

O'KEEFFE MIDDLE SCHOOL WRITING CLASS

Special guest inspires students to write with passion

BY A. DAVID DAHMER

Lisa Hoon, an eighth-grade teacher at O'Keeffe Middle School on Madison's near east side, tries to get kids in her class passionate about writing by inviting amazing literary talents to come to her English classroom and talk about the importance of writing.

Omega School Principal/Executive Director Oscar Mireles was the latest accomplished Madison writer to be her special guest as he came in to share his expertise and knowledge and, on Feb. 17, pizza! Mireles capped off his work with the students this year with a pizza party and six pizzas from Little Ceasars for the young writers in Mrs. Hoon's classroom at O'Keeffe.

"Our role is to encourage the students to write the great stories they have to tell," says Mireles, the winner of the 2009 Dane County Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Humanitarian Award, "We all have stories to tell. Writing is an empowering tool."

Mireles has been writing poetry for almost three decades. He is the editor of two anthologies titled, "I didn't know there were Latinos in Wisconsin: 20 Hispanic Poets" and "I didn't know there were Latinos in Wisconsin: 30 Hispanic

Writers." He has had over 50 poems published in anthologies and magazines.

This is the third year at O'Keeffe for Mireles, who would not only talk about writing with the kids but about non-writing life topics like where they wanted to be in life and what they wanted to do.

All of the kids interviewed Mireles and asked him questions and then wrote their own stories about Mireles which they put into

the pizza party. "It's really about getting the passion of writing going for these kids and then having them produce something," Mireles says. "It's something that they can be proud of."

"This was a great group of young writers and we wanted to do something special for them. That's what the pizza party was all about," Mireles adds. "I want to continue to do this in the future and get more writers to come."



Mrs. Hoon (far left) and Oscar Mireles (second from left) have been helping O'Keeffe 8th-grade students expand their writing talents.