

Creating an Essential Literary Culture in Your School by Appealing to Students' Interests

by Author Silvia Acevedo

Blue chip businesses are spending as much as \$3.1 billion on remedial writing training annually. Of this budget, \$2.9 billion was spent on current employees--not new hires.

- National Commission on Writing

Reading and writing influence nearly every aspect of our world.

ENTERTAINMENT:

video games, TV, theater, music, literature itself

TECHNOLOGY:

hardware and software

SCIENCE:

astronomy, physics, life sciences

BUSINESS:

production, distribution, retail

"Raising the level of literacy for children is an act of social justice."

- Columbia University's Teachers College "Reading and Writing Project"

Reading and writing skills learned early and reinforced continually help children achieve higher success throughout their academic years.

STUDENTS NEED:

- High-volume reading
- High-success reading
- High-interest reading
- Protected reading time
- Read-alouds
- Writing time at least four days per week

“When writers write every day, they begin to compose even when they are not composing. They enter into a constant state of composition.”

- Donald Graves as quoted in “Children Want to Write”

VISITS FROM PROFESSIONAL WRITERS:

- Prove there are rewards for creativity
- Create a culture of community
- Spark a personal connection to literature
- Confirm that everyone can push through the hard times of learning

Students learn that authors also struggle with formulating ideas, editing and revision, and accepting criticism.

FIND WRITERS:

- By connections
- By location
- By genre
- By specialty
- By availability in the area

GUIDE VISITING WRITERS TO MATCH THEIR TALK TO YOUR UNIT OBJECTIVES:

- Provide classroom worksheets or a bibliography
- Communicate (about expectations, number of students, age range, and setting)
- Offer to look over their presentation outlines

FUND THE VISIT:

- Occasionally free but usually via a personal connection
- Expect to pay, but know that the cost is generally less than the cost of a field trip
- Apply for an Amber Brown Grant (Nov. 1 - April 15) for a free author visit + \$500
- Apply for a local educational grant (Rotary, Kiwanis, Optimists, etc.)
- PTO. Attend their meeting to import the priority of real life mentor writers
- Title I funds when visit is linked to curriculum, which it should be
- Book fairs
- Local business sponsorship
- Penny drives, allowing students to take ownership of the visit
- Grants
- Crowdfunding
- Skype visits, which are good but don't carry the rock star status of an in-person visit
- ASK! Creators are often willing to make it happen or direct you to someone who can

A FEW EXTRA TIPS:

- Find in-school partners to ease the burden of numerous tasks
 - Build student excitement at every turn
 - Classroom read aloud or having older students reading to younger students
 - Mention in announcements
 - Decorate the halls, create welcome banners, do writer-inspired art projects, hold contests for lunch with the writer
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REFERENCES:

Columbia University Teachers College "Reading and Writing Project"

<https://readingandwritingproject.org/about/research-base>

Inc. Magazine. Study: Poor Writing Skills Are Costing Businesses Billions

<https://www.inc.com/kaleigh-moore/study-poor-writing-skills-are-costing-businesses-billions.html>

Washington Post Columnist Jeff Selingo

<https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/why-so-many-new-college-graduates-bad-writers-jeff-selingo/>

The Author Village

<https://theauthorvillage.com/make-year-year-author-visit/>

SCBWI Amber Brown Grant

<https://www.scbwi.org/awards/grants/amber-brown-grant/>

The Booking Biz

<https://thebookingbiz.com>

The Nerdy Book Club

<https://nerdybookclub.wordpress.com>



Silvia Acevedo is the author of the *God Awful Series* of Books, the tale of a not-so-likable Cupid who loses his place in Olympus and fights his way back - and into our hearts.

Visit her at www.silviaacevedo.com

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January 18, 2018

My writing has been put on hold so I can prepare for school visits tomorrow and next week.

