

Authors (for) All:
Providing Professional
Author Visits for all
Pelham Elementary
School Students



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I Objectives:

For the past two years, pursuant to a district imperative, elementary teachers have received extensive professional development in the writing workshop model of teaching all genres of writing. As a result, this approach to writing, with its emphasis on the process of crafting text, is the hallmark of the elementary classroom. A corollary of this concept is that we are all authors, all the time, so that identifying as a writer becomes part of a student's self-concept.

In fact, the structure of the workshop is relatively consistent from kindergarten through fifth grade. The teacher begins each session with a mini-lesson, followed by independent practice and conferring. As well, student-authors in each grade produce a consistent output of both narrative and informational text:

Grade	Narrative	Informational
K	Telling stories with pictures Writing narratives	How-to books
1	Personal narratives Fiction stories	All Abouts
2	Realistic fiction	All Abouts
3	Personal narratives	Angled information books
4	Personal narrative	Personal essay
5	Personal narrative Realistic fiction	Research/information article

Note that this emphasis on both narrative and informational text throughout the elementary years derives from the clear mandate of the Common Core writing standards.

We propose to complement this instructional paradigm by bringing in popular children's authors to meet with all elementary students district-wide. To maximize our impact, we recommend that both narrative AND informational authors be included in this program. That way, we can support the entire range of writing genres included in Pelham's rich writing curriculum, as mandated by the Common Core writing standards. We believe author visits offer a unique opportunity to breathe life and relevance into what is experienced in the classroom.

The research supports us. A recent survey of teaching staff conducted from December 2012 to March 2013 by the Society of Authors found that every respondent who had organized an author visit found them to be an invaluable enrichment that encourages creative writing, reading for pleasure and wider reading. (www.societyofauthors.org) All pupils are positively engaged, particularly those with special education needs. Teachers also detailed the benefit to their own teaching skills. Indeed, the majority of participants commented that they would like to expand their programs and host regular visits and residencies for the benefit of students, but lack of funding prevented them.

Moreover, The Guardian (November 8, 2010) notes that, in these fiscally fraught times, it is likely that "paying for an author visit to promote children's writing will increasingly rank low on a school's list of priorities. And yet ... if an author visit goes well, some pupils will get more of a writing confidence-boost in one day than they normally would in a whole term; some will crack how to plot a story and will go off to compose their first magnum opus; and some will discover that writing can actually be fun."

The impact of these visits is multi-layered:

1-authors share their writing process, from inspiration to rewriting, providing invaluable modeling

2- authors interact with student authors, validating and reinforcing their self-concepts as writers

3-coincidentally, the status of authors and reading is elevated

4-teachers learn new strategies and skills to bring to future workshop sessions

II Beneficiaries

We seek to benefit each and every Pelham elementary student by inviting professional authors with appeal to both K-2 and 3-5 writers. Every elementary teacher gains as well, as noted above.

III Project Description

A typical author visit begins with an interactive assembly during which the author shares his or her writing process and answers students' questions. This is often followed by writing workshop sessions led by the author--smaller groups permitting even closer contact and interaction.

We list below the authors we propose to invite, and outline each writer's program. **Note that we are unable to book dates until we have secured funding; accordingly, we might find that one or more of these authors may not be available at a mutually convenient time during the 2014-2015 school year. In that case, we might need to replace one or more of these authors with another; however, in no case will our proposed budget exceed the one we've set forth here.**

Please note as well that we propose to offer for sale signed copies of each author's published books.

- Informational text

David A. Adler

David A. Adler, a former inner city school teacher, is the author of 220 books including all the Cam Jansen mysteries, the Picture Book Biography series, and the award-winning America's Champion Swimmer. When he speaks to children, he follows a book from idea through the research, writing, rewriting, editing, galleys, illustration, and printing steps. His program is interactive and varied. For just about every step, there is a demonstration of one kind or another:

----With the help of an audience member he convinces the children to THINK LIKE WRITERS.

----He talks about the nonfiction books he writes and how he does the research for them

----He explains the writing process and how knowing he will rewrite makes writing the first draft so easy. He spends much more time on this step with older audiences than with younger groups.

-----He shows them an example of rewriting from a sign Benjamin Franklin rewrote in

his print shop in the eighteenth century. It's the example Franklin gave Thomas Jefferson before Jefferson began his work on the Declaration of Independence.

----He tells a funny story about his son and rewrites. "The first draft doesn't have to be good. It just has to be on paper!"

----He talks about the importance of the first sentence of a manuscript and tells a VERY funny story about his 10th birthday and the cake his mother baked for the occasion. It makes the point--beginnings are important.

----With young audiences he plays the illustrator game, demonstrating how the same words can be illustrated many different ways.

Mr. Adler will present separate age-appropriate sessions to K-2 and 3-5 audiences.

Books are available for school visits at a large discount directly from his publishers. He provides follow-up lessons for teachers all ready to copy and use.

TOTAL COST FOR ALL SCHOOLS: \$10,400 (\$2500/day for 3 programs a day x 4 days + travel from Long Island).

- Narrative text: K-2

Nick Bruel

Nick Bruel is the author and illustrator of *New York Times* bestseller *Boing!* and the Bad Kitty books, among others. He is a freelance illustrator and cartoonist. Mr. Bruel's presentation constitutes 40-50 minutes in which he reads books, conducts at least one interactive exercise, and ends with a question & answer session. In addition, he will sign books and even have lunch with our students.

TOTAL COST FOR ALL SCHOOLS: \$2,500 (\$1,200/day for 4 programs each day x 2 days + travel from Briarcliff)

- Narrative text: 3-5

Gordon Korman

Gordon Korman is a popular author of books for kids and teens. Gordon's fast and entertaining presentation begins with how he wrote his first novel when he was only twelve -- a four-month-long seventh grade language arts assignment produced *This Can't Be Happening At Macdonald Hall*, which was published by Scholastic a year and a half later, when Gordon was fourteen. He also talks about brainstorming, developing characters, dialogue, rewriting and revision, and of course his trademark humor. Now, more than 30 years after that 7th grade project, he has over 75 books to his credit, including the Island trilogy, *No More Dead Dogs*, and *The Monday Night Football Club* novels, which inspired the Disney Channel TV series *The Jersey*.

TOTAL COST FOR ALL SCHOOLS: \$7,000 (\$3,500/day for 3 visits a day).

Implementation: 2014-2015 school year

participation in development: Dr. Garcia, Susan Gilbert

IV Project Assessment

We plan to assess the impact of this author visit project by focusing on both students and teachers. Regarding students, we will reach out with a survey that asks the following:

1. What did you like about _____'s visit?
2. What did you learn about writing?
3. How have you used what you have learned?
4. How have your feelings about writing changed after _____'s visit?
5. How have your feelings about reading changed after _____'s visit?

As for teachers, we would like to know both what they will bring to their teaching from each visit and their perception of the impact on their students:

1. What did you like about _____'s visit?
2. What new strategies have you brought into your writing workshop lessons?
3. How do you think your students have benefitted from the experience?

We believe that this project is most suitable for continuation--in fact, our hope is to lay a framework for annual author visits, which many Westchester elementary schools provide. Perhaps in the future, our PTAs can join forces with BOCES to provide the resources to make author visits an annual essential ritual.

Of course, we will note PEF's generous support by including written statement of financial support in all materials provided to teachers and parents, and we will announce such support at any assemblies on the day of each author visit.

V Project Budget

See attached quotes from author agents, supplementing the costs included herein

<i>TOTAL COST: \$19,900</i>

No PTA funds are available

UPDATED!