

Principal Sanée Bell believes that the strongest leaders are approachable, accessible, and supportive



# Cimarron Elementary

Principal Sanée Bell instills a drive for knowledge in her students

*Written by Kirsten Cornell | Select photography by Lara Massey*

A center point of the well-established community, Cimarron Elementary stands as a reminder to the residents it serves that the educators within its walls are dedicated to the growth and education of their children. “The school is a focal point, and there is a sense of ownership and pride instilled in those who utilize it,” says Cimarron principal Sanée Bell. “Parents, students, and staff are proud of [our] accomplishments, and everyone pulls together so that the school can experience success.”

## Empowering Others

Although this is her first principalship, Bell learned valuable lessons serving as an assistant principal at both West

Memorial and WoodCreek Junior High. “A successful principal sets the course for the school but, knows when to step back and let the teachers and students lead the way,” says Bell.

A key ingredient to Bell’s leadership strategy is helping others to feel empowered. “I am the biggest cheerleader for my students and teachers,” she explains. “I believe it is my job to create conditions for success by being approachable, accessible, and supportive.” Bell believes that the power of teamwork, and her role in facilitating that, lend to Cimarron’s unique environment.

## Building Opportunities

The staff at Cimarron strives to continue growth in their curriculum as well as their students. Principal Bell has had the opportunity to be instrumental in instilling several new programs. “I joined a great staff when I came to Cimarron, the kids are amazing,” says Bell. “My vision was to continue to enhance the learning opportunities for students. With the help of my staff, many have been able to be implemented.”

Bell executed the Principal’s 200 Club, which brings recognition to students who are demonstrating exceptional character. Students are selected by their teachers and then their names are placed on the Principal’s 200 Club banner, which is prominently displayed in the school. Their parents even receive a personal phone call from Bell bragging about their particular student, reinforcing the school-home relationship. “Academics are certainly a positive component of public education, but helping students develop and demonstrate great character is key as well,” adds Bell.

During Bell’s second semester at Cimarron she brought the program Watch D.O.G.S., or Dads of Great Students, to their school. “This program has taken off and is a valuable experience for our dads and students,” says Bell. Watch D.O.G.S. has provided an opportunity for dads to be actively engaged who might not have otherwise known how to volunteer at their child’s school. “It has [also] increased the number of volunteer hours that are recorded for our campus,” adds Bell.



Bell with volunteers at Cimarron’s Boosterthon Fun Run

Photo courtesy of Cimarron Elementary

“Parents, students, and staff are proud of [our] accomplishments, and everyone pulls together so that the school can experience success.”

- Sanée Bell

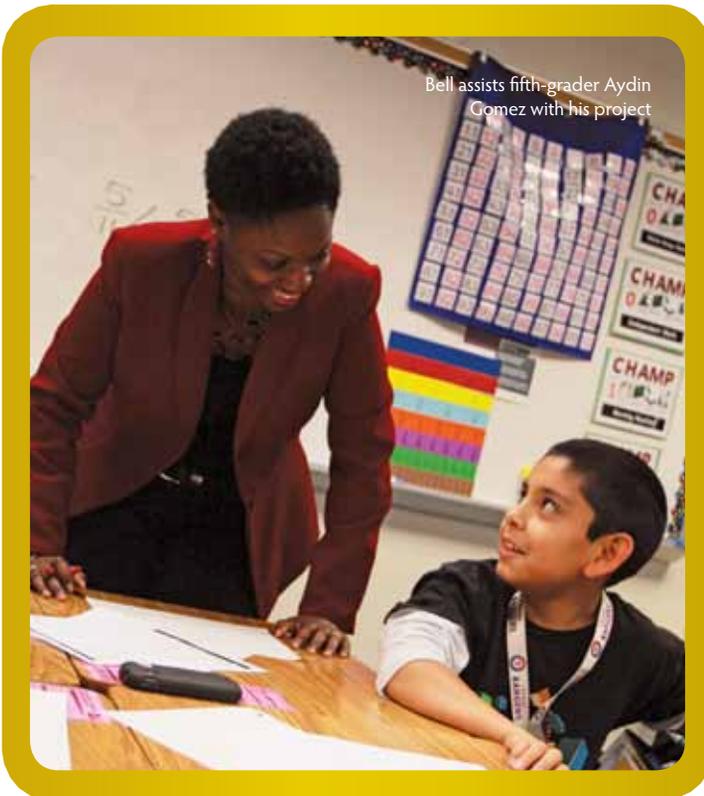
## Growth and Grit

The Cimarron Cheetahs are focused on the importance of personal growth and the power of grit this school year. “A mindset that believes that abilities can be developed through hard work is a key component to improving student achievement,” she says. Bell maintains that students who are able to see challenges and setbacks as an opportunity to grow, will be better equipped for their academic and life experiences. “Grit focuses on the determination and willingness to succeed despite those challenges,” she adds.

Under the leadership of Bell, the Cheetahs are on track to exceed their exceptional goals. “The primary focus of Cimarron is to serve the students,” she says. “Through offering an exceptional academic program and providing engaging events, we will strengthen and celebrate this wonderful community.” **KM**



*KIRSTEN CORNELL is the lead associate editor for Katy Magazine. She hopes to one day earn her spot on principal Sanée Bell’s Principal’s 200 Club banner.*



Bell assists fifth-grader Aydin Gomez with his project