



## TEACHING ARTIST PROFILE and APPLICATION

Date of Application: August 19, 2016

Artist Name: Julie York Coppens

Address: 125 Troy Ave., Juneau AK 99801

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Email Address: jycoppens@gmail.com

1. I am available to work/teach (check all that apply):

\_\_\_\_\_ in 1-2 week residency period only

  x   I am flexible and could work different times

\_\_\_\_\_ I can work 1 day per week for a month or more

\_\_\_\_\_ I could work part days, different times

2. Please describe your arts education and/or arts background.

Since earning a B.A. in Journalism and Theatre from Indiana University – Bloomington in 1994, I've spent most of my career on the journalism side, working as an arts critic (most recently at the *Charlotte Observer* in North Carolina) and as a staff editor for *Dramatics* magazine and *Teaching Theatre* journal, publications of the Educational Theatre Association, a national nonprofit based in Cincinnati. For twelve years I've run Thespian Playworks, EdTA's annual high school playwriting contest and script development program, which culminates in a weeklong residency at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln: five plays, professionally staffed and student-cast, getting up on their feet for the first time. I'm an actor, director, produced playwright, musician (voice, piano, baritone ukulele), dancer, creative costumer, general arts historian and community connector. I've volunteered frequently in my daughter's schools (Harborview and Montessori Borealis), leading music and drama/movement activities tailored to teachers' needs and helping with productions; I've been a producer/musical director for Northern Lights Junior Theatre, led music and drama and video projects for Girl Scouts of Southeast Alaska, taught my popular Broadway Boot Camp (fitness + show tunes) for Juneau Dance Theatre, and assisted Juneau Public Libraries with some of their arts-ed programming; I've been a Mudrooms musical guest and a First Friday performer at Kindred Post, among other local gigs. I've traveled widely and seen and read many, many plays—although moving to Alaska in 2012 taught me how much culture I have yet to explore.

3. Which Art Forms are you interested in teaching, and how will you incorporate them into the classroom? Please list all, and indicate preferences if any. Also indicate what age children you prefer to work with.

I'm a theatre generalist, a Jill of all trades, a creative "big box" store in human form, ready to pull out whatever's needed to bring a particular curricular area to life. Some subjects "dramatize" or "musicalize" more readily than others—history and literature, for instance—but I've also written songs for second-grade science lessons and used ensemble choreography to illustrate mathematical concepts like multiples and fractions. Got a problem? I have a play for that!

I've happily worked with students of all ages.

4. What themes, concepts, and experiences do you want to share with students?

I've developed a few specific programs which I'd be happy to expand to more schools. Last year, for instance, I ran a successful pilot at Montessori Borealis called Nitbusters, working with the JSD health team and teachers to develop a fun (really!) approach to head lice awareness, prevention, and eradication. I created a "Nitbuster" character (like a Ghostbuster, only armed with combs and conditioner instead of a ray-gun), visiting classrooms and humorously but informatively quizzing kids on head lice facts and misconceptions; the next day I'd go in with a couple of intrepid parent volunteers, again in full haz-mat gear, to comb-check each

student and teach them how to check themselves. This is called “applied theatre,” and it works! The kids are all asking me when the Nitbusters are coming back, and I also heard from many appreciative parents.

Most of all, I want to give more students the opportunity to make their own theatre, deciding what stories *they* want to tell and taking them from page to stage, working with and for one another. Obviously the methods for doing this will vary depending on students’ age and experience; for younger ones, I might start by having them turn a favorite picture book into a series of living tableaux, whereas I might guide high school students through a process of scripting and video-producing short “film trailers” of their own life stories, complete with dramatic musical underscoring and over-the-top narration.

Few experiences are more powerful than seeing ourselves truly reflected in a work of art, especially a live performance shared with an audience.

5. Please list or describe any prior teaching experiences you may have had (apart from residencies)

I’ve been teaching informally for most of my life—as a summer camp music and drama counselor all through high school and college; as a parent and longtime school and Girl Scout volunteer; and as an arts journalist for more than twenty years, a job that’s forced me to develop expertise in a lot of cultural areas very quickly while guiding readers (whether the young readers of *Dramatics* or the general audience of a daily newspaper) to experience and appreciate the arts more deeply. I’ve taught workshops for high school and college students on critical reviewing, understanding Shakespeare, and more; I’ve choreographed and taught theatre dance classes for youth and adults, primarily at the International Thespian Festival; I’ve introduced pre-schoolers to improvisational playwriting using puppets; I’ve gotten roomfuls of grown-ups up on their feet singing goofy campfire songs like “Forty Years on an Iceberg,” complete with hand motions. I’ve mentored dozens of teen-aged writers through the Thespian Playworks program and beyond—just got off the phone, in fact, with a 2010 Playworks alumna, now a college senior, who sent me her latest play-in-progress asking for feedback.

Outside of the arts, for twenty years I’ve been a volunteer instructor/guide and guide trainer for Ski for Light, Inc., a national nonprofit that introduces visually and mobility-impaired adults to the sport of cross-country skiing. That experience has taught me how to break down complicated tasks into teachable chunks, and how to “translate” one teaching method (i.e., a visual demo) into others (using word-pictures or touch-modeling, say) based on the needs and abilities of particular students.

Finally, because I’ve worked as an editor in the arts-ed field for so long, I speak teachers’ language. When they talk about the Standards, about anchors and scaffolding and formative and summative assessments, I get it, and I know how to build those tools into my lessons.

6. Why do you want to teach the arts in Juneau schools?

We have an incredible teaching corps here in Juneau – I’ve been impressed by every educator I’ve met, and personally inspired by many of them. I can’t magically give our schools the resources needed to make the arts integral to every student’s education, but I can help a few teachers stretch the resources they have, further, giving more students the chance to Create, Perform, Respond, and Connect. If our kids don’t learn and practice these skills now, we are in big trouble. I know my own daughter is getting her RDA of the arts, to her lifelong benefit, but too many of her peers are not.

7. Past Experience with Artist in the Schools residencies: (list all) None to Date: \_\_\_X\_\_\_

8. Have you participated in the **Juneau Teaching Artist Academy series?**

\_\_\_\_\_ I have completed the series \_\_\_\_\_ I participated in some of the series \_\_\_x\_\_\_ No, not yet  
(Registered for September seminar)

9. Please list three references who could be contacted about your work and teaching experience. Include name, phone number and email address for each.

1) Cory Crossett, Montessori Borealis, [cory.crossett@juneauschools.org](mailto:cory.crossett@juneauschools.org); 907-209-2836

- 2) Zach Stenson, Harborview Elementary, [Zachary.stenson@juneauschools.org](mailto:Zachary.stenson@juneauschools.org); 907-209-9833
- 3) Shelly Wright, administrator of Northern Lights Junior Theatre, [shellyw@seconference.org](mailto:shellyw@seconference.org); 907-586-4351.
- 4) Joan Pardes, Girl Scouts of Southeast Alaska, [joaninak@gmail.com](mailto:joaninak@gmail.com); 907-209-3811

9. Provide any additional comments or additions that might help illuminate your work or life as an artist.

A few work samples and video links sent via email to Jen LaRoe.

