Southeast Service Cooperative

Southeast Service Cooperative's 39th Annual

Young Authors, Young Artists Conference

for Students in Grades 3-5

Young Authors Young Artists







May 19 - 21, 2026
Deadline for registration: April 20

Rochester Community and Technical College
Heintz Center

2026 Young Authors, Young Artists Conference

On May 19, 20 and 21, 1,000+ students in grades 3-5 from public, private, and home schools across southeast Minnesota will converge in Rochester for a conference that promotes student enthusiasm and competence in written and visual communication.

Students will learn from and work with authors, poets, illustrators, artists, journalists, bookmakers, and others in sessions that expose them to the art and joy of writing and creating.

DATES: **Tuesday, May 19**
Wednesday, May 20
Thursday, May 21

AUDIENCE: **Students in grades 3-5**

LOCATION: **Heintz Center,** 1926 Collegeview Drive SE, Rochester
(an extension of Rochester Community and Technical College)

TIMES:
8:15 - 8:45 am..Check-In
8:45 - 9:30 am..Introduction/Keynote Speaker
9:40 - 10:40 am.....Session 1
10:50 - 11:50 am....Session 2
12:00 - 12:30 pm....Lunch
12:30 - 1:30 pm.....Session 3

COST: **Registrations received by April 6, 2026:**
$52 per student

Registrations received after April 6, 2026:
$62 per student

Chaperones are FREE!

The final deadline for all registrations is April 20, 2026.

YAYA FAQ's

Do my students need chaperones?
We encourage one adult per 10 students attending the conference. Chaperones who attend a session may be asked to assist the presenter with their needs.

How many sessions do students attend?
Students should choose three sessions to attend. Due to space limitations, we cannot guarantee that students will be assigned to all sessions requested. We will do our best to satisfy as many requests as possible.

How will my students know which sessions to attend?
When you arrive to the conference, students will receive paperwork with their session information listed. Master lists of students' session assignments for each chaperone, and a map of rooms will be given to the chaperones.

What will my students receive at the conference?
When you arrive to the conference, students will receive a tote bag with all of their information on paperwork inside. They will also receive a pencil, note pad, and two snacks inside of their tote bag.

When should we show up?
Conference check-in opens at 8:15 am. The supervising adult should check in at the registration table to pick up a box of conference materials. After distributing conference materials, chaperones should store jackets, lunches, etc., in the box and leave it in a designated area in the Commons.

Is there parking at the conference site?
Parking is available at the Heintz Center. Buses and car pools must **unload on the west side** (door H15)**, and park on the east side** of the building (Parking is not permitted in the west lot across from the hospital), you must return to the east lot.

Can we purchase lunches?
Participants should bring their own lunch and beverage. *No refrigeration will be available.* Lunch may be eaten in the Commons or outside.

What if I need to cancel?
Cancellations after the April 20, 2026 registration deadline can receive a refund (minus a $15.00 processing fee). Special circumstances will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

Who do I contact with other questions?
We're happy to help with any questions! Contact Katie Hartman at 507.281.6667 or by email at khartman@ssc.coop

Get your students excited for YAYA by showing them the "Day at YAYA Video":
www.ssc.coop/student-programs/yaya

More information can be found at:
www.ssc.coop/student-programs/yaya

Registration Procedure

STEP 1

Secure Student Spots

- You can secure student spots prior to registration. This guarantees your students a spot in the conference, before having to collect registration forms from students. You should contact Katie Hartman with the number of spots you'd like to reserve. First come, first served.

STEP 2

Prior to registration, we suggest you do the following:

- Identify a **Contact Person** for each school building, district, or parent (for students not attending with their school group). An email address is required.
- You may duplicate the **Individual Student Registration Form and Session Description (pages 5-7)** in this brochure. Add or delete information appropriate to your school and send the registration form home with your students.
- Determine what sessions each student wants to attend and assign students to each supervising adult. All students must have a designated chaperone! (Every effort will be made to grant student requests as space allows, but we cannot guarantee that students will get all requested sessions. Assignments are made based on many factors.)

STEP 3

Ready to register?

- Go to www.ssc.coop/student-programs/yaya
- Download the "Student Registration" Excel spreadsheet and enter the information requested (student name, grade, chaperone, their 3 session choice letters).
- Re-save this spreadsheet and email it to: khartman@ssc.coop. Additional instructions will be provided to you upon receiving this file.

All registrations must be submitted on the spreadsheet.

Payment Procedure

STEP 4

CONSOLIDATE PAYMENT and choose one of these options:

- Purchase Order (mail, email or fax)
- Check mailed to the address below
- Credit Card: Please call Katie 507.281.6667

Registration is not complete without payment.

