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## **Youngsters get a taste of college life**

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Eleven-year-old Madeline Langub forgot to call her parents in Middlesboro for four days.

When the seventh-grader at Middlesboro Middle School signed up for the Summer Camp for Academically Talented Middle School Students at Western Kentucky University, she worried about getting homesick during the two-week camp.

But the program, which has drawn nearly 200 middle school students from across the country and one from India, has kept the girl so busy that her mother had to call to make sure she was OK, Madeline said.

"There are just so many options of things to do," she said. "My mom finally called and said: 'You haven't called in four days; you have to call.'"

The students are given a list of more than 30 classes to choose from and are enrolled in four that they attend daily for hour and a half periods.

The lessons range from creative writing to sand sculpting to digital photography. Other more in-depth classes include a look at Nazi Germany and Holocaust issues, Civil War and abolition topics and lessons in German and Spanish.

Madeline said she signed up for some of the creative writing and theater classes and was a little disappointed to see Spanish turn up as her fourth class on her roster.

She said she put it last on her list because she had disliked it so much during the school year. However, after learning to count to a million in less than a week, she said the Spanish classes have been among her favorite.

"When I first got here, I thought it would be scary or hard but oh my gosh, this is so much fun, I don't want to go back," she said. "You don't really have a lot of down time because they keep you running but you're not tired because you are so excited."

This marks the 27th year of the camp, said Julia Roberts, executive director of The Center for Gifted Studies at WKU.

Roberts said the camp was started as a way to give practice to teachers getting endorsed in gifted education. This year, 16 teachers and 22 counselors are working with 192 students from 12 states and India.

"The purpose is for young people to have a chance to learn at high levels and have the opportunity to be with peers as they learn and make friendships with others their age equally interested in learning," Roberts said.

On Monday, the students kicked off their second week in sand sculpting class ankle deep in the ton of sand in front of Florence-Schneider Hall.

Under the shade of a tent, the group worked with WKU professor Greg Mills, who teaches construction management, to create castles, houses and even busts of Burt and Ernie.

Emily Powell, a 14-year-old student who attended Drakes Creek Middle School, said she signed up for the class after seeing some of the sand sculptures at different festivals around town over the years.

"It's been really fun, but it's harder than it looks," she said. "He makes it look easy, but it's a lot harder to find the small details."

Emily said she is also taking a pottery class where she is learning to use a wheel to make a clay pot in the same classroom where college students take art classes.

While some students are learning robotics and math patterns, Emily said she has enjoyed her Geo-Art class where they use geometric puzzles to see art come together.

"It's been a really great experience because we're not just learning things, but we're in a college atmosphere of getting to be here and around everyone," she said.