

FAMILIES AND EDUCATION LEVY APPROVED PROVIDER OVERVIEW

Organization Name: **Seattle Arts & Lectures
Writers in the Schools' Program (WITS)**

Website: www.lectures.org/wits

RFQ Area Approved (select all applicable):

- College and Career Readiness Expanded Learning Opportunities
 Elementary Social, Emotional, Behavioral, and Family Support Middle and High School Social, Emotional, and Behavioral

PROGRAM CONTACT INFORMATION

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PROGRAM OVERVIEW (Check all applicable)

Seattle Area(s) Served:

- Northeast Northwest Central Southeast Southwest

Grades Served:

- Elementary (K-5) Middle (6-8) High (9-12)

Special Populations Served:

- English Language Learners Special Education Other Please specify:

Areas of Support:

- Math/Science Reading/Writing Attendance College/Career Language Acquisition
 Passing Core Courses Social, Emotional, Behavioral, and Family Support

Service Delivery:

- Before School After School During School Weekends School Breaks

Current Levy-Funded School Partners (if applicable):

- Leschi Elementary
- Franklin High School
- Hamilton Middle School
- McClure Middle School
- Washington Middle School
- West Seattle High School

Key Program Strategies (Please provide a brief overview of program strategies including number of students served and program costs):

WITS places professional local writers with teaching experience in public schools for extended residencies to engage K-12 students in creative writing in close partnership with classroom teachers. WITS teaching artists infuse the classroom with the joy of writing while also meeting state curriculum standards through sequential, hands-on, interactive writing instruction. Each writer-in-residence develops 8 to 14 one-hour sessions to teach students how to write poetry, fiction, creative non-fiction, plays, or comics.

Through relevant mentor texts, authentic role models, and an emphasis on publication and performance, WITS students discover their own voices and use words as a powerful tool of self-expression. WITS students develop important writing skills and habits of mind such as persistence, thinking flexibly, and taking risks that will serve them in school and throughout their lives. At the same time, WITS models and reinforces innovative teaching for the classroom teachers. Teachers come away recharged and as inspired as their students through the hands-on, in-class professional development that they receive.

The cost of the program to schools is \$6,000 for a full 84-hour residency.

Results Achieved (Bullets or Brief Description):

WITS focuses on three outcomes:

- **Inspire students to engage in the writing process**, build writing skills, improve the quality of their writing, and increase their self-confidence;
- **Invigorate the teaching of writing** by providing teachers with innovative lessons and literature, fresh techniques, and the time and encouragement to join their students in writing;
- **Support and sustain a positive culture of reading and writing** at each school.

To track WITS' impact, we use a comprehensive set of methods to gather both qualitative and quantitative data to identify WITS' strengths, describe its impact, and determine opportunities for improvement as well as strategic opportunities for growth. Our evaluation is designed to answer both process questions regarding participants' experience and program quality as well as outcome questions focused on how WITS impacts students, teachers, writers and schools. According to our most recent survey,

- 92% of teachers agreed that because of WITS their students' writing improved; 89% agreed that their students' interest in and appreciation for writing increased, and 84% agreed that their students' self-confidence increased.
- 84% of students said that because of WITS they believe they can continue to get better at writing; 73% said they can use the new skills they learned in the future; and 70% said they feel more confident about their writing.

Additional Notes:

WITS currently partners with 27 public schools as well as Seattle Children's Hospital to serve more than 5,000 students in in-class residencies and an additional 1,500 students through our Spotlight Author Visits, bringing nationally and locally acclaimed writers to schools.

Over the past 22 years, WITS has inspired more than 100,000 students to build their literacy skills and hundreds of K-12 educators to strengthen their teaching skills through the literary arts.

Last updated: February 2017