

Sweet rhythmic sound leads to poetic success

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WESTLAKE



Bridge Point Elementary School Librarian Kate Richter (wearing a cowboy hat) gives directions to fifth-graders who composed spontaneous poems for younger students on March 7 during the school's first Typewriter Rodeo. SUZANNE MAJORS DAVIS FOR WESTLAKE PICAYUNE

Bridge Point Elementary School students experienced poetry in a new way during their first poetry-writing festival on March 7, as the forgotten sound of typewriters filled the air thanks to the use of an App called Hanx.

Two classes of fifth-graders wrote spontaneous poems for younger students following a demonstration by a traveling team of poets who perform for groups around the country, composing witty rhymes on vintage typewriters, just for the fun of it.

Typewriter Rodeo was born in Austin, when writers Jodi Egerton and Kari Anne Roy invited two improv performers to create a foursome that would quickly personalize verse to simultaneously entertain and educate. Now, the group has added more poets, wowing wider audiences with their skills.

On Feb. 21, Typewriter Rodeo authors were invited to show-off their talents at Bridge Point with the hope that “students would get excited and inspired to write poetry in a different way,” said Librarian Kate Richter, surrounded by books and cowboy-themed decorations.

A collaborative decision by fifth-grade teachers, Educational Technologist Marianna Ricketson, Instructional Partner Kim McLaughlin and Richter brought the authors to demystify poetry, making children feel more comfortable about the creative process.

“A few weeks ago, two professional poets spoke to the kids about how to get ideas and how they originally founded Typewriter Rodeo,” Richter said. “Since then, the fifth-graders have been working with their teachers to learn how to write poetry, and not second guess themselves ... to go with their first instincts, just write something down, and be comfortable with that.”

Richter said idea is to make poetry fun, “because it can sometimes be intimidating.”

Younger children came up with ideas for subject matter ahead of time, but the fifth-graders “didn’t know what their topics would be, until someone walked up to them and said, ‘I want a poem about dogs,’ for instance,” said Richter.

After the poems were typed, teachers printed them out, then proud authors affixed their personal stamps before handing them to appreciative younger students, who thanked them.

Fifth-grader Boone Lackey typed with his Stetson on, reflecting the rodeo theme. He said he liked the element of surprise,

“This is fun, because it is spontaneous, you don’t know what your poem will turn out like,” he said.

Fifth-grader Peyton Stinson quickly typed out a Unicorn poem for a second-grader before requesting a new recipient. She said she liked learning about “shape poems, rhymes and Haiku because, I get to explore new words, and new ways of putting them together.”

Richter said she would like to do it again in the future.

“I think it was a very valuable experience,” Richter said. “We wanted to make poetry accessible and more enjoyable, and they just totally embraced it and have done a great job.”

Richter’s mother is also a librarian, and serves at Barton Creek Elementary.

Bridge Point was the first school in the Eanes school district to host the event, and approximately 220 students participated.

