years. It is her passion for serving the students there that drives her.

Sanders tries to live by the Albert Einstein quote "Try not to become a person of success, but rather a person of value."

According to her principal Cheryl Savage, she does it quite successfully.

"Mrs. Sanders helps me with all of my meetings, data, parent conferences, and discipline," said Savage. "She does our Facebook page and takes all of the pictures for the school. She is the sweetest, most patient person ever."

Sanders' dedication to the teaching profession earned her the title of school Teacher of the Year in 2008-2009 and the Charleston County School District (CCSD) Distinguished Reading Teacher of the Year in 2005-2006.

While Sanders is proud of those accomplishments, she is even more proud of the growth Dunston students are making every day.

"Title 1 is where my heart is," said Sanders. "I know I am needed here and as long as I can continue to effectively serve my students and colleagues, I will remain here. I truly love it here."

Sanders' husband is proud of that. Occasionally the couple discussed her transferring to a neighborhood school closer to home. Sanders said the daily commute is all worth it."

#### **As luck would have it**

Sanders was born in Queens, NY, and raised in Virginia. Her next-door neighbor was an educator and she would often take Sanders with her to school. She would

be tasked with cleaning and organizing the centers and helping out around the classroom.

"I was exposed to being in the classroom at an early age," said Sanders.

In high school, Sanders participated in an educational course that sent students to the local elementary school for one period a day where they spent 40 minutes interacting with children and learning from the teacher.

"That elementary school was my old school and many of my former teachers were still there," said Sanders. "They gave me the encouragement I needed to consider pursuing a career in education."

Sanders describes herself as somewhat shy and in her high school senior superlatives, she was voted the quietest person in her class.

"I learned that I wasn't shy nor quiet when I stood before those kids at the front of the classroom," said Sanders.

Sanders pursued Elementary Education at College of Charleston and was assigned to Title 1 schools during her practicum. Eventually, Sanders was assigned to Dunston to complete her student teaching.

"As luck would have it the principal at the time, Patty Shaffer said she had an opening for a second grade teacher and offered me the position," said Sanders. "This would allow me to loop up with my first graders that I was already working with. I was equally encouraged to be working with the students I already knew and being able to lean on my cooperating teachers."

Sanders has since served as a classroom teacher at multiple grade levels, a reading recovery teacher, a master reading teacher, and is now the lead teacher. She splits her time between children and teachers helping both to develop a growth mindset.

"I am helping to build a bridge between students and teachers and teachers and administration," explained Sanders. "I am also learning a lot from the teachers I work alongside."

Sanders said the students are what makes Dunston such a special place to work and learn.

"The kids want to be here," Sanders said. "They want to please and they want to learn. They know the importance of getting an education."

So does Sanders.

"There are so many opportunities to learn and grow here for me, too," said Sanders.

Sanders also worked under Janice Malone, now principal of Sanders Clyde Elementary School.

"She pushed me even further," said Sanders. "She made sure I took every training available to me. She tasked me with presenting to staff and my colleagues. She made sure I didn't stand still in my professional development."

Malone said that in all of her 30+ years, she has worked with some dynamic teachers, and Sanders is one of a few that rises to the top of that list.

"I can go on and on about Kerry Sanders," said Malone. "She is such a sweetheart. In her shy sort of way, she is a quiet storm! I don't think there is anything Kerry cannot do in the field of education. She is so skilled, so talented, hardworking, loyal, and intentional about everything she does for children and the entire school community. Every principal needs a Kerry Sanders. I absolutely love her!"

Sanders went on to earn her Master's in Literacy at The Citadel where she was awarded the 2017 Colonel Charles E. Hirshey Award for Excellence in Graduate Education.

"I wanted to earn my master's so that I could better serve my students," said Sanders.

During her years at Dunston, Sanders worked alongside Cheryl Savage, who was Lead Teacher. When Savage became the principal, she immediately asked Sanders to fill the lead teacher role.

"I chose Mrs. Sanders to be my lead teacher for many different reasons," said Savage. "She has always been excellent in building relationships with the teachers and the students. Everyone here has a lot of respect for her because she is such a hard worker and always takes the time to assist in any way she can. She also stays abreast of any digital content and curriculum so that she can help the teachers when they are struggling to learn all of the new programs."

Sanders at first declined Savage's invitation to be the school's lead teacher, but eventually agreed and has not looked back.

"I love working with teachers, and this position still allows me to work with the children," said Sanders. "It is the best of both worlds."

Savage said Sanders is doing an amazing job.

"I have no regrets asking Kerry Sanders to be my lead teacher," said Savage. "I can always count on her to assist me in any way that I need. I do not have an

assistant principal, but I know the school is in good hands with Kerry Sanders if I am out of the building. She is one of the sweetest people I have ever met and the most dependable. She is my right hand!"

Sanders has seen many changes in education during her time with CCSD.

"Education is always changing and new challenges are presented," said Sanders. "It is what you do at the school level to adapt to those changes that determine the success of your scholars and your colleagues."

Sanders plays a role in teacher retention at Dunston, as well.

"I am great at listening and sometimes all a person wants is to be heard," said Sanders. "I am better able to support teachers if I listen. I am then able to create a bridge between teachers and the principal, which allows for collaboration. I am a problem solver and I will advocate for my colleagues as much as possible."

Sanders stays in contact with all of the principals she has served under and is appreciative of their continued encouragement.

"They all put me where I am today, added Sanders. "Having them as cheerleaders has made all the difference."

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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 49,000 students in 88 schools and specialized programs.

CCSD offers a diverse, expanding portfolio of options and specialized programs, delivered through neighborhood, magnet, IB (international baccalaureate), Montessori, and charter schools. Options include programs in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM), music and other creative and performing arts, career and technical preparation programs, and military.