Meet Pitt County’s Top Teachers

Tisha Newton Love

NAME: Tisha Newton Love
AGE: 32
SCHOOL: A.G. Cox Middle
GRADE: seventh grade advanced and general mathematics
NUMBER OF YEARS TEACHING: 11
HOMETOWN: Chesapeake, Va.
EDUCATION: bachelor of science in biology and mathematics, Shaw University; certification in middle grades mathematics and science, East Carolina University; National Board Certification in early adolescence mathematics
BEST THING ABOUT BEING A TEACHER: Making an impact on students’ lives and teaching them that they can learn. I also enjoy the humor my students bring to my day. It makes me happy to see them having fun and learning at the same time. I enjoy a classroom where the students not only learn, but love to learn.
BIGGEST CHALLENGE TEACHERS FACE: Getting parents involved in their student’s education. Parents enjoy supporting the fun extracurricular activities, but the support seems lacking when it comes to homework.
A NOTE FROM THE TEACHER: Remember that education and learning doesn’t stop at the end of the school day. We as parents need to help and encourage our students to have the desires to continue to learn beyond the realm of the classroom.
Meet Pitt County’s Top Teachers

NAME: Ann Moore
AGE: 52
SCHOOL: Belvoir Elementary
GRADE: fifth
NUMBER OF YEARS: 30

HOMETOWN: Greenville
EDUCATION: Bachelor of Science in intermediate education, East Carolina University

BEST THING ABOUT BEING A TEACHER: Getting paid to read to and hug students.

BIGGEST CHALLENGE TEACHERS FACE: Meeting the needs of an entire group of diverse learners who are not only looking to you to prepare them to meet state requirements, but to give them the skills to become lifelong learners.

A NOTE FROM THE TEACHER: Stay involved with your child's school and teacher. Good teachers want you to visit the classroom and need your help to provide the best educational experience for the student.
Meet Pitt County’s Top Teachers

Chrisie Brand

NAME: Chrisie Brand
AGE: 27
SCHOOL: Bethel School
GRADE: literary collaborative coordinator for grades kindergarten to second

NUMBER OF YEARS
TEACHING: six
HOMETOWN: Chesapeake, Va.
EDUCATION: bachelor of science in elementary education, East Carolina University; National Board Certification

BEST THING ABOUT BEING A TEACHER: The best part of being a teacher is knowing that I have a positive impact on the lives of my students. I enjoy the challenges and successes that come with each day. There is nothing better than seeing children delight in learning as they become independent thinkers and problem-solvers.

BIGGEST CHALLENGE
TEACHERS FACE: One of the biggest challenges that teachers face is a lack of time for planning. With more and more requirements, meetings and paperwork being put on teachers, time is being taken away from what is most important — planning dynamic instruction that

A NOTE FROM THE TEACHER: Since my background is in reading education, my advice to parents would be to read, read, read to and with your children every day starting at birth. Make it an enjoyable experience that you can share together!
Meet Pitt County’s Top Teachers

Christle Dowdy McKinney

NAME: Christle Dowdy McKinney
AGE: 31
SCHOOL: Sadie Sautler Elementary
GRADE: Autistic children in kindergarten-second grade
NUMBER OF YEARS TEACHING: nine
HOMETOWN: Winterville
EDUCATION: Bachelor of science in special education, cum laude master’s of education in low-incidence disabilities, East Carolina University

BEST THING ABOUT BEING A TEACHER: The best thing about being a teacher is the fact that I never have to face a boring, same-old-same-old kind of day. When I walk into the quiet of my classroom, I take a deep breath, say a little prayer and try to mentally prepare myself for... anything! I have lots of stories, little miracles, that keep me going; these are the best things about being a teacher.

BIGGEST CHALLENGE TEACHERS FACE: The biggest challenges that teachers of children with special needs face is funding. My children learn best with visually defined, hands-on materials. My students were blessed with over $3,000 in the past two years because of grants and donations. Without outside financial assistance, I would not have been able to teach my little ones as much as I did.

