

Frequently asked questions about Carol Franks-Randall's School Author Visits

As a former teacher, elementary principal, central office administrator and superintendent, I **love** to work hands-on with students in schools. Conducting author visits and having the opportunity to share space with kids and teachers, and talk about my books is one of most rewarding aspects of being a children's book author. While the books I have published were written for a variety of audiences, I always listen carefully to what the children have to say. Every time I read my books to kids, they provide me with perspectives I hadn't considered before. They never disappoint. I continue to learn from my audiences all the time.

Why have me come to your school?

By meeting a real author in the flesh, your students will hopefully become inspired to become better writers. They can also ask questions about my books and find out many of the "behind the scenes" thoughts and ideas that are not explicitly stated in the book. A visit also provides students with an opportunity to delve into the text and illustrations more deeply and draw inferences that might otherwise not come up when another adult reads the book. There is no substitute for asking the person who wrote them what the words mean. I'd like to think that I exude enthusiasm for reading, which is always a plus.

Who should be part of an author's day event?

To date, all of my visits have been in elementary schools, although I can certainly customize my presentation to include middle and high school students. The audience I work with most often is K-5.

How much time should we allot for each grade level?

My most successful author's day events have been conducted by grade level. Typically I read a book aloud before engaging in any follow-up activities. The table

below contains some suggestions of what a visit might look like for each elementary grade:

Grade level	Time Period	Follow- up activities
Kindergarten	Approximately 40 minutes	Coloring sheets, early writing prompts depending on the level of the students. . I could send the worksheets I have developed to teachers/library media specialist/principal in advance for input, if requested.
First grade	40 - 50 minutes	Coloring sheets, early writing prompts depending on the level of the students. I could send the worksheets I have developed to teachers/library media specialist/principal in advance for input, if requested. I have several levels of writing prompt worksheets prepared.
Second grade	40 - 50 minutes	Early writing prompts depending on the level of the students. I could send the worksheets I have developed to teachers/library media specialist/principal in advance for input, if requested. I have several levels of writing prompt worksheets prepared.
Third grade	40 – 50 minutes	More sophisticated writing prompts; I could send the worksheets I have developed to teachers/library media specialist/principal in advance for input, if requested. I have several levels of writing prompt worksheets prepared. Perhaps some peer sharing; student-created class book could be created as a culminating activity.
Fourth grade	40 – 60 minutes	Students work in pairs to design a poster encouraging younger students to read one of my books. 11 x 17 paper will be

		provided. Art supplies can be provided if needed.
Fifth grade (if deemed appropriate)	40 – 60 minutes	Student work in pairs and write down the most important idea they learned or were reminded of when listening to my book(s). I will provide index cards. Oral sharing encouraged but not required. Microphone may be needed. Could be videotaped for future use.

I certainly understand that the activities outlined above may not be completed in the time I have allotted. I can certainly begin these activities, and they can be finished by classroom teachers or other school personnel at a later time.

What materials/strategies do you use during your presentations?

I introduce the main character(s) in the story with dolls rather than simply launching into the story. I generally begin with some tried and true attention getting strategies like “Thumbs up if you are ready”, “Eyes and ears on me”, “Sit crisscross applesauce”, “Are my friends at _____ school/grade ready for a story?” to settle the group down for a read aloud. If the students have read the book(s) in advance, I might start off with some discussion questions and refer to the book as the conversation unfolds.

Where do you conduct your presentations?

I am very flexible. I have conducted presentations in cafeteriums, with students sitting on the floor, in “open areas” with kids sitting in chairs and on the floor, in library-media centers and in classrooms. Whatever setting the school deems best is where I will work.

How are follow-up activities conducted?

Ideally, I would love to have the opportunity to spend enough time with each group to participate in follow-up activities. So for example, if after reading one of my books aloud, the children participate in a writing prompt task, I would

welcome the opportunity to be present to work collaboratively with school personnel to circle the space, answer questions, provide encouragement, etc. I have no problem rolling up my sleeves and working directly with students. As mentioned earlier, I can certainly initiate these activities, if the staff deems this appropriate, and they can be finished by classroom teachers or other school personnel at a later time.

What should the school do to prepare for the visit?

There are many ways to approach this question. If the students read my books in advance, they can formulate questions to ask me, and conduct an interview. This interview could be videotaped and used on a website, on social media, etc. Another thought is to conduct a poll and ask students to vote on which one of my books they liked best. The students could create posters, welcome signs, etc. in advance of the visit. The pre-visit activities can certainly vary and are driven by the desires of the school personnel.

Another approach is to merely tell the students that an author is coming to the school and utilize the element of surprise and novelty. This works well too. All the follow up activities can still be successfully executed.

What giveaways do you provide?

Stickers will be provided, as well as coloring sheets for younger students. Word Search and writing prompt sheets are available as well.

What happens after your visit?

I will send a letter(s) to the students and staff, thanking them for their participation in the author's visit activities. I may ask staff if they are willing to provide me with a quote to post on my website. If permission is granted, I will post a few samples of student-generated written follow-up activities on my website.

If approved I will generate a press release in conjunction with school personnel to be sent to local newspapers. I will only do this if I have explicit permission from the principal or his/her designee.

In conclusion:

Every school visit is different – this is merely a guide. My goal is to customize each visit to meet the unique needs of your school. If you want to learn more, contact me by using the Contact page on my website, and we can set up a time to communicate in greater detail about how I can create a memorable visit for your school.