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GWU Alumna Named Teacher of the Year at Charter School in Rutherford County, N.C.

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ALUMNI

GWU Alumna Named Teacher of the Year at Charter School in Rutherford County, N.C.

BY OFFICE OF UNIVERSITY COMMUNICATIONS ON OCTOBER 27, 2020



Chasity McCraw, '17, Helps Students Overcome Fear of Solving Math Problems

Gardner-Webb University alumna Chasity McCraw, '17, approaches math problems like giant puzzles. Her goals as a teacher at Thomas Jefferson Classical Academy (TJCA) in Rutherford County, N.C., are to share the excitement of finding a solution and to help her students overcome their fear of math. For her innovative classroom strategies, contagious spirit and other qualities, McCraw was recently honored as [TJCA's Upper Campus Teacher of the Year for 2020-'21](#).

"She is masterful at helping her students understand why math works the way that it does," praised Mike Fair, TJCA Upper Campus Assistant Principal, in an announcement on the school's website. "She designs activities for the students that engage them and challenge them to think about the deeper workings of mathematics."

McCraw said she is still in awe that she was recognized with the award. "I am truly humbled to be named Teacher of the Year among such a strong faculty at TJ," she shared.

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We welcome your suggestions and feedback, contact:

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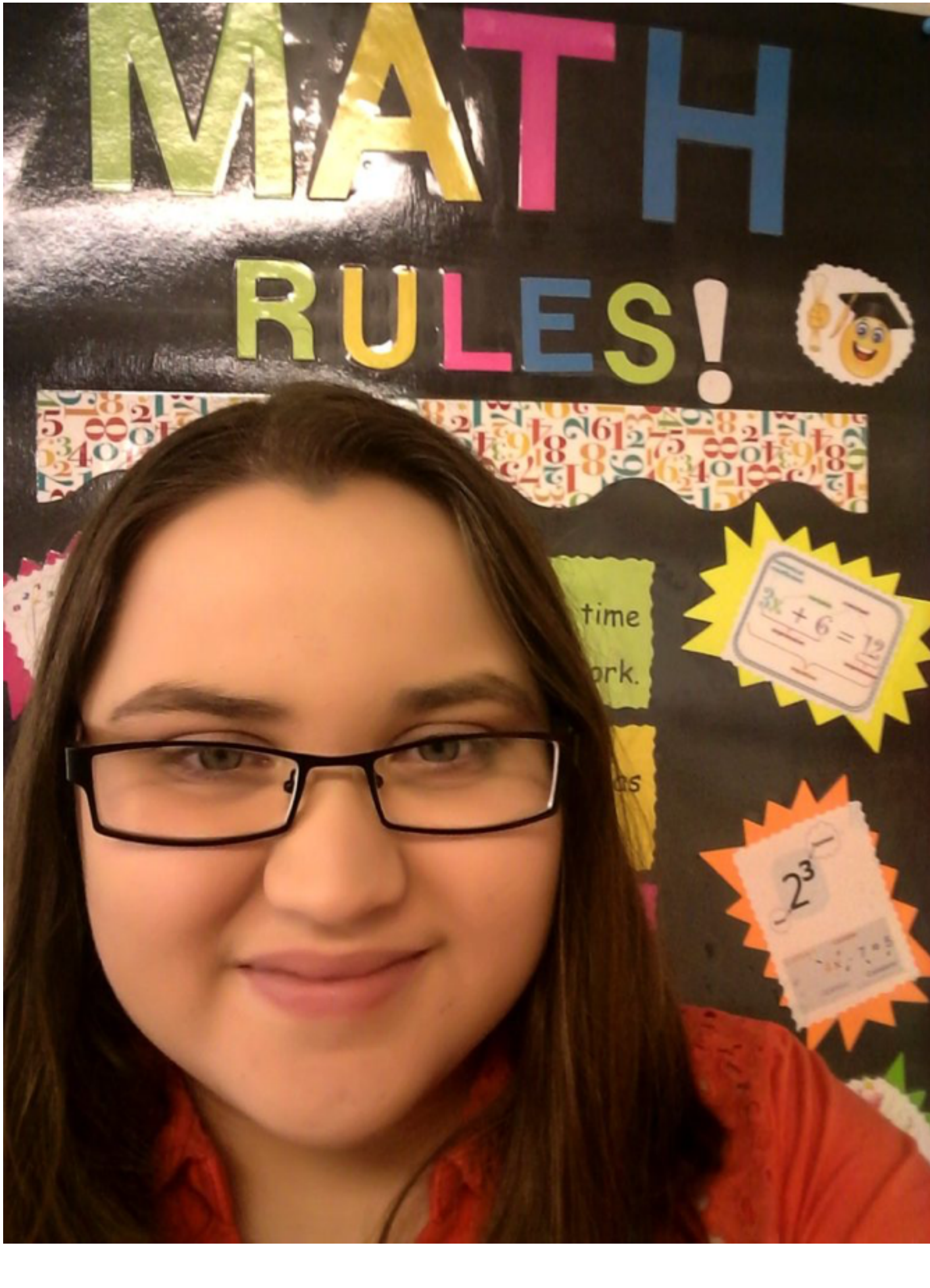
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She teaches around 100 students in Math II, Honors Statistics, and AP Statistics. To comply with COVID-19 protocols, McCraw has about 30 students on a hybrid schedule, which means they come two days a week and are remote for three days. "I have 70 or so students who are full remote," she noted. "The best way I have overcome the challenges that COVID-19 has given to us is by being flexible and understanding. I've also tried to create a variety of activities and assessments, so that the students still feel engaged at home."

