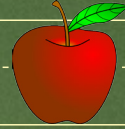


# EARLY BIRD GETS



# THE WORM



## After graduating early from ECU, Becky Taylor '76, '80 is successfully impacting education

Many people take their time deciding what college they want to attend and what career they want to pursue, but **Becky Taylor '76, '80** always knew that she would go to East Carolina University to become a teacher.

Taylor applied to ECU under early admission, finished in three years, and left her final summer semester a few days early to begin her first teaching job.

From her first classroom in Edgemcombe County to her current position as a Sylvan franchise owner and a member of the State Board of Education, Taylor has more than thirty-five years of experience in education.

"I knew that I wanted to be a teacher from the time I was in first or second grade," said Taylor, who grew up in Jacksonville. "Coming from a family of educators, I knew I would be an educator without a doubt."

As a child, Taylor practiced being a teacher. Coming from a family of five girls and one boy, Taylor spent a lot of time "playing school" and trying to get her siblings to complete their "assignments." As the second oldest, she enjoyed playing the role of teacher and still values that role today.

Choosing to attend ECU was just as natural for Taylor.

"I knew from the beginning that I wanted to go to ECU," she said. "My aunt and grandma both graduated from

ECU. It was very easy for me to make that decision. I wanted to major in special education, and I knew ECU had a really good special education department. Being a special education teacher is the most rewarding position a teacher can have."

Taylor's favorite professor was Betty Levy, who showed Taylor how to set up a structured but warm and caring teaching environment.

Taylor has many great memories of her time at ECU. "There were so many exciting firsts, like my first football game and my first class as a student teacher."

While she enjoyed her time on campus, "I was ready to work. I couldn't wait to be a teacher!" she commented.

"ECU prepared me for my career in a lot of different ways," Taylor said. "But the field experience truly prepared me for the classroom."

Her first job was teaching exceptional students age eight to sixteen in Edgemcombe County, where she spent four years. She started the first learning disabilities resource classroom in Edgemcombe County Public Schools. She also served as the Special Olympics coordinator for the school system.

She then taught for six years at Greenville Middle School (now J.H. Rose High School). During that time, she was selected to pilot an innovative hands-on science curriculum for ECU.

After leaving the public schools, she served as the first educational vocational director at the Boys Club of Pitt County. Then she accepted a position with ECU as a project director writing grants and working with at-risk students, including adolescent mothers and their children. She taught in the Department of Special Education at East Carolina where she also supervised student teachers during their clinical placement in the schools.

"It was wonderful to come back and work at ECU," she commented. "I was in the same office with some of my professors!"

After hearing about the opportunity from a colleague, Taylor bought her first Sylvan franchise in 1988. She now owns and operates six locations across eastern North Carolina. With more than 1,000 locations across the country, Sylvan is the nation's leading provider of supplemental education. Sylvan does not take the place of the student's school, Taylor says, but rather works side by side with it to increase the student's experiences of success.

"We support the public schools," she said. "We have a great relationship with them. We provide very personalized individual instruction that teachers don't always have time to give. We help students catch up, keep up, or stay ahead. We communicate and share ideas with teachers. We even donate supplies."

Taylor has been serving on the State Board of Education since April 2013.

"I love it! It's a lot of work, but it's very exciting," she says. "It requires a lot of communication with teachers and parents. I get to visit so many different schools and districts, which is so fun. It keeps me on the cutting edge."

As a board member, Taylor's goal is to have a positive impact on education in North Carolina. "Students are our future leaders," she says. "Times have changed, and we must be innovative. We need to prepare students for college or a career; they must be productive citizens."

Taylor's experience in the K-12 classroom, at the university level, and in the private sector give her a unique perspective on education.

"It gives me the opportunity to look at the whole system objectively," she said. "I'm not looking at it just as a teacher or administrator or business owner. I can put myself in the shoes of all stakeholders and try to see each point of view."

The biggest challenge is increasing teacher compensation and respect, Taylor says. "Teachers have so much passion; they knew, as I did, exactly what they wanted to be. It's a shame when people say, 'don't go into teaching because you can't make a living.' Compensation has got to get better. Teachers really want to be respected."

Taylor knows firsthand the impact that quality teachers can have.

"ECU is known across the state for its strong education program," Taylor says. "That is one of our best assets. To me, ECU is number one in the state for preparing education professionals."

Thanks to her East Carolina education, Taylor has helped improve the lives of thousands of children in North Carolina. **ec**



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