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BECAUSE COMMUNITY MATTERS

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News

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Students talk with author on virtual tour



KELLIE GEIST/STAFF

Fifth-grader Ally Jandles asks author Kenneth Derby a question during a video-conference/virtual book tour Friday, Oct. 29. Derby, author of "Top 10 Ways to Ruin the First Day of 5th Grade," lives in Hungary.

By Kellie Geist

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The fifth-grade students at Ebon C. Hill Intermediate School got to meet the author of "The Top 10 Ways to Ruin the First Day of 5th Grade" – even though he lives in Hungary.

The students met Kenneth Derby via video-conference Friday, Oct. 29.

Fifth-grade teacher Dixie Parsons got the idea for the video-conference after sending Derby an e-mail.

"I Googled (Derby) and sent him an e-mail to tell him how much the kids liked the books and he e-mailed us back," Parsons said. "I looked at his website and it had information on his

virtual tours. I just thought, "The kids may not have another opportunity like this."

"As a district we can't afford to bring authors in to talk to the kids and, since (Derby) lives in Hungary, this was the answer," she said.

The students interacted with Derby through a headset and web-cam.

"I think it worked out really well and the kids seemed to love it," she said.

After Derby told the students about himself and his work, the students were able to ask him questions. Some of the questions included "Why do you enjoy writing?" and "How long does writing a book take?"

Derby said those questions were easy

to answer.

"I like to write because, when I write, I get to escape to another world ... I feel like a character in the story except that I can make the story go any way I want," he said.

He added that books can take a while to write, especially since he is a full-time teacher in Europe and a parent. Derby wrote "The Top 10 Ways to Ruin the First Day of 5th Grade," which was his son's idea, in about a year, he said.

Parsons said the experience was definitely worth the time.

"He was so personable and it was easy for the kids to talk to him. Even the shy ones weren't afraid to ask questions," she said.