



WRITERS IN THE SCHOOLS

Writers in the Schools Colorado (WITS) trains professional writers to conduct a series of writing workshops in classrooms that have proven to raise standardized CSAP/TCAP writing test scores. Each residency culminates in a published anthology and public reading of student work. Placing poets, playwrights, fiction and nonfiction writers in the classroom inspires students to make leaps of literary imagination, and this excitement and sense of autonomy impacts all other areas of language learning. Our goal for the program is to prepare students for future educational and creative endeavors, giving students a sense of excitement and authority over their own written language and increasing their ability to perform well on standardized tests.

Thanks to funding from the Pulitzer Prizes Campfires Initiative, Colorado Humanities has support for three schools to host three classroom residencies each. The Pulitzer model introduces students to work by Pulitzer Prize-recognized authors who have written about “the American West as Living Space” in nonfiction, fiction, poetry and journalistic writing. The resident writer and teacher may also collaborate on news literacy training. Students will then be given the opportunity to explore their own imagination and create written works in each genre, focusing on the American West.

WITS HELPS TEACHERS MEET GOALS

Writers meet with teachers in advance of their residency to plan together how they will meet the teacher’s curricular goals as they inspire student writing, help with revision of student work, and collaborate to produce an anthology and final reading to peers and the public. The online or print anthology contains one piece of writing by every student involved in a residency. Writers conduct up to 12 workshops per classroom. Resident writers include master teachers and award-winning writers Eleni Silekianos, Sandra Dorr and Jill Burkey.

WITS IMPROVES TCAP SCORES!

In a 2012-2013 study conducted by the University of Denver’s Marsico Institute for Early Learning and Literacy in the Morgridge College of Education, 83% of the teachers responding noticed a positive change in their students in terms of reading and writing skills. Over 82% reported that the program inspired them to work differently with students when they write.

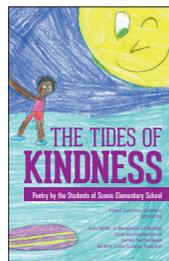
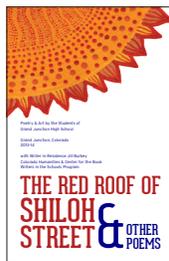
WITS students at Clara Metz Elementary School in Denver earned statistically significant higher 2012 TCAP writing scores than their peers who did not participate in the workshops.

In addition, the longer the students were involved in the program, the higher their 2012 reading and writing scores. As researcher Dr. Sheridan Green reported, “The finding confirms that **the WITS program truly aligns with state standards (tested by TCAP)** and it enhances student learning of writing art and skill.” It also correlates with other WITS programs across the country; Houston WITS reports a 10 to 15% increase in their standardized test scores.

For more information, contact Assistant Coordinator Bess Maher at bmaher@coloradohumanities.org or 303.894.7951 x19.

“Our Writer is amazing with our students! He teaches them difficult concepts in such a fun way. They are excited when he comes and then they want to continue writing when he leaves.”

Karen Jenks
Teacher, 5th grade
Clara Metz Elementary School
Denver, Colorado



The Pulitzer Prizes

