



America's Literacy Crisis

In the United States, the typical middle-class child enters 1st grade with 1,000-1,700 hours of picture book reading time; the same low-income child averages just 25.

The American literacy gap emerges early and only expands with time. By the time students reach 4th grade, only 46% of low-income students read at or above the basic level compared to 77% of their middle-class peers, according to the Department of Education's 2005 Nation's Report Card.

Children raised in poverty often begin school with limited exposure to books and, as a result, underdeveloped literacy and language skills. In Chicago, where 86% of the 420,982 public school students qualify for free or reduced lunches, the disparity between low-income and higher-income student reading ability is even more stark. Sixty-five percent of low-income 4th grade Chicago Public School (CPS) students tested below the basic

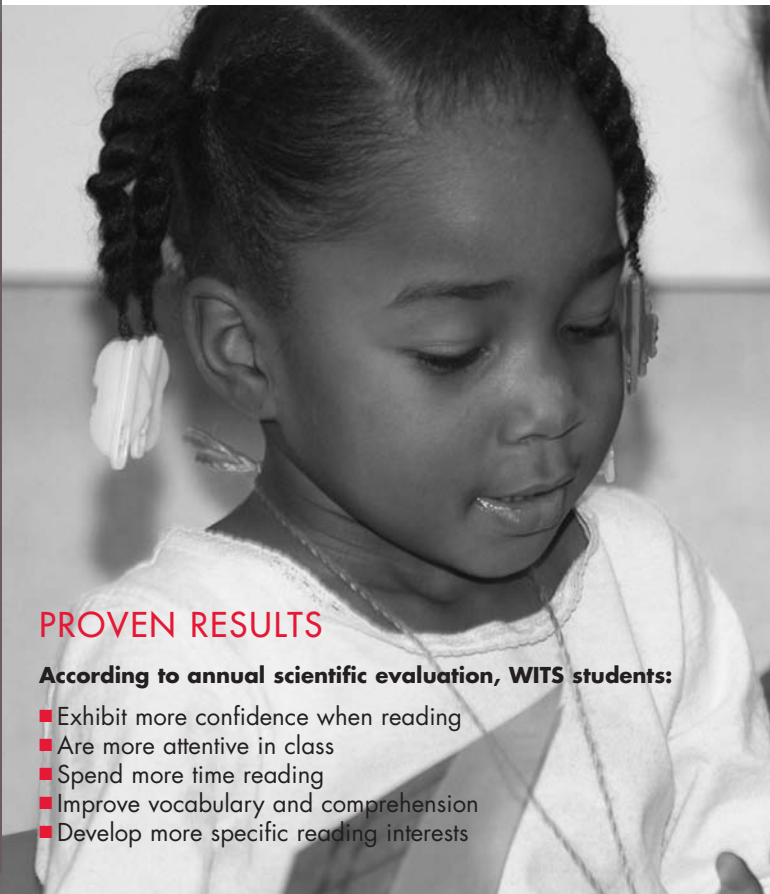
reading level in 2005, more than double the 32% of higher-income students.

Since the implementation of No Child Left Behind (NCLB) in 2002, some progress has been made. From 2000 to 2005, for instance, reading scores increased for the first time since 1992. NCLB requires that all U.S. 4th graders read at the basic level by 2014. Without outside help, however, the literacy gap will continue to widen.

Committed to increasing the reading proficiency and learning capacity of low-income and minority CPS students by recruiting business, government and community volunteers for tutoring and mentoring, Working In The Schools (WITS) epitomizes the public-private partnership necessary to help bridge the gap.

40% OF CHILDREN IN THE UNITED STATES COME FROM LOW-INCOME FAMILIES.

These 29.2 million children hear only 1/2 to 1/3 as many spoken words as children in more affluent households.



WITS Bridges the Gap

Over the last 15 years, WITS programs have become an integral part of the solution to the nation's literacy crisis. Proven to bolster low-income students' reading skills and attitudes, the simple WITS equation—one adult, one child, one book at a time—helps bridge the literacy gap, giving at-risk children a better opportunity for success in both school and life.

