

Students learn how to draw from different ingredients to tell story

By Christina Leslie
Correspondent

METUCHEN — “Who likes to draw? To write stories?” asked prolific author and illustrator Michael Dooling in an auditorium filled with excited schoolchildren. Little hands shot up in assent as scores of St. Francis Cathedral School students interacted with Dooling during his Jan. 29 visit to the Blue Ribbon School.

The soft-spoken, bespectacled grandfather shared academic and artistic advice in equal proportions during his visit. He revealed his love of art began at age eight or nine both by watching his mother, Patricia, doodle at home between art classes, and artist Gene London on Philadelphia-area television.

“You have to look for the ingredients in a picture, like in a recipe,” he told his rapt audience. “Use color, emotion, and perspective from a bird’s eye or worm’s eye height.”

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—Michael Dooling

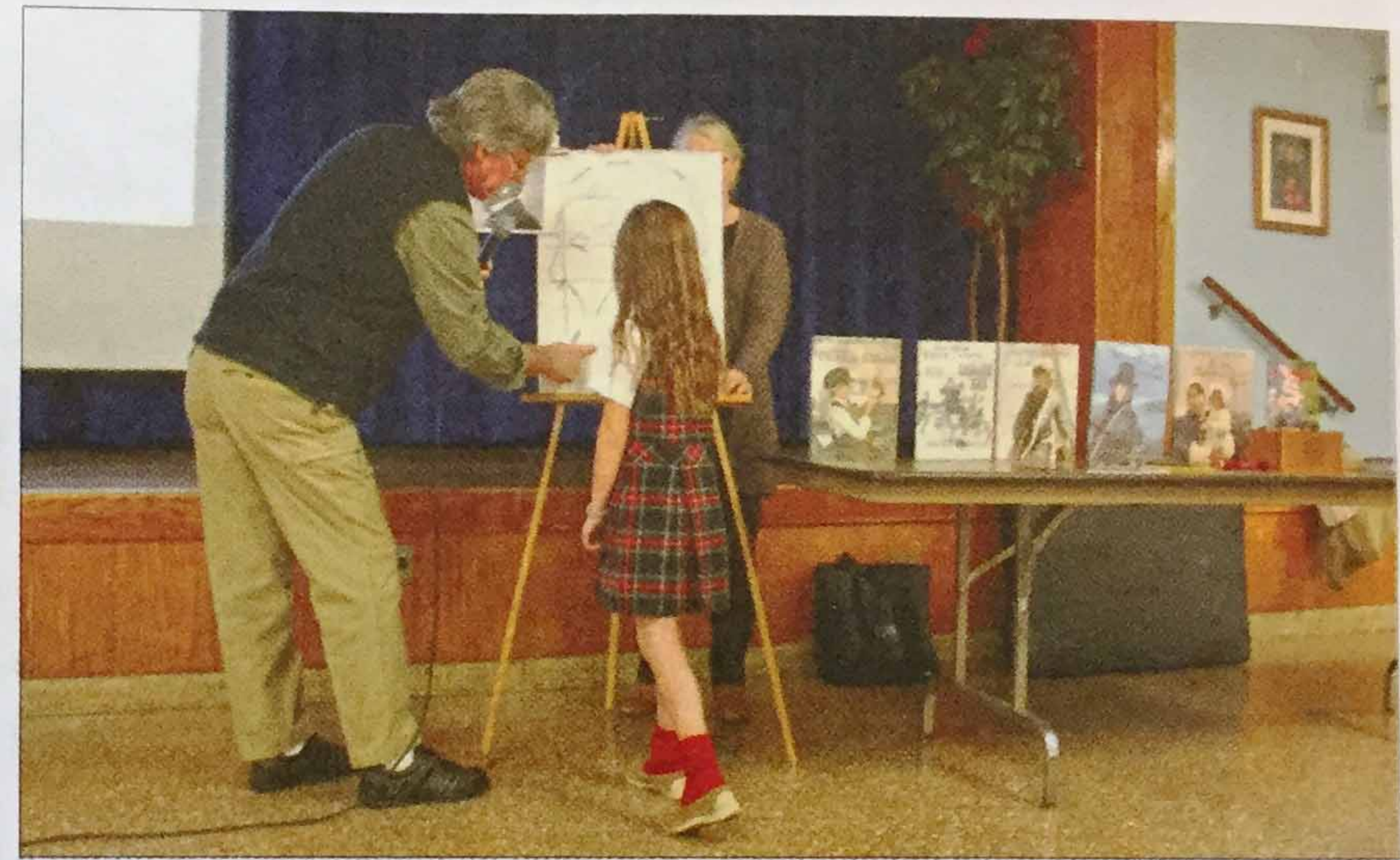
To create realistic portraits of historical figures such as Thomas Edison, George Washington and Lewis and Clark for children’s books, Dooling revealed he asks his daughters and neighbors, in period attire, to serve as models for his illustrations. “Every day at my house was like Halloween,” he laughed. “People are dressed in costumes.”

