

## Fun & Creativity at Core of SCWriP's Young Writers Camps at UCSB, CLU & Girls Inc of Carpinteria



Each day, at SCWriP's young writers camp, campers engage in crafting a variety of writing forms, such as poems, journal entries, autobiographical sketches, short stories and observations. (South Coast Writing Project photo)

Long days, relaxing nights, cotton clothing, nature hikes, cooling dips in some water, delicious in-season fruit, good books, *anything* iced...

We all know what time of year this is. Summertime is around the corner again in Santa Barbara. Although summer will always be an amazing time of year, there is nothing like the summer vacation days during K-12.

Summer break from school means time for summer camp.

Parents, we got you covered with our [2018 ParentNooz Camp Guide](#).

[Noozhawk](#) got a chance to chat with Nicole Wald, the director of SCWriP Young Writers Camp at USCB.

## South Coast Writing Project

**Question: What is the name of your Summer Camp or Program and what is its mission?**

**Answer:** SCWriP's Young Writers Camp offers children of all writing levels an opportunity to grow and be inspired within a supportive community of peers led by highly qualified, credentialed teachers and writers.

**Q: Describe the activities involved in your program.**



Camps are lead exclusively by highly qualified, credentialed teachers who use camp as an opportunity to break away from the confines of a classroom, explore nature, exhibits, museums, and go on field trips which ignite creativity in campers.  
(South Coast Writing Project photo)

**A:** Daily journal writing and writing workshops are blended with activities in other creative arts, while guest authors and presenters provide mini-workshops on specific writing genres. Teachers seek to build confidence while providing the writing tools that inspire creative thinking.

Depending on the location, Young Writers may tour their campus, visit a college bookstore, or explore a nearby beach, historical site, or museum – the goal is to help them have rich experiences that lead to rich writing.

Each day, young writers engage in crafting a variety of writing forms, such as poems, autobiographical sketches, short stories and nature observations, and thus become familiar with the writing process.

Some camps, like the high school Playwriting Workshop, hone in on a specific writing genre, while our Digital Writing camps incorporate online media such as blogs, video, and design programs.

In every scenario, campers develop a writing community, supporting each other through feedback and collaboration. Each camper chooses one or more pieces of writing for publication in the camp anthology. During graduation on the last day of camp, campers read (and in some cases perform) their work in front of an audience of family and friends.

**Q: What is the age range for children to participate?**

**A:** Students entering grades 3-9 at CLU and UCSB; students entering grades 4-9 at Girls Inc of Carpentaria

**Q: When did Young Writers Camp begin? What was the inspiration for creating it?**

**A:** Young Writers Camp began in 1990 as a way for the fellows of the South Coast Writing Project (SCWriP) at UCSB to refine their writing instruction outside of the traditional classroom through work with students and collaboration with other teachers. We were also inspired by a desire to develop communities of writers at all ages.

**Q: What goals do you have for kids who participate?**

**A:** We in Young Writers Camp believe that young people can learn about themselves, others, and their world through the wonder of written words. We want to elicit from them the words that are within. We want them to weigh words and play with words and to be risk-takers in their writing.

Our goal is for each child to walk away thinking, “I am a writer,” and to understand how to participate in a community of writers. To facilitate such writing, we follow three basic tenets stemming from current research and modeled on the summer institute of the South Coast Writing Project at UCSB.

Our first tenet is that writing is a process, a dynamic cognitive function that requires time and

progression. We believe that prewriting stimuli prepare the writer to enter this process. The young author then creates a concrete expression of his or her thoughts and feelings in rough draft form. Responses from teachers, parents, and other young authors give the writer valuable feedback.

Now the writer can evaluate what he or she has written to determine how to be more precise, clear, and engaging. The writer then can address grammar and usage, heading toward publication. The recursive nature of the writing process in a supportive community inspires campers to move their compositions forward with growing skill and confidence.

Our second tenet is that the environment for writing should be stimulating and enjoyable. Camp teachers provide a diverse variety of prewriting experience that includes literature, art, field trips, professional writers, storytellers, artists, musicians, and local craftspeople.

These stimulating activities lead our young writers to craft their own unique written responses. Because the staff of Young Writers Camp believes strongly that positive responses to writing encourage more and better writing, praise and encouragement are central to our program.