WITS' six volunteer programs uniquely integrate literacy tutoring with one-on-one adult mentoring, providing individual attention that rarely occurs in the home or classroom. The consistent weekly attention cultivates a unique rapport that transcends generations and socio-economic classes.

Consistently proven to increase reading-related skills and attitudes, WITS' signature program, Power Lunch, has a real and measurable impact on at-risk elementary students. Compared to non-participating students, Power Lunchers consistently improve comprehension, vocabulary and fluency, participate more and behave better in class, develop more positive attitudes toward reading and take books home more often. In recent years, 64% of all Power Lunch students scored high enough on state standardized tests to be immediately promoted to the next grade, nearly double the 38% of non-Power Lunchers. Teachers agree about the program's effect. "To say thank you would sound too simple and there is nothing simple about the impact Power Lunch has on the girls and boys in Room 401," beamed Kathleen Glennon, a second grade teacher at Stowe Elementary.

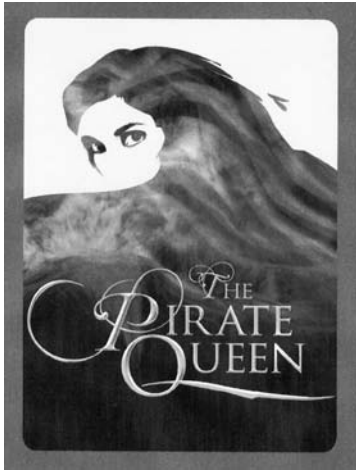
By matching volunteers with at-risk students for read aloud sessions, WITS engages one of the nation's greatest resources—corporate and civic America—to combat the literacy crisis. ■

PROVEN RESULTS

According to annual scientific evaluation, WITS students:

- Exhibit more confidence when reading
- Are more attentive in class
- Spend more time reading
- Improve vocabulary and comprehension
- Develop more specific reading interests

THE YEAR IN REVIEW



PIRATE QUEEN A ROYAL SUCCESS

On October 3, 2006, an electric atmosphere filled the Cadillac Palace Theatre. Hosted by WITS, the highly anticipated world premiere of Boubliil & Schonberg's *The Pirate Queen* was received by a sold out crowd. Among the attendees, many of Chicago's Irish turned out to witness elements of the extraordinary life of Grace O'Malley, Ireland's legendary maritime heroine.

The first night performance raised more than \$70,000 for WITS tutoring and mentoring programs.

"BEE" IS FOR... d-e-m-a-g-o-g-u-e-r-y?

For the fourth year in a row, Chicago's corporate and civic communities showcased their spelling skills at the WITS Corporate Spelling Bee. Creating quite a buzz by edging second place UBS out of the competition, City Hall took home the trophy this year. Clinching the w-i-n with "demagoguery," ironically enough, the City of Chicago team stung competitors ShoreBank, a trio of CPS Principals, Ariel Capital Management, LaSalle Bank and Motorola before veteran Pronouncer Bill Kurtis and a panel of Chicago celebrity judges.



A BLACKBOARD AFFAIR

More than 300 of Chicago's Gen Xers noshed and nibbled at Reserve on May 5 for the WITS Junior Board BlackBoard Affair. Featuring its signature silent auction, DJ Matt Wells and elementary edibles such as mini hamburgers and teeny hot dogs, the 6th annual BlackBoard Affair raised nearly \$25,000 and more than a few glasses to the WITS Junior Board. Between raffle drawings and trips to the dj booth, guests at the red-lit West Loop lounge bid fervently on such hot items as private shopping events at Jake and Crosstown Classic tickets. Proceeds benefited the Saturday Program, the Junior Board's weekend tutoring and mentoring program at Walsh Elementary.



