

# Dallas Elementary School Meets Young Author of “A Halloween Story”

DALLAS--(26 Oct. 2007)—Who has come to thrill a Dallas school’s 2nd graders: A Vampire? A Scary Spider? A Mummy? Or maybe a different kind of little monster: Alberto Fernandez, a bilingual published author, who also happens to be in the 1st grade.



After reading “A Halloween Story” the children of KB Polk Vanguard Elementary were so inspired, they wanted to meet its young author. On Oct. 25, in a first-of-its-kind video conference, they got the chance, not only to interview Fernandez, but also the artist Pilar de la Fuente, who created the quirky black and white illustrations for the story.

In the conference all of the questions and answers were made in both English and Spanish, as both the young author and the illustrator are bilingual, as are two of the 2nd grade classrooms at KB Polk. Nearly 70 students attended, many wearing striped cones on their head, dressed like the costume of the story's main character.

But how did this 5-year-old capture the spirit of a holiday in a story, with structure, plot, and suspense, in 60 words or less? And in another language? A new children’s book publisher, Maroma Books, asks more importantly, “how many 5-year-olds have you asked to try?”

That is the purpose of the video conferences and the “Your Turn” pages story-starters at the end of the book; to fire up other young creative writers and storytellers to try it themselves. Judging from the reaction of the children and the teachers at KB Polk Elementary; it's working.

The reaction at Alberto’s own school, the American School Foundation of Monterrey: “If Alberto can do this, and in his 2nd language, I know I can create something just as wonderful,” said ASFM Kindergarten teacher Monica Reyes of students’ reaction.

“A Halloween Story” is Maroma Books’ first title. Alberto, who was born and lives in Monterrey, Mexico, wrote the story in his English class as part of a project last Halloween. Just learning how to write, and just learning English, his first version was with phonetic spelling and accompanied by his own drawings. His teachers, surprised by its remarkable structure, and how the story captures its audience, shared it with Alberto’s parents.

Alberto’s father, Alberto Fernandez, Sr., moved by his son’s story, saw the book as the start of something big. He launched Maroma Books, a children’s book publishing company which provides a venue for talented young Mexican authors and artists, while

improving education (profits earmarked to improve education in Mexico's most impoverished areas) and also for enhancing multi-cultural & multi-lingual understanding (each of the books is available at the publisher's website in various languages, easy and free to print out for children to practice and compare with their copy; see the "BookPocket" section of the website [www.maromabooks.com](http://www.maromabooks.com)).

Thus, Maroma Books was born, settling on a playful name with an international twist; "Maroma" is Spanish for "summersault."

In Dallas, a nonprofit reading program Earning by Learning that services over 60 Dallas ISD elementary schools bought 25 copies of "A Halloween Story" for libraries within the Dallas ISD district. Maroma Books donated 12 additional copies for the same purpose.

"Alberto truly exemplifies the transformation that happens when we allow children to feel and experience the power of words," said Earning by Learning's founding Director Thelma Morris-Lindsey.

Alberto had a more basic outcome in mind for the readers of "A Halloween Story": "That people ask, 'WHO is it?' 'I want people to get a scared face, with their mouths formed like an 'O!' " said the little author— "and then their mouths change from an 'O!' into a smile."

"A Halloween Story," a "frightfully delightful tale, by a 5-year-old, for other little monsters everywhere," is available at select bookstores, at Amazon.com (hardcover version recommended; a high-quality keeper), and from Maroma Books, [orders@maromabooks.com](mailto:orders@maromabooks.com). ISBN: 978-0-9796465-1-5.