

Multicultural Institute Youth Writing Festival 2015 • BY KELLY LONERGAN

Monday, June 15 marked the beginning of the annual Youth Writing Festival at the Multicultural Institute (MI) of West Berkeley. At the outset, 40 eager school-aged children gathered in MI's offices for their first day at the summer program that promises new friends, lots of creative writing, and even a few field trips.

But the Youth Writing Festival is more than four weeks of entertainment; the program aims to counteract the learning gap that arises when students are out of school during summer months. The essential idea is to

promote writing as a form of self-expression improving literacy skills in the process.

Many of the participants in the Youth Writing Festival are members of the Multicultural Institute's year-round Mentoring for Academic Success (MAS) program, and look forward to their return visits.

"I am happy about being here and like coming to the Festival," said 6th grader Jonathan Campos who has been attending MAS for nearly three years. Jonathan is especially enthusiastic about the daily "free writes" when he

gets to fill the pages of his own journal.

Students attending the Festival benefit from individual instruction and feedback on their writing projects, occasional public speaking opportunities, and engagement in small-group collaboration. After four weeks of intensive writing and editing, the students from both the Berkeley and Richmond sites come together at the program's closing public reading ceremony. Here students have the chance to share some of their written work aloud with family and friends and receive the 2015 anthology, a

published compilation of student's favorite pieces they wrote during the Youth Writing Festival. It makes for a rewarding, exciting, and community-oriented evening as students reap the benefits of their hard work as writers.

For more information about the Youth Writing Festival or the Mentoring for Academic Success Program, contact the Multicultural Institute at (510) 848-4075.

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