

Testimonials

I am a 2nd grade teacher at Central Park School for Children in Durham, NC, and I had the pleasure of getting to know Melissa Rooney as I was seeking an expert to come teach my students during a project we completed on “Great Artists”. As our class was studying an Aboriginal artist, a colleague connected me with Melissa based on her expertise in Australian culture, history, and art, and her excitement for sharing this passion with young students.

Melissa was wonderful to work with from the very beginning and was extremely dedicated to tailoring her presentation to match my student’s area of study, interest, and ability level. She sought to understand what our project was about and how her work would supplement my project curriculum in a meaningful way. She prepared a very thorough and engaging two-day workshop that immersed my students in Aboriginal culture and helped my students to make connections between the culture and the art that the aboriginals have produced. Melissa shared her didgeridoo with my students, demonstrated where it came from, and how it worked, and played it for them. They were enthralled with this interesting and unique experience and had great respect for her. My students searched for hollow sticks for weeks after her presentation, hoping to follow in the footsteps of the Aboriginals and find a suitable musical instrument to play themselves.

By looking at the response from my students, I could see instantly that Melissa is a gifted educator. My students asked questions to find out more about her experiences and to share their knowledge with her. Melissa brought in many artifacts and created a personal connection with my students. They talked about her presentation for weeks and shared their new knowledge with their peers and families at home. When Melissa came back a second day to complete an aboriginal line and dot art session with them, it was like they were welcoming an old friend into the classroom. She embraced our classroom culture and encouraged the students to be creative in their work.

Erica Bentley - Central Park School for Children

Dr. Rooney embodies the true spirit of an artist through her creative writing along with her unique education style when presenting her works to families and children. The fact that she believed so much in her first creation, *Eddie the Electron*, that she published and illustrated the book on her own is a true testament to her dedication to her craft.

Over the past 33 years, I have worked in four museums and one environmental education non- profit. If there is one thing that I am aware of, it is effective education. Dr. Rooney has supported my mission of science education through her creative, captivating, and informative books.

My work at both the Science Museum of Western Virginia and the Virginia Museum of Transportation as Director of Education has allowed me to invite Dr. Rooney to present educational workshops, offer author meet and greets and provide hands-on education to thousands of students, teachers and parents. From daytime classes during our Science Saturdays to multiple Roanoke STEAM Days since 2009.

I have also invited Dr. Rooney to present her books and supporting activities at the Children’s Area at our local Front Porch Festival in Stuart, Virginia. She always delivers smiles and awareness.

I find that her commitment to spending a significant amount of time to writing and educating others through her works to be amazing. We are continuing this partnership as we embark upon a sustainability series in my current non-profit, Clean Valley Council, where Dr. Rooney will present information about sustainable practices and how it connects to her book *Fate of a Frog*.

Courtney Carter Plaster - Executive Director - Clean Valley Council

I had the privilege of getting to know Melissa when I taught her son in the Second Grade. After sharing her background as a CAPS artist through the Durham Arts Council, Melissa conducted First and Second Grade workshops for the students in my multi-age classroom as well as the other Second Grade students in the grade level. Her workshops were aligned to the North Carolina Course of Study Science Standards and focused on the science of sound. She engaged students in a hands-on experiment involving a didgeridoo and lively discussion about sound waves, comparing sound to a 'tsunami' in an ocean of air molecules. As she dropped her son off for school later in the school year, students stopped to remind her about the 'tsunami' of sound.

Melissa continued to support students in their instruction when she read her book, *The Fate of the Frog*. Her text enriched student study of life cycles as they gained more information related to ecology, water resources, and conversation. Not only did her text teach students relevant information about the topic of study, but her reading of her own book gave students an image to see themselves as writers. She donated a copy of the text to our classroom library, and as students took turns reading the text, I overheard multiple students say they were going to write their own books one day. I'm excited to know that other children have the opportunity to experience her writing through her other texts as well, including *Eddie the Electron* and her upcoming book, *One Proud Black Cat*.

In addition to bringing her work to students, Melissa's work extends to supporting and empowering her local community. She has previously written columns for the Durham News and Raleigh News and Observer. She also teaches a writing and editing rotation for the Health Sciences graduate students at UNC Chapel Hill. Her blog attracts thousands of readers, especially when she writes about local issues...

Kathleen Janes - Public Elementary School Teacher and K-2 Literacy Integration Facilitator

As one of the owners of The Regulator Bookshop, I've seen first hand the positive impact that Melissa has had through her writing and literacy advocacy. Melissa has done multiple readings at The Regulator, through which she has brought the world of environmental and STEM education

into children's lives. Not only is Melissa a fantastic writer, she is also a wonderful performer. Her readings are both engaging and educational.

