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### GWU's Year-round, Online Classes Allowed Teacher Assistant to Earn Degree in Five Semesters

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**ALUMNI**

## GWU's Year-round, Online Classes Allowed Teacher Assistant to Earn Degree in Five Semesters

BY OFFICE OF UNIVERSITY COMMUNICATIONS ON JUNE 30, 2021



### Melissa Ramsey, '21, Ready to Begin Teaching Third Grade

When Melissa Ramsey, of Shelby, N.C., walked across the stage at Gardner-Webb University's May 2021 commencement, she crossed a start-finish line. Completing a 16-year journey, the teacher assistant received her Bachelor of Science in Elementary Education. At the same time, she took the first step on her new adventure as a third-grade teacher.

Ramsey earned her degree through the GWU College of Education's online elementary education program for Teacher Assistants (TA) to Teachers. With year-round enrollment, including summers, the TA to Teachers program allowed her to complete her degree in five semesters. Moreover, she was awarded the Academic Excellence Award from her professors.



“I always knew I wanted to be a teacher,” Ramsey shared. “I would say it is truly a calling from God. I get excited about teaching. I love being with and teaching the kids. God had his hand in this without a doubt—the way the program opened up, and the timing of it all.”

Ramsey earned her associate’s degree in 2005, but paused her education in 2009 when her first husband died and she became a single mother. When she learned about Gardner-Webb’s program for teacher assistants, she was fearful of going back to school. “The teacher I work with told me, ‘Do it scared,’” Ramsey informed. “She said, ‘It’s OK to be scared. Just do it. If it’s something you want to do, and it’s your calling, go for it. It will work out.’”

The online format was perfect, because it allowed her to take classes and be at home with her four children. In addition, she discovered that the virtual environment allowed for unexpected connections with her professors and classmates. “Several professors—if we had a need—I knew that they were going to support us however they could,” she affirmed. “Even though it was online, they made the time. We (classmates) instantly started building relationships through voicemails and phone calls, and just lifting each other up.”

She accomplished her student teaching during the COVID-19 pandemic with some adaptations. “We started with the students in two cohorts and then they all came together a few weeks in,” she related. “The hardest part was planning activities that met students’ needs while keeping them socially distanced, but my clinical educator and I worked closely to develop ideas and activities that met those needs.”

She added, “If I had to pick one thing I learned at GWU that will help me in my classroom, it is all of the literacy instruction I received. Everything that I learned will be a great asset to help me meet the needs of the diverse learners who will be in my classroom.”

Learn more about the [GWU College of Education \(https://gardner-webb.edu/academics/colleges-schools/education/\)](https://gardner-webb.edu/academics/colleges-schools/education/) and the [TA to Teachers program \(https://gardner-webb.edu/programs/elementary-education-teacher-assistants/\)](https://gardner-webb.edu/programs/elementary-education-teacher-assistants/).

*Located in the North Carolina foothills, Gardner-Webb University is a private, Christian, liberal arts university, Gardner-Webb emphasizes a strong student-centered experience and rigorous academics to prepare students to become effective leaders within the global community. Ignite your future at Gardner-Webb.edu.*