

NC Beginning Teacher Newsletter

Regional Education Facilitators – North Carolina Department of Public Instruction – bit.ly/NCDPIREF



A Message from the 2019 North Central Regional Teacher of the Year, Carro “Katie” Eddings

“Everyone can be great, because everyone can serve.” - Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.



As I was thinking about what I want to share with our beginning teachers in North Carolina, I remembered how important community partnership had been when I lived in Las Vegas. I am an Air Force Veteran and while in Las Vegas, I had lots of family and

friends visit. No one ever came to see me when I was stationed in Michigan or Maine. However, they all came to Las Vegas. My family wanted show tickets, quick-passes to the best restaurants, free rooms and complimentary anything else I could provide. As an Air Force member, I volunteered at the local HIV/AIDS childcare center, worked with the Clark County Special Olympics, and participated in numerous 5k and 10ks. It had been through each of these off-base community events that I had been able to make connections. It wasn't just being able to find tickets to Celine when they were not available. It had given me access to members in the community that could help when a military member or service member's family needed help with housing, food, transportation or even employment after leaving the Air Force.

My name is Katie Eddings, and I am the 2019 Burroughs Wellcome Fund North Central Region Teacher of the Year. Thank you for allowing me to share my story. Thank you for what you do to improve relationships within your classroom, school, and community.

Our communities need to know more about who we are as teachers in North Carolina. And we, as teachers, need to know more about the communities where we teach. Outreach and community partnerships must be an important part of our local structure, and there needs to be an established committee within our school that deals specifically with the community. This committee should have a plan that brings the teachers, schools, and community partners together.

In order to build a stronger relationship, it is important for our communities to know who we are and what we are about. We do not want the public to see us only when demanding higher salaries or urging the School Board to pass the budget. We need ongoing visibility in our communities so that when we do reach out to them, it is not only during a crisis. Communities have to see more of who we are and what we care about as a school.

One way we can make this happen is by working with surrounding communities to build relationships and partnerships. A community outreach and partnership plan should be an integral

part of every school's plan. Community outreach and partnerships work best when aligned with goals and objectives. In order for this to happen, community outreach must be embedded in the school culture.

As teachers, we participate in community outreach and partnership everyday through conversations with parents, students, caregivers, and public agencies both in and out of our workplace. Community involvement is also an opportunity for us to examine community issues and support local causes. Some of these issues can include housing, safety, social services, transportation, and basic school supplies.

In addition, developing our community outreach and partnership plan will allow us to understand where our students come from each day. This can help to inform the decisions we make in our classrooms and around the school to create a more supportive and inclusive environment for students and staff. We must understand our community in order to best serve our students.

As teachers we need to utilize our local community members as guests in our classrooms. Our students need to see people in the community who are making a difference in the work they are doing and who are part of the positive changes being made in our communities. We must create opportunities for community partners to see our students as potential employees, clients, or partners in business.

Community engagement has been enmeshed in my teaching practices since my early days working in Robeson County. In an effort to ensure all of my students had school supplies, I partnered with both local and national organizations, allowing families to “shop” for items at no cost. Several of my former military colleagues and I also began an “adopt a family” program where we provided holiday meals and gifts to families in need. After this, I moved to Southern Middle School in Moore County where I organized an annual American Heart Association (AHA) “Hoops for Heart” fundraiser and a family fun-run/walk that also benefited our local AHA. Additionally, my students and I have organized school-wide food drives, assisted in the yearly campus clean-up, and participated in Kiwanis Family Christmas and the Special Olympics.

After nine years of teaching, I made the decision to become a licensed foster parent. My family and I soon realized the immense lack of support for children in foster care and the families with whom they were placed. This was particularly true regarding educational experiences. As a result, we created a foster/adoptive parent organization; we worked to provide clothing, school supplies, and countless other resources needed by foster children and their families.

In 2015, I was hired as the AVID elective teacher at Lee County High School (LCHS). During my first year at LCHS I began working with the Lee County Partnership for Children and Families to support their Teen Outreach Programs (TOPs). Collectively, our mission was to support our students and families in Lee County through outreach and service-oriented activities. Through this collaborative effort, we have been able to assist students at all levels of the Lee County School District. This partnership has afforded my students the opportunity to use their voices as they met with state and local representatives to discuss their concerns about education – specifically Senate Bill 192 teacher resource officers, undocumented students, and the amount of testing required by students in North Carolina.

Our AVID students also were able to be a part of the local election as paid volunteers during November 2018 elections. Students worked with local board of elections personnel at polls throughout our county. This offered a first-hand experience of the elections process in the county. Many had never been to a polling place before. Community members had a unique opportunity to spend election day with high school students. I believe the day was rewarding for students and community members. Each year my AVID students work as bell ringers for the Salvation Army Kettle bell program. This has been a huge part of the service learning that our students do each year. Last year three of my seniors were asked to continue as paid interns with the Salvation Army for the remainder of the school year. This experience has led to them being invested stakeholders in the value of community partnerships and how those partnerships support their community.

In addition to our partnership with TOPs, we have a mentoring program with Belflex staffing. This program pairs students with a community partner for six weeks with meetings once a week. At the end of the program, each student participates in a mock interview and receives a new outfit. In collaboration with our CTE department, we organize an annual *Student-to-Business Luncheon*. This allows students and community members to spend time together prior to students engaging in one-on-one interviews for potential employment and/or internships.

Through these experiences and many more, we have had the pleasure of showing our students how important community outreach and partnerships are. My hope is that students will learn and take to heart the benefit of service for their community and themselves carrying this responsibility forward to future generations.

Defeat the November Blues

Ellen Moir and the [New Teacher Center](http://www.newteachercenter.com) followed thousands of teachers throughout their first years of teaching. Their research has shown that **new teachers tend to go through a similar set of six phases in their first year of teaching**. According to their research (and our own observations and experience confirm it), the end of November through the end of December is the toughest time for new teachers. **This is when new teachers hit rock bottom.** November is a time of the first-year teacher blues. Rock bottom blues. But it gets better. Remind yourself why you became a teacher. [Read this post to inspire you.](http://www.thrivingyoungteachers.com/november-first-year-teacher-blues/) Hang in there, new teachers. Your attitude will grow uphill from here. **We promise.** <https://thrivingyoungteachers.com/november-first-year-teacher-blues/>



Image via Ellen Moir and New Teacher Center