Who is clever enough to share how to catch a lobster with a chicken nugget and to explain the complexities of writing books? Award winning children’s author, Jerry Pallotta! In a presentation on the morning of May 29th , local author Jerry Pallotta helped Saint Francis School celebrate reading and writing literacy. He captivated his audience immediately when he asked the question, “Kids, guess how many years I went to Catholic Schools?” His answer… sixteen! With humor and student participation, Jerry discussed many messages about literacy. “Read a zillion books!” is his motto, expressing that reading and writing literacy is essential.

Writing started later in Jerry’s life when he became a father. He loved to read to his children, and this enjoyment inspired him to write his own book. He wanted to share the creatures of the ocean with his children but could not find a book that was fun and exciting. Published independently by Peggotty Beach Books, The Ocean Alphabet Book was the beginning of his writing career. The book features an ocean animal for each letter of the alphabet and has now become the number one best-selling book at the New England Aquarium. The vision for this book and many of his other titles came from his adventurous, summertime experiences on Peggotty Beach in Scituate, where he had countless adventures catching crabs and investigating seaweed.

Jerry has now written 25 alphabet books with interesting and imaginative topics such as boats, Fenway Park, skulls, and airplanes. He encouraged Saint Francis students to write about subjects that they feel curious about. In addition to the alphabet books, Jerry Pallotta has also crafted books on topics such as counting, holidays, fiction, math, and the military. For reluctant readers, he created a series of books titled Who Would Win? in which two animal predators are featured and compared. Do you think that the giant squid “with the eye of a basketball” would win in a contest, or the whale? The colorful illustrations, fascinating facts, and creative wording make Pallotta’s books an adventure for families with children of all ages.

In his demonstration, Jerry shared the challenges of writing and revealed the development of writing a book. His point was made clear: writing is a process of making choices and decisions, and as a writer, you are in command. Writing takes time. One book he wrote in five different ways and it took three years to write! First, Jerry brainstorms his ideas, making a plan for each of the 32 pages in a picture book. In the research process, he explores the subject both in books and through field trip visits to meet experts in the field. For example, for his book on skulls, Jerry visited the Harvard Museum of Zoology in Cambridge MA, a place he suggests everyone should visit. After writing an initial summary of his ideas, it is time to have fun with words! Jerry revealed that during editing he works intensely to find just the right word, and to eliminate repetitive and boring words. He rearranges the order and experiments with various endings. He likes to test out his pages with his friends and editors, and even polls the students he visits for their opinions!

Jerry Pallotta’s website, <http://www.jerrypallotta.com/>, is a great way to find out more information about Mr. Pallotta and about his books. One section of his website is devoted to “hidden secrets” surprises and challenges gifted seekers to find secret images in the illustrations. In his book The Extinct Alphabet Book, the reader can find Elvis and Jerry secreted in the pictures and in The Skull Counting Book , he challenges the reader to discover all 43 presidents of the United States in the colorful images.

Children's author Jerry Pallotta fascinated the Saint Francis School community with his captivating humor and his inspirational love of reading and writing. He stated that he loves writing books and visiting schools, and that his job is “the best in the whole world!”