

The “Write” Stuff: Budgeting, Planning, and Preparing for a Guest Presenter

• Keep 'em Reading •

Grades
K-2, 3-5

by | Aileen Kirkham

As budgets shrink and the emphasis on improving test scores grows, the process of hosting a guest author, illustrator, or storyteller in schools is becoming more complicated. The need for a guest speaker must often be justified in new ways—beyond the sheer joy, excitement, and value that a visiting author can bring, for instance, you may need to show that the visit will meet a variety of other criteria that warrant the budget expenditure.

Preparing for this possibility up front can save you time, put you in a better position to secure permission and funds for the visit, and get you thinking about ways to make the visit as meaningful and enriching as possible. This article will explore several ways to make sure you have the “write” stuff in advance, from finding and corresponding with the presenter; writing a curriculum-based funding proposal; booking the presenter; and creating sample lessons, activities, and handouts.

Doing Your Homework to Find a Presenter

Consider the following tips when planning the kind of visit you would like to host:

- Generate criteria for selecting the presenter. For instance, you might think about:
 1. Your students' diverse backgrounds. What sort of presenter might appeal to them?
 2. Male role models (especially important for at-risk and reluctant boy readers)
 3. What kind of literacy presentation you wish to have (one ideal scenario would be three literacy presenters a year—an author, illustrator, and storyteller)



4. A presenter who has created work in a variety of literary formats: fiction, nonfiction, graphic novels, poetry, etc.
 5. Your curriculum needs
- Visit with other librarians to get recommendations for presenters.
 - Attend library conferences and workshops to find quality presenters.
 - Check to see if there is a chapter of the Society for Children's Book Writers' and Illustrators (SCBWI) in your area so you can book a local presenter and save on travel expenses.
 - Network with other schools and districts so you can book multiple days of visits and share expenses. You may also receive a discount for your efforts.
 - Consider purchasing a subscription to www.TeachingBooks.net so that you can have year-round access to presenters. (The site can save untold hours of searching age-appropriate websites for authors and illustrators.)

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- Explore author/illustrator/storyteller websites to see who is doing Skype visits. This can also decrease costs to the schools.
- Request references to validate the quality of the presenter.

Corresponding with the Presenter

Below are steps to take once you have determined the presenter you'd like to have at your school.

- Request the following information from the presenter in order to generate a curriculum-based funding proposal (for more information, see "Writing a Curriculum-based Funding Proposal" at right):
 1. Total fee including travel expenses
 2. Grade levels for which presenter's program is appropriate
 3. Audience size: limited to _____, or unlimited?
 4. Curriculum-related objectives*
 5. Program synopsis
 6. Contact information including website and other social media
 7. Presentation title
 8. Do you require access (and permission from school district) for Internet usage?
- *If presenter can't generate these, use the program synopsis to draw curriculum connections, yourself.
- Ask the presenter if her or she will be bringing books to sell. If not, do you need to have them available from a local vendor or the publisher? You may wish to limit the number of titles to five or so, in order to keep the sales sheet and shipping from being complicated and expensive. Request at least 5–10 copies of each book or more, depending on the economic status of your students. Order books to arrive a month or so in advance so parents can preview them, and you can use them in lessons. Find out what formats the books are in: hardback, paperback, e-book and/or app.
 - Clarify if the presenter is willing to autograph books, and whether the books are limited to those purchased for the visit, or personal copies that students and teachers already have in their possession.

Writing a Curriculum-based Funding Proposal

When you develop a presentation proposal for the funding entity at your campus (principal, PTA/PTO, grant, etc.), treat the guest visit as a lesson with specific objectives to be addressed and recorded in your lesson plans. I've used my own presentation information in the following example.

To: Mr. Do Right, Principal
From: Ima Librarian, Media Specialist
Date: April 18, 2012
Re: Literary Presentation Proposal for the 2012–13 School Year

Please review the following literacy presenter proposal for next fall's budget and respond by May 15, 2012.

