

CHATHAM METHODIST PRESCHOOL STAFF BIOS



Amy Crandall "Miss Amy"

Chatham Methodist Preschool Director

Amy has been with CMP for thirteen years. Time flies when you are having fun! Prior to joining the CMP community Amy worked as a 4th Grade teacher at Lafayette School, and also at St. Bridget's school in Jersey City.

Amy is most excited for you to experience all that CMP has to offer. To her it never gets old getting to know the students and watching them grow and discover so many things through learning. Amy loves the car line and welcoming students to school everyday! You may even see her husband Bob helping in the carline, it is a family affair.

Amy is a very active volunteer in the community. She helps lead the Chatham Historical Society, and the Chatham Twig. She loves working with members of our community, and when she's not busy with work or volunteering she enjoys reading, cooking, entertaining and spending time with her family on Cape Cod. Amy is married to Bob and together they have three kids: Jessica, Tim, & Mike.



Melissa Walker "Miss Melissa"

Assistant Director

Melissa is back for her fourth year as our Assistant Director. She has been keeping our budgets and books straight for many years, first as a volunteer on our Board and Executive Board and then most recently as our school Financial Manager. Melissa brings a sense of "zen" to our school with her extensive yoga practice. She has even taught our CMP students yoga. When she is not in the office, she enjoys reading, traveling, and going to the beach. Melissa's three children, Caroline, Charlie and Jude, have attended CMP and still talk about their fond memories. One of her favorite CMP traditions is the Muffins with Mom. Melissa loves balanced books, carline duty and all the children's smiling faces.

Colleen Carey “Miss Colleen”

Almost 2s Lead Teacher in the Green Room



We welcome back Colleen for her fifth year at CMP in the Green Room! Before Colleen joined us she worked in public relations, working with children's charities. She truly loved working with these kids and decided to make a career change, pursuing a job in teaching and we're lucky she did! Colleen loves painting and art, exercise and walking her dog, Charli. Speaking of her future, Colleen is expanding her family with the addition of Kyle, her fiancé, and his children Brynn and Jack (13 year old twins). She is also mom to her four sons: Ryan, Brendan, Peter and Shep. Colleen can often be found cheering her sons on at the lacrosse field and is looking forward to meeting next year's parents and their children at CMP!

Laura Schmidt “Miss Laura”

Almost 2s Assistant Teacher in the Green Room



We couldn't be more excited to welcome Laura to the CMP teaching staff! Laura has been a CMP parent for years and now she will use her years of teaching experience to guide our two year olds in the Green Room in fun and learning. Laura has 15 years of experience teaching 4th and 5th grade special education at Eisenhower Intermediate School in Bridgewater, NJ. She has tutored several children in many areas specifically using her Reading Specialist Certification. She's most excited to share in the joy and excitement her new little friends feel as they embark on their school journey. Laura lives with her husband Andy, three sons, Nolan, Mason and Rylan (all CMP alum!) and lab mix, Morrison. When she's not at CMP, she enjoys reading, skiing, crafting, and spending time on the lake in

Cooperstown, NY with her family.

Rachael Welz “Miss Rachael”

Almost 2s & Two's Assistant Teacher in the Green Room



We are so excited to welcome back Rachael as an Assistant Teacher in the 2s and Almost 2s class after years of being part of the CMP community as a parent, board member and yoga teacher. Rachael has many years of childcare experience including babysitting and working in a daycare as well as raising her own four children, Audrey, Lily, Brendan and Thomas (all CMP alumni!). She has taught yoga to CMP students for years after receiving her 200 hour RYT certification and 30 hour children's yoga certification. You may also recognize her for her years teaching at Powerflow in Chatham. Rachael enjoys gardening and listening to music and lives in Chatham with her husband Rob and four children. She is most excited to spend time getting to know and nurturing the youngest CMP students and being a part of the wonderful community of CMP staff.



Jennifer Blunda “Miss Jen”

Lead Teacher in the Two’s Green Room

Welcome back Jen to the CMP family! Last year, Jen was the Assistant Teacher for the Green Room and this year she will lead the team. After teaching 4th and 5th grades in Jersey City for many years, Jen took time off to raise her three children, Tommy, Bella and Olivia. During her years staying home with her children, she dedicated many hours to volunteering at their schools, St. Vincent Martyr and St. Peter’s Prep. Now she’s ready to get back into teaching and can’t wait to get to know all the 2 year olds in the Green Room. She’s most excited to explore each of their minds and figure out how each of them learn best. She also can’t wait to work with the CMP team! In her free time, Jen likes to spend time with her children, traveling for lacrosse and field hockey, volunteering and relaxing at the beach in LBI. She also loves spending time with her many nieces and nephews.



