

1. What do you find gratifying when teaching young minds?

To be completely transparent, what is most gratifying is how much they teach me. I love the “buzz” that begins to fill the room when children start creating. My absolute favorite is when they break out in song. It usually starts with just a couple and then spreads to the whole room. It happens with all ages. It happened just last week during a class with some students visiting from Brenau. It’s magical. Definitely my happy place.

2. Why is art and creativity so important for young students?

I had the experience of a Reggio Emilia workshop early on in my teaching career. They encouraged us to read “One Hundred Languages of Children” which is a confirming source of how, I feel, children should be taught by always questioning. I refer to it often. I also won a raffle prize of photographic slides taken at the Diana school in Reggio Emilia, Italy. One of the slides is of an infant sitting in the center of a very large sheet of white paper. The child has a long artist’s brush in its hand and a pot of paint to its side. He/she is painting circles around herself. You can see by the expression on his face that hundreds of synapses are “snappin’”! It was amazing to think how this one experience for this child could teach so much. Balance, small and large motor skills, emotional and sensory gratification and who knows what cognitive doors it opened. Not many infants have this experience but I believe it has great value to the child. Art offers these kinds of awakening and challenging experiences and should be considered more often, at any age really.

3. What is the biggest important takeaway you will impart to your students during camp?

Everyone is an artist. It’s about the process not the product. Enjoy the process, try them all, you never know when or from where your inner artist and passion will emerge.

4. How long have you been a teacher in Gainesville city schools?

I taught Pre-K in private schools for 7 years. I taught GCSS for 14 years.

5. What are some of the mediums children will be working with at camp?

We will work with watercolor and acrylic paints, paper, fabric, dyes, clay, food, ice, aluminum foil, cardboard and whatever else we can imagine.

6. Talk to us about your hair

I love my hair, as it is a gift and legacy from my dear friend and mentor Rosemary Wood Dodd. She was a spirit like no other. She decided during COVID, she was passing the rainbow hair to me and as soon as salons were open, she took me to her hair colorist. “When you are asked what color you would like, the answer is always, all of them!”

7. Will students be introduced to mediums not typically used when creating art?

There is a South Carolina artist, Kirkland Smith. She is a kindred spirit on consumerism and the environmental impact it has. She inspired my love for the use of found objects when creating. I’m hoping students will bring things they would like to turn into an art work rather than adding it to a landfill. In fact, that sounds like a great challenge in the making!!

8. Will you incorporate other art forms during camp?

Yes! It is my plan to line-up working professionals connected to the field of art to visit us weekly. Musicians, dancers, chefs, hair stylist and colorist, make-up artist, florists, photographers, performers, event planners, designers, architects, wood workers, nail techs and bakers, just to name a few.

9. Tell us something about yourself that you want students and parents to know
I don't seem to have an interest in perfecting technique. My passion is for the process. I love to learn a new process. I have many products, one from each process learned and then I'm on to the next learning experience. I do have a love of sewing. I feel like sewing lends itself to a million possibilities. And, the materials are wonderfully diverse. I did make a lot of masks during the pandemic but even then tried to make sure no two were alike, unless requested to be so. Many times, children are my catalyst for learning. On my recent trip to visit my daughter in L.A., I learned about a place that creates cotton candy sculptures! I can't wait to learn how to do that!