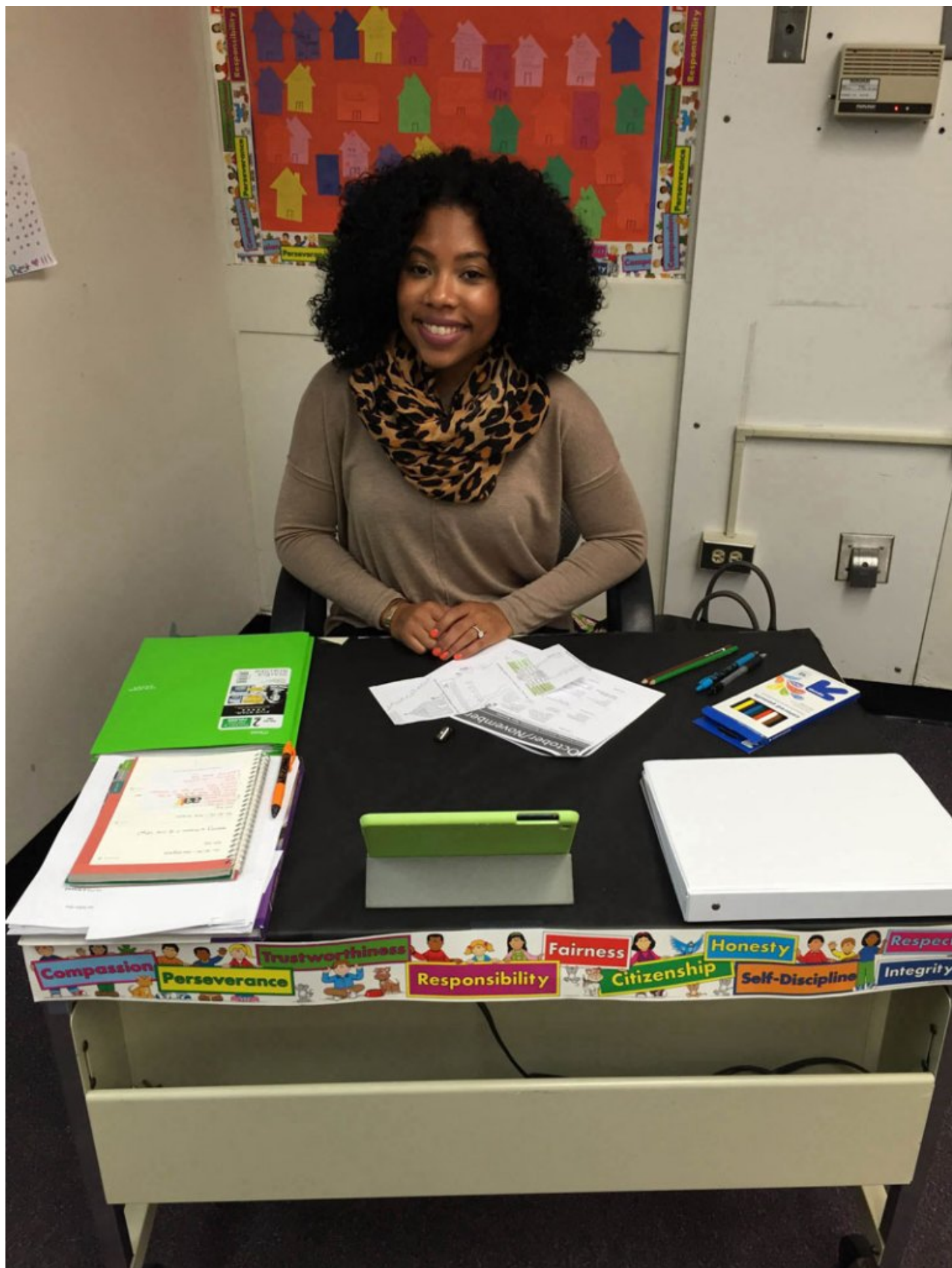


April Johnson, Charlottesville City Schools  
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April Johnson, Teaching Associate, Walker Upper Elementary School

What is the most challenging aspect of your job?

The most challenging aspect of my job is definitely my age and current role in the school. While my age sometimes makes me more relatable with my students, as they can “connect” with me about clothing, music, etc., it can also be a hindrance when it comes to successful behavior management. The students tend to “forget” that we are not peers, and that when I assign a task or require a particular behavior, that I mean it. Additionally, my age also speaks to my inexperience as a full-time, all-eyes-on-me teacher. Luckily, Mrs. Trent is always there to guide me, or simply assure me that I’m doing the right thing, but being a one-woman show is still something I’m getting used to.

What is the most common misconception about your job?

That teaching is easy! People seem to think that teaching is some overly simplified version of baby sitting and vacation bible school, in which students sit quietly and listen to “old news.” In fact, it’s just the opposite. For many of our students, the information is new and complex. Coupled with a wide variety of ability levels and parental support, planning lessons requires a great deal of orchestration. In reality, teaching is very similar to conducting an orchestra. As a teacher, you understand how different students may sound or think, and if you’re successful, you get them to play, or learn, in harmony.

Where do you see the teaching field in five years?

In the next five years, I see teaching, and education in general, relying increasingly on technology. As students become more familiar with technology outside of the classroom, their learning inside the classroom will need to match, and adapt to, those familiarities. Additionally, I have seen a growing tendency towards performance-based assessments, as administrators, educators, parents, and researchers understand the failures of standardized testing. Finally, in thinking about these changes, I hope that education becomes more flexible, adjusting to the needs of an increasingly diverse (academically and culturally) population.

What outside experience prepared you best to become a teacher?

I’ve spent a great deal of time working with students in various summer camps and after-school activities. Learning to manage different personalities, while also navigating educational philosophies dictated by some higher organization. For example, my work with summer camps showed me just how much information can be lost during the summer, as students spend the majority of their “off-time” playing games. While many upper-class children benefit from trips to museums and camps that stimulate their intellectual needs, their lower-class counterparts do not. In seeing this, I now understand how important it is to teach life-long skills, especially for the demographic of students I wish to teach. In other words, while content is certainly an important component of my instruction, I also hope that my students will learn how to be successful learners, even beyond my class.