

Whitney Hawkins job is cool because she followed in her parents' footsteps by becoming a teacher. She grew up in Alberta, Virginia and attended Nottoway High School and the Governor's School of Southside Virginia at the same time.

Whitney said, "I chose to attend Governor's School while in high school because I wanted a head start when it was time for me to graduate and attend a university. Southside Virginia Community College (SVCC) allowed me to get a feel for college level coursework while also allowing me to prepare myself to be successful for life after high school."

Since graduating from high school and SVCC with an associate's degree in general studies, Whitney transferred to James Madison University where she majored in interdisciplinary liberal studies. She graduated with her Bachelor of Science degree in 2016 and went on to earn a Master of Arts degree in teaching the following year. She now teaches kindergarten in Brunswick County Public Schools, and was recently named Teacher of the Year for both her school, Red Oak-Sturgeon Elementary School, and the entire county.

Her dad, Crawley Hawkins, teaches at Red Oak-Sturgeon and has been a teacher for 25 years and her mother, Priscilla, retired after 30 years in the classroom.

Outside of teaching, Whitney runs a program called "Bike and Read". In this program, students are provided with the opportunity to enjoy bike rides on a local trail, have lunch, and read books throughout the year. She also recently hosted an event called "The Mommy and Me Brunch," where she celebrated all mothers do for their daughters and recognized mothers from the local area.

In the future, Whitney says she plans on "pursuing a doctorate in educational leadership with hopes of becoming a principal. I also would like to work on getting my summer "Bike and Read" program to be an official nonprofit organization." Whitney also said, "Many people dream of moving far from home and establishing themselves, but I truly love making an impact here in my hometown."

Looking back on her experience at SVCC, Whitney had these thoughts: "My time at SVCC was challenging but so well worth it. I was able to experience college level course work while still in high school in a more personal setting, and I encountered some of the best professors such as Dr. Joyce Hurt, Mrs. Celeste Paynter, and many more. I also made lifelong friends with whom I am still in contact with to this day. I continue to rave about the wonderful experience I had while attending SVCC for Governor's School, and recommend all high school students to look into it and apply if the opportunity arises for them."

She is proof that you don't have to land far from home to have a very rewarding and cool career!