“Illustrating means to tell a story with a picture,” he said as he stepped to an easel of paper, marker in hand.

Also, research is important, Dooling stated, recommending visits to museums, libraries and historical re-enactments. He described a trip to a museum in Philadelphia as he wrote a book about fossil hunter William Foulke. Inside was the dinosaur bone the man had unearthed in Haddonfield in the late

1850s. Dooling’s wife, Jane, then invited the children to touch a large replica of the bone, bringing the story to life.

The artist asked for help drawing



Author and illustrator Michael Dooling shows Emily Mulhearn, a third-grader at St. Francis Cathedral School, some tips about sketching during a presentation. Dooling, who has illustrated more than 65 books and is the author of five, was raised in Marlton and lives in Audubon. — Christina Leslie photo

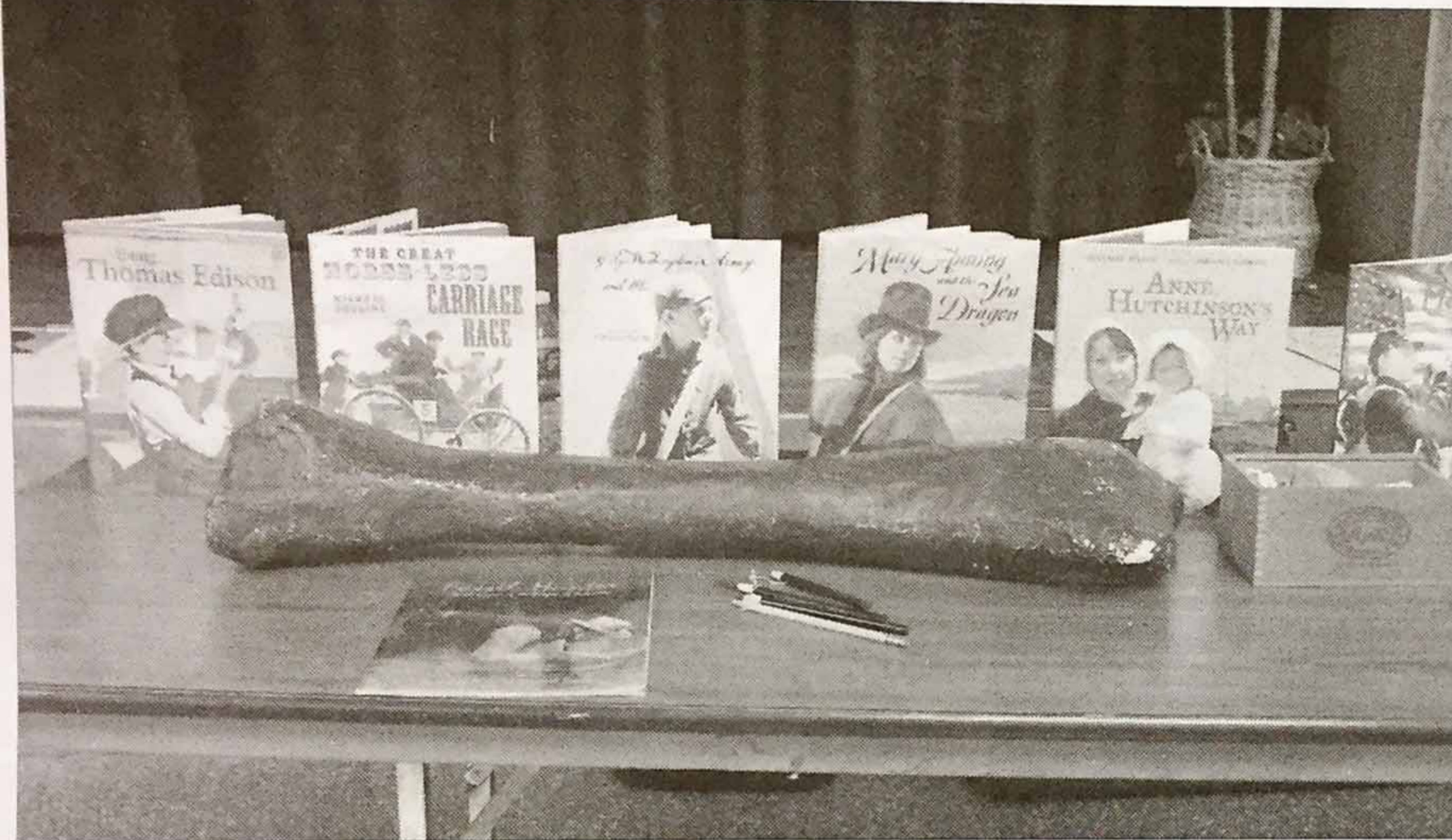
a picture of Foulke, and third-grader Emily Mulhearn stepped forward. He asked her to take an “artist’s stance” — one foot in front of the other, with head slightly tilted. The youngster carefully sketched a collar on the paper, then autographed it under Dooling’s signature.

