

PILGRIM SCHOOL

Dear educators,

Six weeks ago, our school had one of the most exciting and stimulating days we have ever experienced when Denis Belliveau came to visit our students. We had no idea what to expect and were completely awed by Denis's knowledge, his passion for his subject and his immediate rapport with students of all ages. We had three assemblies—one for Elementary grades 3-5, one for Secondary Humanities classes, and one for Secondary Arts classes. Many students and faculty members actually attended more than one—they just couldn't get enough. I was unsure about the response of our youngest students, but they were riveted by Denis's stories of Marco Polo's adventures and asked some of the best questions of the day. It was thrilling to look out over the room and see a sea of small hands raised as our students begged to hear one more story or ask one more question. They would have stayed all day to listen to Denis! The 4th graders were so excited that they went straight to their Art class and created a beautiful sculpture based on the map of Marco Polo's travels.

Denis showed a remarkable ability to tailor his presentation to the age, abilities and interests of each group. We have a substantial boarding population of international high school students who were so excited to hear about the parts of their countries that Marco and Denis had both visited that they stayed after to continue their discussion of what Denis had eaten during his travels. Several of our international students who are usually shy about speaking in public were completely engaged in the presentation and raised their hands to ask insightful questions—the first time they had asked a question in a school assembly for many of them! The talk with our art and photography students included a discussion of old school vs. digital video and photography and gave our students much to think about as they continue their studies in the visual arts.

I cannot recommend Denis highly enough as a valuable resource for your school. He has the ability to knit together the threads of many disciplines in a way that creates excitement among students—and faculty—and brings history to life in a unique and powerful way. It is becoming increasingly difficult to engage the digital generation in the study of the past and Denis accomplished this in a way that had our technologically sophisticated students clamoring for more. We are still seeing the effects! We want him to come back as soon as possible to work more intensively on cross-curricular activities with our students and faculty, and plan to include parents and other members of our school community in what will be another exciting and inspiring experience for all of us.



Mark Brooks
Head of School