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Feb. 6, 2020

NEWS RELEASE

Bailey Middle School to Host Their Second Author Visit of the Year

Author Wendelin Van Draanen will visit Jim Bailey Middle School on Feb. 20 to speak to students who have read her YA (Young Adult) novel, *Flipped*. The book was also adapted into a film directed by Rob Reiner. This is the second author visit held this year at Bailey Middle.

The Feb. 20 visit will include two assemblies in the morning (9:25-10:20 and 10:20 - 11:15), along with a lunch and writing workshop for a group of selected students in the afternoon. Superintendent Malcolm Thomas will attend the first morning assembly and will also speak to the students.

"We are so excited to bring authors into our school to meet our students," said Charline Barger, Bailey 7th grade Language Arts teacher. "Meeting a published author inspires our students interested in writing and finding authors who use their knowledge of topics important to our students, whether it is something like science or the challenges teens face every day, shows them that they can write about what is important to them, and someone will want to read it."

The teachers at Bailey invited Draanen because she is the award-winning author of over thirty novels for young adults. She taught for many years and writes books full of heartfelt lessons that apply to students' lives. She will be traveling from California, accompanied by her husband, Mark Parsons, who has also written several articles and a young adult novel, *Road Rash*.

This is the second author visit this year. Bailey Middle hosted another young adult writer, Polly Holyoke, in November of 2019. Each student was able to take a copy of the book home, thanks to a Grant for Excellence from the Escambia County Public Schools Foundation, applied for by Dr. Roberta Wetzel, the school's Innovation Specialist. During Holyoke's visit students attended science and language arts related assemblies based on her *Neptune Project* series, which addresses the issue of climate change.

According to one student, Holyoke's visit in November was "such a cool opportunity that most schools don't get to experience. I also love writing, and it's so cool to get to meet someone who loves writing as well because apart from my English teachers, I don't live in that type of environment."

"Holyoke's visit was a great success and truly sparked student interest in reading and science," added Barger. "The event also created a close community of readers, with Bailey students and adults, as we read the book before the visit. Students who never enjoyed reading suddenly wanted to discuss their book and read similar titles. We are excited to build on that momentum by bringing in Van Draanen and Parsons later this month."

"Our students have really enjoyed the experiences, focused on writing, we have been able to provide this year. It is the hard work of our teachers and Innovation Specialist that has made these opportunities possible. We hope that by showing students how they can affect change through writing, students will want to work harder on perfecting their writing skills." Janet Penrose, Bailey's principal.

"My inspiration for doing this came primarily from attending the three-week National Writing Project this summer at UWF, a fantastic workshop and experience for Escambia County teachers," added Barger. "The NWP program was organized by Dr. Susan James and included the opportunity to speak to many authors. That made the idea of bringing a writer to come to our school seem possible and really exciting and beneficial for our whole community of readers and writers, of all ages."

MEDIA: If you would like to attend any of the sessions planned for Feb. 20, please contact Kim Stefansson at kstefansson@escambia.k12.fl.us (changing soon to kstefansson@ecsdfl.us) or 850-469-6219.

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ECSD PRC Feb. 6, 2020