

2011-2012

WITS Report



Writers in
the Schools

A PROGRAM OF LITERARY ARTS

Writers In The Schools

What We Do

WITS places professional writers in Portland's public high schools and several alternative schools to teach semester-long workshops that focus on generating, revising, editing and publishing creative writing. WITS hires poets, playwrights, graphic novelists, and writers of fiction and creative nonfiction to cultivate young authors in grades 9-12. WITS also brings authors to visit schools, mentors students in small groups, provides professional development for teachers, donates books to classrooms and school libraries, publishes student work, and coordinates public student readings.



Franklin student MacKenzie shares her work at a WITS reading at Bipartisan Cafe

A WITS Snapshot

13 Portland High Schools served

44 Classes worked with a writer

36 Teachers learned new strategies to teach writing

21 Local Writers shared their expertise with youth

2800 Students Served



Roosevelt students attending Portland Arts & Lectures featuring Chimamanda Adichie

1015 participated in semester-long residencies

50 were mentored individually and in small groups by writers

393 participated in author visits to schools

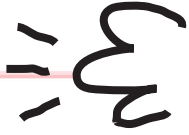
100 students attended The MothSHOP event at Benson High School

1165 attended an author event at the Arlene Schnitzer Concert Hall, including the Everybody Reads lecture with Heidi W. Durrow

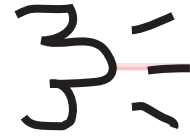
47 were mentored by community members at college essay writing events at Franklin and Madison High Schools

30 participated in Verselandia! Poetry Slam

WITS Invests in Our Schools



WITS provides professional development for teachers.



WITS served **6** new-to-WITS teachers, demonstrating our commitment to reach new teachers each year.



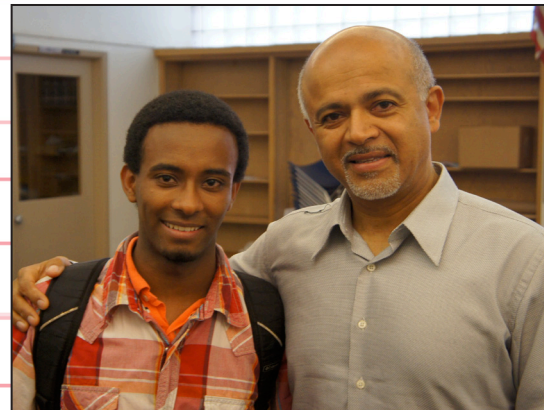
30 of the **36** teachers served by WITS this year had already hosted a writer in the past, demonstrating their confidence in and enthusiasm for the WITS program.



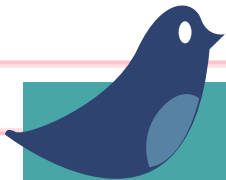
WITS hired **21** writers: **14** returning writers to maintain program stability and **7** new writers to diversify our roster in terms of ethnicity, genre, and aesthetic.

WITS helped schools meet their goals of teaching writing across the disciplines by

providing residencies in Astronomy, AP Spanish, Communications and Radio, English Language Development, Modern World and U.S. History, and 3-D Design, as well as in many Language Arts classes.



Writer Abraham Verghese with Jefferson student Robel



The Real Cost of WITS

Since 1996, WITS has invested over \$2.6 million in Portland Public Schools.

The program's total cost for 2010-11 was \$222,706.

Combined, schools contributed a total of \$21,000, or approximately 10% of the total cost.

Schools were served regardless of their ability to pay.

WITS Brings the Literary World to Schools

WITS extends literary experiences beyond the classroom.



WITS provided student tickets and transportation to all Portland Arts & Lectures events in 2011-2012. **365** students attended.



Chimamanda Adichie inspired Grant students

WITS coordinated **7** author visits.

Nationally known poetry and prose writers Heidi W. Durrow, Jonathan Hill, Abraham Verghese, Chimamanda Adichie, Anis Mojgani, and Tom Brokaw visited Portland high schools, serving approximately **393** students.

WITS partnered with Multnomah County Library and the Library Foundation

to host Heidi W. Durrow, author of *The Girl Who Fell from the Sky*, at the Arlene Schnitzer Concert Hall, providing tickets and transportation to over **800** students and teachers from almost every Portland area high school. Heidi W. Durrow also spoke at Reynolds Academy and Jefferson High School.



Heidi W. Durrow with Jefferson students



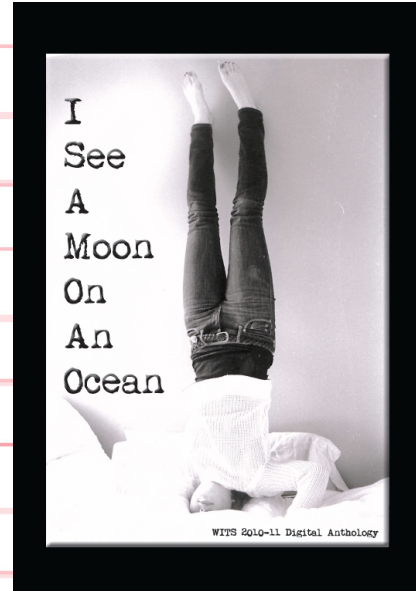
A Benson MothSHOP student storyteller

The Moth, a storytelling nonprofit from **New York**, visited Benson High School for a week-long MothSHOP with four students. After working with professional directors all week, the students performed their personal stories, without notes, for **100** of their classmates.

