



Kelly DiPucchio is the *New York Times* bestselling author of over 30 stories for children. Her titles include *Grace For President*, *Gaston*, and *The Sandwich Swap* – a picture book she co-authored for Queen Rania of Jordan. Her books have appeared on *Good Morning America*, *The Oprah Show* and *The View* and have received numerous starred reviews and awards. Kelly travels the country speaking to schools about the importance of kindness, overcoming adversity and personal empowerment. She lives with her husband of nearly 30 years in southeastern Michigan. They have three young adult children and three crazy dogs. For more information about Kelly and her books visit kellydipucchio.com

Kelly will be accepting applications for: writer of picture book fiction

1. If you could be in any movie or tv series, what would it be and what character would you play?

I think it would be fun to be in *The Office* because I love the cast and the show so much. I'd like to play a new character – maybe a temporary hire who was into essential oils, healing crystals, and meditation. Dwight, of course, would accuse my character of witchcraft and go to great lengths to protect himself from my spells. Michael, on the other hand, would pretend to be very spiritually evolved around my character and he'd try to prove how much *more* enlightened he was than everyone else in the office.

2. If you could have any supernatural power, what would it be and why?

I would choose the power to teleport. I could see the world and avoid airports and baggage fees.

3. What are your five favorite picture books not written, illustrated, and/or edited by you?

You know this is a completely unfair question, right? Only five?! Ugh. Here are five books I admire, in no particular order: *Escargot* by Dashka Slater and Sydney Hanson, *The Book of Mistakes* by Corinna Luyken, *Mrs. Biddlebox* By Linda Smith and Marla Frazee, *We Don't Eat Our Classmates* By Ryan T. Higgins, *Truman* by Jean Reidy and Lucy Ruth Cummins.

4. What writing and/or publishing-related accomplishment are you most proud of?

I have been publishing children's books for nearly 20 years and there are many accomplishments I am proud of but one that stands out is the movement created by *Grace For President*. Over the years I have met countless little girls across the country who were eager to tell me the book made them want to grow up to be president. The book has also inspired many classroom discussions about the election process and leadership. It's been such a blessing in my life to bear witness the power of a picture book that features a confident, independent, strong female character of color.

5. What about mentoring excites you most?

I'm most excited about the possibility of helping someone achieve his/her dream of becoming a published author.

6. What are your strengths as a mentor?

I am kind but honest.

7. What is your feedback/critique style like?

I generally give big picture feedback on what I feel is working well in the manuscript in addition to any concerns I have for the story or the writing. Depending on the manuscript, I might give line by line feedback as well.

8. What are the most important things you're seeking in a mentee?

I like to work with people who have studied picture books extensively and are open to feedback.

9. Who are you not the best mentor for?

People who have not studied picture books extensively and are not open to feedback.

10. How will you help your mentee and their stories develop?

I try to help by giving my opinion about what I feel are the story's strengths and weaknesses. If I feel a picture book manuscript is too long, I will often suggest ways to streamline the story. I usually recommend specific published titles for the mentee to study for inspiration.

11. What is your style of communication like?

I prefer to communicate by email or through funny memes. ☺ Just don't call me on the phone.

12. What are you looking for in the applications you receive?

Strong, unique voice. No manuscripts over 900 words.

13. Any tips/advice for applicants to make their applications and/or manuscripts shine?

Be authentic and passionate. I can always tell when a writer is creating from a place of joy.

14. What advice or inspiring and/or motivational words would you like to offer up to anyone applying to be your mentee or simply reading this questionnaire?

Congratulate yourself for continuing to take steps to learn and improve your craft. By signing up for workshops, joining critique groups, and applying for mentorships like this one you are essentially saying to the Universe, "I am willing to do whatever it takes to make my dream come true." Don't ever underestimate the power of sustained belief and action. "Luck is what happens when preparation meets opportunity." -Seneca