

## **CILEM KANCA**

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## **BIOGRAPHY**

Born on May 21, 1989, in Trabzon/Of, Cilem Kanca is a married mother of five who has been living in the United States for over a decade, working closely with Turkish families primarily in New Jersey and New York. She graduated from Gazi University, Faculty of Education, Department of Foreign Languages, with a degree in German Language Teaching. She completed her master's degree in Special Education at CUNY Brooklyn College, with a minor in Early Diagnosis. Currently, she is pursuing her doctoral studies at Rutgers University. Cilem works in the American public school system as a special education teacher/therapist, specializing in early diagnosis and family guidance. During this time, she has closely observed the challenges Turkish families face in the education system and has actively developed solutions to support them. Additionally, she provides voluntary counseling and guidance to Turkish families in need. Cilem is also the **General Secretary of TASC (Turkish American Steering Committee)**.

The assimilation and integration challenges faced by Turkish families in the United States often have negative impacts, particularly on children with special education needs and their families. With her deep understanding of both Turkish cultural values and the American family structure, Cilem guides families through these processes, ensuring that children adapt more effectively to their educational environments. Through her education, professional experience, and commitment to Turkish identity and values, she continues to support Turkish families in the U.S., improving their quality of life and strengthening their children's educational development.

## **EDUCATION**

Rutgers University (05/2020 – Present)

Doctorate (Ed.D) – Educational Leadership: Special Education Concentration

CUNY Brooklyn College (08/2017 – 12/2019)

Master of Arts (M.A.) – Early Childhood & Art Education (Special Education/Early Intervention Extension)

Gazi University, Faculty of Education (10/2007 – 06/2014)

German Language Teaching

## **LANGUAGES**

English – Advanced

German – Intermediate

## **CERTIFICATIONS**

Preschool Teaching (P-3)

Advanced Early Intervention Certificate

Family-Centered Practices (Embedded Coaching)

Expertise in Reggio Emilia, Montessori, and Creative Curriculum approaches

## **PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE**

Wharton Borough School District (08/2024 – Present)

Preschool Lead Teacher / Early Intervention & Family Guidance Specialist

Mendham Township Elementary School (03/2023 – 06/2024)

Special Education Teacher (Special Education Integrated Classroom)

Kilpatrick EW Elementary School (08/2022 – 03/2023)

Preschool Teacher (Special Education & General Education Integrated Classroom)

Bergen Family Center (08/2021 – 06/2022)

Preschool Teacher / Early Intervention Specialist

Maarif School (12/2019 – 06/2021)

Long-Term Substitute Teacher & Turkish Folk Dance Trainer

Chester M. Stephens Elementary School (12/2019 – 06/2021)

Librarian

Apple Montessori Schools (08/2018 – 08/2019)

Teacher (Kindergarten)

Sweet Home Early Childhood Center (03/2017 – 09/2018)

Family Therapist / Early Intervention Specialist

Başkent University (10/2007 – 06/2011)

Turkish Folk Dance Trainer

## **REFERENCES**

Dr. Halil Mutlu – +1 413-446-7033

Nicole Kimble – nkim5779@gmail.com

Laura Garcia – lgarcia136@gmail.com

Prof. Dr. Muhammet Kocak – muhammetkocak@gazi.edu.tr