



Strong School Leadership Yields Impressive Results

Emily Smith started working at [Summit Elementary School](#) in the [Cherry Creek School District](#) while she was still in high school. She knew she wanted to be a teacher and enrolled in the teacher preparation program at the [UNC Center for Urban Education](#) (CUE) right out of high school.

One Path to Becoming a Teacher

Smith is in her third semester now and enjoying her degree program. “One of my favorite parts of this program is working at a school in the mornings and going to classes in the afternoon. I gain teaching experience while also taking classes, and I get paid to do it,” said Smith. “I like taking what I learned in the afternoon and applying it to the classroom the next morning.”

Smith also enjoys the support she receives at Summit Elementary School. The principal there, Missy Matthews, does her utmost to invite paraprofessionals into the teaching process and support them in their professional development.

“Missy is so accommodating,” Smith said. “She makes sure I get to work with the younger kids, which is who I want to teach when I graduate.”

In her first year in the program, Smith spent one week with each teacher at Summit to witness different teaching styles and how the teachers were alike and different. Now in her second year, she's focusing on kindergarten, first, and second grade. She's getting to know what those kids are like and what the teachers do to set them up for success.

The "Learning Community"

"Principal Matthews runs a strong school with strong teachers," said Dr. Rosanne Fulton, the director of the Center for Urban Education. "She's invested in supporting K-5 learners, families, teachers, and paraprofessionals. She frequently meets with paras to help them learn as much as they can and be as happy as possible on the job. She's a true leader of the whole learning community."

"We provide our paraprofessionals with a variety of teaching tasks so that they have a wide-angle view about what teaching entails," said Matthews. Recently, their Gifted and Talented teacher offered to spend time with the teacher candidates so they can learn about that important component of the school. "We also invite them into the decision-making process for instructional design so they get real-life experiences," Matthews added.

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Matthews is a partner of the Center in that she welcomes our teacher candidates as half-time paraprofessionals who work in the mornings and puts time and effort into "growing her own" teachers. "The Center for Urban Education is perfect for our paraprofessionals who want to become teachers because it provides an accessible, established pathway for them to reach their career goals," said Matthews.

It Takes a Village

Todd Daubert, a former teacher in Cherry Creek School District, is a mentor at the Center and has built a strong relationship with Smith. "Emily is thriving there thanks to the support of Principal Matthews and her dedication to growing the next generation of teachers," said Daubert. "Building such strong relationships with teachers helps our students become more confident educators. I see Emily taking her learning to the next level and thinking critically about how she will implement what she learns in her own classroom."

We at the Center for Urban Education thank Principal Matthews and all of our school partners for their dedication to fostering a new generation of teachers who are 100% invested in creating nurturing, culturally responsive classrooms.



Summit Elementary students with teacher candidate Emily Smith (right)

Thinking about Becoming a Teacher?

We are enrolling new students for the spring 2024 semester. Call Dr. Rosanne Fulton, Director, UNC Center for Urban Education, at 303-637-4334 or [email](#) for more information. Watch our [short video](#) to learn more about the CUE teacher-preparation program.