



# Seattle Arts & Lectures 2023-2024 Writers in the Schools Impact Report





seattle  
arts &  
lectures

# 2023-2024 Writers In the Schools Impact Report

Seattle Arts & Lectures (SAL) cultivates transformative experiences through story and language with readers and writers of all generations.

SAL 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 our Writers in the Schools (WITS) and Youth Poetry Fellowship 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

Since 2017, 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.



---

## EVALUATION DATA SOURCES

- **Program Statistics**
- **Student, Teacher, & WITS Writer Surveys**
- **WITS Writer Observations**

## GUIDING QUESTIONS

- **Participation Rates:** Who participates in WITS?
- **Participant Experience:** What do students, teachers, schools, and WITS Writers experience during a WITS residency?
- **Program Quality:** Do WITS 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 their writing with peers and through the process build connections and learn more about their classmates?
  - Do teachers change their teaching practice with new lessons, develop fresh techniques, and/or learn new ways of encouraging students in their writing?



# PROGRAM PARTICIPATION

**In 2023-2024:**

**22 WITS Writers-in-Residence** worked with...

**6,097 students** in...

**233 classrooms** taught by...

**122 unique teachers** at...

**36 K-12 public schools** in 6 school districts and in...

**2 Seattle Children's Hospital departments.**

WITS Writers delivered **2,544 hours of writing instruction ...**

Resulting in a total of **62,567 contact hours with students...**

Or an average of **10.3 hours of instruction per student.**

# CLOSING OPPORTUNITY GAPS

**54% of total WITS students served historically have had the least access to arts learning and engagement opportunities.**

- **19 of our 36 partnering K-12 public schools** were under-resourced with high populations of students from low-income households (based on Free and Reduced-Meals Program eligibility) and/or who identified as youth of color.
- **All schools received subsidized residency rates 70%-100%** of the actual cost to ensure equitable access for all students.



## **WITS REWRITTEN**

We launched WITS Rewritten, a new pilot program that provides WITS residencies at no cost to public schools that serve students furthest from educational justice due to systemic racial and socio-economic inequities. For its inaugural year, WITS Rewritten partnered with three schools: Wing Luke Elementary School, Denny International Middle School, and Rainier Beach High School in the Seattle Public School District.

# PROGRAM IMPACT

## Sense of Belonging

**94%**

of teachers strongly agreed/agreed that their WITS Writer cultivated a sense of belonging among the students.

**90%**

of teachers reported that their WITS Writer brought diverse mentor texts into the classroom.

**62%**

of older students reported that they connected with the mentor texts that the WITS Writer shared.

**65%**

of younger students strongly agreed/agreed that they shared their thoughts and feelings in WITS.

**84%**

of older students reported that their WITS Writer encouraged them to be themselves.



# WRITER SATISFACTION WITH WITS



**93%** of WITS Writers were extremely/mostly satisfied with their overall program experience.

**85%** of WITS Writers were extremely/mostly satisfied with their rate of compensation and the support they received from SAL staff.



***“I've had a wonderful experience with the [SAL] team. In a professional setting, they have been one of the greatest support systems I've experienced.”***

***“I feel so well taken care of.”***

***“I love being part of WITS and the opportunities it provides to do what I love.”***





# PROGRAM IMPACT

## Classroom Teacher Partners



***“WITS is always such an enriching experience for students and for myself. I love to see students' creativity come to life.”***

***“I loved having WITS and [our WITS Writer] in my classroom, and I would highly recommend having this program for any classroom.”***

***“Students shared vulnerable moments in the writing, and this gave us a chance to celebrate many different successes in writing!”***

**100%** of teachers strongly agree/agreed that they would like to participate in WITS again.

**90%** were satisfied with their WITS Writer and would like to work with them again.



*“Students shared vulnerable moments in the writing, and this gave us a chance to celebrate many different successes in writing!” – WITS Classroom Teacher*

*“{My favorite part of WITS }...the celebration on the last day when we got to share our work with other people” – older WITS Student*

*“{My favorite part of WITS]...collaborating with friends and brainstorming ideas for a story.” – older WITS Student*

*“[My favorite part of WITS]...connecting with my WITS writer, and making up a fun and creative story that gave me to opportunity to bond with people more.” – older WITS Student*

*“[My favorite part of WITS]...all the writing people shared because it made our community stronger and made more people communicate.” – older WITS Student*

*“[My favorite part of WITS]...when I got to show other people the real me.” – older WITS Student*

*“I felt the WITS classes helped to foster a culture of inclusion and acceptance. Students felt safe to share their work and to feel happy for others as they shared their work.” – WITS Classroom Teacher*

*“My favorite part of WITS was when suddenly the bell would rings, and I would realize that a lot of time passed while I was wrapped up in writing, and how WITS made me feel like I could just write, write, and write.” – older WITS Student*

*“I liked that our WITS teacher gave us a lot of creative freedom and saw our strengths in our writing.” – older WITS Student*



*“[My favorite part of WITS]...finding out how creative I am.” – younger WITS Student*

*“WITS genuinely helped my students express themselves more.” – WITS Classroom Teacher*

*“... Several [students] were reluctant at first, but nearly all students shared out pieces of writing and were proud of the pieces they wrote!” – WITS Classroom Teacher*

# PROGRAM IMPACT

## Creative Habits

**90% of teachers** strongly agreed/agreed that WITS lessons engaged their students.

**94% of teachers** strongly agreed/agreed that students expressed their thoughts and feelings through writing during WITS.

