

Student Success in the Creative Writing Department

In fall of 2011, hundreds of students in Creative Writing classes (both in General Education classes and in the Creative major or minor) at Missouri State began working with students in the After School Program at the three Boys and Girls Clubs of Springfield, and this program has continued every semester since then. At MSU, there are up to 600 Creative Writing students in any fall or spring semester, from the sophomore level to the graduate level. A great deal of planning went into developing materials to help engage the Boys and Girls Club students in creative writing projects that were meaningful to them. The project was meant to inspire, motivate, and teach both the Missouri State students and their younger counterparts at the Boys and Girls Clubs. The main thrust of the program is to try to create a break-through for a young student to love writing and to create a passion for learning and creativity that will continue for a lifetime.



**Volunteer Coordinator
Cindy Dodson**

This short video of Springfield Boys and Girls Club Volunteer Coordinator Cindy Dodson discussing the dramatic need of the After School Program students for this kind of platform was a central motivation for developing it (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FfiEUCS6CV0>).

Of course, these student success stories are created one student at a time, and there are many such success stories. What follows are a few brief examples.

Program Director of the Stalnaker Boys and Girls Club, Connie Crawford, recently wrote of these engaged learning visits by MSU Creative Writing students:

“Members learned a great deal and enjoyed your classes. One member was far behind his class. He not only caught up to his grade level, but surpassed it, receiving an award from his school for his much improved, at the top of his class, reading skills.”



James Richmond

James himself wrote us, “My reading and writing skills have improved so much from your visits. Thank you for taking the time to come and share your writing skills with us.”



Mysia, Ana, and friend



**Dr. W. D. Blackmon
Head of the English Department**

Program Director Connie Crawford continued, “Some members started a journal after completing your classes. Other members asked to join our Newspaper Club. You and your students inspired our youth and improved their writing.”



Mysia Paach, age nine, also recently wrote us, “When I first saw the sign-ups, I thought I would love it . . . I was right! So I told my friend, Ana, and she joined too which made it even better! The program helped us both become better writers.”

Students in the MSU ENG 501, Advanced Writing: Fiction, class, taught by Professor W.D. Blackmon in spring

2014, wrote the following about their experiences working with students at the Boys and Girls Clubs of Springfield:

“There was a young boy at our table who really took to the prompt. . . . It was refreshing to see how passionate he was about writing and I couldn’t help but compare him to a younger me, or any other of the writers in my class when they were his age. . . . I found great satisfaction in encouraging their ideas and asking them questions about their characters and/or plots to push them on to further writing. Like the boy during our first visit, my favorite part of the experience was just watching the passion these kids had for writing. All the students at our table were dedicated to their stories and projects and the excitement some of them had about their work inspired me to feel the same way about mine.” *Sierra Sitzes*

“It was a pleasure to watch the children transform into writers, asking questions about what the Missouri State students do or how to create their own work. . . . I felt privileged to help children expand their happiness and knowledge of creative writing.” *Charlene Wells*

“I was really impressed with the different methods that my classmates used to get the different kids to write. . . . It is important for kids to feel that they have the freedom to make their writing their own.” *Jake Wells*

“I think the entire class enjoyed the experience, because everyone in the carpool talked about it on the way back. I think their experiences largely mirrored mine.” *Abby Schneider*

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Dr. Blackmon, Administrators, MSU Creative Writing student Jake Wells, and the youth from the Stalnaker Boys and Girls Club.



MSU students working with youth from The Musgrave Boys and Girls Club