

## 7<sup>th</sup> Graders Captivated by Author Yoko Kawashima Watkins

The Wakefield Educational Foundation (WEF) recently awarded Joanne Minahan and fellow 7th grade educators \$1,400 for author **Yoko Kawashima Watkins** to visit the 7th grade classes on December 12, 2017. Ms. Watkins' visit to the Galvin Middle School has become a highly anticipated annual event. The students prepare for her visit by reading her novel, ***So Far from the Bamboo Grove***, which is required reading for all 7th graders to coincide with their Pearson curriculum unit which deals with the essential question: What can one generation learn from another? The story is based on her life experiences when, as an 11-year-old Japanese girl, she and her family must flee Korea to Japan at the end of WWII.

In observing Ms. Watkins with the 7th graders, one could see the respect and awe they had for their guest by their eagerness to ask many thoughtful questions and the sincere delight on their faces. The lessons that she imparts to students are those based on the core values that the school stresses to students every day: appreciation and respect for others regardless of differences, the importance of hard work and integrity. Ms. Minahan states: "I have always evaluated the success of this program by the reaction of the students. They clamor to have photos taken with her; they describe her as "amazing" and "inspiring;" and always list the visit as one of the highlights of the year."

Ms. Minahan submitted a grant application through WEF's annual grant process. WEF continually encourages staff and PTO leaders to submit innovative enrichment projects for consideration. To support the grants, WEF raises funds throughout the year by conducting fundraisers such as: the WEF Wakefield Public Schools Calendar, which showcases student art throughout the system; chocolate rose sales; the WEF Annual Adult Spelling Bee and community donations. WEF will be awarding staff and PTO leaders just over \$25,500 for the 2017-2018 school year and has awarded over \$320,00 to the Wakefield Public Schools since 1989.



Shown in photo: Author, Yoko Kawashima Watkins and Galvin Middle School 7th grade students.