Mailing Address:
Southeast Service Cooperative
Attn: Katie Hartman
210 Wood Lake Drive SE
Rochester, MN 55904

Fax: 507.288.7663
Email: khartman@ssc.coop

Early-Bird Registration Deadline is April 6, 2026
Registration Deadline is April 20, 2026

Individual Registration Form

Parents/Guardians: Your child has been invited to attend the Young Authors, Young Artists Conference, a celebration of student writing and creative expression. Published writers, illustrators, artists and speakers will work with your child to enhance their writing skills and creative expression. Registration information has been provided below by your child's school. More information and detailed descriptions of all available sessions are available on the website at: www.ssc.coop/student-programs/yaya

Students should ***bring their own lunch and beverage***. No refrigeration will be available.

Although not guaranteed, every effort will be made to give students at least two of three session choices.

Contact Person: Please fill out this conference information block for your families.

Conference Attendance Date (please circle one):

Tuesday, May 19 -or- **Wednesday, May 20** -or- **Thursday, May 21**

Cost Per Student: _____ **Return Student Registration Form By:** _____

Return This Form To: _____

• Individual Registration Form •
Young Authors, Young Artists Conference 2026

_____ _____
Student Name Grade

STUDENT SESSION CHOICES
List three sessions you would like to attend. Sessions are listed on the next page.

Session Letter

First session choice _____

Second session choice _____

Third session choice _____

PARENT INVOLVEMENT/PERMISSION

_____ I will attend the conference as an adult chaperone.

_____
Parent Name

_____
Parent Email

Choose Your Conference Sessions

Note to students: You'll pick three sessions that interest you, but don't worry if you don't get all three, you'll have a blast in any of them!

A Junk Journal *(creative)*

Make your very own journal from repurposed materials! If you love to write, doodle, have a place to tuck little treasures, or just want a place for your creativity to flow, then these fun journals are for you. You will get to learn how to put together and bind your very own journal using all sorts of recycled and repurposed materials. Once your journal is complete, the options with what you can with them are endless! Nancy Unnasch

B Drawing with Thread *(creative)*

What do you think embroidery is? It's drawing with thread! Make a pencil drawing on the back of a board, poke holes through the board where you want to make stitches and begin the magical process of drawing with thread. A needle and yarn will make your image come to life! Nicole Havekost

C Writing "Out-of-This World" Fiction *(writing)*

In this session we'll review parts of fiction and where to find your story ideas. We'll also explore "out-of-this-world" stories. Then we'll take a real-life event and turn it into a fantasy story! Come to this session to stretch your imagination! Lisa Bolt Simons

D Soft Pastels Made Easy *(pastels)*

In this workshop, students will be introduced to the art of coloring photographs using soft pastels. Each student will be supplied with a photo and working with soft pastels, will use their own imagination to bring the photo to life. Each student will produce a completed work of art. Terri Michels

E Needle Felted Landscapes *(creative)*

Create needle felted landscapes! Using wool roving, attendees will learn how to add wool to a felt background using needle felting techniques. You will create and take home your own felt landscape! Stena Lieb

F Kinetic Origami Snake Workshop: Fold It, Flex It, Make It Move! *(origami)*

Get ready to build something that wiggles! In this hands-on origami workshop participants will create a flexible paper creature made from many small folded pieces that connect together and move. Along the way, students will explore patterns, repetition, and basic engineering concepts while strengthening fine motor skills and following step-by-step instructions. Kathleen Sheridan

G Doodle Diddlee Design an Ad *(writing/storytelling)*

Do you dream and scheme new inventions? Or maybe you're pretty good at convincing others to try something new. In this session, you'll up your creative game and get a taste of what it takes to influence others. You may partner with another student or go it on your own to create a short ad for a product or service–maybe even a new invention! Mary Bleckwehl

H Dynamic Comic Cover Creation *(comic/illustrating)*

Do you love super heroes and comics? In this class you will create your own character and design an original comic book cover. The class begins with a discussion on super heroes and dynamic comic cover designs. A handout covering drawing tutorials on super hero ideas, a variety of different action poses, samples of cover designs and other helpful hints will be provided to help create your very own dynamic super powered character comic book cover design. Scott Rolfs.

I Dreamcatcher *(creative)*

In this colorful, hands-on class, artists will create their very own dreamcatcher from start to finish! We'll explore simple weaving techniques, then decorate with vibrant yarn, beads, pom-poms, and feathers to make each piece truly unique. Megan Butts

J Paint on Canvas *(painting)*

Students will create a super awesome painting on canvas. Step by step instructions will be provided. Students do not need any previous painting experience or special skills. First time painting on canvas, no problem! Penni Kittelson

K The Art (and Science) of SLIME! *(creative)*

Kids hear "slime" and they squeal with excitement, parents hear the word and they cringe with fear. But in THIS session you will learn how to make beautiful slime, the science behind it, and how to be a responsible owner of this "non-newtonian fluid". Be prepared to learn new things, meet new friends and get MESSY! After the session, each student will go home with their own 4 oz container of custom-made slime. Angie Severson

L Comic Jam! *(illustrating)*

Collaborate with your fellow students to draw hilarious comics together! You draw the first panel of your comic, then pass it to someone else, who will draw the next panel, and so on! How will these stories turn out by the end? Micah Amundsen

