

2021-2022



WRITERS IN THE SCHOOLS IMPACT REPORT



SEATTLE ARTS & LECTURES CULTIVATES TRANSFORMATIVE EXPERIENCES THROUGH STORY AND LANGUAGE WITH READERS AND WRITERS OF ALL GENERATIONS.

Seattle Arts & Lectures believes that literacy and a love for writing is a life-long process that starts in our public schools and connects directly to our public stages.

Through Writers in the Schools (WITS) and our Youth Poet Laureate (YPL) programs, SAL connects working professional writers with students and teachers to elevate and amplify the voices of students throughout the Puget Sound region.



EVALUATION DESCRIPTION

For the past six years, SAL has partnered with MEMconsultants, a long-established Seattle-based evaluations firm with expertise in youth development and arts programs, to hone and implement our annual WITS program evaluation process. Based on our learnings each year, with MEM's guidance we continue to refine our evaluation process to better assess WITS' impact and inform future program decisions.

2021-22 was the most challenging school year since the pandemic began. WITS residencies returned to being in person to help students and teachers with the hard work of rebuilding school culture and classroom connections after nearly two years of remote learning.



EVALUATION DATA SOURCES

Program Statistics

Student, Writer, & Teacher Surveys

Writer Observations

Guiding Questions

- Participation Rates: Who participates in WITS?
- Participant Experience: What do students, teachers, writers, and schools experience during a WITS residency?
- Program Quality: Do writers deliver a high-quality experience for students?
- Program Outcomes:
 - Do students engage in WITS activities, build skills, and increase confidence in their writing?
 - Do students practice creativity and self-expression through their writing?
 - Do students share writing with peers and through the process develop empathy for each other's thoughts and feelings?
 - Do teachers change their teaching practice with new lessons, develop fresh techniques, and/or learn new ways of encouraging students in their writing?





2021-22 PROGRAM PARTICIPATION

Participation Rates

- 22 WITS writers-in-residence worked with...
- 4,209 students in...
- 186 classrooms taught by...
- 116 unique teachers at...
- 26 public K-12 schools and at Seattle Children's Hospital.

Contact Hours

- Writers delivered 1,587 hours of writing instruction...
- Resulting in a total of over 35,943 contact hours with students...
- Or an average of 8.5 hours of instruction per student.

CLOSING OPPORTUNITY GAPS

- 41% of total WITS students served were at historically under-resourced schools, and had the least access to arts education and enrichment in the classroom.
- 37% of total WITS students were low-income, based on school Free and Reduced Lunch rates. (As a comparison, FRL rate in Seattle Public Schools is 34%.)
- 248 youth participated during extended hospital stays (at Children's Hospital sites.)
- 53% of total WITS students were youth of color.



PROGRAM EXPERIENCE

Teacher Satisfaction with WITS

- 100% of teachers strongly agree/agree that they enjoyed working with their WITS writer and would like to participate in WITS again.
- 93% strongly agree/agree that WITS met or exceeded their expectations.

"I had a very challenging classroom this year. [Our WITS writer] was patient and gentle with the students." - WITS Classroom Teacher

"[Our WITS writer] brought a celebration of imagination and a welcome recognition and inclusion of the different mental states students might be having right now. Writing is so clearly an avenue for groundedness and community." WITS Classroom Teacher

Student Satisfaction with WITS

- 91% of older students liked working with their WITS writer; 92% of younger students liked their WITS writing time.
- 79% of younger students reported receiving encouragement from their WITS writer; almost two-thirds younger students reported they chose to share their writing after class was finished.



A background image showing two students. In the foreground, a young woman with dark hair, wearing a light blue surgical mask and a pink cardigan over a dark jacket, is looking down at a piece of paper she is holding. In the background, a young man with glasses and a patterned shirt is partially visible, looking towards the camera. A microphone on a stand is positioned in front of the woman.

"You could write about anything and that was fun and sometimes you could write about your feelings." - younger WITS Student

"I really loved how we had the ability to express ourselves in ways a lot of kids don't get the opportunity to at home, it really opened our minds to a lot of new ideas and how to process them." - older WITS Student

"Our WITS writer encouraged us to work even if some of us didn't want to and if some of us had upside down faces. He definitely made my life much easier if I am being honest. I liked how it wasn't too hard, it was calm, and fun to do."