Rachael Welz “Miss Rachael”

Almost 2s & Two’s Assistant Teacher in the Green Room

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Stefanie Cutler “Miss Stefanie”

Two’s Assistant Teacher in the Green Room

We can’t wait for you to meet the newest member of the CMP Family! Miss Stefanie worked as a teacher in Jersey City Public Schools after earning her teaching degree from St. Peter’s University. She has three children, Brianna, James and Allison and has been a dedicated volunteer at St. Vincent Martyr School for over 18 years. Stefanie and her husband Jamie live in Madison and love being a part of the community. When she is not at school you can find her walking and taking care of her two dogs, Maddie and Murphy. She is most excited to work in the Green Room with our 2 year olds and Miss Jen and Miss Rachael.



Karen Laferriere "Miss Karen"

Lead Teacher in the Two's Red Room

Karen is very excited to return to CMP as the Lead Teacher for our 2-year-olds. She graduated from Boston College with degrees in Elementary Education and French. She taught second and third grades in the Basking Ridge public schools prior to becoming a stay at home mom to her five children. Karen has enjoyed volunteering at schools and becoming involved in all her children's activities. Karen truly enjoys spending family time with her husband Rob and her children Sophie (25), Alex (23), Harry (22), Jack (20) and Phoebe (16). She can be found cheering at ice hockey, lacrosse, football and field hockey games as well as swim meets. If you see her in an LA Kings Hockey jersey on the playground, she must have borrowed it from her oldest son Alex, who plays for the franchise!



Amanda Collins "Miss Mandy"

Assistant Teacher for the Two's Red Room

We welcome Mandy back to our CMP family! Mandy has had a career in advertising, law and real estate before the classroom. She brings skills in making things look good, negotiation, and staking claim to territory; she has all the skills she needs for the 2 year old classroom. Mandy lives in Summit with her husband Tim. She has 3 children, Maddie, Kelly and Brennan. She is most excited to work with all of the children and the amazing staff at CMP. When she is not in the classroom, you can find her on the pickleball court playing, paddle boarding and doing needlepoint.

Kirsten Williams “Miss Kirsty”

Lead Teacher in the Three’s Purple Room



Kirsten has a rich history in childhood education. Between 1999 and 2002 she taught 8th-12th grade Biology and Natural Science and was also a 4th grade teacher in South Africa, where Kirsten and her husband Bradley grew up. In 2002 Kirsten and Bradley moved to the USA and settled in Brooklyn, NY where Kirsten taught 7th & 8th grade science at St. Francis of Assisi School for 18 months. Kirsten took a break from formal work at the end of the 2004 school year, deciding to stay home with her children. Kirsten was also responsible for child care (ages 6 months to 5 years) for the Walking with Purpose Ministry at St. Patrick’s church. It was there she renewed her love for working with little ones. Kirsten has worn a few hats at CMP; floating teacher’s assistant and Lead Teacher for the Almost 2s and 2s. She really enjoys the intimate setting of the Purple Room. In her free time Kirsten really enjoys being creative, reading, cooking and baking and of course spending time with her husband Bradley and their three children: Rachel, Samuel and Katherine.

Lauren Walsh “Miss Lauren”

Assistant Teacher in the Three’s Purple Room



We are thrilled to welcome Lauren Walsh as the new Assistant Teacher in the Purple Room! She has been substitute teaching at CMP for a few years and we couldn't be happier to have her join our staff. She will be a familiar face to CMP students and families! Lauren has a Masters degree in Early Childhood/Special Education and many years experience teaching in Brooklyn and Summit. Lauren lives in Madison with her daughter and two sons. In her free time she enjoys walking, reading and volunteering as PA President at her children's school. She is so excited to explore and learn together with her new class!



Laura Grosso “Mrs. Grosso”

Lead Teacher in the Three’s Yellow Room

Years ago Laura was a member of the CMP community as a parent, and that student has graduated college! We are thrilled to have her back at our school. Laura’s past teaching experiences include both as a 1st Grade Teacher in Maplewood and a 3rd Grade Teacher in West Orange. She is the mother of six children: 5 boys Christopher (25), Matthew (23), Patrick (21), Ryan (19) and Quin (16) and one daughter, Madeline (14). She and her husband Chris have raised their family here in Chatham. Laura is most excited to get to know the children and watch them grow. When Laura is not at a sporting event for one of her children, she loves to run and exercise. She loves gardening, reading, cooking and entertaining. She can be found at the beach during the summer where she takes long walks with her dog. We are not sure how she fits it all in! But once you get to know her, the thing that sticks out the most is that Laura loves to laugh and be around children!



