

Young Inspired Writers Harness Technology

by Rose Albano-Risso
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Woodward School third grader Tristan Dooley works on his illustrated story in the computer lab.

They are young. They are talented. They have dreams of becoming a future J.K. Rowling, an Ayn Rand perhaps, or a Walt Whitman.

Dozens of young students this summer are already a step ahead in fulfilling their dreams of being a published writer. They are, actually, now published authors – online.

Young Carl Chandler, who penned the half-of-a-quatrain creative piece above, is already one. His two-line verse is one of three that is now a part of the e-book produced by his group that took part in the Great Valley Writing Project (GVWP) Writing & Technology Workshop at Walter Woodward Elementary School.

The GVWP summer class of 2012 will have that same feather in their creative hat, too, before their vacation time is over. There are scores of students from various schools who are spending part of their summer break by taking part in GVWP Writing & Technology Workshops at different campuses. One short session, offered exclusively to Lathrop Elementary School, lasted just a week. Two other groups participated in two-week sessions; both are having their final day today with an open house. The first one is at Woodward School in Manteca whose participants range from third to eighth graders. The other is being held at Ripon Elementary and Ripon High schools, open to students from 1st to 12th grade.

The final GVWP workshop starts Monday, June 18, and continues through June 29. It will be held at the Robert E. Goodwin School, San Joaquin Office of

Education's One.Program school, located at North Main Street in Manteca. Like the other workshops, the classes will meet from 8:30 to 11:30 a.m.

The students have different lessons each day, explained Michelle Crippen, a Manteca Unified teacher and the program coordinator who runs the annual summer program at Woodward School. One of Thursday's lessons was writing scripts.

At one point during the morning, the young workshop participants had an opportunity to be on the "hot seat" and read their verse and prose creations to their captive audience – their summer schoolmates, the workshop teachers who are also called consultants working for GVWP, and the high school students who are assisting them.

Besides Crippen, the workshop teachers include Jan McCutcheon and Michelle Beacham of Sequoia School, Brenda Madsen from Woodward, and Ann Waller from Lathrop School. The high school student assistants, who are called coaches, are Robin Glover of East Union, brothers Cameron and Trevor Crippen, Reigan Alcaria, and Emmanuel Elijah who will be all seniors in August at their respective schools. Most of them are alumni of the summer GVWP workshops and are quite well versed with the program.

The program is not just for future writers. It's also for the tech-savvy young talents, like soon-to-be Buffalo senior Cameron Crippen who is the Woodard group's web publisher and the one responsible for putting the students' writings on the e-book. The students' writings can be viewed at <http://imeet.sjcoe.net/wtw>. Emmanuel Elijah's area of expertise is the Excel computer program. "He is amazing at Excel," said Crippen.

In the computer technology portion of the class, the young students learn Powerpoint in addition to creating computerized stories complete with image illustrations to get their works published.

"Each day, students learn new writing strategies and multimedia skills to polish, present, and publish their work. Completed projects are featured in our workshop websites and anthologies," explains the program's flier.

Participant fees range from \$110 to \$165. Discounts are offered for large families. Thanks to contributions from local businesses, those who are qualified may receive financial assistance via scholarships; the applications are available at local school offices and Give Every Child a Chance. Complete information is available at <http://wTw.eventbrite.com> where one can also sign up online.

The GVWP Writing & Technology Workshops are offered through the Great Valley Writing Project at California State University Stanislaus and the San Joaquin County of Education.