A NOTE FROM THE TEACHER: My advice to parents of children who have special needs is to always follow their heart. They know their child better and love their child more than anyone ever will. No one can advocate for their
Meet Pitt County’s Top Teachers

NAME: Christine L. Arnold
AGE: 41
SCHOOL: Ayden Middle
GRADE/SUBJECT: eighth grade math
NUMBER OF YEARS TEACHING: 19 years
HOMETOWN: Washington, N.C.
EDUCATION: bachelor of arts in mathematics and chemistry,
Meredith College; master’s of education in middle grade mathematics,
East Carolina University

BEST THING ABOUT BEING A TEACHER: The best thing about being a teacher is celebrating the successes of your students and knowing that you had a small part in that success.

BIGGEST CHALLENGE TEACHERS FACE: The biggest challenge that teachers face is meeting the individual needs of each student in the regular classroom.

A NOTE FROM THE TEACHER: My advice to parents and students is to stay organized and plan ahead.

Christine L. Arnold
Meet Pitt County’s Top Teachers

Christine L. Elmore

NAME: Christine L. Elmore
AGE: 58
SCHOOL: Elmhurst Elementary
GRADE: third
NUMBER OF YEARS TEACHING: 15, as well as eight as an assistant
HOMETOWN: Dundalk, Md.
EDUCATION: University of Maryland; bachelor of science, East Carolina University

BEST THING ABOUT BEING A TEACHER: Each year I have approximately 22 students and they are the “best thing” about teaching. To see them grow academically and socially over the span of one school year is a gratifying experience. Relationships which last many years are forged with the students and their families and that, too, is rewarding.

BIGGEST CHALLENGE TEACHERS FACE: My biggest challenge is to meet the needs of all of the learners in my classroom. Our classes are diverse and have students who need individualized instruction. My challenge is to find the best way to deliver the instruction so that all students will have an understanding and be successful learners.

A NOTE FROM THE TEACHER: My advice is to read with your child every day. Reading is a way for parents and students to connect personally and educationally. A proficient reader will be successful in future endeavors.
Meet Pitt County’s Top Teachers

NAME: Dale S. Naylor
AGE: 43
SCHOOL: Wellcome Middle School
GRADE: sixth grade communication skills and social studies
NUMBER OF YEARS TEACHING: 20
HOMETOWN: Raleigh
EDUCATION: bachelor of science and master of arts in education, East Carolina University
BEST THING ABOUT BEING A TEACHER: Knowing that you are making a difference in the life of a child. Seeing the children “light up” when they understand and when they are enthused about learning is priceless.

BIGGEST CHALLENGE TEACHERS FACE: Teachers face many challenges today. I feel that one of the biggest challenges is meeting the needs of all of the students in your class. A classroom today may have children that are academically gifted as well as exceptional children in them. It is important to meet the needs of everyone without making any of the children feel different. Every child needs to feel that he is making an important contribution to the class!

A NOTE FROM THE TEACHER: For the students: Be an active participant in class, ask questions, study and contribute to the discussions. For the parents: Be involved in your child’s education, contact the teacher, visit the classroom and be an active member of the school community.
Meet Pitt County’s Top Teachers

Heather Sullivan

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NAME: Heather Sullivan
AGE: 26
SCHOOL: North Pitt High School
GRADE: English
NUMBER OF YEARS TEACHING: five
HOMETOWN: Swansboro
EDUCATION: bachelor of science in English, East Carolina University

BEST THING ABOUT BEING A TEACHER: The opportunity to be a positive influence on a teen.

BIGGEST CHALLENGE TEACHERS FACE: Maintaining the idealism of an effective teacher in spite of school politics.

A NOTE FROM THE TEACHER: Everyone has the potential to do something positive with his or her life. Don’t allow mediocrity to rob you of that potential.
Meet Pitt County’s Top Teachers

NAME: Jennifer A. Smith
AGE: 26
SCHOOL: Farmville Middle
GRADE: sixth and seventh grade exceptional children
NUMBER OF YEARS TEACHING: four
HOMETOWN: Statesville
EDUCATION: master’s in special education, East Carolina University
BEST THING ABOUT BEING A TEACHER: The best thing about being an educator is sharing knowledge and experiences with young people in order to help them improve both academically and socially. You learn so much from observing and listening to students.
BIGGEST CHALLENGE TEACHERS FACE: The biggest challenge teachers face is successfully adapting to the various changes in education in order to better serve our students.
A NOTE FROM THE TEACHER: My advice or students is to respect yourself! Accept responsibility and serve the consequences for the things you do both positively and negatively in life. My advice for parents is to be a parent! Nurture, respect, discipline, be responsible, teach responsibility, most of all love your kids and have faith!
Meet Pitt County’s Top Teachers

