

Fred KD Diggins

Bio

The Theatrical Arts has always been my passion, ever since elementary school. I have worked with several schools, organizations, and instructors in my career. Many of my childhood inspirations, I have contact with today. The originator of Skylight's Education program was a teacher and performer named Ray Jivoff. In high school, Ray was one of my creative writings, singing, and acting instructors. Since then, I have always had the urge to teach others the basics of Theatre and hope it would bring them the same joy as I had. After graduating High School, I became an instructor/Director for the Milwaukee Youth Theatre. After 15 years with the company, I decided to move on. Later in life I was offered this opportunity to work for Skylight Music Theatre in the Education Department and I readily accepted. Now, being the Education Manager, I feel that I can help promote the arts through education to not only the local schools, but community organizations throughout Milwaukee. Also, I can carry on the tradition and legacy that Ray Jivoff once began.

My GOAL for the Education Department's Enlighten Program. EMPOWER THE ARTIST... EMBRACE THE COMMUNITY....

EMPOWER THE ARTIST

Education starts from the core. My staff is as important to this program as the content and delivery of the program. We strive to present hands-on education about how to work with various backgrounds, ethnicities, and abilities. Training the staff to understand how to handle each situation is a vital role. As the Education Manager, I take part in almost all the outreach and school programs, to lend assistance, guidance, and encouragement. If I can create an atmosphere where the artists are safe, appreciated, and well-educated, this will trickle down to the schools/organizations that we perform for.

EMBRACE THE COMMUNITY

The best part of becoming an educator is the ability to pass on your knowledge and passion. Our community thrives when shown that there are programs like "The Arts" that can be exciting, fun, and create a sense of accomplishment. Many organizations that help people in need embrace the idea of having an artistic portion of their programming. Skylight Enlighten customizes each program to fit the needs of the organization, creating content where their participants can have fun, release energy, and explore their creative side. If we embrace these organizations in our community, it will make a positive impact on the individual, the organization, the community, and overall, the city of Milwaukee.

Marion Frank

1. Who are you and what do you do at ENLIGHTEN?

My name is Marion Frank, and this year I am one of the Teaching Artists for the Enlighten program at Skylight. Right now, we're going into many different classrooms in the Milwaukee area to do writing workshops with students in 3rd-8th grade, encouraging them to write stories based around this year's theme: DREAMS! It's been so lovely to see students creating imaginative stories, and to hear their aspirations. Later this season, we will select around 20-25 pieces of writing and create a performance

using the students' words. I had the privilege of directing last year's performance, and it was incredibly fun. I am so excited to be a part of the Enlighten team this year!

2. How long have you worked for this education program?

This is my second year being involved with Skylight's Education Program. Last year, I was one of five ECPs (Early Career Professionals), and my focus was on directing. Because I've been involved with the workshops and theatre-devising process last season, I get to take the lead in some of our classroom workshops, which is a great opportunity for me as an educator.

3. What is your favorite thing about ENLIGHTEN?

It's hard to pick just one favorite thing about the Enlighten program, but I'd have to say my favorite thing is getting to know the students in the classrooms. Since we attend some of the same schools each year, kids recognize us as soon as we walk in. It's one of the things that I love most about education-- seeing students' growth over time. It makes it even more meaningful when we go back and read all the submissions; we remember working with the students who wrote each piece.

4. What is your favorite memory from working with ENLIGHTEN?

My favorite memory of the Enlighten program is when we started touring the KidsWrites show last spring. It warmed my heart to hear the kids laugh and engage with what we had all worked to create. We had a particular moment with a newscaster character, and I'd had the idea to play part of the NFL theme song to initiate that scene. I wasn't sure if it would work, or if the kids would get it, but during our first performance the kids went wild-- they loved it. Watching students get excited about theatre and about writing motivates me every day.

5. What are you most looking forward to in terms of the future of this program?

For the future of Enlighten, I am most excited about expanding the KidsWrites program. There's been discussion of adding another smaller, more specific KidsWrites student performance, which I think would be phenomenal. I wonder what would happen if there was a high school KidsWrites-- or how the performance would be different if students got to act out their own writings. Whatever happens, I'm so happy to be a part of it.