

Jessica Custer-Bindel

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EXPERIENCE

The Ithaca Care Collective - Ithaca, NY - Founder & Executive Director

October 2025-Present

Lead the development of a nonprofit childcare initiative that expands access to mutual aid-based drop-in care for underserved families. Partner with local community members and caregivers to design and implement the program, complete detailed project proposals, and secure a dedicated community venue. Build partnerships with neighborhood organizations to strengthen family support networks and increase childcare access across the community.

Freelance Grant Writer- Ithaca, NY

January 2009 - Present

Research philanthropic, government, and private institutions that provide grants to individuals and organizations. Write grant proposals and project plans, achieving a 95% approval rate. Collaborate with clients to develop proposals that highlight their work and align with funders' goals. Prepare follow-up grant reports and maintain communication with funding institutions.

ICSD, Fall Creek Elementary School - Ithaca, NY - First Grade Teacher

August 2024- June 2025

Taught a diverse group of first grade students. Implemented a Reggio-Emilia inspired Science program which tied in community resources and followed an emergent curriculum philosophy (child-initiated). Provided ELA and Math instruction which followed the ISCD curriculum map.

Shine Literacy - Cape Town, South Africa - Volunteer Instructor at Lourier Primary School

March 2024- June 2024

Provided individual and small group reading instruction which blended science of reading principles with storytelling and learning through play. Worked with first-third grade students who were struggling readers to develop positive dispositions for reading. Offered carefully structured hour-long literacy sessions which involved paired reading, share reading, have-a-go writing, and literacy games.

State University of New York, Cortland - Cortland, NY — Adjunct Lecturer

January 2023 - May 2023

Developed/delivered lectures in accordance with course objectives; prepared course syllabus and aligned learning objectives with course materials; and engaged students via Blackboard discussions, individual emails, and interactive classroom projects. Evaluated and graded student coursework, assignments, and papers in accordance with school policy; provided effective feedback to students. Collaborate with colleagues to address teaching and research issues.

SKILLS

Educator with 18+ years of teaching and curriculum planning experience in public schools, private schools, and higher education.

Experienced and effective grant writer with 15 years of experience finding and securing funding resources for important causes.

Over three years of supervisory experience.

Personal Grants and Awards

The Park Foundation - 2025

Social Service League Grant - 2025

Cornell Cooperative Extension Thriving Youth and Families Mini Grant - 2025

City Federation of Women's of Women's Organizations -2025

IPEI Teacher Grant - 2024

Teacher Artist in Residence at the Saltonstall Foundation - 2023

CAP Grant- 2022

ICSD, BJM Elementary School, Ithaca, NY — Kindergarten Teacher

August 2020 - June 2022

Taught a diverse group of learners, both on-line and in-person. Created lesson plans, conducted lessons, prepared assessments, and facilitated school/home connection. Served as the Kindergarten ICSD liaison for Kids Discover the Trail. Created and received a grant for "Cooking Around the World", a culturally inclusive curriculum. Created and successfully implemented a multidisciplinary outdoor education curriculum for our outdoor classroom.

Child Development Council, Ithaca, NY— Infant and Toddler Specialist of Tompkins County

July 2019 - July 2020

Provided on-site coaching, consultation, and technical assistance to infant and toddler caregivers and early childhood parents and educators across licensed childcare programs. Supported quality improvement efforts aligned with the NYS Early Learning Guidelines and Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS). Designed and facilitated professional development workshops focused on responsive caregiving, social-emotional development, and infant/toddler curriculum. Conducted developmental observations and offered individualized strategies to enhance classroom environments and child outcomes. Supported family engagement efforts through parent education, resource sharing, and culturally responsive outreach.

DICC, Ithaca, NY — Educational Guide

August 2017 - May 2018

Provided monthly staff development. Coached a staff of 65 on best teaching practices and conducted classroom observations. Provided strength based feedback for all observations. Ensured compliance with OCFS licensing regulations.

Child Development Council, Ithaca, NY — Childcare Specialist

July 2015 - July 2016

Conducted OCFS inspections for Family Daycare Providers. Supplied providers with resources, feedback, and guidance to assure they complied with New York State childcare regulations. Created and Presented a "Diversity and Inclusion" professional development workshop for Family Daycare and Group Family Daycare providers.

Community Nursery School, Ithaca, NY — Lead Teacher

August 2012-January 2014

Designed and set up the physical space of a new preschool classroom. Created and implemented an emergent, play based curriculum. Analyzed the program's needs, and petitioned for new materials. Organized and hosted parent events to create a classroom community. Set up a new parent communication model to foster a home-school connection.

El Museo Latinoamericano, Ithaca, NY — Director, Educator

January 2010-December 2012

Created, directed, and taught El Museo Latinoamericano, a sustainable 2nd and 3rd grade Spanish through expanded arts program. This program was funded through personal grants, and was picked up as a service learning course by Ithaca College.

