

SUCCESS SPOTLIGHT

Upward Elementary Grade 4 Teacher Inspires Caring Classroom Community and Unmatched Engagement

During the 2020–2021 school year, learning at Upward Elementary School, part of North Carolina’s Henderson County Public Schools, took a variety of forms.

Students began the year learning remotely and then transitioned to a hybrid learning model for several months. Finally, in late February, most students returned to in-person schooling—with a handful of them remaining remote.

Despite numerous challenges, Upward educators ensured learning continued during remote and hybrid instruction by fostering strong student engagement and offering students personalized support. When asked to share how they were able to connect with students during an uncertain school year, Upward educators kept bringing up one teacher in particular: Grade 4 teacher Marcie Burlett.

“i-Ready was one thing we could all do, and it was on [students’] levels. I think that’s what helped the most. I had some students on a Grade 1 level and then others on a Grade 6 level. They didn’t know what level each of their classmates was on, but they were all feeling successful.”

—Marcie Burlett, Grade 4 Teacher

Henderson
County Public
Schools



STUDENTS

433

GRADES

K–5

TITLE I

77%

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What They Did

Whether Burlett's students were in a virtual classroom or a physical school building, Burlett fostered a learning culture in which her learners supported one another and wanted to participate in their class assignments. By the end of the 2020–2021 school year, her students experienced standout academic success.

The following elements were integral to Burlett's community-building approach:

"I think it's just so important to have that bond with your students and families."

—Marcie Burlett



Creating Connection

Whether learning was fully remote or part of a hybrid setup, Burlett had students work on assignments while connected to an online video platform. She allowed them to turn off their cameras while they worked, but she required them to stay connected, which gave her the opportunity to support and encourage them in real time. Soon, students also began vocally supporting one another.



Communicating Proactively with Families

Burlett determined early in the school year that she needed to keep families in the loop with regular updates, ensuring they understood what was happening in class and how they could support their students in completing assignments.



Focusing on Individual Relationships

"What I've observed that's so powerful is Ms. Burlett's relationship with the kids," said Becky Wuerzer, a district instructional coach who worked with Burlett's class. "The respect she gave me as an instructional coach really helped the kids respond to me as well. And then, as a group, we could all celebrate their learning, be proud of what they accomplished, and motivate them to keep up the good work."



Including Everyone

When her class had a pizza party in February, Burlett didn't want her students who were still learning remotely to feel left out, so she brought pizza to students' homes. Throughout the second half of the year, Burlett went above and beyond to ensure all students were able to participate in special activities.



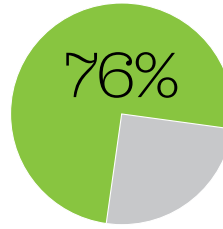
Creating Consistency with *i-Ready*

Upward began using *i-Ready Assessment* and Personalized Instruction, Curriculum Associates' integrated formative assessment and instruction programs, in 2018. Burlett described *i-Ready's* personalized learning capabilities as a key factor in facilitating learning and community during a very trying school year.

What They Accomplished

Burlett's approach to classroom management inspired her students to feel like they were part of a team and that their individual contributions mattered to the whole. This mindset resulted in a rare and impressive accomplishment: 100 percent of her students completed their *i-Ready Personalized Instruction* assignments every week of the 2021–2022 school year.

It's not unheard of for an entire class to complete their 45 minutes of *i-Ready* instructional time in a given week, but for every student to complete their assignments every week of the year is truly noteworthy. Burlett attributes this to the support students provided one another as well as the excitement she showed for their progress.



Students from economically disadvantaged backgrounds



Students who completed their weekly *i-Ready Personalized Instruction* assignments in the 2020–2021 school year

“I got excited with them, and when they were virtual, I really got the [families] involved. And when they saw I was excited, their excitement increased as well.”

—Marcie Burlett



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