Our third tenet is that every young person is a writer. Within each camper lie ideas, feelings, dreams, and a unique cultural perspective. We want campers to express these images in many modes of writing that include journal entries, poems, stories, autobiographical sketches, and other genres.

At our graduation, each camper shares published pieces and acknowledges the rewards of being part of a community of writers.

**Q: Describe what makes your camp unique and worthwhile.**

**A:** We are the only camp in this region designed for students who love to write. Unlike other camps, ours are led exclusively by highly qualified, credentialed teachers. In many cases, these teachers have also published authors, poets, and/or leaders at their school sites.

Because each group of 20-30 students is led by a team of two teachers, children receive large amounts of personalized support. Since we are a camp environment, we also provide an opportunity for students to experience writing for enjoyment, personal expression, and fun versus the required writing of school.

**Q: What is the best part, in your opinion, about your camp or program?**

**A:** Students walk away from camp with the sense that "I am a writer." This carries through into their work at school and into how they approach assignments. They come to understand that writing can be a tool that they apply in different ways in different parts of their life, and become confident in knowing when and how to apply various types of writing.

Amada Irma Perez – an acclaimed local author and educator who often teaches and presents for the camps – shares: “The magic of camp is most apparent at the end when kids who were barely

writing a paragraph at the start are turning out multiple pages. The kids begin to view themselves as writers, and walk away more confident in their writing skills and ability.”

**Q: Describe a favorite activity for children.**

**A:** While specific writing activities vary by location and by the teacher, a favorite across camps is time to journal and share free writing. Children also love the guest authors and speakers who come to work with the class and taking walking field trips that inspire the day's writing.

**Q: In what ways is your camp or program educational?**

**A:** Education is at the core of our camp. Children learn a variety of writing genres, practice how to give and receive feedback from peers and instructors in writers workshops, and discover ways to extend their writing abilities to the next level.

**Q: What else should parents know when deciding whether to send their kids to your camp or program?**

**A:** Parents often wonder if this camp is the right fit for their child. Young Writers Camp is a space for all children and teens who enjoy writing or would like to expand their writing knowledge.

The most important question to ask is, “Does my child want to go to Young Writers Camp?” If the answer is yes, then this is a good match.

**Q: What is the cost/tuition? Are scholarships available?**

**A:** Tuition is \$325 through April 30, \$350 May 1-May 30, and \$375 after June 1. Scholarships are available.

**Q: What does a typical day at camp consist of?**

**A:** Most days start off with daily journal writing. Campers get a chance to free write about any topic they choose, allowing them to express themselves better. From there campers take part in writing workshops, walking field trips, guest speakers, or other writing assignments (often incorporating art to help illustrate their writing).

We also give campers one or two snack breaks to refuel and play.

**Q: What are some of the writing assignments?**

**A:** Writing assignments are created by the teacher teams leading your particular camp group, so they vary from class to class and from year to year. They span all types of genres. Many are the same ones explored by our teachers during their month-long intensive inquiry into writing (called the South Coast Writing Project’s Summer Institute), and they also pull from teacher classroom experience.

All teachers aim to help each writer dip into the vast pool of stories they have to tell, both from personal experience and imagination. For example, in one activity called the Neighborhood Map, campers first draw their hometown or favorite place growing up. Then, they write a story about a memory they had in one of the places they drew. Arts, crafts, or even physical movement often accompany writing.

**Q: How is YWC different from school curriculum?**

**A:** At school, writing is often taught from a grammatical perspective. Students learn the rules that govern writing, the forms of essays, and get graded on how well they have followed the rules. Occasionally, if they are lucky, they have an opportunity to write for enjoyment.

At camp, we reverse that model. We start with writing as a creative, enjoyable way to express yourself and share the limitless stories we each have inside of us. We break away from the confines of a classroom, explore nature, exhibits, museums, and other places that spark creativity and introduce a wide range of guest speakers.

While the teachers support students in learning new forms and structures of writing, as well as by having students learn how to participate in peer-to-peer writer’s workshops effectively, the emphasis is on fostering a love of writing. Our goal is for each child to walk away thinking “I am a writer,” and to understand how to participate in a community of writers.



Praise and encouragement are an important part of SCWriP's young writers camp. Kids leave camp thinking of themselves more as writers, and have more confidence in their writing skills and ability. (South Coast Writing Project photo)

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