



**Cohort 4**

**Alondra Acosta**



**Elementary Education**

*Sampson County | Midway High School*

“Being around younger kids has been something I’ve always enjoyed. Having caring and helpful teachers growing up made a huge impact on why I wanted to become a teacher. I had to learn English when I came back from Mexico and not many teachers knew Spanish. I want to make a difference and have more bilingual teachers out there, not just for the benefits of students but for their parents too. So why not come back and help around the area where I grew up.”

- Teacher Cadet

**Daniel Aguilar**

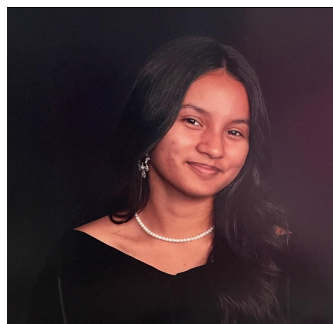


**Middle Grades English Language Arts and Social Studies Education**

*Sampson County | Hobbton High School*

“My aspirations of becoming an educator stem from the everlasting impact my teachers and coaches have had on me throughout my high school career. These role models made it clear to me that my purpose in life is to also have a great impact on young people by pushing them beyond the limits that they may set for themselves, academically and athletically. Having the opportunity to do this while also returning to my home of eastern NC will only prompt me to perform to the best of my abilities for my community.”

**Heily Avila Ponce**



**Elementary Education**

*Sampson County | Hobbton High School*

“My childhood was filled with nothing but fond memories, both in and outside of the school building. I realized that some children do not experience the same beautiful childhood after hearing a devastating story of one of my students during my internship at our local elementary school. My career ideas suddenly pointed in the direction of those kids who need an escape from home and a capable teacher to lead them down the right academic path. It became my goal to become that very teacher.”



**Cohort 4**

**McKenna Branch**

**Middle Grades English Language Arts and Social Studies Education**



*Edgecombe County | Tarboro High School*

“What inspires me to become an educator is knowing that I have the power to shape and influence young minds. I'm passionate about returning to eastern North Carolina because I know how much potential each student of eastern North Carolina holds and I know that I can help bring it out of them. I want to be the best person and educator possible for students who deserve a great education experience.”

- Teacher Cadet
- LIFT 2024 Participant

**Lindsey Cliser**

**Elementary Education**



*Martin County | Bear Grass Charter School*

“During high school, I experienced many health difficulties. Throughout all of it, one of my teachers was my biggest supporter. She would give me extra help if needed, and she would pray over me before doctor appointments. I am passionate about returning to eastern North Carolina because I want to give back and make a difference in the area that gave so much to me and shaped me into who I am.”

**Elizabeth Cowen**

**Elementary Education**



*Onslow County | Dixon High School*

“I am inspired to become an educator in the future because I have seen first hand how education can change peoples lives. Because I have lived and gone to school in eastern North Carolina, I've seen the impact education can have on our lives and want to help the community reach its full potential. I want to return and give back to my community and help future generations grow and impact the world in a positive way. I have lived here my whole life, and I believe because of my knowledge of the area I will be able to make the biggest impact here.”



**Cohort 4**

**Christopher (Chris)  
DeSousa**

**Technology, Engineering, and Design Education**



*Craven County | Havelock High School*

“Growing up around sports and after school events I have been able to see just how important teachers are to students. They can act as father figures in the lives of kids who otherwise would have none. Teachers are key to guidance and have lasting impacts on the hearts of children. Some of those memories last a lifetime. I want to be the guidance, or role model, that so many kids now need in their lives.”

**Chloe Hammonds**

**Elementary Education**



*Robeson County | Purnell Swett High School*

“I want to become a teacher because I’ve experienced first-hand how art can help students express themselves, build confidence, and feel understood. My teachers made a lasting impact on me, and I want to do the same for future students. I’m passionate about returning to eastern North Carolina because it’s my home and where my roots are, and I want to give back to the community that shaped me. My goal is to help students discover their creativity and believe in their potential.”

**Diana Harper**

**Mathematics Education (Middle Grades)**



*Pamlico County | Pamlico County High School*

“I was inspired to become an educator because of my love for education and children. For so long I told myself I would never become a teacher because I had watched my mom and other teachers struggle. I knew it would be a taxing job. After some long thinking though, I knew there was nothing else for me. I love working with children and seeing them grow in programs they enjoy!”





**Cohort 4**

**Brianna Jackson**

**Elementary Education**



*Sampson County | Clinton High School*

"I want to be an educator because I enjoy helping students learn and grow. It inspires me to know I can make a difference in their lives. I'm excited to return to eastern North Carolina because it's home and where I feel I can give back the most. I want to support the community that helped shape who I am."

- Dark Horse Fellows

**Katherine (Katie)  
Del Key**

**Science Education (High School)**



*Brunswick County | South Brunswick High School*

"I believe that my area has a great need for passionate and driven educators and that my experience as a student in the Brunswick County area will better prepare me to fill the gaps in my local school system."

**Carly Kincaid**

**Elementary Education**



*Onslow County | Swansboro High School*

"I am passionate about returning to eastern North Carolina to give back to the community that shaped who I am. I will do this by becoming a qualified educator and pairing my college education and program experiences with my passion for making a difference in the world around me. Overall, I am looking forward to being the change that I wish to see in the world and being a transformational leader. It is even more special to be able to do that in my own eastern North Carolina community."

- Future Teachers of Onslow  
- Teaching as a Profession

*Developing teacher leaders with transformative impact.*



**Cohort 4**

**Jayleigh Locklear**



**Elementary Education**

*Cumberland County | Pine Forest High School*

“The ability to bring about growth among my community's youth is my number one inspiration for becoming an educator. I am passionate about returning to eastern North Carolina because as someone who went through an eastern NC school system I would love to bring change and improvements to it. I also have a deep love for North Carolina and its many peoples and cultures.”

**Emmorhianna  
(Emmy) Taylor**



**Mathematics Education (Middle Grades)**

*Onslow County | Jacksonville High School*

“Growing up, I moved around a lot, and I had my fair share of good and “bad” teachers. I want to be able to prove to everyone from my small town that teaching is worth it. All I see all the time is people going into a career for money instead of passion. I want my students to see that it is okay to choose your passion.”

- Future Teachers of Onslow
- Teaching as a Profession
- LIFT 2024 Participant