Kristy Gurkins Dail

NAME: Kristy Gurkins Dail
AGE: 32
SCHOOL: Farmville Central High
GRADE: English
NUMBER OF YEARS TEACHING: 11.5
HOMETOWN: Greenville
EDUCATION: bachelor of science in English education, East Carolina University; National Board Certification English language arts

BEST THING ABOUT BEING A TEACHER: The best thing about being a teacher is seeing a child recognize his or her potential for success. Students often don’t succeed because they don’t realize they can. Once they know they can succeed, there is no stopping them. I teach honors through remedial; and that’s true for all kids. Everyone’s potential is different.

BIGGEST CHALLENGE TEACHERS FACE: The biggest challenge facing teachers is getting everyone involved in the process. Parents, teachers and students have to work together to meet goals. Teachers cannot do it alone. Students have to be held accountable for their own actions from the beginning. Especially at the high school level.

A NOTE FROM THE TEACHER: High school is an opportunity to prepare for the future while having a great time. Work hard and study, but also take time to play sports, join clubs and make great friends.
Meet Pitt County’s Top Teachers

Krystyna Castro

A NOTE FROM THE TEACHER: “You never know what you can do until you try!” This is a quote that I use in my daily life as well as one that I teach to my students every year.
Meet Pitt County’s Top Teachers

NAME: Lesli Grandy
AGE: 27
SCHOOL: Pactolus
GRADE: fourth
NUMBER OF YEARS TEACHING: four

HOMETOWN: Lillington
EDUCATION: bachelor of arts in elementary education, master’s of elementary education, East Carolina University

BEST THING ABOUT BEING A TEACHER: I love getting to know my students and being able to watch their excitement about learning new information and how it all works together. Even more than that, I love watching them learn how to treat each other and pull together as a team. Sometimes the things that they say and do for each other amazes me and challenges me to be a better person.

BIGGEST CHALLENGE TEACHERS FACE: Meeting state requirements for testing.

A NOTE FROM THE TEACHER: Always do your “personal best” in everything that you try and never give up.

Lesli Grandy
Meet Pitt County’s Top Teachers

NAME: Lisa D. Sessoms
AGE: 30
SCHOOL: Wahl-Coates Elementary
GRADE: first
NUMBER OF YEARS TEACHING: eight
HOMETOWN: Zebulon
EDUCATION: bachelor of arts and master’s in elementary education, East Carolina University
BEST THING ABOUT BEING A TEACHER: Being able to share knowledge with students and watch their faces glow when they “get it.”
BIGGEST CHALLENGE TEACHERS FACE: Lack of funding in the classroom. Oftentimes teachers have to fund the purchase of consumable items in order to teach innovative, hands-on lessons.
A NOTE FROM THE TEACHER: Students, always do your best work. Do not be afraid to ask your teacher to clarify things that you do not understand. Parents, stay abreast of your child’s grades and behavior.

Ms. Sessoms has moved to Raleigh to work with the N.C. Department of Instruction, as part of the State Assistance Team, and was unavailable for a photograph. She plans to return to teaching in Pitt County in 2006-07.
Meet Pitt County’s Top Teachers

NAME: Meghann Boyd
AGE: 27
SCHOOL: Northwest Elementary School
GRADE: third

NUMBER OF YEARS TEACHING: six
HOMETOWN: Berlin, N.J.
EDUCATION: bachelor of science in elementary education, East Carolina University

BEST THING ABOUT BEING A TEACHER: Seeing the smiling faces of the students each morning. Knowing each day brings a new and challenging experience. Watching students “grow” over the course of the school year. On the last day of school, thinking back to the first day of school and realizing just how much each and every student has learned and progressed.

BIGGEST CHALLENGE TEACHERS FACE: Each year it seems objectives are changing or being added to the curriculum. It is overwhelming for not only the teachers but also the students. It seems like every time you turn around, something else is being “put on our plate” which takes away from instruction and/or planning time.

