

January 5, 2016

Dear Parent or Guardian,

In my language arts classes, students will soon begin a story project designed to accent the six writing traits that are the focus of the Birmingham Public Schools’ writing instruction. As the class reviews and practices each trait, your student will revisit an original story he or she will develop.

This project is unusual in only one respect, and that is the final outcome. Internet-based publishing gives me the capability to collect students’ stories into a professionally-produced paperback volume. It is my hope that students will be spurred on by the opportunity to contribute to a book that will be available for sale to the general public. There are no costs to students unless they wish to purchase copies.

The word “internet” often triggers concerns about privacy, and I will address those below. First, I would like to outline the project in a bit more detail.

1. Every student will participate in the story-writing cycle and receive grades throughout this project. However, inclusion of the story in the published volume, while strongly encouraged, is entirely voluntary.
2. Students and I will discuss the types of stories they will write, and how stories of varying types will be organized into a single volume.
3. Students will start their stories with the traits of Idea and Organization in mind. There will be a revision process centering on these two traits before we consider the third trait, Voice, followed by further revision.
4. The remaining three traits—Word Choice, Sentence Fluency, and Conventions—are built into the curriculum in various ways, through instruction in grammar, usage, mechanics, and vocabulary. We will pay careful attention to these traits throughout the writing process.
5. The familiar writing process will be the model for this project. Students will pre-write, create a rough draft, confer with each other and me, proofread and edit their work, revise, and finally publish. Many of these steps will be revisited over time as a student considers his or her work with a particular writing trait in mind.
6. This project will exist alongside other reading, writing, and grammar portions of the curriculum. An important part of the project is the opportunity for students to put their stories away for days at a time. I hope this will result in fresh perspectives when they pick them up again after short breaks.
7. I anticipate that we will finish by the end of April. Once stories are completed, I will compile and submit for publication those that parents have approved.

The company that will publish these stories is CreateSpace. It publishes on demand, meaning that it only produces a book when an order for it is received. The economics of electronic storage makes it possible for

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CreateSpace to keep a book in its catalogue indefinitely. In addition, no copyrights are given up because of this process. The publishing rights to your child's story will remain with him or her.

CreateSpace sells every book in its catalogue via the internet. As a result, any person in the world who wishes to purchase our volume may do so. On the Web, browsers will see Berkshire Middle School identified and see my name as editor. On Amazon.com, some student names may be visible via the "Search Inside" feature. All student names will be listed within the volume itself.

A parent or guardian with privacy concerns has two options: a pen name in place of your child's name, or non-inclusion of your child's story in the published volume. I much prefer that a story be published under an assumed name than be kept from publication. At the same time, I recommend using your child's real name. I have seen no evidence of misuse of a child's identity through this project in the fifteen years that we have published, and the benefits of seeing one's name as a published author are great.

My plans are to purchase through Berkshire volumes for school use, many of which students may check out from me. At the close of the school year, these copies will be distributed among classroom collections and the Berkshire Media Center. Students or parents who wish to purchase personal copies may do so through Berkshire (to achieve the lowest price) or online. Should there be profits from book sales, proceeds will be used to reimburse Berkshire for set-up costs and the cost of the circulating copies; any additional proceeds will be donated to the Berkshire Media Center or other school account.

I have high expectations that this publishing outcome will act as a motivating force for some strong student effort. My expectations are based on the experience of producing fifteen previous volumes (*Short Stories by Short People; Who Says Adults Have to Write All the Good Stories?; Got Stories?; Tall Tales Gone Short; Stories for Shorties; Five Drafts Later...; Your Title Here; 638 Potential Paper Cuts; No Autographs, Please!; There Is No Title—Just Read the Book; There's No App for This; Like; InstaStories; Read It for the Vine; and Life in L.A.*), each a success from my point of view. I urge you to check out CreateSpace on the web (www.createspace.com) for information about how it conducts business. Finally, I hope you will support your child's effort in becoming a published author. I am asking for your instructions now by way of a checklist and signature on the cut-off portion at the bottom of this letter. I will request another signature from you shortly before publication to ensure that you remain comfortable with the story your child chooses to submit.

A rubric for this project will be provided to your child. You may also view it on my web site <<http://misterfisher.tripod.com/storyrubric.pdf>>.

Thanks for you help. If you have any questions or concerns, please let me know.

Sincerely,

Dan Fisher
mr.fisher@juno.com

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Please check all boxes that apply and fill in the required information. Return this form to Mr. Fisher.

- I give permission for my child's story to be published through CreateSpace.
- I give permission for my child's real name to be used in publication. The name should appear as (please print) _____.
- In place of my child's real name, I would like the following pen name to be used in publication (please print): _____.
- I deny permission for my child's story to be published through CreateSpace.

2015/2016

Student Name: _____ Hour _____ Parent/Guardian Signature: _____