"I loved the openness and the creativity that was channeled through the lessons, and really enjoyed the safe, comfortable environment."

"I would like if we had more time for WITS because I really enjoy it."

Writer Satisfaction with WITS

- 100% of writers reported an extremely/mostly satisfying overall experience with WITS and the WITS cohort.
- 100% of writers were extremely/mostly satisfied with their relationships with classroom teachers and students.
- 100% of writers were extremely/mostly satisfied with the support they received from SAL staff.

"I have never worked somewhere where I felt as valued and heard as I do at WITS." - WITS Writer

"I love the WITS teaching artists cohort - it is such an amazing group of people who do this work." - WITS Writer

"My classroom teachers were masterful with their students and I so admire their tenacity in a really difficult year." - WITS Writer

"I felt my relationships with students got better as the year went on and we all got more comfortable being in person together again." - WITS Writer



PROGRAM IMPACT

SENSE OF BELONGING

97%

of teachers reported a high level of student engagement during their WITS partnership.

*"[My favorite part was] **feeling connected with my friends.**" – younger **WITS Student***

93%

of teachers reported that WITS writers brought new and diverse mentor texts into the classroom.

*"My favorite part about WITS was **working in groups and collaborating with my peers.**" – older **WITS Student***

85%

of students felt acknowledged and accepted in their WITS class; 73% of students felt their cultural identity was honored and reflected during WITS.

*"I feel I personally **learned more about several of my students** – their lives, their interests, their concerns – because of the poetry work they created." – **WITS Classroom Teacher***

70%

of younger students and 51% of older students felt more connected to their classmates.

PROGRAM IMPACT

CREATIVE HABITS



*"I loved being able to **set my words free** and just exist within a world of my own." - older WITS Student*

*"[My favorite part was] **sharing what our hearts feel like.**" - younger WITS Student*

*"[WITS] created a **creative space for students to explore their own identities, emotions, and the world arounds them.**" -WITS Classroom Teacher*

*"I loved that students were able to be **creative and vulnerable.**" -WITS Classroom Teacher*

- 97% of teachers reported that most/many students practiced creativity and self-expression in their WITS class.
- Over three-quarters of older students reported that during WITS they wrote about what's important to them, and their thoughts and feelings, and shared their writing with other people.
- Two-thirds of younger students reported sharing their writing with others;
- 59% wrote about their feelings all or some of the time.



PROGRAM IMPACT

WRITING SKILLS AND MINDSETS

- **73% of teachers reported that most/many students developed a greater enjoyment of writing.**
- **73% of teachers reported that most/many students improved as writers.**
- **92% of younger students and 85% of older students reported a growth mindset and will continue to use the new writing skills they learned from WITS in the future.**
- **80% or more of students are proud of the work they put into their writing.**
- **Over two-thirds of older students believe they are a better writer and feel more confident about their writing because of WITS.**

"I observed several of my reluctant writers participate with [WITS]. They wrote more during WITS than any other writing lessons in the past year. - WITS Classroom Teacher

"Certain students really came alive with the expressive nature of the writing; it was wonderful to see." - WITS Classroom Teacher

"I really liked trying out new styles of art/writing that I wouldn't have done before. I feel more confident with graphic noveling now too." - older WITS Student

"I liked the open freedom WITS writing gives me, and what I learned from WITS will help me in the future." - older WITS Student

PROGRAM IMPACT

"WITS contributed to our classroom culture/learning goals by allowing students to write without an agenda/academic focus. They could write for the sake of writing."

– WITS Classroom Teacher



TEACHER SKILL DEVELOPMENT

96%

of teachers strongly agree/agree they have or will apply things they've learned from the WITS writer to their teaching practice.

100%

of teachers strongly agree/agree that WITS supported them to meet their classroom goals.

2021-22 WITS SUPPORTERS

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MAY YOU LET

Lilah Beane

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May your heart light your path
Let your curiosity be your guide
May your wonder be your map
Let the ocean pick you up
Let the sea set you down
Let the eagle soar you high
May you be your own light
Let the stars guide you home



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