Tomorrow I just have two second-grade classroom visits, probably about 50 kids each. I just did some second-grade visits a few months ago, so I have a basic age-appropriate presentation, but I had to revamp to include my new books. I also wanted to rethink including a small section on process that may need to be moved or deleted; not sure, but I worry the energy lags there. I had to decide whether to add a few photos from the Cinderella musical--fun, but is there any added value for the kids? I decided that it's an interesting example of how things sometimes turn into something you never even dreamed of, so probably will keep them in. And it made me wonder if I should add a section in the assemblies for older kids next week about how a story can be changed over and over again--if we write our own fractured fairy tale, after they find differences between the original Cinderella story and my version, I may tell them about some of the differences between my version and the musical, so they have ideas they can riff off of.

Next week, I have to do two writing workshops as well as assemblies. I haven't done those for a while, so I needed to pull out my notes, and I need to prepare some props and talk through the presentation to make sure it still works, check the timing, and get it into my head, especially since I'll be doing the workshops after two assemblies plus signings plus lunch, so I'll be exhausted and running on fumes.

I'm doing assemblies for three or four grades at a time at each school, which will require some rethinking and rejiggering, since usually I do K-1, 2-3, and 4-5.

I spent a little time looking at the ethnic makeup of each school, seeing how many are English language learners, and seeing how many kids are on the free lunch program. Is there something I can say to let the kids know that every one of them is welcome and valued?

I also need to print out maps, just in case of a phone navigation issue, figure out travel timing, pack food in case the promised vegan lunches don't materialize, check the projector I bring as a spare, copy my Keynote onto my iPad as a backup, and save copies as PowerPoint and pdf files on flash drives just in case. At tomorrow's school, there was a tech issue last year, and I needed the flash drive/PowerPoint version.

So. This is why writers charge for school visits.



Deborah Underwood
Interstellar Cinderella



SILVIA

ACEVEDO

AUTHOR VISITS



I'm a journalist turned novelist. In my 20+ years in news, I've interviewed presidential candidates, covered national and international stories, and given breaking news reports for CNN and local television and radio stations around the country. I also write fantasy and mythology for ages 12 and up. I genuinely love meeting readers and teaching aspiring writers at schools, libraries, book clubs, bookstores, and writers' conferences.



“Silvia is truly an energetic and engaging presenter.”

– Dana Kaleta, *Director*, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee Quest Project



To reserve a date or inquire about custom programming, email me at silvia@silviaacevedo.com

www.silviaacevedo.com

“Silvia captivated my freshmen Honors English class and opened their minds to the creative process.”

– Courtney Trachtman, *Honors English Teacher*, Carmel High School (Indiana)

PRESENTATIONS

Middle & High School

● **WORLD BUILDING**

Middle school and up, especially writers

See how writers use world building to expand their story's world and grow their characters' troubles. Bring a pencil for some writing drills.

● **DRAGONS, GODS, AND FANTASTICAL PLACES**

Middle school and up, general interest

The power of fantasy and mythology is a deep well of inspiration for many works of fiction. Learn how popular series have made it all cool again.

● **LET'S MAKE A SCENE**

Middle school and up, especially writers

Have you ever wondered why some books make you feel like you could step right into the page? We'll talk about how writers pull you in.

● **IT'S TIME TO TALK**

Middle school and up, general interest

Characters that feel real have an authentic dialogue. Let's talk talk. And ready your pen because we'll try to capture the speech of a few favorite characters.



Dear Educators,

I understand that you are pressed to meet curricular standards within finite instructional time. As such, I will work to enhance your instruction, not disrupt it. I can easily tailor my presentations to your subject and unit themes. I've taught kindergarteners to octogenarians, small groups and large, and I'm happy to tie my experiences to your lessons. Hope to hear from you!

- Silvia

Elementary School

- **WHAT DO WRITERS DO?**
- **ME? (*GULP*) YES, YOU CAN WRITE!**
- **HOW A BOOK IS MADE**
- **I FLEW UP IN THE SKY AND THEN ...**



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