“The secret is that you don’t worry about your mistakes, you can

just do it over,” he advised his young collaborator.

During a question-and-answer period, St. Francis language arts teacher Kathleen Adinolfi drove the point home, asking the artist and author about his first and second work drafts as the children groaned in recognition. “It’s important they know

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Books written by author and illustrator Michael Dooling, a member of the Society of Illustrators, are shown behind a replica of a dinosaur bone that inspired him to write a book about fossil hunter William Foulke. — **Christina Leslie photos**

Continued from previous page that something they write is not ‘one and done,’” she said later.

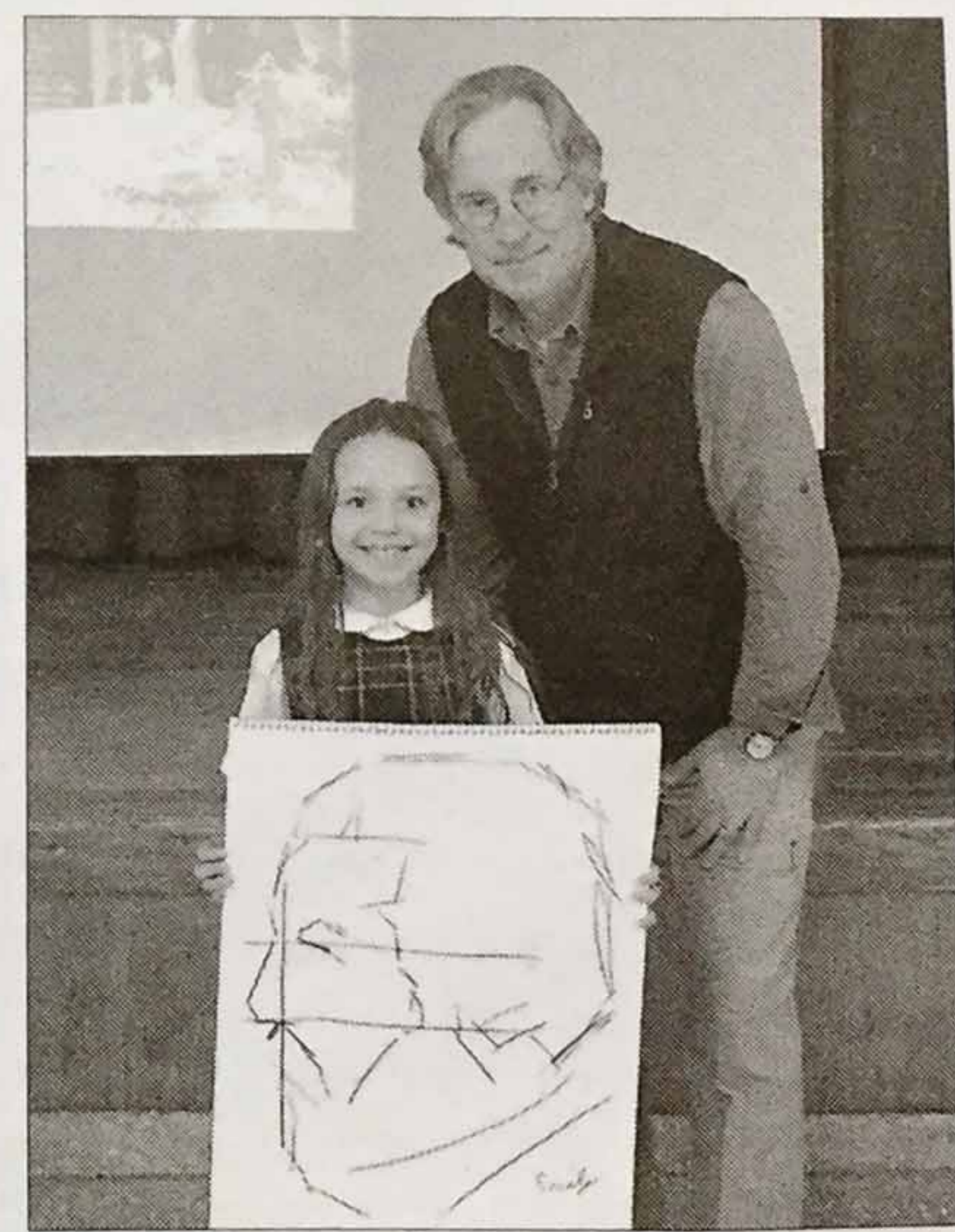
Known for his dramatic and historically-accurate illustrations, Dooling is the illustrator of more than 65 books and the author of five. He has illustrated articles for “Reader’s Digest” and picture books, chapter books and middle-grade novels for numerous publishers. In 2006, he was commissioned by the U.S. Postal Service to sketch Benjamin Franklin.

Dooling was born in 1958 and

ter’s degree in illustration at Syracuse University (N.Y.), and is a member of the Society of Illustrators in New York. In 2013, he was selected to a Top Ten List of Great Author Visits by the Pennsylvania School Library Association. To date, he has visited more than 800 schools nationwide. Dooling and his wife live in Audubon and have two daughters and five grandchildren.

A few budding artists reflected upon what they had learned from Dooling.

Third-grader Diya Sachdeva said



Above, Dooling gives a presentation about illustrating to students at St. Francis Cathedral School, Metuchen. Left, Dooling poses with third-grader Emily Mulhearn after she helped him draw a sketch of William Foulke, who unearthed the skeleton of a dinosaur in Haddonfield in 1858. Dooling told the students not to worry about making mistakes when they sketch because they can do it over.

with emotion,” while Lucas Teboul, a fifth grade student countered, “Don’t get frustrated when you make mistakes.”

Gabriella Franzina, also a third-grader, summed up the exercise, saying, “The whole point of writing is to use your imagination.”