Additionally, Melissa has been an advocate for literacy and equity in children's literature in Durham's public school system. Melissa has shown a passion for allowing access to all members of the community to books and limiting the corporate school book fairs that sell more toys than they do books.

I've known Melissa since before we took over ownership of the store... Her art, advocacy, and enthusiasm for literature make the community a better place.

Elliot Berger, Ph.D - Co-owner The Regulator Bookshop

I am the past President and current Nature Park Committee Chair of the Kiwanis Club of Roanoke, Virginia. This year, we hired and are working with Melissa Rooney to create a children's picture book entitled "Larry (the Roanoke) Logperch," featuring this endangered fish struggling to survive in our waterway, the Roanoke River. In the Nature Park we are conserving and working to improve the water quality in this environmentally threatened area. We have placed a strong emphasis on community engagement in our project, working closely with the neighborhood and its children. We will be featuring the art work of public school students who live there.

Melissa has met with our committee repeatedly via Zoom, started "The Roanoke Logperch" Facebook page, and provided text, a glossary, other supplemental sections, preliminary conceptual illustrations, and ideas related to involving the children who live near the Nature Park. She is now in the final stages of collaborating with the illustrator, the Roanoke Artist in Residence Jane Gabrielle, under the direction (design, formatting and publishing) of the independent publisher @FrowardPress. Melissa has sought feedback from scientists who study the Roanoke Logperch and received enthusiastic support for the effort and style with which she has enabled "Larry (the Roanoke) Logperch" to educate local youth and their caretakers about the importance of sustainable practices and our ability and need to share the planet with all species. Melissa's playful and engaging approach toward educating children through her writing has been evident throughout, and we look forward to future collaboration with her in this regard.

Cheri W Hartman, PhD Kiwanis Club of Roanoke, Past President, Kiwanis Nature Park Chair

I am writing this letter to recommend Dr. Melissa Rooney as a CAPS artist. My name is Jennifer Duvall and I have worked at Lowe's Grove Middle School for eighteen years, most recently as AIG Facilitator.

I first met Dr. Rooney three years ago when her daughter enrolled at the school as an AIG student. For three years, I saw her as a highly dedicated and involved parent. She is extremely supportive of the entire staff and will help out in any capacity.

When I took on additional responsibility as the STEM Academy coordinator. Dr. Rooney was a guest speaker for my classes twice, and the students and I enjoyed it tremendously. Her background in Science makes her a fun and friendly expert for the students in my classes. She has helmed two workshops for the students Eddie the Electron and Water Conservation. Both workshops were highly engaging and fun. So fun and engaging, in fact, we have asked her to return later this month for a third.

I highly recommend Dr. Rooney as a CAPS artist. She is extremely knowledgeable, highly engaging, and (frankly) fun.

Jennifer Duvall - Teacher and AIG Facilitator ~ Lowe's Grove Middle School of Technology

Children's books are not Rooney's only published works. I have personally enjoyed her blog, because she discusses community concerns, often bringing light to environmental concerns – and making a difference. She is committed to spending the time and energy to shine a light on issues that range from the city's budget for green funding to a new STEM app grade-schoolers can adopt.

In addition to her writing, I can attest that Rooney is an astute editor and teacher, since she offers valuable commentary on my own work, as well as other writers'. Her writing is stunning and rich in imagery and creatively-inspired dialogue.

Finally, I know the city (Durham, NC) well, having been a member of the Board of Trustees of the Carolina Theater and a theater/music reviewer for Triangle Arts and Entertainment. I've spoken to various groups, held workshops, and have been a college administrator. I have great pride in Durham, and I know that Melissa Rooney shares that love for the city that stole both of our hearts. She's a good investment!

Dawn Reno Langley - Author of The Mourning Parade ~ Rewired Creatives

I met Melissa over a decade ago when I created the artwork for her self-published children's picture book *The Fate of a Frog*. Melissa used the book as an integral part of her teaching workshops in local libraries and museums in NC and VA in which students were taught the importance of Writing/Rhyme, Ecosystems and Local Waterways.

Taking what we learned from our first collaboration together, we published a hardback version of *The Fate of the Frog*, which won the Beverly Hills Book Award. Our first in-person meeting occurred when Melissa joined me for the book tour in my home state, Ohio. Together we cold-called and conducted readings at indie bookstores in the Columbus area, often performing several readings per day.

Melissa engaged the audiences at our book readings by leading the children in a craft project in which they were able to create tadpole plush dolls using recycled materials. One of the bookstore owners even commented that our reading was the highest attended children's book event her store had ever hosted.

The thing that sets Melissa apart is the effortless way in which she uses her craft to not only promote literacy but community as well. It is just as important for her to foster and support community programs as it is for her to produce quality writing. I have had the pleasure to work on several projects with Melissa and know first-hand how hard she works to create her own success.

Stacy Fabbre - Illustrator and Creative Writing Instructor - Thurber House