

Fantasy Week with Author Cinda Williams Chima – Final Report

LFM Middle School held Fantasy Week from Feb. 9-13, 2015. In preparation for the week, Mrs. Clouse's art students and Sketch Club members created fantasy works of art. Sixth graders worked on drawing castles while 7th and 8th graders made pastel drawings of dragons. These were used to decorate the halls of the middle school. Additionally, all students had the opportunity to create artwork of their own choosing with fantasy themes during Academic Assistance or at home. Many students created additional drawings, magic potion recipes, stories and models.

On Wednesday, Feb. 11, Cinda Williams Chima spent the day at the school. She presented for an hour to each of the three grade levels individually, and then held a Writer's Workshop in the afternoon for 21 selected students. In her large group presentation she highlighted the steps of the writing process from an author's idea to the published book. Students were surprised that it took four years for her first fantasy novel to make that journey. They were also intrigued to see her manuscript, which was the best she could make it before submitting it to her editor, full of corrections, markings and comments. Ms. Chima also shared the changes in cover design some of her books have gone through.

The Writer's Workshop participants were overheard saying they got many good ideas about creating compelling characters. These students peppered the author with excellent questions that Ms. Chima answered patiently, encouraging these aspiring writers. Several of the participants were Power of the Pen team members who hope to use the author's suggestions in the upcoming district competition.

All students, who owned copies of Ms. Chima's books, had the chance to interact personally with her while she signed their books. Her presentations inspired several students to have their name added to the waiting list to read classroom copies of her Heir series.

Additional activities rounding out Fantasy Week included a fencing demonstration for the entire student population, an option to play fantasy games one day during Academic Assistance, and a "Dress as a Fantasy Character" day with judging and book prizes.

Thank you to the FP Education Foundation for funding the art supplies and author's speaker's fee. It is only through such opportunities that our students can experience a professional writer of this caliber and hopefully, become inspired to improve their own skills.

English Language Arts Team: Kale Chavelier, Gayle Dill, Kim Dunlap, Janice Frygier, Jeff Hicks and art teacher, Annie Clouse