

# Allen Kurzweil

## Author Presentation Descriptions

Allen speaks frequently on matters of literacy, reading, writing, and the social and intellectual role of the public library. He has given keynote speeches and lectures throughout the United States and Europe. Although Allen has spoken in august settings—the Library of Congress, Oxford University, Trinity College, Dublin, Yale University—it is in grade school classrooms that he finds the greatest satisfaction as an educator.

Allen invariably tailors his school and library presentations to the specific setting and situation. A struggling charter school that lacks library facilities will, by necessity, prompt one set of pedagogic priorities. A private school with a robust book budget will prompt another. That said, all of Allen’s school talks have two common features: an underlying allegiance to young readers, and a commitment to redemptive power of the written and spoken word. Currently Allen offers three basic programs:

### Presentation One: My Son, My Editor

For grade and middle school readers. In this presentation Allen shows children how even the most horrific grade-school experiences can yield humorous results. Drawing upon anecdote and his very own fourth grade report card (viewable on Allen’s website), plus the editorial perspective of his grade-school son, Allen charts out the path a book takes from nagging notion to publication, all the while challenging students to consider the power of metaphor, synonym, narrative, etymology, suspense, restraint, and (sometimes) spit.

### Presentation Two: Chip Off the Young Block

For grade and middle school readers. This talk turns the world’s most popular snack food—the potato chip—into an object of scientific and literary inquiry. This presentation includes a discussion of the scientific instruments Allen invented and used while writing *Leon and the Champion Chip*. Objects presented include: a potato chip measuring gauge, a clock that runs off a potato, selections from Allen’s collection of museum-quality potato chips. Along the way, Allen introduces doses of poetry and metaphor, plus principles of science that might otherwise meet resistance. When appropriate, Allen can bring along a small quantity of “research material” for the students to analyze (and munch on) while they discuss the *Leon* books.

### Presentation Three: Classification by Attraction

For teachers and librarians. This is a less whimsical exploration of how the rhetoric of “interdisciplinarity” and “integrated curricula” can—and indeed *must*—find application in grade school education. During this presentation, Allen draws on his own primary education—at a fledgling community school in Italy, progressive and public schools in Manhattan, an experimental school in rural Massachusetts, and a boarding school in Switzerland—to argue for a more fluid and intimate relationship among various disciplines. Using his experience as a teacher at Yale University and in elementary schools throughout the country, Allen produces what one school administrator has called, “a spellbinding talk that summons up the alchemy of written word.”

For more information: [www.allenkurzweil.net](http://www.allenkurzweil.net)