

Transcript: Meet Deena

Hi, I'm Dr. Deena Kara Shaffer. My pronouns are she and her, and it has been a total delight to work on this Thriving in the Classroom project, in particular, my space of academic resilience, and that languaging means something to me around making more freedom for students, putting a whole bunch of stepping stones, skills and capacities and disruptions and provocations along a student's path in order to be in service of wherever a student wants to go. And what continues to drive me in this area, I suppose, is, you know, I'm a teacher and supporter and strategist all to do with learning.

And so when I'm in a classroom space or any kind of learning space in real life or digital, I want a student to learn something or contemplate or interact or produce something, many things, and the student is trying to integrate and hold and intersect with... they're trying to keep afloat, they're trying to comprehend and make connections. And we just have this encounter between the teaching type person and the learner type person alongside each other and the academic journey. But so much else is there. So much else is there underneath the surface of things. Hidden curriculum is there, all the kinds of assumed ways of doing and being and knowing.

A whole student's life is there and what pulls at them and the weights that they hold and their wisdoms that they come with. So academic resilience in this work has something to do around naming that and centering that. That a student's struggles along the way, some of them are personal and some of them are systemic. Sometimes students are so harmfully, pushed to the margins. And I want to be part of making truly disruptive and long lasting and excellently welcoming spaces where learning can be healing, where learning can be nourishing, where learning can be joyful.

So I want to give as many strategies as possible to educators and to students so that there's the possibility of a freer time about things, that there's an acknowledgement of all that lies under the surface that can't possibly all be named. But we can at least recognize that it's there, that so much can interfere or hold back or compress or make impossible learning or bouncing forward or thriving or excelling. And I want to be part of that uplift in learning, really, to be in service of students wherever they're headed, wherever they want to go.

Thanks.