

## Student Spotlight

Transfer student success stories.

***Mia Mitchell, Elementary Education AAOT (2022) from Central Oregon Community College, working toward a BS in Elementary Education at OSU-Cascades.***

***Q: Tell us about your transfer pathway. What was challenging, and what was helpful?***

***A:*** After high school, I took a gap year and when I was ready, I decided to enroll at COCC. Then COVID hit. At the time, I wasn't sure I wanted to major in education, even though my mom, nana, and aunt are all educators. I was living with my cousin (who is also a 4th grade teacher) while her husband was deployed and began helping her daughters with homework while they were doing school online. It was then that I discovered how much I loved seeing them make connections as they learned. That experience also helped me realize that I was interested in teaching. At COCC, I got connected with Angie and Amy in the Elementary Education program and before long, I fell in love with the curriculum. It didn't feel like work and was nothing like school when I was a kid. I have a learning disability and remember what it was like to be on the opposite end of students who excelled in school. I didn't think I liked learning until I found something I was passionate about. Now I want to be a positive influence in students' lives while making learning fun!

I love being in the classroom and experiencing different teaching methods. My decision to pursue a BS in Elementary Education also created a connection between me and my family. It felt natural and, in many ways, it was like I was coming full circle. Seeing the impact my teachers have had on me motivates me to want to do the same for my own students. I have learned a ton, and I'm still learning. COCC helped by encouraging me and making my two years there interactive with practical experience in the classroom. This will really help next year when I start student teaching.

COCC also did a really good job by helping me avoid wasting time (and money!) taking courses I didn't need. When I finished my AAOT in Elementary Ed at COCC and applied to OSU-Cascades, I was surprised that some of my classes didn't transfer. I would suggest that students work closely with an advisor to avoid the frustration of taking classes that don't count toward a degree. However, COCC's transparency with the process really helped.

I was adopted and as a person of color growing up in Wilsonville, Oregon I didn't often see kids who looked like me. As a teacher, I want to advocate for students because I understand what it's like to be different. Everyone is smart, and we are all intelligent in different ways. I don't want anyone to think they are less than. Sometimes people just need a little help. After graduating, I want to teach special education for K-5 kids and look forward to sharing my passion for learning with my students.