

## **Jen Laffler**

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*College Advisor, Writing Coach, Author, Educator, Poet*

### **Recent Work Experience**

#### **July 2020 – Present                      College Advisor / Essay Specialist @ [Seriously Standout Essays & Apps](#)**

Volunteer work with college prep program Encuentros Leadership led to finding my passion for College Advisory & Essay Coaching. Referrals have grown my business exponentially – in 2025, I coached forty-plus applicants as well as developing and teaching well-attended workshops on my own; in conjunction with College Advisor Gabby Yates; and at [San Diego Writers. Ink](#). I support students to mine their experiences, own their insights, and find a perfect balance between “standing out” and “playing the game”. I gently coach students through/past vagueness, clichés, and missed opportunities. My clients have achieved admissions to their “reach” and even “wildest dreams” schools (Harvard, UCLA, UT Austin, Pepperdine, Wellesley, etc.); equally importantly, they look back at the apps & essays they created, and know they gave it their best.

#### **Jan. 2021 – April 2024                      Guest Teacher @ El Camino Creek Elem., Carlsbad, CA**

Long-term engagements included 5 months developing and teaching Art Enrichment (Fall 2022) and 3½ years teaching Yoga & Wellness (Spring 2020, Spring 2021, Fall / Winter 2022, Fall 2023). Frequently invited into classrooms to teach poetry and creative writing. In-person teaching career ended abruptly April 2024 when a ski accident put me on crutches.

#### **Aug. 2024 – May 2025                      San Diego Outreach Coordinator @ [Amigos de las Américas](#)**

Joined AMIGOS, a sixty-year old organization which facilitates service projects in Latin America, with responsibility for recruiting/engaging local middle and high school students. Visited local high schools to present about AMIGOS, held Info Nights and Open Houses, answered parent and student questions about our programs. Surpassed organizational goal of recruiting sixteen San Diego student participants, the highest number in any US region AMIGOS is present in.

#### **Oct. 2017 – Oct. 2020                      Director @ [SDWF KidsWrite! Children's Writing Contest](#)**

Inspired by the student-activists of Parkland High School, I created *KidsWrite!* for the San Diego Writers Festival (SDWF). I oversaw every aspect – theme selection, volunteers, entries, judging, and awards – in partnership with SDWF, SD Union-Tribune Festival of Books, Coronado Library, and Warwick's Books. I continue to serve as a *KidsWrite!* judge.

#### **Oct. 2017 – Nov. 2019                      Children's Programmer @ [San Diego Writers Festival \(SDWF\)](#)**

Created and curated kid-friendly, literary-themed, art, musical and theatrical experiences. Booked authors for read-and-greets; ensured our offerings were culturally, linguistically and neurologically diverse. Hosted Children's Poetry Slam, with kids performing original work in a uniquely supportive environment.

### **In a Previous Life**

#### **July 1996 – June 2002                      Investment Banker / Assistant VP @ Credit Suisse, Inc., Ltd. and AG**

Recruited from college to Credit Suisse's Investment Banking Analyst Program. Attained Series 7/Registered Representative License. Moved from New York to London to Zurich, Switzerland, analyzing counterparty credit risk in fixed income sales-and-trading transactions.

### **Recent Workshops / Classes / Events / Camps I've Created**

#### **July 2024                                      Workshop (HS): College Essay Info Night: Crafting Standout College Essays**

Created/presented online course “Tell Your Story: Crafting Standout College Essays” to dozens of high school students. Shared do's and don'ts, tips and tricks, and unique yet accessible prompts to get creativity flowing.

#### **Dec. 2023                                      Workshop (all ages): Victorian Puzzle-Card Making @ Encinitas Library**

Together with Children's Librarian April Fukuda, co-hosted a workshop in which library-goers learned to fold Victorian Puzzle Pockets, charming keepsake cards with art and poetry inside.

#### **Sept. - Dec. 2023                              Class (HS): CoTA Book Arts Class @ Alta Vista HS, Vista, CA**

Working with CoTA and Alta Vista HS, met weekly with students to create original, deconstructed book art. Students received high school credit for this elective class.

#### **Oct. 2023                                      Workshop (teens & kids): “The Music of Poetry” @ Encinitas Library**

For my latest poetry workshop on behalf of [Kids San Diego Poetry Annual](#), we considered how poets weave the element of music into poetry; explored poetry's role in music; and wrote our own music-inspired poetry.

**Oct. 2023 (and 2022) Event (all ages): Poetry Takeover @ Encinitas Library**

Working with Encinitas Library staff and other volunteers, helped create children's programming (workshop and poetry reading) for a Poetry Takeover of Encinitas Library.

