



Melissa J. Collesano

AUTHOR, ILLUSTRATOR

Former NBA Dancer, Teacher, Librarian

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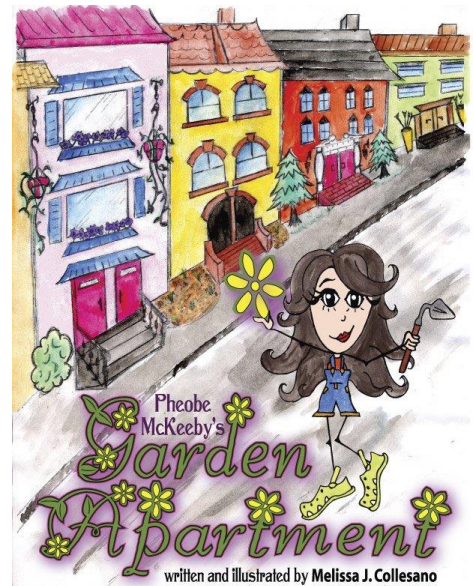
Three Cheers for Books

A former NBA dancer, promoting enthusiasm on the court or the field was always right up my alley. I enjoyed cheering on my team through good spells and bad and found later on when I became a teacher that being a cheerleader is exactly what you need to be when you're in the field of education. Molding young minds takes creativity. If you don't think naming the states is fun, your students won't either. Finding a way to make it enjoyable is a craft. Teaching becomes enjoyable when you enjoy it. Children find learning enjoyable when they feel your energy. It's not easy doing the same routine every day, be it on the court or in the classroom. It takes practice, strong will and heart. But when you know exactly what your game plan is, your crowd can follow suit.

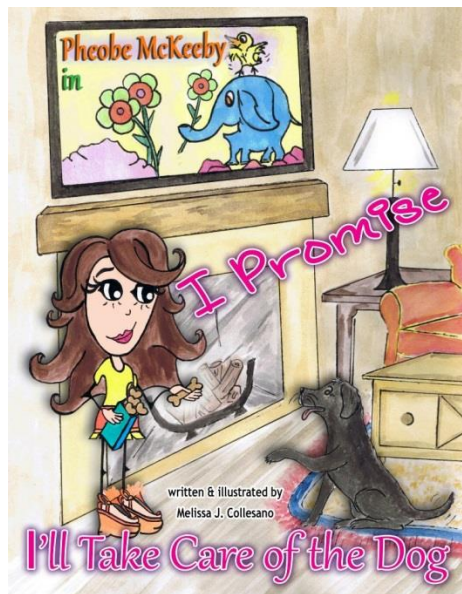
Besides teaching and performing, I would do appearances with the dancers. "*Stay in School*" assemblies (as they were called) specifically stand out in my mind. They were held at schools, the actual arena, or any other large venue sponsoring the event. Players, coaches, and dancers would encourage students to stay in school no matter what their obstacle. Even if their dream was to be a pro ball player, successfully attending and completing school was stressed to be their first objective. Its purpose was to reel students in from just going through the motions or wanting to drop out and redirecting their focus on completing that goal of a high school degree. The 'bigger' idea was to achieve a set goal, feel its reward and hopefully create a 'set and achieve' pattern as a foundation for other successes in their future.

Participating in these events, I could see how important it was that these NBA professional figures (including myself) display good character on and off the court. Youngsters, teens and quite frankly most of the 'staffulty' looked doe-eyed at these sports figures, craving their advice and direction --hanging on their every word and analyzing the tone in which every word was said. Anyone in a leadership role should aim to set good examples; but in my case I saw firsthand how sports figures really had an impact because of their exposure and huge fan base. It was at that point that I knew how important it was to help show the audience that money and power don't buy a person character; it's the character in a person that help map out their true status.

