

Worlds collide at Tiogue Elem.

'Shakespeare to Hip Hop' inspires students

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COVENTRY — Students from Tiogue Elementary School got to learn about language and poetry a different way last week after three educators visited the school and presented Shakespeare to Hiphop.

This collaborative performance poetry was started by Regie Gibson and Marlon Carey.



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Anthony, a student in Mrs. Sinnott's fifth-grade class, reads some of his answers aloud.

Tiogue students get lessons in language

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Both men are poets, scholars, musicians, mentors and educators who travel to schools across New England and teach students about poetry and the English language.

This was the first time Gibson and Carey have visited the Coventry community but the teachers and PTO, who paid for the event, hope it will become a tradition.

They used their knowledge to host in-class writing workshops for grades K-5 and on Friday, grades 3-5 used what they learned to show off their poems in the form of hip hop during a school presentation.

To help Gibson and Carey teach all the grades in a week, Ryk McIntyre, another poet, joined the crew at Tiogue and coached students in the art of the Spoken Word.

Gibson taught a workshop on Wednesday afternoon in Mrs. Sinotte's fifth grade class to help them understand the concepts of alliteration, poetry, creativity and the history of the English language.

He explained to the students that in order to understand poetry they have to think with the right side of their brain and use their imagination.

"The left brain is a beautiful thing," he explained. "It is a thing we need to make analysis, the thing we need to build things, it is logical; we need that," he said. "But it needs that other part as well. I want to talk to that part of you that believes that purple dinosaurs can sing and yes, sponges can live in a pineapple under the sea."

To get the students thinking "outside the box" he asked them a series of bizarre questions that they had to answer such as "why aren't helicopters designed to suck honey from the

in the place space ends?"

Three students were chosen to stand in front of the class and give their answers to those questions: Nathan explained, "because that's what airplanes do. Also, helicopters are too busy playing football and dancing, helicopters aren't cool enough."

The second student, Anthony, used numerous puns in his answer regarding the trees, "they learn root words. They also learn how dogs bark is not a tree's bark."

Once the students were warmed up and thinking creatively, Gibson explained that "poetry is also a language to talk about connection."

He told the class that English comes from the Anglo-Saxons, who were two groups of people living thousands of years ago.

In their language, he said they used kenning to create their poetry. Kenning is the bringing together of two separate words.

Gibson used examples such as whaleroad, which meant ocean, sworddance, which mean sword fighting and battlesweat, which meant blood.

He had each student write down 10 nouns on a piece of paper; once complete he had them switch with their neighbor who wrote down 10 verbs on the same paper.

The students then read out loud the various words they created such as backpack dance. The students began laughing as they imagined what a backpack dance could entail.

Gibson explained that each morning, before school, children throw on their backpacks and "dance" to get it onto their backs.

"Here are two words we've never seen put together before but we can all understand it because we've ex-