

Redlands High School teacher writes relationship curriculum to address growing concerns

By CHRISTEE LEMONS, Staff Writer
Posted: 10/27/2009 03:37:45 PM PDT

REDLANDS - Fourth- and fifth-graders gasped and shrieked at every suspenseful moment and laughed at every joke when author Frank Beddor presented his series, "The Looking Glass Wars," at McKinley Elementary School Thursday.

"I usually do sixth, seventh and eighth, but fourth- and fifth-graders are really reactive to everything," Beddor said.

It was the second time Frugal Frigate children's bookstore owner Brad Hundman arranged for Beddor, who presents at schools around the country, to speak at McKinley.

"I make sure that I know the talent so I can bring it to the readers," Hundman said.

Principal Tim Hoch jumped at the idea of having Beddor talk to students.

"Besides being just a fabulous storyteller, he shows the kids all the steps he went through to develop a novel," he said.

Beddor took Lewis Carroll's "Alice's Adventures in Wonderland," chopped and expanded it into three books, three graphic novels and a online game's worth of war, mischief and heartbreak.

"I knew that I needed to have something other than reading to the kids," he said. "I knew that it needed to be visceral and dynamic."

He explained the idea behind the series, the steps of production and showed animated clips of the motion picture, which is in its casting phase.

"You don't simply have to hand a book to a kid to have them read," Beddor said.

"There's lots of different portals to get them to read."

The story bridges mediums to capture an audience of different interests and lead them into his mythical world.

Student Kimberly Chew, 10, was not thrilled when she read "Seeing Redd," but watching the animated trailers sparked an interest.

"The trailers were better than the actual book," she said. "It's getting me really excited about the movie."

Joseph Maysonet, 10, enjoyed reading the first volume of "Hatter M."

"I like that it was pretty exciting and adventurous," he said.

After audience members read scenes from the movie script, Beddor signed books students could purchase. Hundman has known Beddor for about four years, and arranges author readings on his own at no cost to the schools.

"It presents good literature at their feet," Hundman said. "It shows them that there are good authors out there and encourages them to read their work."

E-mail Staff Writer Christee Lemons at clemons@redlandsdailyfacts.com