

# ORLAND PARK GET INVOLVED!

## Author visits Jerling Jr. High School

Kelli Murray/Triblocal.com staff reporter 12/03/07  
03:32 PM 21 hits

In many ways, Frank Beddor's visit to Jerling Junior High School in Orland Park Dec. 3 was a combination variety show and book signing.

Beddor is the author of "The Looking Glass Wars," the real story of "Alice in Wonderland," not Lewis Carroll's version.

Also a movie producer, Beddor was in London for the 1998 movie premiere of "Something About Mary," when he visited the British Museum. It was a trip that was to take him down the proverbial rabbit hole.

"I found these ancient cards that were dark and gothic and similar to Alice in Wonderland," Beddor told the crowd. "This incomplete deck of cards was constantly on my mind."

He met an antiques dealer who owned the remaining deck of cards that set his fate to writing the trilogy: Lewis Carroll had the story all wrong and it was up to Beddor to set the story straight.

To keep the students engaged, Beddor didn't do a reading of his book to the crowd of about 600 students; instead he enthusiastically re-told the main storyline. His animation in the retelling of the story drew the crowd into his world.

"See the feral cat coming down the aisle? See it?" he pointed between two sections of seated students who all cranked their necks to follow his finger pointing to the imaginary cat.

Beddor brought up two students from the crowd to read sections of the book as if auditioning for a movie.

Heather Golz and Michael Cook, both sixth graders, took on the roles of Alyss and Dodge. The crowd roared with laughter as Dodge took Alyss' hand at one point, but what brought the auditorium to near hysteria was the choosing of two teachers for the



Frank Beddor shows one of the cards that inspired his trilogy.

parts of Queen Redd and her henchman, the Cat. Seventh grade teachers Rebecca Tompkins and Tim Kantor won those roles.

To prepare for the author's visit, the art teachers had their students prepare storyboards with the books' theme that were prominently displayed on the stage behind the author.

"We're really excited about this," art teacher Karen Ritter said. "Everything looks great."

Ritter said that art teachers Sue Berry and Marissa Gall had students do smaller paintings of the same theme that hung in the library where the book signing event took place.

After the performance, the students all had an opportunity to go to the library to get their books signed.

"The kids were really engaged," said assistant principal Heather Conrad. "They were attentive, they participated. It was fantastic."

Eighth grader Leah Kurecki had a stack of books she was holding while in line.

"It was really interesting," Kurecki said. "He had a lot of personality and he wasn't a boring person doing a talk. He put a visual to what he was saying."

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