

Arts

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Laurent said. "The poetry that I am teaching them are those I learned while I was still in high school and they have stuck with me this whole time."

Since other children learn by listening, she compares basic themes of poetry with lyrics they might have picked up listening to a popular song. To convey this during yesterday's session, she compared TLC's popular song "Creep" with Shakespeare's "Othello."

"The song is talking about being on the down low, creeping around behind someone's back and that is the same theme that plays out in Othello before he kills Desdemona," Laurent said.

Carla Conway, family outreach coordinator for the Norwalk Housing Authority, said she believes the program will enhance children's learning patterns during the school year.

"Marguerite Laurent is extraordinary. Her passion for blending neighborhood culture with beautiful art so that kids that may in

certain ways be saying, 'Hey, I don't want to know Shakespeare,' are learning it," Conway said. "They are learning how it feels to be creative. Learning about their creative inner voice, learning to be poets in their soul, in their spirit, in life. If they feel happy about the inner poet within them, I think it gives any child, from any place,

more of a sense of self, more of a sense of awareness."

The program is offered to children who live in Norwalk Public Housing, including Meadows Garden, Washington Village, Fairfield, King Kennedy, Carlton Court, Colonial Village and Roodner Court.

"The program has certainly

been one of the more popular ones," said Curtis Law, executive director of the Norwalk Housing Authority. "We certainly hope it continues. Children need avenues in terms of how to express themselves. Art, poetry, reading and acting are ways they can deal with some of the frustrations in their lives."

Laurent, a Stamford native, has taught Hip-Hop Theater workshops for after-school enrichment programs such as Artworks and the I Have A Dream Foundation. She is a lawyer, performing artist and recent recipient of the playwright fellowship for the Connecticut Commission on the Arts.

During one exercise yesterday, Laurent guided students to write with color, shape and motion.

"The best part of the class for me was learning how to express myself using a shape, a motion and a color. I think it will help me when I have to write sentences for school," Shamajah Addison, 9, said.