

WITS REPORT 2010-2011

Writers in
the Schools

A PROGRAM OF LITERARY ARTS



Inanna shares her work at a WITS reading in a local cafe.

Writers

In

The

Schools



What We Do

WITS places professional writers in all of the Portland public high schools and several alternative schools to teach semester-long creative writing workshops. 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 the 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.

WITS Teaches Writing

A WITS Snapshot

15 Portland High Schools

49 Classes

45 PPS Teachers

23 Local Writers

2600 Students Served



WITS writer John Issacson in the classroom.

1176 participated in semester-long residencies.

75 were mentored individually and in small groups by local writers.

645 participated in author visits to school.

1222 attended an author event at the Arlene Schnitzer Concert Hall, including the Everybody Reads event.

35 were mentored by community members at a college essay writing project at Franklin High School.

225 students attended The MothSHOP event at Marshall High School.

WITS Invests in Our Schools

WITS provides professional development for teachers.

★ WITS served **11** new-to-WITS PPS teachers, demonstrating our commitment to reach new teachers each year.

★ **34** of the **45** PPS 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 **23** writers in the summer of 2010: **18** returning writers to maintain program stability and **5** 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 Advanced Biology, Art History, Astronomy, English Language Development, Film and Literature, Modern World History, Striving Readers, Study Skills, Research Medicine, and Theatre, as well as in many Language Arts classes.



WITS Writer Mark Pomeroy with students Keegan and Hujjatt.

The Real Cost of WITS

Since 1996, WITS has invested over \$2 million in Portland Public Schools.

The program's total cost for 2010-11 was \$208,000. Combined, PPS schools contributed a total of \$21,300, 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.*



Tracy Kidder was inspired by his intimate visit with Marshall students.

WITS coordinated 8 author visits.

Nationally known poetry and prose writers Natasha Trethewey, Tracy Kidder, Joanna Rose, Renee Watson, Amanda Gersh, Michele Glazer, Wes Moore, and comic artist Art Spiegelman visited select Portland high schools, serving approximately **645** students.

WITS partnered with Multnomah County Library and the Library Foundation to host author Wes Moore at the Arlene Schnitzer Concert Hall, providing tickets and transportation to over **900** students and teachers from almost every Portland area high school. Wes Moore also spoke at a Roosevelt High School school-wide assembly.



Wes Moore with Roosevelt students.



Marshall's MothSHOP student storytellers.

The Moth, a storytelling nonprofit from New York, visited Marshall High School for a week-long "MothSHOP" with three students. After working with professional directors all week, the students performed their personal stories, without notes, for **225** of their classmates.



WITS provided student tickets and transportation to all Portland Arts and Lectures events in 2010-2011. **352** students attended.

WITS Publishes Student Work

WITS students experience the excitement of being published.

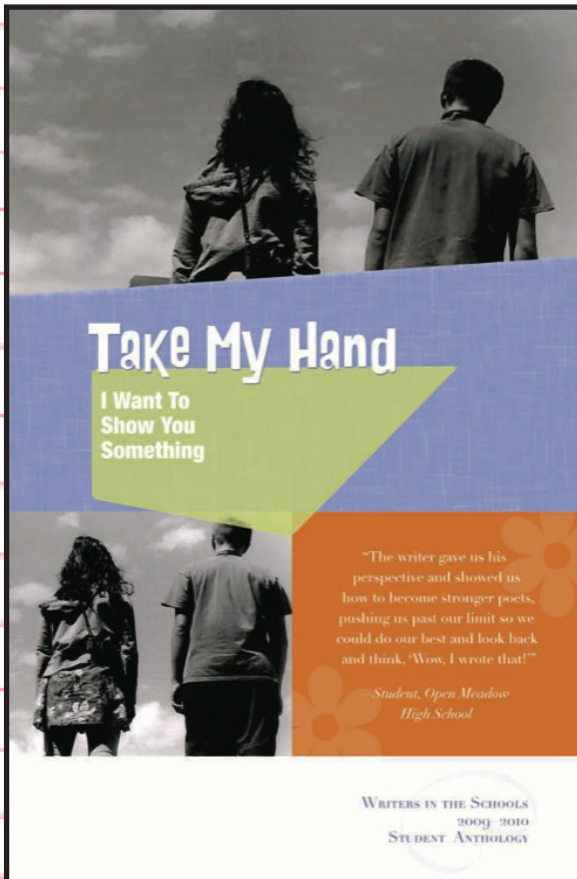
WITS published a new anthology, *Take My Hand I Want To Show You Something*, featuring the work of 48 students. WITS also published four digital chapbooks, *The Best Thing That Could Have Happened*, *A Ship of Poets*, *The Main Ingredient*, and *The Things I Live For*. These chapbooks, which are available for download on the WITS blog (witspdx.com), feature the work of 63 additional students



The Things I Live For

a WITS digital anthology

A WITS Digital Chapbook.



The 2009-10 WITS Anthology.

Editors of the *Oregonian*, *Glimmer Train*, *Burnside Review*, and *Tin House* honored students by selecting their favorite pieces from the print anthology. The editors presented the students and their pieces at the WITS Anthology Release Party.



Bronson and Andrea at the Anthology Release Party.

WITS Coordinates Student Readings

WITS students have an audience. ♡

WITS coordinated 13 student readings at local cafés, bookstores, libraries, and galleries: **10** individual school readings, and **3** district-wide readings at Wordstock, Powell’s Books on Burnside, and the World Trade Center for the Anthology Release Party. **181** students shared their work.



Cleveland High School student Ned shares his work with the audience.



Wilson High School student Nick reads at Powell’s.

