



Reading Is Power

Newsletter of the Open Book Program
Summer, 1999

Kids Interview Famous Authors and Illustrator for Open Book T.V. Show

Student interviews with Children's Book Author Darwin McBeth Walton and Illustrator/Author Jan Spivey Gilchrist rounded out activities for the Open Book Program pilot project at Mayo Elementary School, 249 E. 37th St.

The Spring 1999 pilot project represented a chance for young adolescents to participate in a variety of after-school activities that encourage the development of reading, writing and critical thinking skills.

Students Name our Newsletter

Welcome to the first edition of *Reading is Power*, the newsletter for the Open Book Program. The newsletter's title is an example of how Open Book stimulates student thought and creativity. Students worked in small groups to come up with a list of titles. Then a vote was taken by the entire class. The students can be proud of their choice. For this is exactly what Open Book wants to convey—**Reading IS Power!**

-- **Marrice Coverson**
Executive Director

The program was deemed a success by Mayo Principal Fredrick D. McNeal Jr. "It's a good concept," stated McNeal. "Meeting with the author and asking questions—that was a highlight. Most youngsters, most people period, don't get a chance to meet with the authors of the books they read."

The Open Book Program focuses on stimulating interest in quality children's literature through a variety of activities. During each program segment, participants do an in-depth study of one book. For example, required reading during the Spring 1999 program was *Dance Kayla!* by Darwin McBeth Walton.

In addition to face-to-face interviews with authors and illustrators, the students keep daily journals, write poetry, learn video-taping techniques and use theatrical skills to portray characters and scenes from the book they are reading. Another feature of the Open Book Program is parent participation. Parents are required to attend an orientation meeting, sign a contract of support, and participate in at least two Open Book sessions.

During the Spring 1999 program, theatrical training was provided by Actress Jackie Samuel from the Chicago Arts Partnership in Education. Hands-on video training was presented under the direction

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Open Book Program participants got a chance to meet and interview Darwin McBeth Walton, author of *Dance, Kayla!*



Parent participation is mandatory in the Open Book Program. In addition to attending an orientation meeting, parents agree to attend at least two sessions during the program.

Author and Illustrator...

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of Tony Streit and Diedre Searcy from Street Level Youth Media. In addition, the students received interviewing tips from WLS Radio Talk Show Host Chris Green.

The centerpiece of the Open Book Program is the Book Talk by Teens, a cable T.V. show that is initiated and produced by students. The first show which features video clips from the Spring 1999 program is scheduled to air this fall.

Open Book Expands

Word about the success of the Open Book Program pilot project is spreading throughout Chicago's educational community. This fall, Open Book will return to Mayo Elementary School and will expand to five other Chicago Public Schools including Raymond Elementary, 3663 S. Wabash, Esmond Elementary, 1865 W. Montvale, Shoop Elementary, 1460 W. 112th, Williams Elementary, 2710 S. Dearborn and Wells Preparatory, 244 E. Pershing Rd.

The expanded program includes all the activities featured in the pilot project. In addition, students will work with a professional web designer to develop an Open Book web site and their own personal web pages.

Author/Illustrator Interviews

One of the strengths of the Open Book Program is its focus on face-to-face contact between students and professional authors and illustrators. During their interview with Jan Spivey Gilchrist, illustrator of several books including *Angels*,

Honey, I Love and For the Love of the Game: Michael Jordan and Me, students learned a lot about how an illustrated book is produced. Spivey-Gilchrist also talked about her career as an author.

The interview with Author Darwin McBeth Walton featured thoughtful questions about her career and her book *Dance Kayla!* Excerpts from this interview demonstrate some of the important skills learned during the Open Book Program:

Question: Where did you get your ideas?

Darwin McBeth Walton: "Ideas come from all different places. You write about what you know. Then you take it from there and imagine it the way that you'd like to be... All the things that I have been and all the places that I have visited are part of the ideas that come to me when I'm writing a book."

Question: When you wrote *Dance Kayla!*, was it hard, easy or was it both?

Darwin McBeth Walton: "There were times when I didn't know what to write about. I would sit maybe for a long time before the computer before anything inspiring occurred. And then there were times when it would click in and I would have so much to write about. I'd run to my computer. I even got out of bed one night to go write a chapter."

NOTE: The complete interview with Author Darwin McBeth Walton will be featured on the Open Book Program web site (coming soon!). Also, excerpts from the interview will be featured on the Book Talk by Teens cable T.V. show.

Wishes for Kayla and Me

by Open Book Participants
Mayo School, May 17, 1999

After reading Dance, Kayla!, the class wrote a free verse poem based on Kayla's wishes and their own.

Kayla wished she saw her dad again, but I wish that Christmas was everyday and that Halloween was in June.

Kayla wished that her daddy would come back and I wish that my father would come back because he disappeared on me since I was little.

Kayla wished she had a letter from her dad, but I wish I would stay happy and never get sad.

Kayla wished she could see her dad, but I wish I wasn't always sad

Kayla wished Gran did not die, but I wish I had a motor.

Kayla wished that she could go and visit Cheefus, but I wish that I had a car.

Kayla wished that she could see her dad, but I wish I can have a four by four truck.

Kayla wished that Gran was alive, but I wish that I had a navigator. car.

Kayla wished that her daddy would come, but I wish that I was rich.

Kayla wished that she could see her dad, but I wish that I could have more money.

Kayla wished that Gran didn't die, but I wish I become famous.

Meet the Open Book Kids



Students learned to express themselves and portray scenes from the book, *Dance Kayla!* by participating in acting exercises developed by Jackie Samuel from Chicago Arts Partnership in Education (left). Under the direction of Diedre Searcy and Tony Streit from Street Level Youth Media, Open Book participants took active roles in a video production that will air on cable TV (right).



The youth in the Open Book Program eagerly participated in book discussions and other interactive exercises. *Dance, Kayla!* was read in group sessions and at home. In addition, students wrote about their feelings, ideas and opinions in their personal journals. By doing an in-depth study of one book, students discovered that reading has the power to expand their horizons in many directions.

On the Horizon

Open Book Program Expands Thanks to Support of Sponsors, Contributors and Volunteers

The success of Open Book Program's six week pilot project at Mayo Elementary School in the Grand Boulevard community means that that it can expand to a total of six schools during the 1999/2000 school year. "This unique educational and cultural enrichment initiative for young adolescents would not be possible without the help of our sponsors and contributors. Because of their support, the Open Book Program will be able to serve 100 participants in a 30 week program," states Executive Director Marrice Coverson. "We also want to thank our volunteers including the parents and college students from the Illinois Institute of Technology.

Sponsors of the Open Book Program include First Chicago NBD, Loyola University, R.R. Donnelley and Sons, Kraft Foods, the Chicago Area Project, State of Illinois Department of Human Services, Host Organization, Mr. and Mrs. Laurine Healey, the Church of the Spirit and the Polk Brothers Foundation. Other contributors include from Street Level Youth Media and Chicago Youth Centers/Elliott Donnelley Youth Center Grand Boulevard Arts. Many individuals also made donation during Open Book's first fundraiser in December 1998.

The Open Book Program is a cooperative effort involving the Institute for Positive Living, the Center for Urban Research and Learning at Loyola University, the Chicago Public Schools, the City Colleges of Chicago and the Church of the Spirit. The program provides a sage, intellectually stimulating environment for young adolescents during non-school hours.



Open Book's expansion means that more students will get a chance to experience the power of reading.

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VOLUNTEERS NEEDED!

Help adolescents learn about the Power of Reading
Call 312-663-3574 Today!