

## Kenneth Oppel



On Tuesday October 17th, 2017, award-winning Canadian author Kenneth Oppel delivered a special presentation for teens at *The Mississauga Central Library*. *Father Michael Goetz* students were invited to meet Mr. Oppel and to listen to him speak about his popular novels and his expertise on the writing process.

Students could easily relate to Mr. Oppel as he explained how his childhood fascinations inspired him to write stories. He clicked through pictures on the screen of iconic *Star Wars* characters, classic board games like *Dungeons and Dragons*, as well as familiar videogames of the 80's like *Pac Man*. Giggles from the audience ensued as, generations later, not much has changed in terms of what young people love and love to do.

Although Oppel described the writing process as “tortuous” he went on to explain the deep satisfaction he derived from the process and especially from the finished product. His modesty and kind sense of humour delighted the audience as they peeked into an ordinary life behind extraordinary stories.

Oppel’s casualness and honesty were refreshing and hugely inspirational. A valuable piece of advice he offered was, “jump around; don’t worry if you don’t finish; sometimes stories die”, an especially important message for young students who often complain they don’t know where to start, or experience writer’s block, or feel that their writing just isn’t good enough – all according to Oppel, typical experiences and very much part of the writing process.

Interestingly, Oppel didn’t have real success until he wrote his 12<sup>th</sup> book, *Silverwing*. In a world of immediacy and instant gratification, he encouraged Generation Z’s to work hard and to persevere while pursuing their dreams and desires. In a debriefing back at the *Father Michael Goetz Library Learning Commons*, according to most students, that was the most important message they took away from the acclaimed Canadian author – an invaluable lesson indeed!

Oppel has been awarded the 2004 *Governor General's Literary Award* for English language children's literature and a *Printz Honor Award* (for *Airborn*), and *The Times Children's Novel of 2005* award for *Skybreaker* which was also named “the 2006 *Best Book for Young Adults*” by the American Library Association.

N. Mouchbahani, Teacher-Librarian

*Father Michael Goetz Library Learning Commons*