**Sept. 2023 Workshop (HS): Tell Your Story: Crafting Standout College Essays**

Together with College Advisor Gabby Yates, created and taught an online college essay "boot camp" in partnership with [San Diego Writers Ink](#). Included generative writing prompts and personalized feedback.

**Dec. 2022 Workshop (teens & kids): "Cursive & Kindness" @ Encinitas Library**

A passionate cursive-aficionado, I have developed an original curriculum for "Creative Cursive Camps". In this workshop, students learned and practiced cursive skills while making holiday cards for hospice patients.

**Aug. 2022 Workshop (teens & kids): "I Am" Poems @ Escondido Library**

Inspired by the work of poet Sandra Beasley ("*I Am The Jukebox*"), we explored the role of sensory language in bringing poetry to life, and wrote "I Am" poems for publication in the [Kids San Diego Poetry Annual](#).

**Oct. 2020 Class (teens & kids): "Young Writers: From Inspiration to Publication"**

Created and taught online class at [San Diego Writers, Ink](#). for enthusiastic children and teen writers looking for opportunities to "get published", share their work, and connect with other young writers.

**Personal Writing Highlights**

11/2024: Presented new manuscript, "*Here I am, Happiness: How Buddha Found His Flow*" at SD Writers, Ink.

10/2024: Poem "Free Lunch" accepted for publication in *San Diego Poetry Annual*.

10/2023: Poem "*I Am Your Moonlight Beach*" published in Surfing Madonna Foundation's "Ocean-Air-Earth"

10/2022: Poem "*The Night Shark*" accepted for publication in Issue 4 of *The Journal of Undiscovered Poets*.

10/2022: Poem "*Beware: Wild Animal Sleeping*" accepted for publication in 2023 San Diego Poetry Annual.

3/2021: Featured Poet in "Jewish Poets, Jewish Voices", a program of the Jewish Federation of SD County.

3/2021: Awarded Poetry Fellowship to Martha's Vineyard Institute of Creative Writing.

2/2021: Poem "*Summit*" accepted for publication in *A Year In Ink, Volume 14*.

11/2020: Poem "*Winning... And Losing*" published in *Cadet Quest Magazine*, November issue.

9/2020: Poem "*Mantis*" accepted for publication in the 2021 *San Diego Poetry Annual*.

9/2020: Short Story "*Big Apple, Big Cherry, Big Smoke*" featured in *Shaking the Tree IV* memoir anthology.

8/2020: Poem "*Wipeout!*" featured on Kids Cast Weekly! Podcast, Episode 7.

7/2020: Featured Author in San Diego Writers Festival's Kid Lit Power Hour.

4/2019: Hosted Children's Programming at the inaugural San Diego Writers Festival.

6/2019: Short play "*The Matzoh Ball*", selected/performed at the *Straight from the Page* Five Minute Play Festival.

3/2018: Performed poem "*Bring On The Brainstorm*" at the 5,000-strong Encinitas March For Our Lives rally.

4/2018: Poem "*Cotton Candy: A Puff Piece*" published in *San Diego Poetry Annual*.

11/2015: Published children's picture book *J is for JITTERBUG: A Fanciful Animal Alphabet* (2015; JALG, Ink.)

**Education**

**May 2023 – Oct. 2023 Artist-Educator Institute [CoTA \(Collaborations: Teachers & Artists\)](#)**

Completed CoTA's professional development program for teaching artists/writers. The Institute prepares creatives to collaborate with teachers and transform schools by providing arts-based, connective learning experiences that satisfy Common Core requirements.

**Sept. 2020 – May 2021 Certificate in Poetry, San Diego Writers, Ink.**

Pandemic presented unprecedented opportunity to study and write with San Diego Poet Laureate Ron Salisbury. Ron describes his year-long course as "just the parts of an MFA you actually need to know".

**Aug. 1992 – June 1996 Bachelor of Arts Degrees, Wellesley College, Wellesley, MA**

Double-majored in International Relations (concentration in Latin American Political Economy) and Spanish. 3.9 GPA / summa cum laude. Research assistant at Harvard University's Sardis Expedition; intern at Harvard University's Sackler

Museum; 3 year Varsity Crew coxswain; Wellesley-in-Washington Scholar at NASA; semester abroad at University of Córdoba, Spain.

### **Other**

Fluent in Spanish, conversant in German. Mother of three terrific children ages 14, 17, and 18 (oldest is completing first year at UC Berkeley). California credentialed teacher (Document Number #230244078). Ten years as Leader of Girl Scout Troop 1323.