Melissa Canter was a stay-at-home mom living in New York in 2010 when she unexpectedly became a single mother with two young children, Allison and Chad. The initial challenges were substantial, but within two years Melissa was able to relocate with her children to the foothills of North Carolina and obtained a job with Alexander County Schools. Over the next few years Melissa served Alexander County as a: Teacher Assistant, Bus Driver, Data Manager, and Substitute Teacher.

“I never thought I would be able to earn my degree after unexpectedly becoming a single mother...without a job”.

Against the odds, Melissa was determined to earn her bachelor’s degree. After exploring options in her local area, she was awarded a scholarship and acceptance to a university in the western part of the state. “However, there was a stipulation, I had to be a full-time student and attend face-to-face classes.” Those requirements were obvious barriers for a single mother working a full-time job.

Undaunted, Melissa continued her search for a way to reach her goal. In 2013 her school’s Speech Language Assistant shared information with her about ECU and the variety of online degree options. She connected with the ECU Partnership Teach program advisor for her region and was able to begin the part-time online Elementary Education program in the Fall of 2014. Life got even sweeter for Melissa when later that same year she married her supportive and loving husband Alex.

All of the pieces seemed to be falling into place, still there were obstacles, “I worked full-time with two very active and involved kids. I worried constantly about finances and being able to juggle everything.” Having an amazing support system around her and being PIRATE Strong, Melissa was able to excel in her online courses with ECU and graduated with her Bachelor of Science degree in Elementary Education in the Fall of 2017.

“ECU was an amazing experience for me, I was able to begin and finish an education program while raising two children and working, the professors were great and made the experience like I was actually living on campus! I always felt like a “real” student.”

Melissa currently teaches at Wittenberg Elementary School, in Taylorsville, NC and is honored to be named Alexander County Schools Beginning Teacher of the Year for 2019. “I love ACS and the students and parents! My family, Alexander County Schools, my principal, Mary Brown, and the countless teachers who allowed me to use their classroom and ask questions, all of whom have been extremely supportive and encouraging.”

The Pirate Nation is proud of Melissa Canter and stronger because of her outstanding service!
BECOME A TEACHER! Online Degree Completion

1. Schedule an appointment with a regional Partnership Teach Coordinator.
2. Apply to a NC Community College and complete the general education requirements.
3. Register for community college courses. Find a checklist at education.ecu.edu/partnership
4. Take the Praxis-CORE tests in reading, writing, and math.
5. Apply to Partnership Teach.
6. Apply for transfer admission to East Carolina University:
7. Complete your degree in elementary education (ELEM), middle grades education (MIDG), or special education (SPED) online.
8. Become the teacher!

**Funding Your Education…A Pirate’s Treasure**

Students may apply for financial aid in the form of grants, scholarships, loans, or employee assistance programs. It is never too late to learn about financial aid. There is a free course online called, Financial Literacy 101 [https://www.cfnc.org/paying/financial_literacy.jsp](https://www.cfnc.org/paying/financial_literacy.jsp). This course may be useful in helping you understand various forms of financial aid and application procedures.

All college students should complete a FAFSA, Free Application for Federal Student Aid, online at [www.fafsa.gov](http://www.fafsa.gov). Even if you do not qualify for federal aid such as a Pell Grant; other types of financial aid may be available but require documentation of a completed FAFSA.

**For additional resources to fund your education, visit the websites below:**

   a. Forgivable Education Loans for Services
   b. NC Community College Grant and Loan Program
   c. Teacher Education Assistance for College and Higher Education (TEACH) Grant Program

**The Praxis CORE**

Students interested in becoming teachers need to present scores from prerequisite general knowledge tests when applying to Partnership Teach and to Upper Division of teacher education programs across the state. Praxis Core Academic Skills for Educators (Core) tests measure academic skills in reading, writing and mathematics deemed by teacher educators to be essential for all candidates preparing to be teachers, no matter what content area or grade-level they aspire to teach.

East Carolina University uses the Praxis Core tests or qualifying SAT or ACT scores to evaluate individuals for entry into the Partnership Teach education programs. Students may take either version of the Core tests currently offered by the Educational Testing Service (ETS). The Praxis Core tests are administered via computer and may be taken either as three separate tests on separate days or as one combined test. Students will take the Praxis Core tests at the computer testing centers around the state. Available testing times, locations, study resources and videos, along with how to register can be found on the ETS website at [www.ets.org](http://www.ets.org). Allow 4-6 weeks to receive scores.

Scores for tests taken within 9 years of applying to Partnership Teach are accepted.

**Please contact the Partnership Teach Coordinator in your area for more information.**