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Office of University
Communications

June 13, 2017

Cynthia E. Wortham '17 Learned How to Use Research to Evaluate Instructional Programs

When Cynthia E. Wortham completed her School Administration Certificate at Gardner-Webb University in 2014, she was energized and ready for the next step. “That ‘forever-a-student’ part of me became as strong as ever,” Wortham recalled. “My appetite for knowledge was greatly whet again. Even though I have been in education for almost 30 years, I saw that I have so much more to learn. I decided to pursue my Doctor of Education in Curriculum and Instruction almost immediately upon completing my administration work. So here I am with my final defense the only thing left in this doctoral experience. The experience has changed my life – both professionally and personally.”



Cynthia Wortham, center, works with educators in her school district in Wilson, N.C.

Wortham is a district curriculum instructional coordinator in Wilson, N.C., and her primary focus is improving learning opportunities through instructional support. “I am working with teachers to update the secondary curriculum by prioritizing standards, revisiting pacing, providing proficiency scales, creating common and benchmark assessments, and gathering appropriate resources,” she related.

The concepts discussed and assignments completed in her GWU classes applied directly to her job. “The program pushed me beyond the limits I had for myself,” she observed. “It required work like none I had ever experienced – real world work that challenged me in every area.”

photo of Cynthia Wortham

Wortham learned about assessments that address different aspects of education, when they need to be done, how they need to be done, why they are important and how to analyze the data and make recommendations for improvement. “We learned to conduct authentic comprehensive needs assessments and program evaluations,” she expounded. “We worked on projects to engage family/community, to promote professional learning, and to design curriculum. The program provided growth that widened the scope of who I am and what I can do as an educator.”

She has worked as a classroom teacher, a reading specialist and a curriculum facilitator. “In each role, I found myself drawn to research, curriculum, and instruction,” Wortham related. “This degree enriched my career by providing knowledge and experience to enhance my abilities. My perspective has broadened. I know more about research and how to use it. I know more of how to connect initiatives and base decisions on data and information provided by current research. I am a better version of myself that enables me to support other educators as they work to become their best selves and ultimately make a real difference in the lives of our students.”