M The Seriously Silly Song Squadron *(songwriting)*

Ever wondered how your favorite songs were written? Wonder no more! From brainstorming topics, to crafting lyrical tidbits, to writing and recording a brand new song, we'll jump into songwriting together. Our songs might be serious, they might be silly—or even better—seriously silly! The only limit is our imaginations at the Seriously Silly Song Squadron! William Bjorndal

Meet Your Conference Presenters

Nancy Unnasch has been making junk journals for about 8 years and loves to thrift and give old paper new life. She have been a creative and a maker for most of her life, but finding joy and purpose in discarded things is her true calling. Nancy loves to share how to make journals with others and what better way to do that than with things that were destined for the garbage. Journals are a blank slate for creativity...junk journals give you the start of something interesting to leap from.

Nicole Havekost is an artist currently working and living in Rochester, MN. She studied art at the Rhode Island School of Design and the University of New Mexico. She recently had her first museum exhibition of larger-than-life sculpture at the Minneapolis Institute of Art. She teaches art at St. Mary's University in Winona, MN and spends as much of her time as possible in the studio when not teaching. Drawing and stitching are two of her favorite things and she is excited to share them with you!

Lisa Bolt Simons is a former educator and the author of more than 70 fiction and nonfiction children's books, five middle grade "choose your path" novels, and an adult history book. More are forthcoming.

Terri Michels photographer and author, and her latest Children's Picture Book is titled *Simon of Cyrene*, and *the Legend of the Easter Egg*. She also has more than 60 children's non-fiction titles published as well as several photos in national publications. She continually strives to blend her two arts forms, writing and photography. Terri is a presenter at Young Writers' and Young Artists' Conferences around the Upper Midwest. In Terri's perfect world she would be reading, writing, and photographing the world around her.

Stena Lieb is a K-12 Visual Arts Teacher from Lanesboro Public Schools. She has been an art educator for 11 years. Growing up on a farm has taught her a deep appreciation for what we have, and what we can use to create and teach art to individuals of all ages. Pulling from our surroundings and using nature as inspiration has allowed Stena to take a step toward combining my farm with the forest in her art.

Kathleen Sheridan began folding in elementary school and is still amazed to think what can be created with paper. As a licensed teacher who taught Spanish for 18 years, she's now following her paper dreams!

Mary Bleckwehl loves barns and cookie dough and sharing her love of stories and award-winning books with anyone who breathes. She has taught outstanding students and raised amazing kids and unruly pets. Her Awesome Disgusting Careers series and new picture book, *ARRRGH! Me HATE To Wait*! join her growing list of published work. Bleckwehl lives in Northfield MN with her husband and over-sized dog. Before that she was the queen of the jungle gym (in third grade).

Scott Rolfs received his BFA in illustration from the College of Visual Arts. He's worked for design studios creating kid friendly character art for package designs, graphic novels and children's publication and freelance clients. he especially enjoys working on his own graphic novels and coloring books. Scott also presents drawing classes for young aspiring artists on character creation. Last but not least he enjoys drawing monsters.

Megan Butts Currently lives in Southern Minnesota with husband and son. Megan has a Bachelor of Science degree in Interior Design and has a love for Science & Art. She loves creating hands-on learning adventures for her son so much she wanted to bring the same creative learning opportunity to local communities she opened Craft lab in Stewartville. She loves being able to provide a special space for the community and their families where kids can create & learn.

Penni Kittelson is the owner of Sunshine and Roses Traveling Art Studio. Penni travels to many different Community Ed programs teaching canvas painting classes. Sunshine and Roses has a knack with kids, and guides them step-by-step through the creation process.

Angie Severson is an artist, entrepreneur and philanthropist at heart. Her days are spent teaching art to children and adults, playing outside with her Naturescapes students and creating a mentorship program for Miss Angie's Place After School Academy. Creating and sustaining supportive relationships is at the center of her personal and professional life, and her four daughters give her many opportunities to practice patience, compassion and empathy.

Micah Amundsen is a comic book creator and art teacher who enjoys living in Rochester and holds a BFA in Entertainment Design from UW Stout. Their creative pursuits include creating self-published webcomics and graphic novels, doodling horses, crocheting tiny animals, and performing music with Swing Street and the Rainbow Choir.

William Bjorndal is a musician and naturalist originally from Austin, MN. Now based in Minneapolis, Will travels to schools, parks, and libraries across the state performing original kids' music under the moniker "Will Sings Songs." A multi-instrumentalist, Will played over twenty instruments on his most recent album, Squirrels Run the World. Will had a blast at the YAYA conference as a student nearly 20 years ago and is delighted to return to share his songwriting knowledge as an instructor!

CLEAN WATER LAND & LEGACY AMENDMENT

This activity is made possible by the voters of Minnesota through a grant from the Southeastern Minnesota Arts Council thanks to a legislative appropriation from the arts & cultural heritage fund.