Reading Elementary School: Literary Presentation Proposal for November 21, 2012

Literacy Presenter: **Aileen Kirkham, Storyteller**
Presentation Title: **Captain Book's Story Treasures: Continental Delights!**

Presenter's Credentials for Review: www.aileenkirkham.com

Fee: **\$800** (includes fee and travel expenses)

Number of Presentations: **4 @ 30–45 minutes each**

Grade Levels: **PK - 5**

Curriculum Objectives

The students will:

- Name the continents of the world (Social Studies)
- Participate in the dramatization of stories from four of the seven continents (Language Arts)
- Explore the differences in literature from other cultures (Language Arts)
- Experience character traits that exhibit ethical values (Social Studies)
- Generate oral/written stories as an extension to this experience. ** (Language Arts)

** Collaborative Activity with Classroom Teachers

Provide teachers with the program synopsis in advance, and have them select what type of writing assignment their students must do at the conclusion of the program, e.g., persuasive (writing a review); narrative adaptation of one of the stories told in the session; compare and contrast ethical situations in three stories, etc.

Program Synopsis

The storyteller will present four audience participation stories from different continents: Africa, Asia, Europe, and North America. Students will be required to name the continents that are the setting for each story, and name the continents not included in the story program in order to review all the names of the world continents. Three of the stories focus on ethical situations (greed vs. satisfaction/appreciation; laziness vs. diligence/industriousness; honesty vs. dishonesty), and the consequences of unethical choices.

How to Generate Paperwork to Formally Book a Presenter

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 If your district does not have a formal contract for guest speakers, accomplish two tasks with one piece of paperwork by creating invoice and a contract. (Note: Most districts require a W-9 to accom-

pany the invoice.) If your district has a contract form, delete the word contract and use the form as an invoice only, or request an invoice from the presenter along with a W-9. Again, I have used my own information to populate the example below.

Invoice and Contract BAMA ASSOCIATES, INC.

Aileen Kirkham - Educational Consultant & Storyteller

13211 Lost Creek Road
 281.357.1192 akirkham4u@hotmail.com

Tomball, Texas 77375
www.aileenkirkham.com

Services/Presentations - **Captain Book's Story Treasures**

Fee: \$800

4 afternoon presentations - November 21, 2012

- Time - 1:00 Audience/Grade Levels PK - K
- Time - 1:45 Audience/Grade Levels 1st & 2nd
- Time - 2:00 Audience/Grade Levels 3rd & 4th
- Time - 2:45 Audience/Grade Levels 5th

Room/Area for Presentation: **Cafeteria**

Special Needs

- Lapel Microphone
- 2 Long Rectangular Table for Story Props
- Glass/Bottle of Drinking Water
- One location for all programs unless allowed 30 min. to set up in a different area.

Dietary Needs: **No Limitations**

Facility's Name: **Reading Elementary School**

Facility's Street/ **6 Reading Lane** City, State, Zip/

Facility's Phone _____ Contact's Home Phone _____*

Facility's FAX _____

Contact's Cell Phone _____* Work Email _____

Facility's Contact's Signature & Date _____ Consultant's Signature & Date _____

Please Note

1. Fill in all information, keep one copy for your files and return one copy to me.
 2. Please make the check payable **BAMA ASSOCIATES, INC.**
- The **tax ID number** for this business is _____.

(* For last minute emergencies such as presenter being ill on presentation day)

Creating a Lesson Plan to Promote a Presenter's Books

I created the following mini-lesson plan to warm students up for a visit by Stephen Swinburne to our school.

Objectives

Students will:

- Experience the editing process.
- Explore the scientifically based nonfiction books written by Stephen Swinburne.
www.steveswinburne.com

Procedure

1. Pull and display all books written by Stephen Swinburne.
2. Read and prepare mini-booktalks of the ten titles you'll be using in this activity. Before you begin, share at least three unique facts about the ten titles to pique their interest. (Optional: Add props to enhance booktalks).
3. Explain that books go through an editorial process before they are published, and that an editor helps an author to make sure everything is okay with the book before it is printed. The process includes finalizing a title that may or may not have been selected by the author. The editor of a publishing house wants a title that is appealing to readers so that it will sell well.
4. Invite students to take the editor's challenge (see page 5; answer key on page 6) by reading the "Rough Draft Title" and selecting the "Publisher's Pick."
5. Divide the class into two teams and tell them they are about to play a game like baseball, with each team getting three chances to match the correct title. Remind them that they must raise their hand to respond, or the point goes to the other team.
6. Display part of the list by showing only the example title of the "Rough Draft Title" column and the entire "Publisher's Pick" column. Model the example to show how the game is played.
7. Call on each team by turn to provide the correct Publisher's Pick. As the answers are given, record the scores and present your mini-booktalk for each answer. Give clues as needed so both teams succeed with 5 points each.