A NOTE FROM THE TEACHER: For the parents, spend time with your child each night reading and reviewing what is being taught in school, take your child to local events to help broaden their experiences and support your school and your child’s teacher. For the students, always do your best and never give up; set goals all the time for you to work toward. Your teacher is there to help, so do not be afraid to ask questions. Live each day to the fullest because you never know what tomorrow may bring.
Meet Pitt County’s Top Teachers

NAME: Pamela Oestreich Anderson
AGE: 52
SCHOOL: G.R. Whitfield
GRADE: second
NUMBER OF YEARS TEACHING: 13
HOMETOWN: Whiteville
EDUCATION: bachelor of science and master of arts in education, East Carolina University; reading certificate K-12
BEST THING ABOUT BEING A TEACHER: The best things about being a teacher are the students themselves. I love it when the student gets that “I understand” look. There is always something new to enjoy, something new to keep things lively and engaging, and something new for me, as the teacher, to learn.

BIGGEST CHALLENGE TEACHERS FACE: Every year, the bar is raised as far as educational responsibilities. I think I put more pressure on myself to have my students perform to their abilities and try to push them that one step further.

A NOTE FROM THE TEACHER: I would remind the parents to stay engaged and active in their child’s life, not only at home, but at school. The more support a student gets, the more the students will accept challenges and will want to succeed; not only for the parents, but for him/herself. With the parent, school, and community involvement in a student’s life, I feel there will be a more intrinsic desire to learn, do well, and be proud of oneself.
Meet Pitt County’s Top Teachers

Pamela Moore

NAME: Pamela Moore
AGE: 35
SCHOOL: Grifton School
GRADE: second
NUMBER OF YEARS

TEACHING: 13
HOMETOWN: Ayden
EDUCATION: bachelor of science in elementary education; pursuing master’s in elementary math education, East Carolina University; National Board Certification

BEST THING ABOUT BEING A TEACHER: I get the opportunity to touch the lives of many. Through teaching, I not only get to empower youngsters with the ability to reason, but simultaneously, I am helping to shape the future. Many people complain about their jobs being monotonous, but no two days are ever the same within the four walls of a classroom.

BIGGEST CHALLENGE TEACHERS FACE: I believe that the biggest challenge facing teachers today is the ability to motivate the uninterested, challenge the unchallenged and love those who are behaviorally challenging. More today than ever before, the children come into the classroom with their “plates so full” and their hearts so burdened that they have difficulty focusing on academic matters. Yet as teachers, despite what happened last night or this morning before we got to school, we must still inspire these youngsters to learn. Somehow we must still make them believe we can make it snow in the middle of September, that math is fun and that learning to read is the best thing that could happen to them. We must make our classrooms safe, happy and inviting. The biggest challenge that teachers face today is how to make every child a success story and how to help each child reach his or her greatest potential despite the obstacles that he or she may be facing or the obstacles that we the teacher may face. Remaining positive and inspiring young-sters to learn in the midst of uncertainty and adversity is not an easy task!

A NOTE FROM THE TEACHER: Spend quality time with your child. It doesn’t have to be costly or extravagant. Embark on new adventures, take a trip or do household projects such as assembling furniture, cooking a meal, building a doghouse or making a quilt. Not only will you enjoy the time spent together, but you will give your youngster experiences that he or she will not learn in the classroom, but will ultimately help him or her in school (especially math).
Meet Pitt County’s Top Teachers

Penny Thomas Phillips

NAME: Penny Thomas Phillips
AGE: 31
SCHOOL: H.B. Sugg Elementary
GRADE: second

NUMBER OF YEARS TEACHING: seven
HOMETOWN: Columbia
EDUCATION: bachelor of science in elementary education, East Carolina University

BEST THING ABOUT BEING A TEACHER: Teaching 7-to-8-year-olds is never boring! I love that every day is different and that I never know what to expect. My students always bring a smile to my face ... and what a privilege I have to be a part of their learning and development process.

BIGGEST CHALLENGE TEACHERS FACE: I find it challenging to get some parents involved in their child’s learning. It’s so important that children practice at home the skills they’re taught in school. It’s that one-on-one review that makes each child more proficient in the skills we’re teaching. It takes us all working together to make a child the best he or she can be.

