



# MELISSA SCHAFFER

## CONTACT

973-600-6846

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melissaschaffer.com

## EXPERTISE

Interactive Teaching

Cooperative Learning

Innovative Lesson Plans

Performing, Writing

100+ Professional Development  
Trainings

## EDUCATION

Point Park University  
*MFA in Writing for the Screen  
and Stage, 2024*

Montclair State University  
*Graduate Certificate in Theatre  
of Diversity, Inclusion, and Social  
Change, 2024*

Boston University  
*BFA in Theatre*  
Awarded BU Alumni Association  
Medal for Scholarship in the Arts

## CERTIFICATIONS

Wolf Trap  
Early Childhood Educator

Orff Schulwerk  
Level 1 Music Educator

WeBop! Early Childhood  
Jazz Educator

Yogarhythmic & Kripalu  
Yogadance Instructor

ACE Personal Trainer  
Lab/Shul StorahTelling Maven  
Kol Zimra Chant Leader

## OBJECTIVE

To create supportive learning environments that inspire, educate, and challenge students of all ages to discover more about themselves, each other, their communities, and the world at large by engaging in interdisciplinary arts.

## EXPERIENCE

Teaching Artist, New Jersey Performing Arts Center 2018 – Present

- Devise theatre and plays with students grades 3-12 created from their own life experiences using deep discussion, theatre games, improv, voice and speech exercises, movement, music, research, and collaborative creative writing incorporating students' unique talents
- Co-facilitate monthly Arts Integration experiential workshops as member of select team instructing K-12 teachers in methods to incorporate multidisciplinary art forms into standard curricula; provide 1:1 mentoring and model lessons in teacher's classrooms
- Build literacy, problem solving, social skills, communication and self-esteem through storytelling, movement, puppetry, music and playwriting for ages 4-18 with grades K-1
- Create and share residency outlines and lesson plans that embody NJPAC's programs, the specific needs of each school, and integrate NJ curriculum standards
- Direct presentations at schools with students as content creators and performers

Co-Creator/Instructor, Montclair Film, NJ 2017 – Present

- Serve as the Lead Facilitator of 505 Films + Friends, an inclusive club for neurodiverse young adults with disabilities ages 14-30 in which members engage socially and intellectually through the viewing and interactive discussion of films
- Highlight film-related themes and professions each session; introduce new concepts and vocabulary
- Initiate lively discussions pre- and post-film exploring club member's lives in relationship to themes represented in each session's movie
- Promote and nurture social interaction and communication between members leading to sustained friendships outside of club

Playwright/Screenwriter 1998 – Present

- *Take The Plunge!* (play w/original music), *Windows* (play w/original music), *Ba-Dum-Pishh!*, *Force, Independence, Shelter, Zombie Nation, Bexley, The Casserole*

Exercise Instructor, Cranes Mill, NJ 2015 – 2020

- Organized and conducted group fitness exercise classes for senior citizens
- Led routines with weights, chair yoga, resistance training, dance, and stretching to build strength, bone density, balance, and cognitive flexibility
- Ensured a safe, fun environment for students of all levels, ages 60-100
- Adapted workouts for each individual based on injuries and chronic health conditions

Exercise Instructor, Agudath Israel Synagogue, NJ 2010 – 2016

- *See above*



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## COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP

Instructor,  
Chant & Meditation,  
Montclair, NJ

Chair,  
Montclair Special Education  
Parent Advisory Council

Interfaith Lead,  
Moms Demand Action for  
Gun Sense in America, Essex  
County, NJ

Organizer,  
1st National Gun Violence  
Awareness Day, Montclair, NJ

CASA Caseworker,  
Newark, NJ

Moderator,  
Montclair Film Festival  
Sensory Friendly Films

Producer/Moderator,  
Kids & Anxiety Educational  
Symposium, Montclair, NJ

Producer/Director,  
Inclusive Hidden Talent Show,  
Montclair, NJ

Producer/Moderator,  
How To Speak To Kids About  
9/11, Montclair, NJ

## EXPERIENCE (continued)

Music and Art Teacher, Shoresh Pre-School, NJ 2006 – 2018

- Integrated speech, social, emotional, cognitive and motor skills through joyful song and movement
- Taught Jewish stories, ethics, and holidays with songs, movement, dance and rhythmic patterns with percussion instruments
- Organized art show/fundraiser with student works inspired by Marc Chagall
- Conducted student performances featuring Hebrew and folk songs, percussion instruments, and American Sign Language

WeBop! Early Childhood Jazz Educator, Jazz House Kids, NJ 2016 – 2017

- Taught curricula combining early childhood practices with jazz pedagogy to provide musically authentic, multisensory, interactive, bonding experiences for children 8 months to 5 years and their caregivers
- Explored musical concepts such as tempo, dynamics, and rhythmic patterns through singing, listening, playing and improvising with percussion instruments and live jazz musical accompaniment; conveyed jazz history through storytelling and books

Music Teacher, PS 527, NYC 2013 – 2015

- Created and taught curriculum for elementary school choral music program for 100 students, Kindergarten through 2<sup>nd</sup> grade
- Conducted concerts featuring Spanish language, social justice, and pop songs, bucket drumming, American Sign Language, and choreography

Theatre/Drumming Instructor, Montclair, NJ Public Schools 2008 – 2011

- Instructed students K-5 in before and after school enrichment theatre and drumming classes
- Taught theatre games, improv, and script writing; directed students in their original scripts
- Conducted rhythm matching exercises and improvised jams with percussion instruments

English as a Second Language Teacher, Essex County College, NJ 2002 – 2003

- Designed lessons for adult learners in four skills language learning: speaking, reading, writing, and pronunciation using language scaffolding, audio-lingual drills, collaborative problem solving, interview and job skills; coached students in non-verbal communication, cultural idiosyncrasies and expectations
- Fostered welcoming, compassionate, fun, culturally diverse classroom environment, respectful of students' life experiences
- Taught students to write and perform scenes and dialogue about their daily lives at work and home

ESL Teacher, New York Association for New Americans 1989 – 1994

- See above
- Taught adult refugees from the former Soviet Union, Syria, and Iran