I have always been very creative and when the opportunity to write and illustrate my first book presented itself, I jumped on it. My story is a simple one but it's impact has been life changing. I was living in my first apartment while holding a media specialist position in an elementary school. On a beautiful afternoon, I decided to go outside, clean up my modest and neglected garden, and add bright white rocks to the area to give it new life. When I arrived home later that day, I noticed bright red flowers planted in my garden! I was literally dumbfounded and stood there speechless just looking at it in wonderment! My neighbor leaned out from her window and explained that the neighbors were delighted to see me taking initiative in sprucing up the area and wanted to help by giving me something in return. I was so moved by their generosity that I had to share the story of this true act you think only happens to others—if at all. The premise of the book, therefore, was written around the character trait, **generosity** and *Pheobe McKeeby's Garden Apartment* hit the shelves.



My second book, *Pheobe McKeeby in I Promise I'll Take Care of the Dog*, focuses on **responsibility**. Pheobe, the main character in this character trait series, is smart and sassy and loves her high heel shoes. But when it comes to getting a dog, her mother needs to sit her down and explain to her that owning a dog isn't as simple as a wink and a walk. They break down the responsibilities and she's made aware of the goings on of taking care of a "new member of the family." Pheobe's parents feel comfortable with the steps they took as a family to learn what's expected of each of them and later present Pheobe with a paw-tastic surprise!



Pheobe McKeeby in When in Rome Do as the Romans Do, is the third book in the series. Pheobe learns of the character trait, **graciousness**, after her mother picks up on her snooty reluctance to try new foods at a friend's house. Pheobe is beside herself and pleads her case, "she prepared PB & J using apricot jelly instead and when it came time for my beloved boxed brand mac and cheese by the batch, she actually made it by grating three cheeses from scratch?!" Her mom explains to her that silly lies to avoid experiencing new things may not be the best route for her. Being in a new place means doing and trying the things that you might not ordinarily do but it can be fun, almost like a game. By exposing yourself to other foods, you may be entering a wonderful new world of fun things to eat! Pheobe allows herself to try and finds her mom's advice was one that would happily lead her to a full belly. (I'm still working on the illustrations. Print date should be later this year.)

*I love sharing my stories with children of all ages. My plotlines are ones in which readers young and old find joy in reading. If you would like to have me come to your school, club, library, or event and share some of my books and experiences, please give me a call anytime for an Author Visit. I tailor my presentations toward any age range. Also having been a media specialist in a high school, I enjoy speaking with older kids as well --my books, artwork, NBA dance/cheer background and goal-setting all encompass a mixture of developing admirable character traits as well. Some topics never go out of style. (**My books can be ordered through [Follett](#) and most other vendors.)*

Stop by my site: bookbabe.net
and Facebook pages: [Melissa J. Collesano \(author\)](#) and [Book Babe](#)

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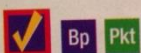
I hope to see you for your next event.
Until then, keep cheering on your readers!



A.C.E. CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT **Pete Collesano, creator and presenter**

If you're interested in having a character development presentation geared totally toward teachers and administrators, I invite you reach out to my former colleague and my husband, Pete Collesano. We met while teaching at the same HS, you know the story of 'football coach woo's librarian!' Truth be told he is an avid reader!

Now a high school teacher at Eagle Academy EHT, NJ, Pete has had the opportunity to speak consecutively at the NJEA Convention. Being a witness to his teaching/coaching tactics in a school setting and seeing his presentations firsthand, it's no wonder he achieves standing ovations from his audiences. His message, tips, and enthusiasm will have your teachers feeling more comfortable to tackle everyday obstacles in and out of the classroom be it in your club, sports team, nurse's office or even in the hallways. Leading students with his character development tools will not only help you rethink your teaching habits for more effective outcomes, it will have you shouting out for more! **For more information contact Pete directly: 609-226-4111 petecollesano@yahoo.com**



iLead: 5 Must Have Leadership Skills in Today's Classrooms

Friday: 3 - 4:30 p.m. Room 316

Presenter: Peter A. Collesano

The teacher has to be the leader of the classroom.
This talk will focus on how teachers can be the best
leader for the best results in their classrooms.