Walsh Elementary teachers take a break from the classroom to enjoy the event

INTRODUCING JENNÉ MYERS

In October 2006, Jenné D. Myers, the new Executive Director of WITS, hit the ground running. Amid program launches, Board orientations and staff meetings, she slid quickly and exuberantly into her new position. "I'm excited and honored to be picking up where Mary Ellen Guest left off. WITS is an incredible organization and I look forward to what the future holds."

As the former Assistant to the Chair of the Chicago Cultural Center Foundation, Jenné served as the first point of contact to city department heads and various boards for Foundation Chair Mrs. Daley. As an integral member of the planning and execution team for *After School Matters'* annual fundraiser gala, she helped raise more than \$3 million for the event. Prior to her tenure at the Chicago Cultural Center, Jenné worked for the City of Chicago, Advance to the Mayor. Hired as the WITS Deputy Director in July before being groomed for the Executive Director position, Jenné is a graduate of Michigan State University.

"WITS will benefit greatly from both the leadership and the energy that Jenné brings to the table. She exudes enthusiasm and we are lucky to have her," stated WITS Board President Ron Sonenthal.

WITS WAVES GOODBYE TO EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR MARY ELLEN GUEST



After eight years of service to WITS, Executive Director Mary Ellen Guest is moving on to her next adventure. "I am honored to have had the chance to work

with the Board, staff, teachers, principals and most especially, the dedicated volunteers."

When Mary Ellen joined WITS in 1998, the organization supported 250 volunteers and four partnering companies through two literacy programs. Under her leadership, by 2006, WITS has grown to 1,500 volunteers, 30 partnering organizations and six programs that help more than 3,000 CPS students learn the skills and love of reading. Beyond the numbers, WITS evolved in its reputation for sound, scientific evaluation as well; WITS' annual program evaluations, created

through Mary Ellen's urging, are considered among the foremost in the field. Championing WITS during her tenure, she secured and managed more than \$.5M in state and federal funding and forged partnerships with 30 Chicago Public Schools. "Mary Ellen led WITS to new highs in volunteers, programs and results," remarked Chairman Emeritus Bud Lifton, "and we will miss her tremendously."

On behalf of the WITS Board, staff, teachers and students, we thank Mary Ellen for her guidance and dedication and we wish her the very best.

Power Lunch Snapshot

McDermott Will & Emery

Every Wednesday, 28 3rd and 4th graders line both sides of the hallway at Brown School. If you ask them what they're doing, they'll tell you they're "waiting for their lawyers."

Indeed, for the last six school years, lawyers and staff from McDermott Will & Emery have traveled to Brown to read one-on-one with their students through the Power Lunch program. As part of McDermott's Partners in Reading program, nearly 60 McDermott employees commit to the weekly one hour WITS read aloud sessions.

Launched in 2001 by McDermott Partners Don Hilliker and Linda Doyle, what started out as a small commitment has yielded huge results for Brown Elementary, a Community School. Last year, only 53% of Brown students tested at the basic level in reading and 53% in math. In contrast, the inaugural McDermott WITS class, having graduated to 8th grade, boasted 85.7% reading at the basic level and 62.4% in math. Brown teachers and administrators attribute much of these students' success to the individualized, devoted attention of their

McDermott Will & Emery volunteers. Fourth grade Brown teacher Betty Boyd remarks that "your tireless effort and encouragement has helped to improve their self-esteem and understanding the need of reading. Thank you so much for caring!"

Going well beyond the walls of WITS to help the Brown School community, McDermott has also provided services to install a new scoreboard and helps with grounds cleanup and landscaping projects. In addition to giving their students holiday books and gift certificates for clothing each year, McDermott provides holiday gifts for all of the homeless families associated with Brown. This year, McDermott launched Lawyers in the Classroom, a new mentoring program with Brown 8th graders. Hilliker, who has served as Principal For a Day at Brown, notes that "we all find our work with children most rewarding and look forward every week to working with them."

Deborah Wilson, a Representative for Community Schools, beamed that "the students are always telling me that they can't wait until their lawyers come on Wednesday to read with them." WITS, along with the entire Brown School community, commends McDermott for their dedication and support.

