

A.C. Stelle teams up with popular author

Writer inspires students to create artwork, newspapers

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THROUGH THE LOOKING GLASS— Student teacher Ashley Benning, left, joins forces with author Frank Beddor, center, and A.C. Stelle Middle School chair Barbara Andrews to bring literature to life for sixth-grade language arts students. Beddor is the author of the book series “Looking Glass Wars,” a Gothic interpretation of the classic “Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland.” Beddor claims his books provide “the real story” of what happened when Alice fell down the rabbit hole.

Student-teacher Ashley Benning recently brought a tinge of Gothic excitement to the language arts curriculum for students at A.E. Wright Middle School.

Capitalizing on fascination with the popular book series, the “Looking Glass Wars,” Benning last month invited author Frank Beddor to speak to the school’s sixth-graders about his dark novels and their connection to the fantasy classic, “Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland.”

Beddor says his trilogy, not the Lewis Carroll classic, tells the real story of Alice in Wonderland.

Beddor told the students how he had encountered an ancient, incomplete deck of cards at the British Museum in London that reminded him of the famous Carroll tale. A chance meeting with an antiques dealer led Beddor to

the eccentric owner of the remaining cards, which revealed in gruesome detail the real story of Alyss Heart, heir to Wonderland.

The alleged, true story of Alyss is a mysterious tale that includes murder, revenge and betrayal. The Mad Hatter in the original tale, Beddor said, is not mad at all and actually hates tea. His name is Hatter Madigan and he's the super-human bodyguard for Alyss. And for Beddor, Lewis Carroll's white rabbit becomes Bibwit Harte, a tutor for Alyss.

Beddor's captivating presentation for the middle-schoolers provided a fitting culmination for a project that included the reading of his books and the students completing a variety of writing assignments and projects.

Students wrote and produced Wonderland newspapers and published user manuals for various gadgetry mentioned in the book. They also wrote essays and letters, and created artwork and other projects to creatively explore the themes in Beddor's "The Looking Glass Wars" series.

Barbara Andrews, the English Department chair at A.C. Stelle, said Benning did a "fabulous job" at bringing literature to life in class.

During the A.E. Wright assembly, Beddor invited different groups of students to "audition" for the "Looking Glass Wars" movie in production, and he gave out bookmarks, stickers and comic books.

Sixth-grade student Nick Rakauskas said he liked the way Beddor spun the classic tale of Alice into a new story.

Beddor is a former world champion freestyle skier, and produced the films "There's Something About Mary" and "Wicked." He's also acted and performed as a stuntman.