

1. Describe your work as an artist and how it connects with your teaching philosophy and methodology.

## MY WORK AS AN ARTIST AND ART EDUCATOR

Wendy Campbell, Ph.D.



**Spirits of Life**  
**Wendy Campbell**

I believe that each of us has a potential artist within. In my artwork, I get in touch with the artist within by surrounding myself with art from many cultures, by developing my drawing and painting skills, and by creating a personal artistic style. In my current work, I create images with oil paints, oil pastels, gouache and watercolor paints. Each image involves the development of a pattern with oil paints and oil pastels. This pattern serves as a resist that shows through the gouache and watercolors which I apply over the oil-based pattern. The result is a fabric-like surface that reflects my admiration for the fiber arts of several cultures. The content of the imagery expresses my sense of connection to the spirit of life in nature.

As an art educator, I encourage my students to give voice to the artist within by creating an art-rich environment. I enlist professional artists using a variety of art forms to participate. In this way, a diverse and caring arts community evolves in which each child feels inspired to create personal and expressive works of art. The photograph at right shows the playful and warm character of this arts community. This exciting community inspires me to develop projects integrating visual art with the academic curriculum and with other forms of artistic expression such as creative writing.



For example, a town planner who participated in the arts community suggested we develop a town planning project for the students. We collaborated in developing a project in which students created imaginary towns using foam core panels as bases. Students drew maps of their towns on pieces of paper that were then transferred to panels of foam core. The students painted the foam core with tempera paints, added roads with black electrical tape, sidewalks with white adhesive tape, houses with acrylic clay, and public buildings with cardboard structures. The results were exciting

models of towns which displayed the students' knowledge of the elements of towns and the differing ways those elements can be organized. Students learned how the forms, colors and textures of the streets, sidewalks, buildings, signs, street lights, trees, and shrubs can be designed as works of art.



In my own work as an artist, I like to experiment with art materials in a free and spontaneous manner in order to develop new ways of combining materials. In the art program I developed, students have opportunities to play with art materials to develop their own unique ways of using materials and creating artwork. While some students prefer to work independently, others love to work collaboratively to create exciting works of art. In the picture at left, students use colored Bristol board and string to create a structure with movable parts.

Just as I use art from a range of cultures to inspire my own artwork, I use art from many cultures to inspire the artwork of my students. For example, third graders created paintings inspired by carved imaginary creatures from Oaxaca. Students studied the exotic Oaxacan creatures and the intricate patterns painted on their surfaces. They then developed their own imaginative creatures and painted them with exciting and brightly-colored patterns. In this way, students not only learned about the artisans of Oaxaca, but also learned how artists use the artwork of others to inspire new creative efforts.



My sense of connection to nature has led me to develop art projects that not only express a reverence for nature but also demonstrate how art can be used to raise awareness of environmental issues. For example, the Education Director of the Arlington Art Center and I developed a painting project to raise awareness of the Mystic River and the importance of keeping it clean. Students created beautiful paintings of fish in water environments using acrylic paint on Masonite boards. These paintings were displayed in various locations in the town accompanied by posters describing the Mystic River and the need to keep it clean.

In summary, I believe that each of us has a potential artist within and that we need an art-rich environment and a caring community in order to give voice to that artist. We need to play with art materials, to develop drawing, painting, and sculpting skills, and we need to internalize a sense of audience by becoming part of a diverse and caring arts community. In my work as an artist, I nurture myself by exploring the imagery of others and participating in an arts community. In my work as an art educator, I develop communities and environments in which each child can express his or her unique ideas and perspectives. I also develop exciting projects that inspire a love of art and a reverence for the unique character of each participant.

