

school times

Author's return

CHILDREN'S book author, Heidi Goh returned to her old school, Chatham High to bring the wonderful world of picture books to the classroom.

Year eight students were guided by Heidi to workshop and create their own story ideas. The class explored picture books from the past and how pictures help to convey meaning. They also looked at the archetypal hero character, an important part of many stories.

With the use of story mapping technology on computers they then designed their own unique narrative, to later be made into a picture book of their own.

Heidi's picture book *York's Universe*, published last year, was one of six in Australia to be short-listed in the Children's Book Council of Australia's Crichton Award which aims to encourage new talent in the field of Australian children's book illustration.

'York's Universe' which was also illustrated by Heidi follows York, a city kid with little experience outside the urban, on a surprising journey into the beautiful universe.

"The universe can be a daunting and almost abstract concept for young children to grasp but

York's Universe offers children a look at our stunning cosmic neighbourhood and celebrates it in all its variety and beauty," Heidi said.

After school, Heidi nee East, studied Fine Arts at The National Art School. She then followed her passion for writing and studied a Bachelor of Arts Degree in English and Communications followed by a Diploma of Education. This saw her work as an English and drama teacher. Heidi now lives in the northern beaches of Sydney and has two young children.

"It's really special to come back to Chatham High because I always knew I wanted to be an author, even when I was at school," she said.

Heidi reflected that when she was a student, if authors visited the school she would lap up the experience.

Heidi brought her own and a selection of modern picture books which sparked ideas and excitement about the chance for students to create their own. Heidi explained interactivity is now a key element with plastic embossing, sound and pop ups used to engage young reader's imagination.

"Picture books now really push



Veronica Batman, Chloe Hayward and Emma Campbell enjoyed the visit of author Heidi Goh to Chatham High.

the boundaries and branch out into the third and fourth dimension."

These were compared to traditional books from the 1960s onwards which offer insight into the way the world worked in past decades.

Heidi described the process of finding a publisher for 'York's Universe' as a labour of love and a test of endurance and passion.

She received seven rejection letters before the now acclaimed children's book was picked up by her

publisher, Windy Hollows books.

"Getting seven rejection letters can really test your faith in your own ability but perseverance is a prerequisite for any aspiring writer, that and being willing to honestly look at your work and take people's constructive criticism on board," she said.

Heidi is one of many successful students to graduate the high school with her visit bringing inspiration through the message that students should always follow their dreams.