



Juneau Arts and Humanities Council – Juneau School District  
**PARTNERS IN EDUCATION**

**2012-13 TEACHING ARTIST PROFILE and APPLICATION\***

Name: Geoff Kirsch  
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**Preferred Method for contact:** email and phone

**I am available to work/teach**

X in 1 - 2 week residency period only  X I am flexible, could work different times  
 can work 1 day/week for a month or more  X could work part days, different times

**Arts Education and/or Arts Background**

BS in Communications with concentration in Creative Writing  
MFA in Creative Writing: Fiction  
New York State Summer Writer’s Institute

**ART FORM(s) and AGE OF STUDENTS** you are interested in working with

Any type of writing – fiction, creative non-fiction, humor, stage or screenplay writing.  
All ages

**What themes, concepts, experiences do you want to share with students?**

Writing is not scary; it can be fun, easy and something anyone can do

**Prior Teaching Experiences**

College level writing at University of Alaska and City University of New York  
Workshops in Juneau, through Community Schools and public libraries

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

To give back to the community by working with kids. To instill a love of writing with as many people as I can.

**Past Experience with Artist in the Schools residencies:** None to Date:  X

**Have you been part of the Juneau Teaching Artist workshop series?**

X Yes, whole series  Yes, some of the workshops  No, not yet

**3 REFERENCES**

1. Jonas Lamb, Outreach Librarian, Juneau Public Libraries, 907-586-5324, [jonasl@juneau.lib.ak.us](mailto:jonasl@juneau.lib.ak.us)
2. Sarah Kirk, Associate Professor, UAA, 907-786-6851, [afsjk@uaa.alaska.edu](mailto:afsjk@uaa.alaska.edu)
3. Libby Stringer, Managing Editor, Capital City Weekly, 907-723-0171, [fresh@libbyis.com](mailto:fresh@libbyis.com)

**Other Comments** or additions that help illuminate your work or life as an artist

I’m a writer, and by that I mean I can and do work in all genres of writing: fiction, non-fiction, humor, stage plays, screen plays, even children’s poetry, in addition to commercial writing work. My first love is fiction, which I’ve been writing seriously since the summer of 1996 when I spent six eye-opening weeks at the New York State Writer’s Institute at Saratoga Springs, NY., meeting and learning from such esteemed writers as

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Joyce Carol Oates, Michael Ondaatje and Oscar Hijuelos. When I returned to college in the fall, I switched out of the pre-med track I was on and dove headlong into creative writing and have been at it ever since – 16 years now and I’m only 36. I received my MFA in Creative Writing from New School University in 2005, months before my wife and I moved from New York City to Alaska and published every story from my thesis in national literary journals.

My second love – outside of my wife and family obviously – is the teaching of writing. While a student in the MFA program I mentored inmates through the PEN Prison Writing Program, and went on to teach composition at the college level, first in the City University of New York system, then in the University of Alaska system. I also taught ninth grade biology at an inner city public school in Brooklyn, which, until I had my own children, was the most challenging and rewarding thing I’d ever done. When I moved to Juneau in the fall of 2006 I was working steadily as a freelance writer but continued my own creative work, ultimately producing Juneau Douglas Little Theater’s annual *24 Hour Miracle*, specifically to offer local writers and actors the opportunity to write and act for a project that would only take up one day of their time. I also began writing a bi-weekly humor column in *the Juneau Empire* and began teaching myself the fine art of creative non-fiction, specifically magazine/newspaper profile writing. And I also wrote humor – for pay and also for myself – for such outlets as the Huffington Post and Comedy Central. Ultimately, I found myself missing the classroom and so in addition to all this taught night sessions of creative writing workshops for the Juneau Community Schools adult education program until the responsibilities of a stay-at-home fatherhood plus a writing career proved too time consuming.

Now my children attend pre-school and I find myself with more time to devote to writing and teaching, which, as I mentioned, I like to keep in balance with each other. It’s a rare opportunity for Juneau’s public school system to learn from a real working writer, just as it is a rare opportunity for a real working writer to be able to work so closely with public school children. I can inspire them; they can inspire me. The biggest lesson I teach my students, regardless of age, is that everyone has a story to tell – it’s just a matter of figuring out the best way to tell it. There are all sorts of strategies, approaches, and tricks that can make writing – which many people find daunting – easy and fun. Of course, writing comes with its share of heartache, but that, too, is part of what makes the process so enjoyable and ultimately satisfying. I would love to help instill these ideals in the children of this town and provide the kind of mentoring I wish I’d had back when I was a public school student.

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