MAKING CHARITABLE GIFTS FROM YOUR IRA

Recently, there has been a significant change in the federal tax law that may afford appreciable tax benefits to you in your philanthropic endeavors.

This summer, the Pension Protection Act was signed into law. Among the provisions of the act was one that allows individuals age 70½ years of age or older to make a gift directly from an IRA to a charitable organization without paying income tax on the withdrawal. An important stipulation is that this provision will only be available in 2006 and 2007. If you are interested, please talk to your financial advisor and have them contact Jenné Myers at WITS with any questions, 312.368.WITS.

WELCOME NEW BOARD MEMBERS

In 2006, WITS welcomed new members to the Board of Directors. To introduce them, WITS asked about their favorite books and what drew them to the organization.

Jamie Garard, III, Financial Representative, Northwestern Mutual Life Insurance

Think and Grow Rich, Napoleon Hill

"I was a terrible reader as a child and want to help young children to read."

Phil Hildebrandt, Managing Director, Segall Bryant & Hamill

Celestine Prophecy, James Redfield

"Childhood literacy and its importance in determining the life trajectory of kids is a passion of mine. I was impressed with the variety of approaches that WITS takes to promote the importance of early reading skills."

Marilyn Huebel, Project Manager, ShoreBank

The Little Prince, Antoine de Saint-Exupery

"At ShoreBank, I was charged with initially checking out Power Lunch; we've been involved for

almost five years now. Why do my colleagues and I stay? Because we've seen firsthand the difference we make; because indeed, as WITS promised, it is easy; because volunteering makes us feel good by giving back; and finally, because, for me, reading with a child in the middle of a work day, in the middle of a hectic work week, is grounding."

Stuart Muir, Managing Director of Sales & Marketing, Charter One

Guess How Much I Love You (children's book), Sam McBratney

"As a former English teacher (and always an avid reader), I have always been interested in reading and know how important it is to having a rich and successful life."

Helen Pates, Civic Leader

My Life in France, Julia Child

"Helping children drew me to WITS."

JERSEY BOYS

The story of Frankie Valli & The Four Seasons

JERSEY BOYS COMING TO CHICAGO!

"TOO GOOD TO BE TRUE!" raves the New York Post for JERSEY BOYS, the 2006 Tony® Award winning best musical about Rock and Roll Hall of Famers The Four Seasons: Frankie Valli, Bob Gaudio, Tommy DeVito and Nick Massi. This is the story of how four blue-collar kids became one of the greatest successes in pop music history. They wrote their own songs, invented their own sounds and sold 175 million records worldwide—all before they were 30! JERSEY BOYS features their hit songs "Sherry," "Big Girls Don't Cry," "Rag Doll," "Oh What a Night" and "Can't Take My Eyes Off You."

Sunday Matinee, October 7, 2007

Front Orchestra \$350
Orchestra \$250
Dress Circle \$200
Mezzanine \$175

Tickets are Limited! For More Information call 312.368.9487.or purchase tickets online at www.witsontheweb.org. LaSalle Bank Theatre 18 West Monroe St

HARVARD CLUB OF CHICAGO HONORS WITS FOUNDERS

On March 10, 2007 the Harvard Club of Chicago will honor WITS founders Joanne Alter and Marion Stone.

Early Childhood is Early Triumph

PROGRAM UPDATE

“Three and four year olds are the best people in the universe. I needed them in my life.”

Monica Williams, Early Childhood Volunteer



A year after its launch, the Early Childhood Volunteer Program (EC) is impacting both little ones—the 3- and 4-year-old participating students—and not

so little ones—adult volunteers like Monica Williams. Busing community and corporate volunteers to two Chicago schools, EC combines “lap time” with learning to plant an early seed for the enjoyment of reading.

Twice a week, WITS buses community volunteers to Nash Elementary on the West Side to read for 20-minute, one-on-one intervals with preschool children; once a week at Herbert Elementary, 38 LaSalle Bank employee volunteers read with 48 Head Start children.

