

Summer Enrollment Increase Campaign 2019

WRITERS IN THE SCHOOLS

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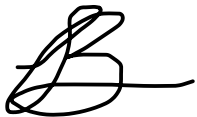
March 8, 2019

Writers in the Schools
1523 W. Main
Houston, TX 77006

To the Board of Writers in the Schools,

It is with great excitement that I submit for your approval this campaign proposal to increase enrollment in the WITS programs offered this summer. I have followed the organization for some time and hold it in the highest regards for what is offered through its classes, workshops, and public events. The dedication to education and enrichment that is constantly demonstrated by WITS is part of what makes the organization a vital part of Houston. While enrollment has been steady since the inception of Writers in the Schools, I believe that with this campaign formulated to increase enrollment we will see an increase by at least 25%. In addition to enrollment increases, the campaign aims to enlist the support of more Houston area educators to help spread awareness of WITS and its offerings. Given the opportunity to implement this campaign, I am confident in its success and impact. I want to thank Writers in the Schools for the opportunity to create a campaign and work side by side with its team. I look forward to hearing from the organization.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be the initials 'LB' followed by a horizontal line.

Louis Barragan

Introduction

The following campaign proposal is composed of nine distinct sections which include research, analysis, objectives, tactics, implementation, and more. Each section was carefully researched and constructed with the projected outcome of increasing enrollment in, as well as awareness of, Writers in the Schools. The campaign hopes to reach a variety of people around Houston with a special focus on inner-city youths in underserved communities. The use of surveying, auditing, and community engagement will all serve as crucial components of the campaign's success. As the focus of Writers in the Schools has been to educate and enrich the lives of students, so will this campaign serve to spread awareness and encourage a love of writing.

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Part 1: Secondary Research

Internal Factors

Writers in the Schools, or WITS, is a Houston area nonprofit organization that aims to teach students the art of writing. WITS began with two founders over thirty years ago who decided to utilize the writing talent of the University of Houston's Creative Writing Program. (<https://witswriting.org/about/our-story/>) The organization works with over 38,000 children and teachers in 360 classrooms around the city. (<https://witswriting.org/about/our-story/>) While the organization focuses on at-risk and underserved students, they also offer writing workshops in museums, hospitals, community centers, and private schools. (Houston ISD 2018) The organization is formed of an alliance between 35 literary arts education programs.

WITS works with a variety of other Houston organizations and institutions. The nonprofit has begun a weekly workshop with the Houston Public Library to offer free writing practice for Houston children between grades 2 and 8. (Esquer, Houstonia Mag 2016) The nonprofit continues to grow and serve young adults and children all over the Houston area. The organization has a variety of outlets for students to turn to. Not only are writing workshops offered, but WITS also provides burgeoning poets the opportunity to work with professional poets in developing their performance techniques. (<https://witswriting.org/about/our-story/>) The nonprofit has also begun work towards providing a digital option by combining writing and game-based technology for youths.

External Factors

Some external factors that relate to the efforts of WITS include a lack of creativity in public school curriculums, school district issues such as budget cuts, board disintegration, and more. As school funding shifts more to a focus on standardized testing as a means for approving

increased funds, creative studies and programs become less and less important. Research shows that creative thinking has declined over the last few decades in young adults while anxiety, depression, and suicide have increased. (Psychology Today 2018) Removing education that focuses on providing students with a place to explore their creativity and express themselves contributes to these rises on mental health issues.

The Houston Independent School District has had a tumultuous reputation for the past five years. Superintendent Grenita Lathan projected an estimated \$76 million deficit in funding for the 2019-2020 school year for HISD. (Carpenter, Houston Chronicle 2018) Board members have had difficulty in formulating plans for dealing with budgetary issues and have turned to infighting in recent years. A recent training session for board members resulted in arguments and threats of violence between participants. Some participants have expressed their dread and resentment at being part of a board that is so chaotic. (Carpenter, Houston Chronicle 2019) WITS works to inform and excite children about learning, writing, and creativity. The lack of creative programs in schools paired with budget cuts leading to further learning deficits cause extreme setbacks for youths in public education. As the HISD board continues to fall apart, programs like WITS are becoming increasingly necessary as a means for extracurricular options for children who might not have a full range of opportunities in school.

