

Trail students enjoy young authors' day

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STAFF PHOTOS/JEFF HORVATH Members of the Lackawanna Trail gifted program, and students who are especially interested in writing, are, sitting from left, Steven Jervis, Matthew Rakauskas, and Logan Dixon. Standing, from left, are, Brayden Clarke, Emmy Jones, Nathan Wescott, Jade Waibel, Kalee Graham, and Sophie Haus.

Two-hundred and fifty or so students from various different northeastern Pennsylvania school districts flocked to Keystone College on Wednesday, Nov. 4, for Young Authors' Day, an annual event sponsored by the Northeast Reading Association.

Nine students from the Lackawanna Trail school district numbered among those who attended the event, which has been hosted by Keystone for 15 years.

Those 9 students, 7 of whom are part of Trail's gifted program, spent the day listening to presentations by and participating in activities with four professional authors.

For fifth grader Jade Waibel, who is currently writing a story about the 'Stamp Act' for a contest sponsored by the Daughters of the American Revolution, the most enlightening part of the day was talking about poetry.

Third grader Sophie Haus particularly enjoyed writing a group story with her peers, where everyone contributed one sentence to the story, which had an eclectic plot.

When asked what the story was about, Haus said it involved "dogs, and elephants, and unicorns..." The list goes on.

Presenting at Young Authors' Day were John Micklos, who signed copies of his own books, and read some of the poems that student participants prepared.

Gayle Krause, a children's book author and native of Scranton, and poet Laurel Radzieski, Adjunct Professor of Humanities at Keystone, also worked with students in a variety of breakout sessions throughout the morning.

The final presentation of the morning was by Matt Novak, who, along with being a children's book author and illustrator, also worked as an animator for Disney.

Novak struck a chord with the auditorium filled with elementary students when he said that he worked on Disney classics such as "Rescuers Down Under," and "Beauty and the Beast," but resonated with the group possibly more so when he described his process.

As an illustrator, Novak demonstrated how to storyboard, envision characters, and begin drawing rudimentary figures that eventually, when given detail, come to life.

Following the morning's activities lunch was served in the Keystone dining center, where the group of Lackawanna Trail students, and their instructors, reflected on the day's activities.

Pat Carpenter, who is the gifted instructor at Lackawanna Trail, said that Young Authors Day was a "great opportunity for the students to hear from people who write and draw for a living."

"Reading and writing are so important," Carpenter continued, "and it's great for the students to meet and learn from professional writers."

Carpenter also added that Young Authors' Day was a great way to get all of her gifted students, who are in different grades, together for a day of collaborative learning.