**92% of younger/86% of older students** strongly agreed/agreed that they were able to be creative and use their imagination during WITS.

# PROGRAM IMPACT

## Creative Habits

**90%**

of teachers strongly agreed/agreed that WITS lessons engaged their students.

**94%**

of teachers strongly agreed/agreed that students expressed their thoughts and feelings through writing during WITS.

**92%**

of younger/86% of older students strongly agreed/agreed that they were able to be creative and use their imagination during WITS.



*“My favorite part of WITS was when suddenly the bell would ring, and I would realize that a lot of time passed while I was wrapped up in writing, and how WITS made me feel like I could just write, write, and write.” – older WITS Student*

*“I liked that our WITS teacher gave us a lot of creative freedom and saw our strengths in our writing.” – older WITS Student*

*“[My favorite part of WITS]...finding out how creative I am.” – younger WITS Student*

*“Students that had previously been lukewarm with creative writing became very engaged with the project.” – WITS Classroom Teacher*

*“It was really fun to see the students engage in creative writing. Several were reluctant at first, but nearly all students shared out pieces of writing and were proud of the pieces they wrote!” – WITS Classroom Teacher*





# PROGRAM IMPACT

## Writing Skills & Mindset

*“There was so much positivity throughout the entire program. I watched students experience ride in each lesson, as their unique writing was celebrated.” – WITS Classroom Teacher*

*“Getting kids into a space to create and share their work is always a great way to build confidence and community. I know my students enjoy it each week, and is something we all look forward to.” – WITS Classroom Teacher*

*“[My favorite part of WITS] was being able to write something that I like and learning skills to improve my writing.” – older WITS Student*

*“I had fun making poems about real world problems, because I could express what a lot of people suffer from, depression, to share with other students.” – older WITS Student*

**9 out of 10** teachers strongly agreed/agreed that students are excited to continue writing because of WITS.

**86%** of teachers reported that students improved as writers. 84% of younger/71% of older students are proud of their work during WITS.

**73%** of students reported that they learned new writing skills from WITS.

**Two-thirds** of older students feel more confident about their writing because of WITS.

# PROGRAM IMPACT

## Teacher Skill Development

**9 out of 10** teachers strongly agree/agree that WITS supported their classroom goals, and that they learned things they will bring into their teaching practice.

*For me, learning from WITS was like discovering a treasure trove of educational wisdom. The poetic strategies and insights gained are not just lessons but invaluable tools I will carry forward in my teaching practice, shaping the minds of tomorrow with newfound brilliance.” – WITS Classroom Teacher*

*“WITS took into consideration my school's unique structure and needs, and tailored the curriculum to help us meet our goals.” – WITS Classroom Teacher*

*“WITS ... gave all students a very clear opportunity to succeed. They just needed to show up and try out some new things. I saw students who usually don't engage in class actually lean into this work. -- so that certainly supports my classroom goals.” – WITS Classroom Teacher*

*“WITS played a pivotal role in shaping a more vibrant, inclusive, and effective learning environment. It enriched the classroom culture by encouraging creativity, enhancing engagement, supporting diverse learning styles, and contributing to both student and teacher growth, all while aligning closely with the overarching educational goals.” – WITS Classroom Teacher*





WITS elevates the expressions of all students as they discover and develop their authentic writing and performance voices. Through WITS, students become authors of their own lives.

# Instructions to the Artist

Omar Gaayte

WING LUKE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL | 5<sup>TH</sup> GRADE

I wish my shoes  
were clown shoes  
but my legs should  
appear really tall.

I want my pants  
to be a waterfall but  
have rainbows too.

I want to wear  
a lovely shirt  
but have a warm  
sweater too.

I wish my face  
to be perfectly round  
but my hair to  
have aquatic waves.

The background  
should include  
an aquarium  
with sharks.