Part 2: Primary Research

Subject 1: Female, 27 years old, 2st grade ESL instructor in HISD

The first person I spoke with is a current instructor who works within the Houston Independent School District. I asked her about the current difficulties within the district and how they have affected programs in her school. She informed me that the focus has shifted largely to standardized testing and ensuring that scores are high. The focus has become so important that students are often prepared less for their next school year than they are for learning how to take these types of tests. When asked about the creative outlets afforded to students, she informed me that while she does try to include those opportunities for her class, they are not as highly encouraged as core subjects. Creative writing is not as much of a focus as creative thinking, which involves presenting the students with scenarios and asking for their response aurally. When I asked her about WITS she informed me that she had heard of the organization. I asked if she learned about it through her position and she informed me that she had a friend who used to volunteer with WITS. She had even heard it mentioned at a local poetry night in Houston but never heard it mentioned in the school.

Subject 2: Female, 26 years old, Special Education Behavioral Therapist

The second person I spoke with is a behavioral therapist for an elementary school outside of HISD. She works primarily with special needs students who are having difficulties in the classroom. I asked how she felt about creative studies such as writing in schools and whether they have any effect on her students. She told me that providing those kinds of outlets for children to express themselves freely often is helpful. Not only are children able to express themselves, but they learn to understand and process their emotions more appropriately. I asked if these types of studies were a part of the curriculum in her school to which she responded that

writing is a part of English courses, but the focus is split between literature, writing, and grammar. When I asked if she was familiar with WITS she said that she had not heard of the organization before, but that she would be interested in finding out more about their programs.

Subject 3: Male, 19 years old, recent graduate of HISD High School

I wanted to get the opinion of a person who has experienced the school system first hand and would have recent experience that could elucidate the current focuses of a higher grade level. The person I spoke with graduated in May of 2018. I asked what creative outlets were available in his school and he informed me that there were various art, film, animation, music, and other classes as well as clubs and extracurriculars. I asked if there was any sort of focus on writing which he said was a large portion of his English course and that there was even the option for a poetry club, but that membership was low. The writing that he said was taught in his English course was more analytical as opposed to creative writing. Creative writing and poetry were small units of a much broader curriculum. I asked if he would have been interested in a program that allowed him to explore creative writing and even poetry outside of school, but he was not very interested in it.

Analysis:

The general consensus was that writing, along with other creative learning, was not a priority in most public education facilities. The professionals in the educational field that I spoke to agreed that these kinds of learning objectives are beneficial to students on a personal and professional level. Providing creative outlets not only helps break up the monotony of the typical 7-8 hour school day, but also provides new skills to students that prepare them for the future. Overall, the current system that focuses on core subjects along with standardized testing seems to take away the students' ability to think creatively and independently. Programs like WITS not

only help encourage creativity but provide students with structure learning outside of their educational facilities.

Part 3: SWOT Analysis

Strengths

1. The organization has over thirty years of experience in the Houston area with plenty of support and recognition over the years.
2. The organization has more than 360 classrooms for programs, partnerships with Houston libraries and other institutions.

Weaknesses

1. The organization is not as well known in certain areas on the edge of this city such as the suburbs.
2. The organization does not have enough marketing power and the ability to gain more membership from students.

Opportunities

1. The nonprofit has the ability to grow and form similar nonprofits in other Texas cities or even outside of the state.
2. A partnership with HISD itself can help to bring WITS into schools as a club, extracurricular, or similar organization.

Threats

1. The organization has the potential to lose volunteers as many education professionals begin seeking careers outside of the industry due to budget cuts in the city.
2. Continued decrease in creative works in school can lead to a lack of interest in creative outlets among the youth that is WITS' main public.