Thank you, WITS.
“ Because of you guys I was able to open up more in class. ”

-WITS Student

Audience Attendance

Benson: 20	Marshall: 57
Cleveland: 43	Roosevelt: 72
Franklin: 80	Wilson: 20
Grant: 70	World Trade Center: 169
Jefferson: 46	Wordstock: 49
Lincoln: 38	Powell’s: 85
Madison: 60	= 809 attendees



WITS Evaluates Results

After working with a WITS writer...



76% of students reported that they usually or always know how to get started writing

74% of students reported that they usually or always know how to sustain a piece of writing

“ I learned to write from the heart and revise over and over. ”

-WITS Student

“ Students who often struggle had the chance to “shine” during the residency. ”

-Rebecca Gundle, PPS teacher.

90% of teachers agree that their students are more confident in their ability to write

76% of teachers agree that their students are more interested in writing

86% of teachers agree that students have improved their writing ability

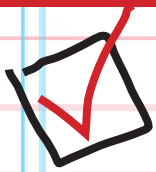
86% of teachers agree that their own teaching was enriched

“ WITS not only helps me make time for writing (while paying the bills), it also feeds my writing. ”

-Alexis Nelson, WITS writer



WITS Reaches Beyond High School



WITS contributes to college readiness.

WITS piloted a College Essay Writing Workshop at Franklin High School. WITS and a Franklin teacher trained 34 volunteers to work with 34 students on their essays for college and scholarship applications. Volunteers helped students generate ideas and revise drafts. Next year, WITS will serve students at Franklin and Madison High Schools.



“ **[It was] a much-needed way to bring together adults fluent with words, reading, and writing with students who can benefit from such role models, and from the individual attention of adults with real-world experience.** ”

-Adult volunteer, WITS college essay writing workshop



WITS develops local partnerships to connect students with their community and the arts.

For the third consecutive year, WITS collaborated with show:tell, a two-week summer workshop for teen writers at Marylhurst University. Show:tell provided five full scholarships to PPS high school students who participated in the WITS program. These students will receive college-level instruction in creative writing and fine art.

For the second consecutive year, WITS collaborated with the Portland Art Museum and the Independent Publishing Resource Center to provide residencies that help students learn more about Portland’s thriving arts community.

Student Writing

YAMAHA

Our ancient Yamaha piano was a gift for the wedding.

A warm light chocolate brown
like the color of an old dog's eyes.

Friendly.

Wise.

A sense of familiar recognition lies somewhere in the
chipped edges,
the mug stains on the top.

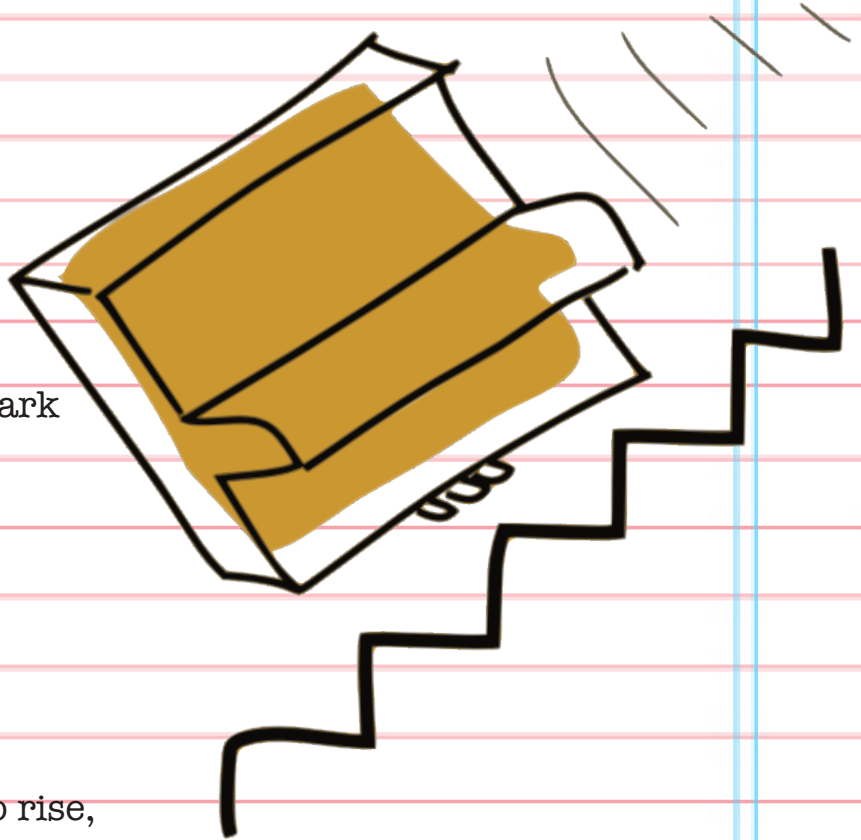
It had become stuck on the mute pedal
from so many years of playing Beethoven sonatas,
Rachmaninoff, nocturnes, hymns
silently

so as not to be heard
unsettle
disturb
or provoke.

A silent prayer
A quiet Moonlight Sonata in the dark
A dream of "Claire de Lune"
an illusion of hope

or perhaps

the faint beating of a heart
beating us on,
on thin wings
furiously yet silently struggling to rise,
like a hummingbird from the ashes
keeping the dying embers of faith
and hope alive.



-Christina Birkett, Lincoln High School
From "Take My Hand I Want to Show You Something" (2010)
Recipient of the Burnside Review Prize for Poetry

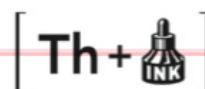
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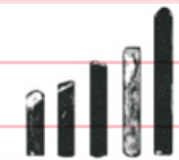
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 ENDOWMENT
 FOR THE ARTS



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Literary Arts

Portland Arts & Lectures

Writers in the Schools

Oregon Book Awards & Fellowships

Delve

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