

## Nagel Middle School

# Connecting to Authors

**April  
2010**

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## New York Times Bestselling Author, Aprilynne Pike, to Visit in May

Aprilynne Pike will be visiting Nagel on May 4th. Ms. Pike has written two novels, *Wings*, held the number one spot on the New York Times Bestselling list for 2 weeks. On the day of her visit the sequel "Spells" will be released.

Some students will hear her speak during class time and a group of students who read the book will be lucky enough to have lunch with her—watch for details.

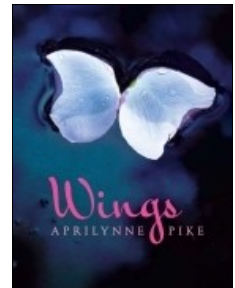


Ms. Pike's exciting novels are a little: magic, romance, danger and your not so ordinary faeries!

Fantasy lovers will not be

disappointed. For a summary of the book please see article on page 4.

Check out the author website at:  
<http://www.aprilynnepike.com/>



## Nagel Visited by Newbery Author, Rebecca Stead

### Author Visits:

- Make books real
- Promotes literacy
- Inspires
- Engages
- Allows for a shared experience
- Connects writing

The author spoke to students about a career as an author, her writing, her books, and signed autographs. A group of 50 students who read the book "When You Reach Me" had lunch with the author, had the opportunity to ask all the spoiler questions.

Ms. Stead lives in New York with her husband and two sons. She has authored two books and just won the Newbery award for "When You Reach Me."

The Newbery Medal was named for eighteenth-century British bookseller John Newbery. It is awarded annually by the Association for Library Service to Children, a division of the American Library Association, to the author of the most distinguished contribution to American literature for children in the previous year.

"When You Reach Me" is about a 12-year-old girl named Miranda who en-

counters shifting friendships, a sudden punch, a homeless man and mysterious notes that hint of things to come. This is a great mystery and science fiction novel where random events converge in a brilliantly constructed plot.

Thank you to Chick-Fil-A for sponsoring lunch and Joseph-Beth Booksellers for bringing this author to Nagel Middle School.



# Connecting to an Author—Why?

Bringing an author to a school allows students to get involved, inspired, engaged and connected to writing like no other assignment can. The author and student can share an experience; the writer can see how students connected to the story and the students can see how the author connects to his writing. I likened Newbery Author, Rebecca Stead's visit to our school like the Super Bowl of literature. (It just happened to be the Monday after the Super Bowl). Students who love to read many times love to write and to create. So for a master to share their craft really allows student to connect writing with creating a story. Several times I have had students bring a writing sample to share with an author—that is when we know a

connection has been made! One team of staff wanted an author to speak on their team as a career speaker—I was a little disappointed but then I decided that writing is a vocation and perhaps there is a writer in the audience—a student that might share the same passion. Many believe that an author visit may encourage reading I believe that an author shares their love affair with words and share a story that needs to be told. Students who have exposure to authors or illustrators connect at a different level than those who have not. So wonder if you cannot afford to bring an author to your school? Do kids miss out? With the advent of some great new technology there is a list of authors that will Skype for 20 minutes for

free! Twenty minutes is a perfect amount of time if your class or group of students is prepared and ready to engage with the author. Working with your local Parent Organization or applying for Title I funds is another way to work on covering the expenses when bringing an author to the school. So put on your creative hat and let's get connected!

"I can't believe I just shook hands with a Newbery Author"—6th grade student.

## Where to Start

In most cases the Media Specialist should start at least a year in advance or farther out depending on the author or illustrator. You may need time to raise money or look for funding. Don't overlook using book fair profits to raise money towards an author visit. If money is a problem check out the article, *Met Any Good Authors Lately?* by Kate Messner (2009) she has a huge list of authors who will Skype for 20 minutes for free. Another idea is to

partner up with a local bookstore who bring touring authors to their stores. Often times the bookseller contracts for visits beyond the store—these visits are free to schools. The only drawback, the Media Specialist will only have 4-6 weeks to prepare for the author and the visit tends to be on a smaller scale. We have had great success with this type of visit and often get 2 authors a year! Next, form a group of interested stakeholders: stu-

dents, a parent or two and start researching your school's favorite author—you're on your way! Don't forget to get the go ahead from your administrators!

## Author, Author

Have an author? Good job—now it's time to start thinking about the details. Map out your timeline and check to see if your district requires a contract—this is always a good idea for smooth communication. What to include?

- Date, Time and Place
- Expenses—honorarium, transportation, lodging and meals

- Preliminary Event Fact Sheet which includes the # of visits, size of the groups, 15-20 minute breaks between session
- Points for discussion: any equipment needs, any meal restrictions, book sales and is author willing to sign autographs (only books?)
- All set? Have all involved sign contract (administrator, funding

source, media specialist)

- Now keep in touch—final itinerary, directions, how students are preparing for the visit



Newbery Author Rebecca Stead visited February 8th

## Read, Promote, Read

Administrative okay, contract in hand it is now time to turn our attention to the reason why we bring in an author—the students. It is time to get books, get the students reading and get them excited about an author coming to their school.

