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Camp Spurs Young Authors

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Camp spurs young authors

Forget silence.

They giggled. They squealed. They played. And then they wrote.

A dozen elementary students learned the secret to combating writer's block, and other writing skills, at the Linfield College Author Camp in June. Children wrote and illustrated books during the four-day workshop, meant to spark creativity and inspire young writers.

This wasn't a typical writing class where students sit quietly and compose. Instead, bins of Legos, marbles and popsicle sticks spurred imaginations, while nearby stations of brightly colored paper, pencils, glue sticks and art supplies stood ready to become books. Around the room, books and more books provided inspiration for budding authors.

A playful environment sparks imaginations, according to Mindy Legard Larson '95, assistant professor of education, who developed the pilot program for elementary students.

"I wanted to create an environment that lets children play around with writing tools and provides opportunities for them to talk and share ideas so that they will say, 'I'm a writer,'" Larson said.

The class focused on writing how-to books and poetry, starting each day with read-alouds and discussion. Throughout the morning, Larson strolled from writer to writer, taking pictures, posing questions and focusing excitement.

"Do you like to talk about your story before you write?" she asked.

"Can you visualize your Lego adventure?"

"Are you ready to write a poem?"

Seven-year-old Zac Mason built a jet out of Popsicle sticks, then chronicled the construction in a "how-to" book complete with photographs and instructions, "How to Make a Jet."

Popsicle sticks came in handy, as well as tape, tin cans and string, for Emmy Martin's book, "How to Build a Popsicle Stick Boat."

Kelsie Boschma, 7, worked with a group to write "Racing Marbles." They built a marble maze and timed how fast various colored marbles went through the course. "We are going to test them individually," said Kelsie, whose favorite part of the week was illustrating. She drew a fire and s'more stick for her book, "How to Make a S'more."

"Everyone can be successful as a writer," said Larson, a former McMinnville elementary school teacher. "You can write any word you can say. It may not be spelled conventionally, but you can get your idea on paper."

Larson joined the Linfield faculty in 2006 and has organized and volunteered in a number of reading and writing projects in the local community.

Community partnerships such as this are important and a hallmark of Linfield, according to Nancy Drickey, chair of the Education Department.

"It is vitally important for our faculty to engage in meaningful partnerships with the educational community – students, teachers, administrators and parents," Drickey said. "Mindy's author's camp is an excellent example of a program linking Linfield with local elementary students."

– Laura Davis



Writing Camp

By Eric Ramos, age 7

Got my bike
Cold morning
A little sun
On my way to writing camp

Pumping my legs fast
Cross the street
On the sidewalk

Park my bike
Walk up the stairs
Open the door

Go up more stairs
And start writing
YEAH



Left: Young writers, from left, Rafael Plancarte, Zac Mason and Gabriel Avalos discuss the Lego centerpiece of their story with Mindy Legard Larson '95, right. Larson's writing camp encourages creativity and play. Above: Jacob Avalos puts pencil to paper at the Linfield Author Camp.