

Alumni Spotlight: Q&A with Shannon Marris '07



“The essence of teaching is to make learning contagious, to have one idea spark another.

--Marva Collins

Shannon Marris is the Education Manager at the Macon Bibb EOC, Inc. – Head Start and Early Head Start program.

1. What attracted you to Middle Georgia State College/University?

I was attracted to Middle Georgia State University (then called Macon State) because it was close to home and they had just started a brand-new Bachelor’s program in Early Childhood Education and Special Education, which has always been my desired area of study.

2. Why did you choose to study education?

The biggest reason, as simple as it sounds, is the children. My mother ran an in-home daycare out of our house when I was growing up. Being the oldest, I jumped right into helping with the other children and I loved it. At six years old I was in a beauty pageant where I was asked what I wanted to be when I grew up, and the answer then was the same as the answer I had as an adult, a teacher. I tried other professions before deciding to go to college, and always felt that there was something missing. Education and being a part of the lives of children was a calling I have had my entire life.

3. What teacher impacted you the most?

I have been blessed with many great educators in my life. My first grade teacher, Ms. Helenburg, showed me how learning and teaching was fun and exciting. In high school, it was an English teacher, Ms. Hart that made me feel connected to what I was learning and encouraged deeper level thinking. In college, I had many professors that stand out; Dr. Laila Richmond for her passion for students with special needs, Dr. Alan Richmond and his rigorous assessment course that prepared me to analyze the facts in my field, and Dr. Loleta Sartin for her emphasis on the importance of literacy and reading for children of all ages. These teachers/professors, and many more, increased my passion for wanting to educate others.

4. Since you graduated, what career path have you chosen? Why?

Since graduation I have done many things. I taught for a private, special needs school with individualized curriculums- which gave me insight into how vastly different we all are and the importance of being unbiased. I taught for Lottery Funded Georgia Pre-K- which taught me how fun learning can be and how much children learn when they play. I taught for Head Start- which taught me the value of including families in education and seeing the whole child. I also taught for a private Catholic School- which taught me the value of supportive leadership and the power of having a strong school community. Currently I am the Education Manager for Head Start/Early Head Start in Bibb county, and all of these experiences, along with my education, have prepared me for this leadership position where I can not only continue to help children and their families, but also my staff.

5. How has an education at MGA benefited you professionally?

MGA gave me all the tools I needed to go out into the world and be prepared for what was ahead. I did not get my first job in middle Georgia, I worked the Atlanta metro area for over 6 years, and the information I received here gave me confidence, and credentials, to be able to go forward and continue to advance in my career.

6. What advice would you give someone who would like to pursue a career in your field?

The education field is a passion and a calling. This is not a field for people who wish to get rich quick, or want an easy work day. Flexibility, commitment, and “outside the box” thinking are required in order to be successful for both yourself and your students. As an educator, you are also always a student. Be prepared to be a lifelong learner and be ready to challenge yourself to always be more, so you can give more.

7. Has there been some obstacles you’ve had to overcome in pursuit of your educational and career goals?

Yes. During my student teaching I was given the opportunity to take over the classroom I did my student teaching in for the following school year. I was so very excited for the offer and felt it was a great fit, however my husband received a job offer in Atlanta and it was the choice that was best for our family. It was hard to leave my community and a job offer that I was excited about, especially since the public-school systems in Atlanta had already had their job fairs and had finished most of their hiring for the next school year. However, I continued to thrive in my career without ever working for a public-school system.

8. Finish this sentence: Greatness means (to you) ... To me, greatness is an attribute that is inside all of us. It is a light that illuminates our strongest qualities and encourages us to share those traits with the world. Anyone can achieve greatness, which manifests itself in a variety of ways in life, just don’t be afraid to put yourself out there and let your light shine!

9. What is your lasting impression of MGA?

MGA is a place that prepared me for my future. It is a place that I am happy to return to for partnership and for assistance with the advancement of my staff as they pursue their own educational goals. Returning to campus 10 years later as a professional in my field felt like coming home to supportive friends and family. I will always value to the connections I have made here.

10. List Accolades, Awards of recognition and any organizations you are actively a part of.

Cum Laude Graduate 2007

Published Children's Poet with Stories for Children Magazine; 2008, 2009, and 2011

Winner of "Poem of the Year" 2008 with Stories for Children Magazine

Girl Scouts of America

Share Your Story!

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Email us at education@mga.edu



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