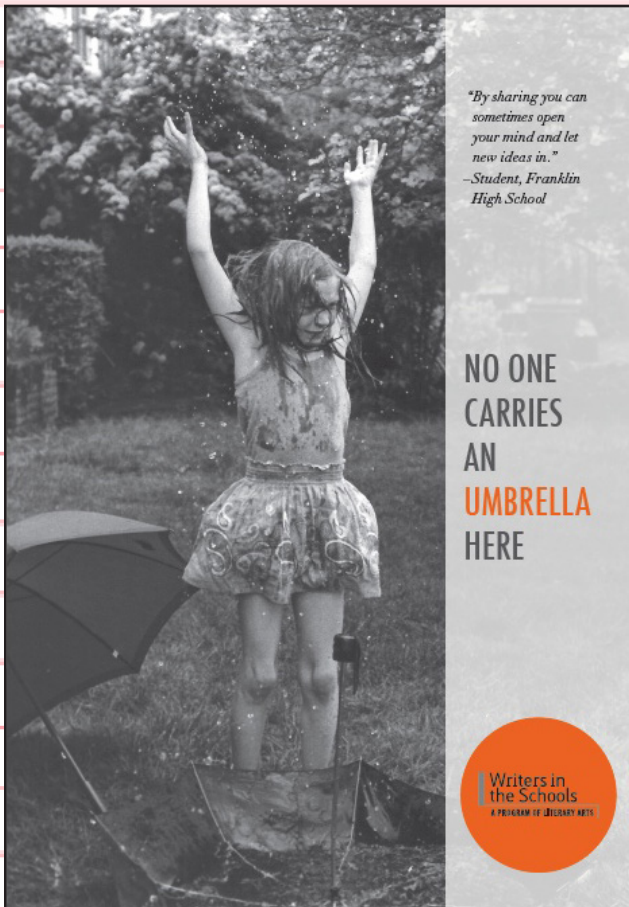
WITS Publishes Student Work

WITS students experience the excitement of being published.

WITS published a new anthology, *No One Carries an Umbrella Here*, featuring the work of **43** students. WITS also published five digital chapbooks, *They Walk Amongst Us Unknown*, *I See A Moon on an Ocean*, *This Story is Anything but a Fairytale*, *Celebrating What's Important*, and *Whispering the Remnants of My Childhood*. These chapbooks, which are available for download on the WITS blog (witspdx.com), feature the work of **74** additional students.



A WITS Digital Chapbook



The 2010-11 WITS Anthology

Editors from local publications the Oregonian, Glimmer Train, Burnside Review, and Tin House honored students by selecting their favorite pieces from the print anthology and awarding prizes for poetry and prose.



Lincoln student Fiona reads at Powell's

WITS Coordinates Student Readings

WITS students share their work with their community.

WITS coordinated 11 student readings at local cafés, bookstores, galleries and restaurants: **9** individual school readings, and **2** district-wide readings at Powell's City of Books and at the WITS Fundraiser at Bluehour restaurant. A total of **199** students shared their work.



Wilson student Deja shares her work at Annie Bloom's

**“ Thanks to WITS,
I learned how
much fun writing
can be. ”**

—WITS Student



Cleveland student Sean reads at Powell's

Our Community Partners Hosted WITS Readings

Bluehour

Girasole Pizza

Broadway Books

TaborSpace

Bipartisan Cafe

Portland Art Museum

Powell's City of Books

Talking Drum Bookstore

Annie Bloom's Books



WITS Evaluates Results

After working with a WITS writer...

93% of teachers report that the writing workshop usually or always met their goal for arts learning in the classroom

Having a writer-in-residence allowed me the freedom to be a student, and in turn, expand my own practice to benefit my students.

—Stephanie D'Cruz, PPS teacher

82% of teachers agree that their own teaching was enriched and will use WITS lessons in the future

The writer's weekly written commentary on each piece of writing, her encouragement to each student to share a voice, and the incredibly varied literature she shared with us was more than we could provide in our classrooms.

—Cindy Irby, PPS Teacher

68% of students report that they usually or always know how to revise their writing

I learned to feel confident about my writing and to keep expressing my ideas.

—WITS Student

86% of teachers agree that their students are more confident in their ability to write

I learned to not give up and to finish what I started, and to have fun with it!

—WITS Student

71% of students reported that they usually or always know how to get started writing

In our residencies, we tell our students that we are professional writers who live for writing and make a living doing that. Through the opportunities at WITS, writers are supported financially and pedagogically in such a professional way that it creates a nice self-fulfilling prophecy.

—Devan Schwartz, WITS writer

75% of students reported that they usually or always know how to sustain a piece of writing



WITS Contributes to College Readiness

WITS trains volunteer mentors

WITS provided College Essay Writing Workshops at Franklin and Madison High Schools. WITS and a Franklin teacher trained **56** volunteers who worked with **47** students on their essays for college and scholarship applications. Volunteers helped students generate ideas and revise drafts.



“ I enjoyed contributing ideas that my mentors have shared with me and passing on the experience of how I’ve developed my own writing. ”

—Adult volunteer, WITS College Essay Writing Workshop



For the fourth consecutive year, WITS collaborated with show:tell, a two-week summer workshop for teen writers at Marylhurst University. Show:tell provides several full scholarships to Portland Public Schools high school students who have participated in the WITS program. These students receive college-level instruction in creative writing and fine art.

Verselandia!

Portland's First Citywide High School Poetry Slam



Verselandia! was the first citywide all-high school Poetry Slam presented by Literary Arts and the Portland Public School's high school library media specialists. Verselandia! was hosted by National and International Slam Champion Anis Mojgani. The judges were Leanne Grable, Turiya Autry, Eirean Bradley, Sara Ryan, and Demond Spann, aka Dlux the Light.



“ It was magical, moving, hilarious, sorrowful, and joyful. ”

—Nancy Sullivan, Madison High School Librarian

WITS is sponsored by...

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