A NOTE FROM THE TEACHER: My advice to parents would be to make sure your child reads every single day. It’s amazing how much reading levels can drop over summer break when a child doesn’t read. Try to find books that you can enjoy and have conversation about together. This can be a fun learning activity.
Meet Pitt County's Top Teachers

NAME: Sharon O'Neill
AGE: 41
SCHOOL: Eastern Elementary
GRADE: kindergarten through second, including exceptional classes
NUMBER OF YEARS TEACHING: three
HOMETOWN: Peabody, Mass.

EDUCATION: bachelor of arts in theater art and a double minor in art and psychology, Salem State College; master of library science, East Carolina University; pursuing instructional technology license from ECU

BEST THING ABOUT BEING A TEACHER: Making a difference. I know it may sound corny, but I go to work every day hoping that I can make a difference in at least one child’s day, even if it is just making him smile or helping him find just the right book. To me, every student is important, and I try to make time for everyone that comes through the doors of my media center.

BIGGEST CHALLENGE TEACHERS FACE: Time! There are just not enough hours in the day to get to everything we need to get done! I find myself, and most of my co-workers, staying late every day, taking our work home with us and coming in on weekends or over vacations just so we can devote all of our time at school to our students. There is a tremendous amount of paperwork and record-keeping that needs to be done, and it seems as though this increases every year.

A NOTE FROM THE TEACHER: Advice you would give to students or parents: Keep the lines of communication open. As a grad school student and single parent of two middle schoolers, I know that we all get busy and distracted, running from after-school activities and grabbing dinner on the run. I find it hard to keep up with my kids if we don’t take time to talk every day. Even if we only have time to sit and watch TV together (we love to watch cartoons!), at least we are together and the opportunity is there. I advocate a family-reading night as well as a family-game night. If your children see you reading, they will read more.
Meet Pitt County’s Top Teachers

NAME: Sue Anne Bundy
AGE: 27
SCHOOL: Sam D. Bundy
GRADE: fourth
NUMBER OF YEARS
TEACHING: five
HOMETOWN: Ayden
EDUCATION: bachelor of science in elementary education, master’s in reading education, East Carolina University

BEST THING ABOUT BEING A TEACHER: Every day is different! Each new day brings a new challenge.

BIGGEST CHALLENGE TEACHERS FACE: Meeting the needs of each and every student in the classroom.

A NOTE FROM THE TEACHER: Get involved in your child’s learning. Find out what is going on and become a part of it.

Sue Anne Bundy
Meet Pitt County’s Top Teachers

NAME: Tina Page
AGE: 43
SCHOOL: Third Street
GRADE: prekindergarten
NUMBER OF YEARS TEACHING: 17
HOMETOWN: Ayden
EDUCATION: bachelor of science in child development and family relations, certified for birth-age through kindergarten, East Carolina University.
BEST THING ABOUT BEING A TEACHER: Making a difference in the lives of children who may not have an opportunity for any education before kindergarten.
BIGGEST CHALLENGE TEACHERS FACE: A challenge for me is not having the time or resources to help all the high-risk children possibly get the help they need. Their educational needs are not being met because their basic living needs are often not being met.
A NOTE FROM THE TEACHER: My advice to parents and children is to read together every day. Check out the library and see all the different resources they have for children. A child that is read to will be a strong reader!
Meet Pitt County’s Top Teachers

NAME: Tricia Briley
AGE: 35
SCHOOL: South Greenville Elementary
GRADE/SUBJECT: kindergarten through fifth, talented and gifted (TAG) children
NUMBER OF YEARS TEACHING: 12

HOMETOWN: Greenville
EDUCATION: bachelor of science in elementary education, East Carolina University; academically gifted licensure

BEST THING ABOUT BEING A TEACHER: The best thing about being a teacher is the opportunity to observe the delight and pride students have when they recognize their own progress and achievements.

BIGGEST CHALLENGE TEACHERS FACE: The biggest challenge teachers face is helping students realize the value of education and how beneficial it is to participate in the various opportunities public schools offer from academics to extra-curricular activities.

A NOTE FROM THE TEACHER: Advice I would give to students and parents is to utilize technology to expand the learning process. Most schools offer links to helpful Web sites that address a multitude of educational topics.

Tricia Briley