

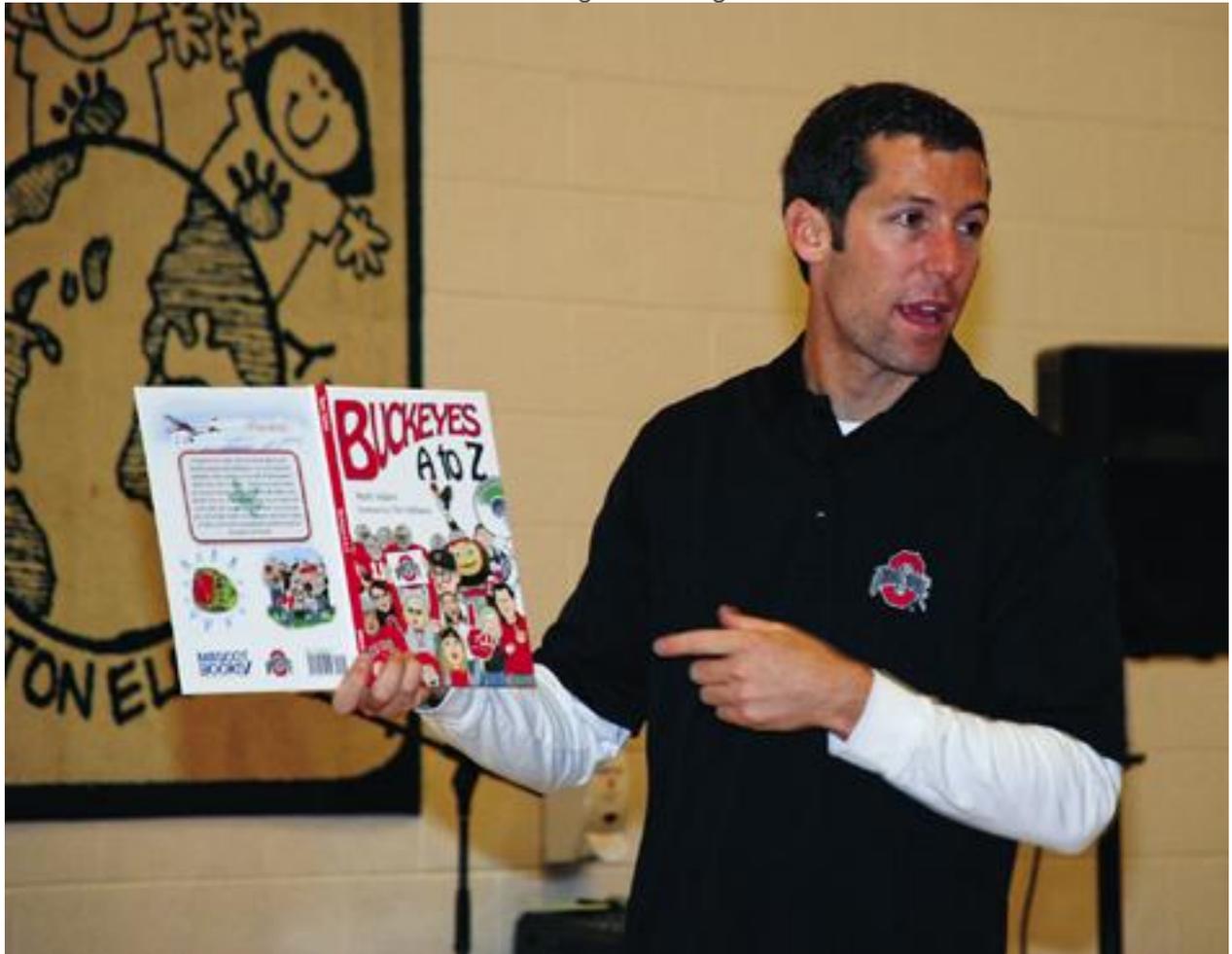
Former student shares A-to-Zs of Buckeyes, writing

By MELISSA DILLEY

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SNP photo by Kurtis Boggs

Author and teacher Mark Walter talks about the cover of his book *Buckeyes A to Z* with students at Barrington Elementary School Friday, Oct. 21, in Upper Arlington. Mark is a former student of Barrington and currently a teacher at Scioto Ridge Elementary School in Powell.



M is for Mark, as in Mark Walter, author of *Buckeyes A to Z*.

It's a picture, letter and Ohio State University history book that brought him back last week to the elementary school he attended as a child, to teach today's students about their hometown team and the writing process.

Walter spent Friday, Oct. 21, at Barrington Elementary School as its featured author. Each fall, the school hosts the author of a book that's been popular with students.

As a former Barrington student and 1998 UA High School graduate, Walter said being there was a bit surreal at first. Friday was the first time he'd been back to the school in almost 15 years.

He never thought he'd be presenting at local schools, Walter said, but that's because he never planned on writing a book when he was in UA.

A second-grade teacher at Scioto Ridge Elementary in Powell, Walter said the idea for Buckeyes A to Z first came to him when he was a senior at Miami University and spending time as a student-teacher.

"I noticed a lot of kids had an interest in Ohio State, but when they checked books out of the library they were always on an informational level or meant for babies, so I thought this would be a great way to bring an educational book to their level," he said.

For eight years between his duties as a teacher at South Western's West Franklin Elementary and then Scioto Ridge Elementary, the lifelong Buckeyes fan spent time researching, looking for a publisher and finding ways to achieve his goal of creating a book that could span age groups.

To entice readers of all ages, Buckeyes A to Z has a hidden Woody Hayes on every page. For early readers and writers, the letters spell out some of the most important Buckeyes of all time.

In the back of the book is a spot to practice writing Ohio in a script font. On each page is also a fact box, which gives in-depth insight into the team and traditions.

Fitting many elements into his first book wasn't the most difficult part of the process, though. Walter said he sent letters to dozens, of publishers only to be declined.

After getting some of those letters, Walter went to local book stores with a notebook in hand to jot down the houses that were publishing college sports books such as his.

Walter eventually landed a deal with Virginia-based Mascot Books and *Buckeyes A to Z* was published in October 2010. The author is currently preparing for November and the release of his second book, *Tigers A to Z*, which highlights Louisiana State University's football, baseball and basketball teams.

Walter used his experiences with conceptualization, rejection and triumph to fuel his talk with students in kindergarten through fifth grade at Barrington and other schools where he has been featured.

Friday, Walter explained that perseverance and effort is what gets students ahead. Then he asked students to turn to one another and say what they are most interested in and could write a book about some day.

"We have authors all the time, but to have one of our own -- that's a great inspiration to our students and there was a great buzz leading up to his being here," said Barrington Principal Jason Fine.

Walter said he used the book in his own classroom to teach students about the process as he lived it, showing his students proofs of illustrations and asking them for feedback on what the cover should look like.

"They're seeing that connection with the real world process of writing a book and getting it published," he said of his students.

"They share my that excitement with me."

Buckeyes A to Z is available at specialty stores throughout Columbus and its suburbs. The book that sells for \$14.95, can also be purchased by sending an email to info@markwalterbooks.com. For more information about Walter's books, search Mark Walter Books on Facebook.

Walter will sign copies of his books from 6:30 to 8 p.m. Nov. 10 at Baker's Garden Center Gift Shoppe in Dublin and from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Nov. 12 at Larson's Toys and Games in UA.