Finalizing Details for the Presenter and Book Sales

2–3 Weeks Before the Event

- Contact the presenter to verify date, time, and setup required, including Internet access. (Internet access may be restricted or filtered by the district and may require the technology department to set up a "window of time" for access.)
- Send home book order flyers (see page 7 for example), and allow extra time for translation if you are at a bilingual campus.
- Announce or request weekly announcements for students to return their book orders to the library.
- Check the orders to make sure they have the child's name, teacher, and correct amount of money included.

Day of the Event

- Set up the presentation area with requested equipment and water for the presenter. Have an extension cord available in case the author brings additional electrical equipment.
- Place masking tape on the floor to denote where seating should begin, and decide whether or not a middle aisle is needed.
- Remind students to turn in last minute book orders and use their best listening manners during the presentation. (Go over these manners if the presentation is at the beginning of the year.)
- Announce that students will receive their autographed book(s) no later than dismissal of the *next* day. (Give yourself an extra day, as you may be too busy on the day of the event to deliver.)
- Get book orders ready with sheets for autographing tucked inside each book. Place books in a location that allows the presenter to autograph without interruptions. Also, give him or her rubber bands to band around the book with the autograph sheet on top so that you can see the students' names for deliveries.
- Order lunch for the presenter if he or she is staying for an extended time.
- Give the presenter the check for his/her fee, or a projected time for its delivery.

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Aileen Kirkham is the author of Library Lessons for Little Ones and the intermediate Collaborative Bridges series (both from UpstartBooks); and articles for Library Media Connection and LibrarySparks. She is a career librarian, an educational consultant for professional development, and a professional storyteller and puppeteer. Visit Aileen's website at www.aileen-kirkham.com.

The Editor's Challenge: Perfecting a Title

Directions: Match the title from the left column with the published title on the right.

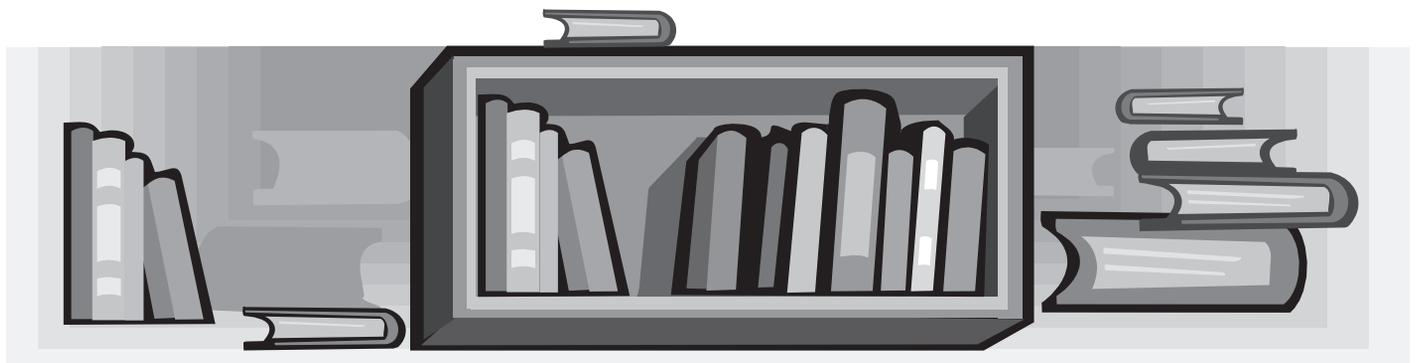
Rough Draft Title

Example: **A Forest Researcher**

1. Armored Animal Path
2. Bunches & Bunches of Animal Lines
3. Dark-as-Night Giant
4. Fantastic Bird Biters
5. Flutters of Brightness
6. Overgrown Kitty
7. Rescuing a Slow Swimmer
8. Sea of Slurp
9. Slowpoke's Wave
10. Winged Wonder Expands