**Books** (How many? Where to get them? Do you have 6 months or 6 weeks?)

- Book fair—if your author is published by Scholastic have a fair—get students to buy paperbacks. Have a theme around the author. Get your own copy for an autograph!
- Public Library—use Teacher Collection Card—get as many copies of multiple titles. This works best for 6 week notice or less.

- Publisher—sometimes the author's publisher will send some copies ahead of the author visit, especially if the author has not published many titles yet.
- Bookseller or Publisher—may send copies for you to sell at a great price.
- Keep in touch with the author—let them know how many books students are reading!

**Promoting** (How to get students excited!)

- Have a Themed Summer Reading Program—around author/illustrator.
- Have several contests with trivia on the books, author, questions to ask
- Give prizes—autograph copy of

the books or lunch with the author

- Announcements (Audio/Video)—get kids to promote the books—write reviews
- Short on time—have teachers read aloud as many chapters as possible, open it up to all students but if students read the book allow them to have lunch visit with the author (students really love to ask spoiler questions of author, so if all students have read the book the author can give the details)
- Use out author/illustrator bookmarks for students to keep track of books read and questions they want to ask
- Make sure you have read as many titles as possible—gets your creative juices going!

## Teachers and Content Tie-In

Students are easy to excite—teachers take more coaxing. Media Specialists need to understand that staff will be more willing to participate if they don't view this as 'an addition to their workload'. Approach staff, you know will appreciate and take the time to prepare students for the author. Collaborate on how can this visit meet standards or enhance what they are currently teaching on their team. D.J. MacHale, popular author of the *Pen-dragon Series*, could tie in with medieval studies and Aprilynne Pike in

fantasy genre studies. Some teachers may want to explore the vocation of writing or the writing process.

Supply staff with options for preparing students—books or readers (publishers sometimes will offer a chapter of the book or a booklet on the author) or Joan Collins (2008) states, "that an Author WebQuest can be an effective way to use information literacy skills and prepare for an author visit". Prepare staff by sending them an informational Glog about the author.

Build excitement with book displays, posters and some local publicity! Collaboration with stakeholders will payoff in a valuable experience for both students and staff!

**"You take a text, you explore it, you enter it with all your heart and all your mind."** ~Elie Wiesel

## Details, Details, Details

A well planned visit will make for a smooth day. Here are a few tips:

- Hand a schedule out to all involved parties
- A welcome on the outdoor sign and on a poster in the lobby.
- Assign a student to greet and escort
- Involve parents—arrange books for autographs, set up lunch—

let them attend to some details

- Breaks-15-20 minutes between sessions—directions to bathroom and supply bottles of water
- A memento for students who may not be able to afford a book—bookmark a great choice
- Set up and test equipment 20 minutes before a session

- Have a prepared introduction
- Take care of payment upfront
- Lunch arrangements are important—some like to eat with students others prefer not to
- Don't forget your camera to document your event!
- Relax, have fun and enjoy a great event!



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**NIGHTHAWKS S.O.A.R**

[www.foresthills.edu/nagel](http://www.foresthills.edu/nagel)

• **Want More information?** Check out these books, articles and websites!

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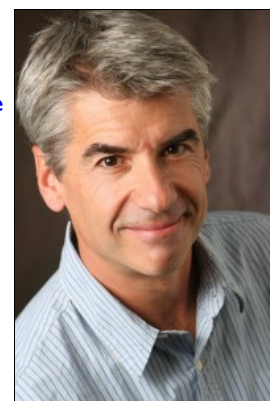
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## This just in.....D.J. MacHale to visit Nagel on May 5th

• Nagel Middle School has just found out that we have been chosen to receive a visit by D.J. MacHale. His *Pendraon Series*, has been on the New York Times #1 Bestseller List. He is not only a very talented author but a director, executive producer and a creator of television series and movies. He will be touring for his new release *Morphous Road*. This is new horror series of books for young adults. Stay tuned

Author D.J. MacHale



## Wings

Laurel is 15 year old girl going through a lot of changes in her life. Her family is moving from a very isolated community, where Laurel had been home schooled, to a larger community where she would be going to public high school. Big adjustment!

She immediately meets David on her first day of school and an instant friendship builds—sometimes David is too understanding to be believable. But it is nice to think in this world that there are friends who will unconditionally love you—even if they find out you are a fairy.

Laurel didn't know herself until a plant grew out of her back



that looked like wings. The fantasy begins as Laurel begins to

discover who she is and begins to deal with living in two realms—where a boy in each realm are fighting for her affection! This is the first in a series by Aprilynne Pike. Girls will love this coming of age, romance fantasy. Guys will enjoy the action. Looking forward to the sequel “Spells” due out on May 4th.