

**For Immediate Release**

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**Contact:**

Erica Taylor 843-937-6303

# Media Release

## **Joyce Baldwin builds positive relationships with her students using the Golden Rule**

**Office of Strategy and Communications**

**Gerrita Postlewait, Ed.D.**  
Superintendent of Schools

**Erica S. Taylor**  
Chief of Staff

**Charleston, SC** – Being a local is important to folks in the Lowcountry. In some cases it's a badge of honor. In other instances, it can be a tool. For Joyce Baldwin, Wando High School's Focus Facilitator, it is a way to build relationships.

Baldwin is a lifelong educator. She has spent 34 years working as an Early Childhood administrator with the Head Start program in both Charleston County and Berkeley County. She switched gears and joined the Wando team as the Focus Facilitator (formerly called the In School Suspension Proctor) in hopes of using her connections to Wando, the Mount Pleasant community, and her church to positively reach the students who may need just the slightest of nudges to get back on the right path.

"I can build relationships with some of our students who have the highest potential just by simply saying, 'I know your mother or your grandmother,'" said Baldwin.

Baldwin is a native of the Awendaw community (also known as 10 Mile). She attends Ebenezer Mt. Zion AME Church in Mount Pleasant where she is a Class Leader and the Church School Superintendent. In her role as a church leader, she works with many Wando families and students.

"I attended Jennie Moore Elementary School, Laing School and was in the last graduating class at Moultrie High School in 1973," said Baldwin. "I am a product of CCSD."

Baldwin always knew she wanted to be an educator. As an only child, she often entertained herself and much of that involved playing school and using her dolls and cats as the students.

After high school, Baldwin attended St. Augustine's College and earned a Bachelor's Degree in English and studied Early Childhood at Trident

Technical College. Baldwin began her career with the Head Start program where she worked for 34 years. Her tenure with CCSD Head Start ran from 2011 until 2016, when she semi- retired.

Baldwin's retirement was short-lived, because she returned to CCSD at the high school level after conducting the youth programs at her church.

"I thought maybe God was preparing me to do something else," said Baldwin. "Look where I am right now. I feel certain He was. I love helping the families, as I have done for my entire career. That's my passion and goal."

At Wando, if a student is sent to ISS, they are still responsible for their schoolwork. It is also a room of consequence. With the help of Baldwin the structure includes, for example, no napping and no cell phone use.

"The kids seem to have an appreciation for me," said Baldwin. "It's like coming in to sit with grandma. Because I have been able to build relationships with these students, they come back to say hello and check on me and let me know how they're doing. It really has brought me a lot of joy."

As with any disciplinary program, there are some repeat offenders. However many of them vow never to return for fear of disappointing Baldwin.

"One day an email came through from a parent I had never met," said Baldwin. "One of her children had been in my ISS class and she wanted to let me know what a difference I had made for her child. That student came home and told her all the things I shared with him"

Baldwin shares what she calls "old school" lessons with the students. For example she did not grow up with a cell phone and it was mandatory that she do chores and go to church. Cursing was not allowed, and paddling was the most common form of punishment.

Baldwin always ends her lessons with an explanation about the Golden Rule. In fact, that's how she lives her own life – doing unto others as she would have them do to her.

Baldwin considers her work as an educator to be a ministry.

Whether it be a student she taught in the Head Start program, or a student from Hibben United Methodist Church where she was the nursery coordinator for many years, she often reconnects with these kids as they pass through Wando. She has three children of her own that are Wando graduates; Angela who graduated in 1997, Maurice who graduated in 1999, and Melanie who graduated in 2007. They are all very proud of their mother and appreciate how she raised them.

"I can't begin to tell you how special that is to me," said Baldwin. "The town has grown, the school has grown, but it is nice to think back to slower times. It is also nice to know I was a part of the past and I am helping these kids with their future."

Baldwin is also appreciative of Principal Dr. Sherry Eppelsheimer and Assistant Principal Jermaine Joyner.

According Joyner, after a few weeks, they knew they needed to bring her on permanently.

"Ms. Baldwin is great at what she does," said Joyner.

"Ms. Baldwin is an asset to the Wando staff," Eppelsheimer added. "She practices our belief in doing what's best for kids and building strong, mutually respectful relationships. When students receive the consequence of being sent to her, they quickly learn her expectations regarding procedures, courtesy, and rules."

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#### **About the Charleston County School District**

Charleston County School District (CCSD), a nationally-accredited school district, is the second largest school system in South Carolina representing a unique blend of urban, suburban, and rural schools spanning 1,300 square miles along the coast. CCSD serves more than 50,000 students in 87 schools and specialized programs. With approximately 6,100 employees district-wide, CCSD is the fourth largest employer in the region.

CCSD offers a diverse, expanding portfolio of options and specialized programs, delivered through neighborhood, charter, magnet, IB (international baccalaureate), and Montessori schools, and is divided into three Learning Communities. Options include specialized programs in science, engineering and mathematics; liberal arts; music and other creative and performing arts; career and technical preparation programs; and military and other public service enterprises.