Chelsea Marinovich “Miss Chelsea”

Assistant Teacher for the Three’s Yellow Room

We are so excited to welcome Chelsea back to the CMP Team! Chelsea and her husband, Serge, moved to Chatham 10 years ago, and have two boys, Stefan (12) and Leo (10). Before moving to Chatham, Chelsea worked in book publishing, and maintains a love of reading. Last year, she assumed responsibility for your Tower Garden and she has taken growing, learning and playing to new heights. Not to mention she makes a wonderful salad. She is most excited to see these sweet little friends form bonds and have fun together!

Chelsea loves to cook (and eat!), often can be found with her nose in a book, playing with her kids and spending time with family and friends. She is incredibly excited to be a part of the CMP teaching team, and looks forward to working with your children!



Dina Rizzo “Miss Dina”

Assistant Teacher for the Three’s Yellow Room

Dina is very excited to be returning to the Yellow room for another year of growth, learning, fun, hugs and many many laughs. Dina is married to her husband Ben and together they have three children: Dylan (11) Winnie (8) and Beau (6). Dina has been a Broadway actress, a music teacher, worked in the fashion industry and has even taught an improv session to college students at Tulane! She has worn many hats but assistant teaching 3 year olds is quickly becoming a favorite. She adores watching the kids grow, share, work as a team, learn to follow rules and best of all develop an enthusiasm for school! She is looking forward to developing relationships with each of her students and seeing their smiling faces everyday.



Nicole Ross “Miss Nicole”

Lead Teacher for the Fours’s Blue Room

Nicole is thrilled to be returning to the blue room this year! Before coming to CMP Nicole was a 1st grade teacher for three years at St. Vincent Martyr School in Madison. She also taught preschool at a nearby Presbyterian Church Nursery School in Morristown and Milton Avenue School. Nicole has four children: Will (18), Lena (17), Adele (15), and Ian (13). She also has four fur children: Portia, Annie, Sasha and Buddy and actually has a fifth if you count her bunny named Daisy. Nicole enjoys fostering puppies (46 and counting!), walking, and singing. Nicole is most excited for the opportunity to see her students grow and learn at CMP. She also loves to hear their laughs and see their smiles.



Mary Reynolds “Miss Mary”

Assistant Teacher for the Four’s Blue Room

This is Mary’s 21th year with CMP! Prior to starting here, she was the administrative assistant to the Youth Minister at St Patrick’s Church. She is looking forward to meeting and creating new relationships with the children and their families. She enjoys seeing her old friends from the Green Room and those she taught the last few years in the 4s program. She always loves to see how they have grown! When Mary isn’t at school, she enjoys spending time with her husband, Patrick and their three sons: Nicholas (31), Michael (29) and Daniel (25). With Michael and Nicholas recently married, she has lots to celebrate . She also loves walking, reading, and being with friends.



Megan Decker “Mrs. Decker”

Lead Teacher to the Four/Five’s Orange Room

Megan joined the CMP family in 2019. She has been enhancing the learning of our 4/5 students for several years. She may also seem familiar as some of you may know her from her work as a swim instructor at Lifetime Athletic or at any local pool where she is known to give lessons. She was awarded the Swim Coach of the Year, but to us she really shines in the Orange Room! She also previously taught technology at Saint Patrick’s School. Megan has an abundance of experience engaging with children and is most excited for the opportunity to enhance and explore the imagination and curiosity of the students at CMP. When she is not teaching, Mrs. Decker enjoys spending time with her husband Scott and their family: Ryan (25), Aidan (24), Cullen (22) and Flynn (20). They love going to the beach and cheering on her boys at the Lacrosse field.



Shelly Cutlip “Mrs. Cutlip”

Assistant Teacher to the Four/Five’s Orange Room

Shelly is excited to return to the Orange Room for the fifth year! She enjoys collaborating with our teachers, building trusting relationships with families and engaging students in a caring learning environment. She loves being a part of the CMP family! Shelly has lived in Chatham for 17 years raising her four children: Chris, Gabriella, Nick and John. She is excited to teach young kids, all of her own are college students and young adults. She has been a member of the CMP community for a while now as one of her own children even went to CMP! She loves the honesty, imagination and innocence of our students. When she is not at school, she can be found running, reading, traveling, spending time with her husband, Justin and her family.