Part 4: Campaign Goals

Campaign Goals:

Writers in the Schools is looking to promote creativity in Houston youths by increasing enrollment in after-school writing programs, classes, and workshops. WITS intends to spread awareness of our offerings to Houston families and encourage participation in our many varieties of writing workshops. The organization wants both youths and their parents to be well-informed on what the program has to offer and the benefits of enrollment. In addition to understanding what the program entails, we want participants to know all of the details on enrolling, joining particular workshops, and how to stay informed of everything happening within the program.

Part 5: Target Publics

Target Publics:

The main public that the campaign is aiming to reach is Houston youths. WITS wants children and young adults in the Houston city limits to be aware of what the organization has to offer. Youths between the ages of 8-17 who are still in school or have recently dropped out are the main demographic we aim to inform about the programs. The organization caters mainly to inner-city youths who are in underserved communities. Young people who attend the least-financed schools in the city, whose families make under \$40,000 a year, and whose schools do not offer extensive extracurricular activities are of the highest priority to WITS. The organization aims to provide free classes to those youths who do not have the means or options to participate in any other form of creative extracurricular, so these demographics will help reach those who need the program the most. We want young people who have a desire for creative expression. Youths interested in music, art, literature, and any other creative medium in addition to writing are who we want to become a part of the program.

The second public that the campaign aims to reach is Houston parents. The parents of those children who we are aiming to reach are a vital public for us to connect with. We want parents to know just as much as their children do about the programs that they are enrolled in. Inner-city families (such as those in the various wards of Houston) are the primary groups that we aim to reach. Adults making under \$40,000 a year who have children are also among those that we want to connect with. A firm faith in the power of education, perhaps those who did not finish school themselves, and a love of the arts are just a few of the characteristics we are looking for. By way of extension through the targeting of the various wards around Houston, the

distinct demographics we are aiming for are Latino and African American communities as these populate the wards most extensively.

The third public that the campaign hopes to reach is Houston educators. This is a crucial public that must be connected with to have the farthest outreach around the city. Creative arts teachers within the Houston Independent School District are the obvious targets for outreach. Those educators who are inspiring their students to engage in creativity daily are who we want to inform about our programs so that they can in turn spread awareness to their students and the parents of those students. On average, most creative arts teachers tend to lean towards more Liberal political stances, are young professionals, and support extracurricular pursuits in their students. We hope that appealing to these beliefs will allow us to connect with these educators directly.

Part 6: Objectives

Campaign Objectives:

1. Raise awareness of Writers in the Schools in underserved communities around Houston by 15% by June 2019 (the start of our Summer workshops).
2. Increase urban youth enrollment in our Summer workshops by 25% by June 2019.
3. Gain the participation of 150+ Houston area educators in providing information to their students, Parent Teacher Associations, and faculty on what WITS can offer.

Part 7: Strategies and Tactics

1. The first strategy is a community outreach strategy utilizing Houston educators and WITS members to reach the public.
 - a. The community outreach campaign will see Houston area educators, Houston Independent School District board members, and members of WITS engaging the public about the organization. The key messages of the campaign will be information for the public about the programs available through WITS, the benefits of enrollment in these programs, and the process for signing up. WITS will team up with these school officials and provide information to them along with materials and strategies for spreading awareness. A few of the tactics that will be utilized are listed below.
 - i. Fliers (see provided) with information on Summer Camp programs that can be distributed in schools and surrounding communities
 - ii. Informational seminars at multiple Houston schools along with pop-up informational booths during lunch periods in schools that include sign-up options
 - iii. A direct email campaign that sends information and links to further readings to members of PTA committees who are interested in the general program as well as Summer Camp
2. The second strategy is a media relations strategy using both paid and unpaid forms of media.
 - a. The media campaign will utilize news agencies, TV/radio spots, and social media to spread awareness of WITS. The campaign hopes to garner support from local

news stations, Houston publications, and more who will help spread awareness for reasonable fees or simply as a charitable donation. The campaign message will be consistent with that of the community outreach campaign in providing the same information on programs, their benefits, and the process for enrollment. For the sake of frugality, the paid media spots will focus on a general overview of WITS and where the public can find more information. The social media portions will provide more detailed information as well as links to further reading, promotional videos from WITS, and testimonials. The tactics that will be utilized are listed below.

