



I heard about Keith from Janice Acuria who is the Assistant Director for Youth Services with the Clayton County Public Library System. Keith performed for one of their summer events and was a huge hit.

Keith Karnok, Ph.D., has taught at the University of Georgia in the Department of Crop and Soil Sciences for the past 28 years and at Ohio State University for 6 years prior to that. He is a past president of the North American Colleges and Teachers of Agriculture. He has received the designation of "Fellow" in four scientific associations including the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS). Fellow is the highest honor bestowed by a scientific society. Dr. Karnok has received 25 honors and awards for teaching excellence, including the "Josiah Meigs Award for Excellence in Teaching," which is the University of Georgia's highest teaching honor. Websites: [www.keithmagicman.com](http://www.keithmagicman.com) and <http://mulch.cropsoil.uga.edu/~kjkarnok/>

Keith's article is below.

Although I'm not a media specialist, as a teacher for more than 34 years, I have first-hand knowledge of the importance of reading not only for our youth, but for people of all ages. As most teachers have found, getting and maintaining the attention of students is a significant challenge. Research has shown that the average attention span of an adult is between 15 to 20 minutes after the beginning of a lecture. It becomes much shorter as the lecture continues. Obviously, the attention span of children is much shorter. In some cases, the attention span for children is measured in seconds rather than minutes!

As a teacher at the college level, I have found that the attention span of most college students probably ranges somewhere between the typical pre-schooler and a fully engaged adult learner. In this day and age, people are used to almost constant visual and audio stimuli.

With that in mind, many years ago, I started using magic and ventriloquism in my lectures to help maintain student's attention and to help drive home important points. Magic when coupled with educational content can certainly achieve that. Over the past 5 years, my success at the college level lead me to try it at the pre-K through elementary school level when discussing with young people the fun and importance of reading. Again, the response has been tremendous.

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**You rarely have time for everything you want in this life, so you need to make choices. And hopefully your choices can come from a deep sense of who you are. ~ Fred Rogers**



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To discuss a book an author or even a concept in an entertaining way is what has been termed “edutainment.” The challenge is to keep a balance between the fun and laughter and the educationally significant information being presented.

Still, the fact remains, people remember more and for longer periods of time when their funny bone or emotional senses are triggered. This certainly has been the case this past summer as I traveled throughout Georgia performing a magic and ventriloquism show as part of the state’s library summer reading program “Make a Splash...Read!”

Library managers and children’s librarians have told me the number of children signing up for the program following my show in which I discuss a variety of books has been tremendous. My reading shows at the elementary school level have been equally successful. Children (and adults) are fascinated by the magic and mesmerized by the ventriloquism portion of the performance.

One principal stated "... *"The magic show was excellent! The references you made to reading had an effect on the children. The media specialist told me that about "200" children had requested your magic book as well as some of the other books. . . ."*

In addition to reading, I am using magic and ventriloquism to present information on “Bullying,” “Five Pillars of Character,” “Say No to Drugs,,” “Preparing for the CRCT,” and other timely topics a school might like me to address.

It's my opinion that the use of magic in teaching is as close as one can get to experiencing "real" magic.

**The Valdosta ETC is hosting its annual Fall Media Conference on Tuesday, September 14th from 8:30 until 3:15.**

Tony Vincent will be the keynote speaker and also he will be presenting during break-out sessions.

You can find more information and the registration form at:  
<http://tiny.cc/mediaconf>

