

Creative Writing Camp: Celebrating Our Uniqueness, Together

“What are you doing?” I ask a fourth grade student splayed across the floor, eyebrows furrowed in concentration as she studies her paper. The classroom hums with the sound of scratching pencils. Children buzz around writing stations, focused on their work.

“These are haiku blocks,” she says, opening her hand to reveal a collection of cubes. “Each side has a different word. You roll them and make a haiku out of the words they land on. Can you help me find ‘is’?”

As I bend down to search through the cubes, I sneak a peek at the first line that she has already placed down in front of her: *Storm blows through the house*. Sentences configure in my mind as she rolls the blocks. I swallow the urge to suggest my ideas to her and instead watch, mesmerized, as she arranges the words in ways I never would have thought to do. How amazing, that we can both start with the same blocks and end with completely different haikus.

This is a phenomenon I witnessed throughout Creative Writing Camp this summer: how, within the same simple structure, each student’s creativity can bloom in its own unique way. A group of kindergarteners can create distinct whimsical creatures from the same starting point of a plain stick. A group of fourth graders can transform a blank face template into a collection of brave heroes and terrifying villains. One great poem can be the entryway to 25 new poems, all anchored in the same powerful words yet each its own special creation.

Creative Writing Camp teaches a vital truth: that not only can we actualize our potential as individuals while participating in a community, but that it is *because* of our community that our individuality has a place to take shape and thrive. Creative Writing Camp gives young people the confidence and space to be themselves while teaching them to accept feedback from their peers, work well with others, and make positive contributions to their community. Through trusting and celebrating their uniqueness, students can come together to weave themselves into a beautiful mosaic whole.