- i. Press releases focusing on WITS Summer Camps (see provided) for various forms of media including broadcast and written media
- ii. Fact sheets including FAQs that are available to the public through the WITS website and social media platforms
- iii. Blog/social media posts including Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter for disseminating information on event schedules and locations

Writers in the Schools
1523 W. Main
Houston, TX 77006

For Immediate Release
24 February 2019

Contact: Louis Barragan, (832) 723-6638

Be inspired by Writers in the Schools' Summer Camps for Students!

(Houston, Texas) — Starting June 3rd through August 9th, Writers in the Schools will be offering summer camps for students across the city.

“We want kids to have the opportunity to have fun while staying engaged in scholarly pursuits during the summer,” said John Smith, a volunteer and representative for Writers in the Schools. “We will offer a variety of camps that include subjects such as creative writing, cultural studies, and even slam poetry.”

In addition to the camps, Writers in the Schools will be hosting free creative writing workshops in public libraries during the summer. The organization partners with Houston educators and volunteers to provide services around the city. Both children and young adults are encouraged to participate in these programs that offer fun activities along with tremendous educational value.

Writers in the Schools is a Houston non-profit organization that provides writing and reading camps throughout the city. Students in grade K-12 have the opportunity to join a variety of programs that include public writing camps, classes, and seminars in schools and libraries around the city. The organization provides both paid and free program options for anyone who wants to participate.

Parents and students interested in the programs can visit the WITS office at 1523 W. Main Street, Houston, TX 77006, or call the office at (713) 523-3877. For the Summer Camp schedule and more information on the programs visit:

<https://witshouston.org/camp-main/>

— END —

SAMPLE



Writers in the Schools **Invites you!**

Join us for Summer Camps!

Creative Writing Camp for grades K-12

*Creative Writing Camp pairs talented, professional authors with experienced classroom teachers for a high-quality summer program that feeds the imagination!



Culture Camp for grades 4-8

*Dive into stories and artwork from India, China, and Japan, and discover how to weave stories like a pro!

Poetry Camp for grades 5-8

*Students have the opportunity to transform their written work into poetry slam pieces under the guidance of WITS' slam poetry coaches!



Discover more at: <https://witshouston.org/>

Part 8: Implementation

Implementation:

Tactic 1: Informational seminars at multiple Houston schools along with pop-up informational booths during lunch periods in schools that include sign-up options

Tactic 1 will require a few steps to implement. Schools allow booths to be set up by organizations such as clubs, career services centers, and even the military so that students get a chance to explore their options for jobs and extracurriculars. Writers in the Schools can set up a booth that includes informational material such as packets, fliers, and voluntary sign-up forms to receive further promotional material through email. The booth can be set up during lunch periods so that every student has the chance to see the material and talk to members of WITS. A tent with the WITS logo, tablecloth with the logo, and promotional giveaways such as pens/pencils/folders, can all be utilized in the booth. The program can reach out to schools in the area to find out about career fairs and also set up at those.

Timeline:

- March 1st – March 31st schools (middle and high school) can be contacted for information on setting up booths
- April 1st - May 1st host daily or weekly pop-ups
- May 1st - June 1st begin reaching out to interested prospects about sign-up

Budget:

- A budget of \$1,000 will be more than enough to purchase logo-printed promotional material such as tents, pencils/pens, and even drawstring bags

Tactic 2: Press releases focusing on WITS Summer Camps (see provided) for various forms of media including broadcast and written media

Tactic 2 will require networking and charitable requests as a means of promoting the organizations and its programs. Press releases will be written for various types of media including broadcast (for television news channels/radio) and print media (local newspapers/online news centers/blogs). Outlets for release include The Houston Chronicle, KPRC, KTRK, and radio stations including 97.9 The Box and 94.5 The Buzz. As we propose the idea of discussing WITS on the air or in print, we will incentivize outlets with well-written, interesting releases on the benefits of WITS' programs. We can request that the organizations give us air-time and article space which can be written off as a charitable donation for a nonprofit.