McCraw credits her confidence in the classroom to her GWU professors, who motivated students to take their understanding to a deeper level. "I was encouraged to explore more of the 'why' math works rather than the 'how,'" McCraw assessed. "This is tremendously helpful when teaching material to students for the first time. By introducing a subject with the 'why,' students are more invested in the 'how' and have a better understanding of the concept as a whole. Also, my classroom management course was a great resource for helping me think about the everyday classroom life and how I wanted to run my classes and show compassion towards my students in my own way."

McCraw also learned and practiced a variety of teaching techniques. "In Statistics, we taught problems to one another, teacher-style," she described. "In Geometry, we sat together and discussed the material while noting the key concepts. In Foundations of Higher Mathematics, we drilled vocabulary and performed formal proofs. In Calculus, we expanded our learning to the 3D plane."

The best advice she received was not to become discouraged if her students didn't understand new material right away. "I often blamed myself if a student I tutored failed or they didn't immediately comprehend my explanation," she revealed. "While student teaching, I experienced that self-blame tenfold. Fortunately, I realized the most important thing was to keep trying and adapting to the students themselves, showing them more perspectives if they are struggling."

McCraw experienced the same support and encouragement from the professors in the Gardner-Webb Department of Mathematics. "All of my professors had a passion for what they were teaching and truly desired to share that passion with their students," she praised. "They also got to know me and would offer me opportunities to enhance my skills as a mathematician and a teacher. These opportunities started as tutoring jobs on and off campus and grew into jobs at local schools. One such opportunity is one of the main reasons that I am actively teaching at a terrific school today."



▲ In 2014, Chasity McCraw received the First Year Mathematics Achievement Award from Assistant Professor of Mathematics Tammy Hoyle, right, and former GWU President Dr. Frank Bonner.

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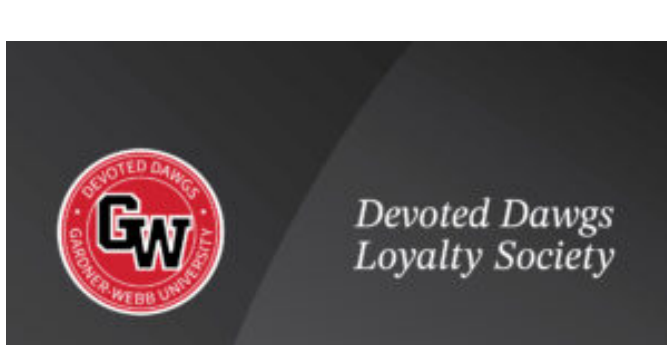


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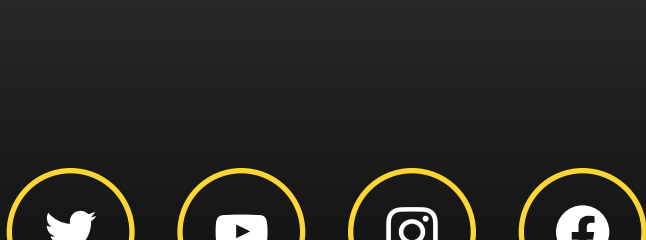
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