Publisher's Pick

- Unbeatable Beaks*
- Saving Manatees*
- A Butterfly Grows*
- Turtle Tide*
- Wings of Light*
- Ocean Soup*
- Lots and Lots of Zebra Stripes*
- Armadillo Trail*
- The Woods Scientist*
- Black Bear*
- Bobcat*

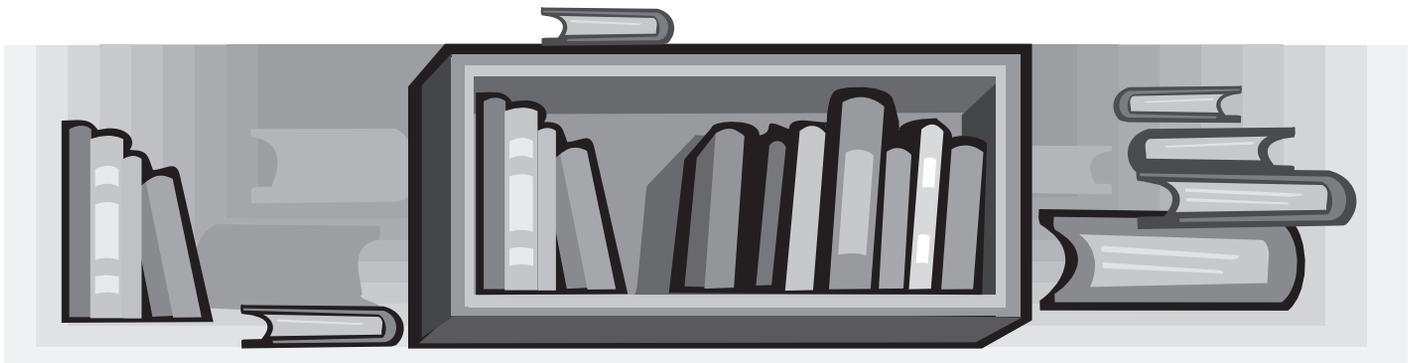


The Editor's Challenge: Perfecting a Title

Answer Key

Example: The Woods Scientist

1. Armadillo Trail
2. Lots and Lots of Zebra Stripes
3. Black Bear
4. Unbeatable Beaks
5. Wings of Light
6. Bobcat
7. Saving Manatees
8. Ocean Soup
9. Turtle Tide
10. A Butterfly Grows



Sample Flyer for Students and Staff

(Sample created in preparation for a visit from Layne Johnson.)

Dear Families of Love 2 Read Elementary,

September 2012

Layne Johnson, the illustrator of many award-winning books, will be sharing his talents with students in grades K-5 on October 15, 2012. If you would like to purchase an autographed book, please fill out this form and include your payment in an envelope with your child's name and teacher's name on the outside of the envelope. Books will be available for preview in the library on October 1. The deadline for orders is Oct. 12. If you have any questions, please contact Ima Librarian at Imalibrarian@love2readelem.com. To learn more about Layne Johnson, visit his website at www.laynejohnson.com.

1. **Christmas for a Kitten.** Tossed to the side of the road and left to fend for itself, a kitten hungers for food and the warmth of a home. The perfect opportunity presents itself when it hitches a ride in a Christmas tree that a family is carrying inside to decorate.

	Hardback	Paperback(s)	Price	Total
Gr: PK-2	N/A	_____	@ \$7 each	_____

Autograph to _____

2. **Christmas Kitten Home at Last.** Santa and his Mrs. fall in love with Cookie, a foundling kitten, but Santa's allergies prevent them from adopting. The problem is solved when a little girl with a caring home wishes for a kitten.

	HB	PB	Price	Total
Gr: PK-2	\$13	N/A	@ \$13 each	_____

Autograph to _____

3. **Farmer George Plants a Nation.** Explores the many facets of George Washington: leader of the country, inventor, and farmer. His great passion was farming, but his claim to fame was political leadership. Both gave him the opportunity to plant seeds of success!

	HB	PB	Price	Total
Gr: 2-5	\$16	N/A	@ \$16 each	_____

Autograph to _____

Total for Entire Order _____

Child's Name _____

Check# & Amt _____

Teacher/Room # _____

Cash Amount _____