Timeline:

- March 1st – March 7th releases will be written, proofed, revised, and finalized
- March 8th the releases will be mailed out/distributed to various agencies
- March 22nd we will follow up with each news outlet and find out who has accepted
- April 1st – May 1st will see the inclusion of the press and media coverage based on the availability of the outlets

Budget:

- If we can convince the agencies to consider this a charitable donation, we will not require any funds to be budgeted. If we are able to get primetime coverage of our programs, we can allocate \$2,000 for various forms of media coverage (mostly local television news networks and the Houston Chronicle).

Tactic 3: Blog/social media posts including Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter for disseminating information on event schedules and locations

Writers in the Schools already utilizes various forms of social media, so implementation of tactic 3 should be seamless. Social media management platforms such as Hootsuite and Buffer can be incorporated to ensure the most effective use of social media. These platforms will allow our social media team to post across all platforms simultaneously, schedule posts for peak traffic times, and use the most popular hashtags for gaining the most attention. In addition to these features, metrics and measurement tools allow us to track the progress and effects of our social media campaign.

Timeline:

- March 1st – August 1st will be our peak social media times as we begin encouraging enrollment and continue following up with enrollment throughout the summer

Budget:

- Hootsuite costs just \$6 per month for two users. Should we get more social media savvy volunteers who want to contribute we can increase users for an additional \$15 per month. The total budget from March-August would be just \$30-\$105.

Part 9: Evaluation

Evaluation:

Objective 1: Raise awareness of Writers in the Schools in underserved communities around Houston by 15% by June 2019 (the start of our Summer workshops).

To evaluate the results of objective 1 we must have an adequate gauge of awareness before and after the campaign. Surveys can be utilized at local grocery stores and schools to gauge awareness of WITS. A simple 3-5 question survey asking about how aware the public is of what WITS offers will suffice. After the campaign the same locations can be utilized along with the same number of responses (for instance, if 500 people are interviewed before the campaign then 500 people should be interviewed after the campaign). We can use the results to see how much of an increase we have gained in public awareness. Furthermore, we can use the metrics gathered by the outlets we utilized for our media campaign to see how many viewers/readers were reached.

Objective 2: Increase urban youth enrollment in our Summer workshops by 25% by June 2019.

The results of objective 2 will require a system audit to evaluate. Enrollment will be audited before the campaign starts by recording the enrollment numbers from 2010-2018. At the beginning, middle, and end of the summer program offerings we can record the number of active enrollments and attendees. While we want to increase enrollment by June, the 25% that we are hoping for will be evaluated at the end of the summer once the programs have all been completed so that we can be sure of the total number of actual attendees. The final number will be compared against years passed to see how much of an increase we gained.

Objective 3: Gain the participation of 150+ Houston area educators in providing information to their students, Parent Teacher Associations, and faculty on what WITS can offer.

Objective 3 will be able to be evaluated as the campaign progresses. We can reach out to as many Houston educators as possible from March through May. Speaking with instructors while we are setting up our pop-up booths during lunch periods, calling local schools, and working with local PTAs will all allow us to gain the support of Houston teachers. We can create a log of sign-ups that includes the names of teachers who are willing to participate along with their schools and how they are willing to help. We can request teachers pass the information verbally to students and parents, through fliers/handouts, and through email campaigns. The log will allow us to see how many supporters we have gained as well as how they are helping us to spread the information. We can go further in our evaluation by requesting that they keep track of how much they have spread the information (number of emails sent, handouts distributed, etc.).