In just one year, WITS has grown EC from 18 inaugural volunteers and 30 students in one school to more than 50 volunteers reading with more than 70 children at two schools. Both volunteers and teachers attest to the positive impact of the program.



Early Childhood evaluation results show that participating children:

- Exhibit interest in going to the library
- Show increased attention span
- Focus more readily on books
- Hold books correctly
- Are more aware of the print on a page
- Talk about the illustrations and tell their version of the story
- Know which books they enjoy

THE SEASON FOR GIVING... BOOKS!

The spirit of giving—and the spirit of WITS—is spreading into Highcrest Middle School in Wilmette. From November 27—December 8, Highcrest teacher Laura Resis issued a **WITS Book Drive** challenge to all homeroom classes. Competing for a pizza and pop party, students donated new kindergarten through 3rd grade books to pass on to WITS children. Thank you Mrs. Resis and your thoughtful Highcrest students!

In addition, on December 14, WITS will distribute books to its students at the first ever **Tree of Learning** event at the Hilton Chicago. As the sponsor, the Hilton is generously funding the purchase of all gift books. On behalf of WITS and its students, thank you Hilton Chicago and WITS Board member Robert Allegrini.

EXPERIENCE CORPS GETS EVEN BETTER WITH AGE

“Without a doubt, Experience Corps has been our biggest success in the last five years. Reading scores have improved, students are more motivated and engaged in learning and teachers are excited about being able to teach more. Such benefits are priceless.”

Dr. Robert Esenberg, Principal, New Sullivan School

Experience Corps connects adults over the age of 55 with schools in their neighborhoods for one-on-one tutoring and mentoring during the school day. Chosen in 2005 to host this national program in Chicago, WITS has grown Experience Corps from 17 initial volunteers and 74 students in one school to 28 volunteers serving 127 1st through 3rd graders in three schools.

In its inaugural year, WITS Experience Corps members and

teachers observed positive changes in their students. Seventy-five percent of students made significant or very significant academic progress, with many significantly improving their self-confidence, attitudes toward learning and attitudes toward older adults. Preliminary data based on member and teacher accounts show that participating students demonstrate:

- Increased attention span
- Heightened interest in learning
- Improved comprehension and word recognition

Principals also credit the relationships between Experience Corps members and students, as well as those between members and teachers, for contributing to a positive overall school atmosphere.

Children are not the only beneficiaries of the program.

Chicago Experience Corps members have also experienced positive effects: camaraderie among volunteers, a sense of making a real contribution to an important issue, social involvement and the affirmation that their input and ideas are valued. Nine out of 10 Experience Corps members report an increased sense of usefulness and social connectedness since they joined the program.



“The students are showing enthusiasm and more confidence in themselves since they have started working with the tutors. One student is really making leaps and bounds and tries more in class. [Another] tries much harder in class and wants to read and participate in lessons. I have noticed these seven students spending more time in the class library and reading more.”

Tamara Nicholson, Teacher, Bontemps School

GIFT REPORT

WITS SUPPORTERS

WITS IS DEEPLY GRATEFUL FOR THE GENEROUS CONTRIBUTIONS OF OUR DONORS. YOUR SUPPORT OF THE WITS TUTORING AND MENTORING PROGRAMS IS CRITICAL TO OUR SUCCESS IN SERVING CHILDREN IN THE CHICAGO PUBLIC SCHOOLS.

Below is a list of WITS supporters from December 11, 2005 through November 14, 2006. Due to space limitations, we are listing contributions above \$200. Please know that all donors' names will appear in the WITS annual report and accept our heartfelt gratitude. WITS sincerely regrets any omissions or misspellings. In the event of an error, please call us at 312.368.9487 to allow us to make the necessary correction.

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WORKING IN THE SCHOOLS
Winter 06

NEWS
WITS

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WITS 6th Annual Junior Board Blackboard Affair

OCTOBER 7, 2007
Jersey Boys, LaSalle Bank Theatre
Call 312.368.9487 or visit witsontheweb.org for tickets!

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