# Messages from the Stars

Nyna Simon

DEARBORN PARK ELEMENTARY SCHOOL | 5<sup>TH</sup> GRADE

I lie beneath my window listening  
to the soft whisper of the cold breeze  
I bite my lip slowly hearing  
quiet footsteps then shattering glass  
My door slid wide open hearing the crunches  
of someone stepping on shattered glass  
I bit my lip harder as the footsteps come closer  
For a split second I felt someone  
breathing on me softly  
Gasp: I gasped for air looking around-

light growing under my door  
But no sign of glass. No, nothing.  
I opened my window silently  
climbing out a bit and sitting under moonlight  
I looked up so suddenly at the stars  
The sparkly stars looked at me,  
whispered calmly  
"Sleep tight my love" and then  
suddenly I fell backwards onto my bed  
feeling very heavy, then finally asleep.

# WE THANK YOU

## FOR YOUR CONTINUED SUPPORT

Carolyn & Tim Ainslie ♦ Karen Maeda Allman ♦ Robert & Sarah Alsdorf ♦ Susan Anawalt ♦ Karen Maeda Allman ♦ Robert & Sarah Alsdorf ♦ Susan Anawalt ♦ Kimberly & Scott Armstrong ♦ Dana Bettinger ♦ Denise Boudreau ♦ Stesha Brandon ♦ Amy & Duff Bryant ♦ Annabelle Burgett ♦ Mark Butler ♦ Peter Byers ♦ Chris Capossela ♦ Tony Cavaliere ♦ Elizabeth Choy ♦ Barbara Joan Christoffersen ♦ Melanie Curtice ♦ Debra Dahlen ♦ Sandy Dickinson ♦ Anonymous Donor ♦ Chris & Christine Drape ♦ Gaylee & Jim Duncan ♦ Lisa & Nathan Every ♦ Kathleen & Steve Flenniken ♦ Pam Fredericksen ♦ Bob Fries ♦ Maria Gehl ♦ Christina Gould ♦ Dan Grausz ♦ K Alicia Graves ♦ Pamela Gray ♦ Stanley Greenthal ♦ Tim Griffith ♦ Don Guthrie ♦ Ross Hays ♦ Campbell Household ♦ Winifred Hussey ♦ Bion Hart Johnson ♦ Jack & Pam Jolley ♦ Leigh & Richard Jones-Bamman ♦ Patricia Kiyono ♦ Diana Knauf ♦ Deneise Kopetzky ♦ Morgan Larsen ♦ Stacy Lawson ♦ Björn Levidow ♦ Arni Hope Litt ♦ James Lobsenz ♦ Ellen Look ♦ Trish Maharam ♦ Robert Maillette ♦ Sally McKenzie ♦ Clare H Meeker ♦ Wayne Meisel ♦ Kirsten Murray ♦ Karen & Joe O'Byrne ♦ Jim & Mariette O'Donnell ♦ Jay O'Neal ♦ Sherry Prowda ♦ Ben & Margit Rankin ♦ Kip Robinson ♦ Liz & Steve Rummage ♦ John & Naria Santa Lucia ♦ Steven Sarkowsky ♦ Micah Skilling ♦ Ann Speckman ♦ Chuck Stemple ♦ Virginia Sybert ♦ Arlene & Mark Tibergien ♦ Candace Tkachuck ♦ Marc & Nancy Tollefson ♦ Leigh Toner ♦ Gregory Traxler ♦ Lisa & SamVerhovek ♦ Elizabeth Wales ♦ Marc & Nicole Walters ♦ Jennifer & Tracy Wong ♦ Diana Xin ♦ Julie Zunker



SAL thanks these individuals for their generous support! These donors (listed alphabetically) have made gifts to Seattle Arts & Lectures' Youth Programs greater than \$250 between 7/1/2023 and 6/30/2024.

# 2023/24 WITS SUPPORTERS

**ARTSFUND**

**BUTLER FAMILY FOUNDATION**

**CITY OF SEATTLE, Office of Arts & Culture**

**COSTCO FOUNDATION**

**ELIZABETH GEORGE FOUNDATION**

**MANNIX CANBY FOUNDATION**

**MEDINA FOUNDATION**

**NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR THE ARTS**

**NORCLIFFE FOUNDATION**

**NORMAN RAAB FOUNDATION**

**PETUNIA CHARITABLE FUND**

**PEG & RICK YOUNG FOUNDATION**

**PUGET SOUND ENERGY FOUNDATION**

**WHEELER CHARITABLE TRUST**

**THE GLASER FOUNDATION**

**THE MARTIN DJOS FAMILY FOUNDATION**

**THE SEATTLE FOUNDATION**

**TULALIP TRIBES CHARITABLE CONTRIBUTIONS**

**WASHINGTON STATE ARTS COMMISSION**



Seattle Arts & Lectures  
340 15th Ave E #301 | Seattle, WA 98112  
[206.621.2230](tel:206.621.2230) | [boxoffice@lectures.org](mailto:boxoffice@lectures.org)

Seattle Arts & Lectures is a 501(c)(3) tax-exempt organization, tax ID number 91-1384964. Contributions tax-deductible as allowable by law.

[lectures.org](https://lectures.org)