IPEI Teacher Grant - 2021

IPEI Gold Teacher Grant - 2020

Sustainable Tompkins Mini Grant -2017

Cornell Public Service Center Civic Leader Fellowship-2012

Cornell Cooperative Extension - Robert Smith Grant-2011

NYC Children for Children Grant - 2010

New York City Board of Education ESL Success Initiative Grant -2009

Grants Written and Received for Non-profit Organizations

No Mas Lagrimas - The Community Foundation of Tompkins County - Fall Grant Cycle 2023

SingTrece - Community Arts Partnership -Arts Education Grant 2022

No Mas Lagrimas -The Community Foundation of Tompkins County - Spring Grant Cycle 2020

Black Hands Universal - The Community Foundation - Susan Christopherson Community Planning Fund 2020

Southside Community Center

Latin American Studies Program, Cornell, Ithaca, NY — LASP Program Manager,

October 2009- October 2010

As Program Manager for Cornell University's Latin American Studies Program (LASP), I directed all administrative, financial, marketing, and personnel operations to ensure efficient daily functioning and fiscal accountability. I managed events and film screenings, serving as co-publicist and press liaison, creating promotional materials, and coordinating logistics for visiting speakers and filmmakers. Collaborating with university departments and community partners, I worked to expand audience engagement and program visibility. I oversaw complex budgets, monitored income and expenditures, prepared monthly financial reports, and led the program's transition from WebFinancials to Kuali in coordination with Cornell's UBSC. Additionally, I supervised student employees, facilitated quarterly team meetings to enhance communication and development, and produced monthly reports evaluating activities, outcomes, and special project expenditures.

South Bronx Academy for Applied Media (MS296) New York, NY — ENL and Italian Teacher, Special Projects Coordinator, LEAP Arts Liaison,

August 2006 - June 2009

Developed MS296's first ELL and Italian program. Wrote and received a grant for \$65,000 for materials for the ELL program. Researched and ordered materials for the ELL grant and implemented their use. Created a pacing calendar and produced a presentation for the New York City Board of Education to demonstrate the successful implementation of grant materials. Analyzed the school's needs and collaborated with outside resources (LeAP Arts, Children for Children, Project BOOST) to provide the school with art, music, service learning, and cultural programs to meet those needs.

Coordinated events such as professional development sessions, visiting teacher schedules, award ceremonies, fundraisers, and assemblies. Created an innovative hands-on field trip curriculum through Project BOOST funding (the International Culture Club). Established, coordinated, and advised the school's first National Junior Honor Society chapter to promote academics within the school. Collaborated with non-profit organizations to develop funding opportunities and supplied feedback to supporting organizations for the implementation of funding and results.

Merit School, Barcelona, Spain — ENL Teacher, 2004-2006

Cedar Grove High School, Cedar Grove, New Jersey — Italian Teacher, 2003-2004

Livingston Avenue Child Development Center — PreK Assistant Teacher — 1997-1999

- Cornell Cooperative Extension—Healthy Food for All 2017

Southside Community Center- Sustainable Tompkins Mini Grant — Women Building Community 2017

Languages

Spanish, Italian, English.
Conversational Portuguese.

Board Memberships

The Community Foundation of Tompkins County
-Executive Board Member and Community Impact Committee Member (2019-2024)

Child Development Council of Tompkins County — Board Member (2022-present)

EDUCATION

State University of New York, Cortland, NY - M.Ed

2015

Hunter College, NYC, NY - Masters In ECE with a Bilingual Extension Program- 9 Graduate Credits completed

2009

Montclair State University/Rutgers University, Montclair, NJ/New Brunswick, NJ — BA

2002

Education, Italian

NYS Teaching Certificate - Early Childhood Education

NYS Teaching Certificate - Childhood Education

NYS Teaching Certificate - English as a New Language

NYS Teaching Certificate - Italian

NYS T-TAP Trainer Certification - 2020

Presentations:

Literacy Exploration through Cooking: A Pre-K Interactive Storytelling Session - ICSD Early Childhood Summer Program, 2023

Puppet Play and Purposeful Literacy. 7th Annual SUNY Cortland Literacy Conference, 2023

The Environment as the Third Teacher: Spaces, Places, and Aligning our Values to Our Practice. Ithaca City School District Professional Development Session, 2022

Statutes and Regulations Pertaining to Childcare. TC3 Childcare Center, 2020

Start Here: Supporting English Language Learners in Early Childhood Education. Ithaca Community Childcare Center, 2019

Cooking Around the World: An Interdisciplinary Educational Approach for Young Learners. SACC Conference, 2016

Creating Diverse Learning Environments in Early Childhood Education Settings. Ithaca Community Childcare Center, 2015