

## **JEF CZEKAJ school/library visits**

**Suggested Audience:** Grades K-6 (though I'm certainly open to other age groups)  
Maximum number of presentations per day: 3-4

**Honorarium:** \$800 per day plus expenses within a 2-hour drive from Boston, \$1000 per day plus expenses elsewhere

### **Equipment needs:**

- A video projector that can be hooked up to a MacBook Pro
- some sort of appropriately-sized soundsystem that can have an Ipod plugged into it
- an easel with paper and markers
- a small table
- if I'm going to lead the students in an art activity (see below), they will need appropriate art supplies. Generally, paper, pencils, and crayons or markers is all we need, but we can certainly use something fancier if you'd like.

**Room requirements:** a room that can be darkened so that everyone can see the screen; seating arranged so that everyone can see the screen.

**Schedule:** Please allow 30 minutes for the initial set-up, and 15 minutes between sessions.

**Preparation:** Student groups should be familiar with my books.

**Travel:** Transportation should be arranged to and from the airport, hotel, and schools.

**Food:** I'm a vegetarian!

### **ABOUT THE PRESENTATIONS:**

In addition to being a writer and illustrator, I am also a musician. As the DJ of a hip hop group, I use the skills I've learned as a musician and performer to combine music and video with traditional reading and drawing to create attention-grabbing, interactive presentations that appeal to even the "coolest" kids.

I have 2 presentations. One for younger children (K-2nd) called WHAT IS HIP HOP? and one for grades 3-6 entitled FROM BRAIN TO BOOK. Of course, since every group of kids is different, every presentation I do turns out differently. Generally, each presentation includes a reading of the book, a short presentation, and, if desired, a short activity. I'm also happy to autograph kids books.

### **WHAT IS HIP HOP? (app. 30 minutes)**

**WHAT IS HIP HOP?** uses music and video as well as traditional reading and writing to introduce kids to the creative process and to show them the similarities between music and storytelling.

It begins with a short funny video that attempts to answer the question "What is Hip Hop?" with cartoons, music videos, and news clips.

Following that is a discussion about hip hop. I emphasize that the 4 elements of hip hop culture (breakdancing, rapping, DJing and graffiti) closely resemble subjects studied in school (dance, poetry, music, and art). The connection between rap and poetry is highlighted.

That leads into a reading of *HIP AND HOP, DON'T STOP!* Since the book is about a rabbit and a turtle who humorously rap, I've created a hip hop soundtrack to the reading. Thus, the reading more closely resembles a performance than it does a traditional "reading".

Following that is a brief discussion about the creative process, with an emphasis on the similarities between my process and the process that even young kids are taught in school. If there's time, we can do a short drawing activity.

### **FROM BRAIN TO BOOK (app. 45 minutes)**

The presentation begins with a reading of *HIP AND HOP, DON'T STOP!* As with the younger grades, this reading involves music and rapping and more closely resembles a "performance" than it does a traditional reading. For the older grades (5th and 6th), I enlist help from the audience to perform the raps from the book.

Following that is a humorous talk (using Powerpoint slides and a video to keep their attention) that follows my creative process from brainstorming through to final publication. In particular, it follows the evolution of one specific page from *HIP AND HOP, DON'T STOP!* from idea, to sketchbook, to rough drafts, to final art. I emphasize the similarities between my art supplies and the kids' (pencils, notebooks, pens, etc), and how my process mirrors the process that kids typically follow in creating stories in the classroom. I bring actual sketches, final art, and tools used to give the kids a concrete picture of the creative process. The goal of the talk is to teach kids that the difference between being a "real" artist and them is not that great.

Once again, if there is time (and if the teachers are interested) we can do a short interactive art activity.

### **SAMPLE ART ACTIVITES**

Depending on time constraints and the individual teachers' desires, I like to do an art activity with the kids. They are usually structured like games and emphasize elements of

storytelling techniques, and can be customized to reflect what you are working on with the kids. Here are some examples:

**INSTANT CHARACTERS:** Students choose two index cards from a box. One index card has an adjective written on it (e.g. angry, cute, hungry, etc.) and the other has an animal or creature written on it (e.g. squirrel, whale, ghost, monster). The students are given 5 minutes to draw the character using whatever style and materials they choose.

After 5 minutes, the students hold up their drawings and the others have to guess what the drawing is.

**A NEW PERSPECTIVE:** Once again students choose an index card from a box. These index cards have different, funny perspectives or points of view on them (e.g. ants view, x-ray, funhouse mirror). The class chooses a well-known story or fairy tale (e.g. **Little Red Riding Hood**) and each student is given 5-10 minutes to draw a scene from the story in the perspective they have chosen. We then share our drawings.