



**Moultrie Middle School**

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Superintendent of Schools

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**Chas Coker**  
Principal

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## Media Release

### **Chas Coker creates a culture at Moultrie that everyone wants to be a part of**

**Mount Pleasant, SC** – When fellow administrators, teachers, and students describe [Moultrie Middle School Principal Chas Coker](#) they collectively agree that he is a servant leader. They consider him a principal for all.

That level of serving and leading is all Coker has ever known. Even though he briefly fought the idea of becoming a teacher himself, the pull to serve was too strong. His mother was an elementary teacher in Title 1 schools for 35 years. Coker was raised in and around the profession his entire childhood.

Veteran educator Michelle Nichols has taught science at Moultrie for 17 years. She has served under what she describes as some amazing leaders. She admires Coker and appreciates how he treats everyone with dignity and respect.

“He creates an environment for us where our needs are met,” said Nichols. “He checks in on his staff on a personal and professional level.”

When the late Lucy Beckham was principal at Wando High School, she hired Coker fresh out of Clemson University. He served as a math teacher, football coach, and baseball coach there for five years. Beckham saw his potential and encouraged him to further his education. Coker took that advice and went on to earn a degree in administration. This enabled him to serve as assistant principal at Wando for six years; Coker oversaw athletics, human resources, teacher effectiveness, and various other departments.

“What I learned under Lucy Beckham, and then Dr. Sherry Eppelsheimer, is that kids come first, no matter what,” said Coker. “That idea has to be at the heart of every decision we make as educators.”

Assistant Principal Shana Maxwell said that Coker extends that same sentiment to his staff as well.

“We are a family here at Moultrie,” said Maxwell. “We take care of each other and we support each other. There is no doubt we are all on the same playing field.”

Coker believes that relationships with people sustain you in life and in education.

"There is no silver bullet," said Coker. "Time and a listening ear are quite the investments, though. More often than not, you have to double down on that because you can't care enough about people."

Layla Drayton is an eighth grader at Moultrie and said the school is an environment where she can express herself and be who she really is.

"Mr. Coker cares about our mental health," said Drayton. "He checks in on us and makes sure to spread energetic, positive energy. He seems to have fun being our principal."

According to Nichols, Coker put others before himself.

"That is evident in his motto 'every kid, every day,'" said Nichols. "When your principal has your back, you're better able to work as a team. Mr. Coker creates a culture that everyone loves to be a part of."

Dana Edwards has been at Moultrie for 14 years (10 years as a teacher and four years as a parent advocate). She said Coker's motto sets the tone for the entire school.

"It is hard to teach and connect with a child if you don't have relationships with them," said Edwards. "Mr. Coker balances that by ensuring the students know they are here to learn and prepare to go on to the next level."

### **Pandemic pivot**

Coker started his career as a principal during the pandemic. Everything he knew and had been taught about being an administrator was turned on its heels. Being forced to adjust meant creating an even stronger team environment.

"Mr. Coker was a brand new principal but he was a natural, like he had been doing it for years," said Nichols. "He was on our side and we were all better able to do everything in the best interest of the students. Mr. Coker made it clear that he would be there every step of the way working for the teachers."

Maxwell was in awe of his ability to lead during the pandemic.

"Collectively, we are a young administration," said Maxwell. "To our benefit, Mr. Coker has innovative ideas and he allows us to express our ideas as well. It is different from some traditional administration styles we might be familiar with but has served as an advantage for Moultrie."

According to Edwards, Coker is easily able to shift directions when necessary.

"Mr. Coker never pretends that what we do is easy," said Edwards. "He acknowledges his own frustrations, too. Because he is solution-oriented, he opens

the door to collaboration so that whatever our next pivot is it's truly in the best interest of our students."

Coker explained he looks at each situation through a focused lens.

"To do that, you have to build basic relationships and then go beyond them so that whether it be a teacher or a student, they know you have their best interest at heart," said Coker. "When you invest in people, they know you really want the best for them."

### **Every kid, every day**

Students at Moultrie adore Coker. They wave him down in the halls and seek him out on the playground. According to Maxwell, Coker intentionally assigns himself to recess duty and operates with an open-door policy.

"That means a lot to the kiddos to know they don't have to schedule an appointment with their principal," said Maxwell. "He is intentional about being inviting. Watching him interact in the manner in which he does is out of this world. He is even-keeled, in no rush, and good under pressure."

David "Trig" Northrup described Coker as an adult friend that students can talk to.

"He gets to know us by name," said Northrup. "He is approachable and encourages open communication."

"The kids don't shy away from him," said Nichols. "His positive and enthusiastic personality is evident in everything he does and infectious to our students who just love him."

Maxwell who deals closely with students in her role as an assistant principal admires how important it is to Coker to get the whole story and every detail before making a decision.

"It is remarkable to witness," said Maxwell. "He follows his heart in all decision-making and that approach has directly affected how the rest of the administration approaches things."

"It is more than just a job for Mr. Coker," added Northrup. "He wants to connect with the students. He actually likes doing it."

Early on, Coker created a partnership among his leadership team, brought the parents in as partners, and gave the students room to take ownership of their education.

"We have to be the thermostat, not the thermometer," said Coker. "We set the tone and the temperature in all situations and it gives us a chance to positively impact and lead. We've seen a big difference here at Moultrie because of it."

Coker has an especially hard job but remains the eternal optimist, where his glass is always half full.

"He asks his staff to be optimistic as well, and encourages us all to work together," said Edwards. "This gives him credibility with the staff because he rallies behind us and is our biggest cheerleader. I feel lucky to work with him."

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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 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.