

## WHAT WE DO



## W R I T E R S   I N   E L E C T R O N I C   R E S I D E N C E L I T E R A C Y   •   M E N T O R S H I P   •   T E C H N O L O G Y   •   A R T S

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Writers in Electronic Residence (WiER) is an education initiative *and* an arts initiative. We use the Internet for a valuable purpose—to link professional writers directly with schools. A national initiative in Canada, WiER offers writing programs at the elementary, middle, and secondary school levels in 12-week terms each fall winter and spring. Key areas of our work—and the relations that become possible between them—follow.

**Mentorship & Learning**—WiER's innovative use of technology brings working writers into the daily context of schools. All parts of Canada and its diverse populations—urban and rural—are well represented in WiER. The influence of each participant's local context enriches the other participants in our network—often located thousands of kilometers away—broadening the reach of literacy and literary awareness.

**Professional Authors**—All WiER writers are published in book form, and bring their professional mentorship to students over an extended interval (i.e., 12 weeks) so that they become part of each school's work over time.

**Arts**—As an arts initiative, WiER creates new forms of paid work for Canada's authors, serving as a form of convenient, part-time employment that writers may do from any location.

**Education**—As an education initiative, WiER broadens literary awareness in classrooms, and extends literacy programs by engaging students actively in composition, critical discussion, and revision—with the authors and one another—online and in the local classroom.

**Scalable, Replicable & Sustainable**—Our program model is scalable, replicable and, taken together with modest support, sustainable, based on our revenue stream. However, new programs, targeted populations (e.g., rural, inner city, the north, talented young writers) and ancillary initiatives, such as our *Books Program*, or investments in key areas (e.g., fundraising, marketing and operations,) require additional support.

**Funding Models & Programs**—WiER has developed a variety of funding models and programs, such as the *"Adapt-a-School"* initiative, attached. We would be pleased to discuss general and targeted areas of shared interest with you at an appropriate time.

**Partners & Sponsors**—Schools pay fees of \$650 per class, per term to participate. Often, school or district discretionary funds (e.g., parent councils) are used for initial participation; however, over time, WiER begins to appear as a line item in program budgets.

Since 1988—WiER is proud to celebrate its 20th anniversary in the 2007-2008 school year. If that sounds like WiER preceded the Internet, you're right! We think this anniversary presents some special opportunities, which we would be pleased to discuss with you.

**Literacy, Mentorship, Technology and the Arts**—WiER contributes substantially to each of the areas in which we work: literacy, mentorship, technology and the arts. However, it may be most helpful to consider how WiER's influence is revealed in the relation between these areas. We have come to see the work we do as catalytic both within and across these areas.

**Content**—Of course, WiER is a renewing and on-going source of new content, much of which is made freely available at our web site. This includes student writing samples, author biographies, and related innovations, like our exciting *"Wired Writers Podcasts"* initiative.

**Relationship**—WiER's success is evident in our relationships, and we look to generous partners and sponsors in the government, corporate, and private and public foundations sectors that see their aspirations reflected in our work. For information about WiER's sponsors, please visit our web site at: <http://www.wier.ca>



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## In Their Own Words

*It was an odd pleasure to be taken so seriously—"helga," Student, Toronto, Ontario*

*Every year there is work I admire in WiER - stories and poems I wish I'd written myself—Susan Musgrave, Poet, Sidney, B.C.*

*WiER is the best professional development I've had in years—Barbara Stevenson, Teacher, Calgary, Alberta*

*Of all the teaching I've done, workshops I've given or lead, WiER is the most interesting, stimulating and fun, by far—Dave Margoshes, Writer, Regina, Saskatchewan*

*Participating students profited, not only from what "The Writers" had to say, but also from the thoughtful comments made by their peers—Guillermo Verdecchia, Playwright, Toronto, Ontario*

*My own experience as a student was one of the reasons I accepted the position of Writer In Electronic Residence. The program is one way of putting a writer in every writing classroom so that kids can see that books don't fall from the skies untouched by human hands. Rather, they are created by ordinary people not unlike them, their neighbours, teachers or parents. Books come out of a specific time and place. Who you are and where you come from are the stuff that books are made of—Lorna Crozier, Poet, Victoria B.C.*

*WiER provides a 'safe' venue for sharing as well as a wonderful support mechanism for student words and ideas, not only from the writers-in-residence, but also from fellow WiER students—Deborah Froese, Writer, St. Andrews, Manitoba*

*This was my first year working with WiER, and I was most impressed. Congratulations to you all for a fabulous idea, well implemented—Cynthia Kerkham, Teacher, Glenlyon-Norfolk School, Victoria, B.C.*

*I find it brings a very high level of engagement and articulation forward, and this is very different than what can and often does occur in the standard writing workshop where young writers are asked to respond to peer work on the spot verbally—very hard even for experienced workshopers. The practice of writing critical response seems to allow the inner voice to come forward—Margaret Christakos, Writer, Toronto, Ontario*

*WiER is a wonderful program. It's life-changing. WiER creates possibilities for talent to emerge. It's a Canadian treasure—Dr. Elizabeth Sparks, Teacher, Cougar Canyon Elementary School, Delta, B.C.*

*I learned what a poem was—Racquel Nelson, Student, Lester B. Pearson C. I., Toronto, Ontario.*

*A teacher in Calgary left me a note online. She said that some parents of students involved in WiER had commented on it. One, who was seeking to be a writer herself, said that with all this help, her son would likely publish before she could. Another complained that she only got to read Susan Musgrave in her book club, while her daughter was engaged in regular online discussions with the author from school. WiER can present problems like that. Where it counts. In the classroom—Trevor Owen, WiER Founder*

*I enjoyed very much the whole process, seeing the motivation of the students to participate in every aspect of the WiER program, using technology in a very meaningful way—Jose Salvador, Teacher, Toronto French School, Toronto, Ontario*

*Without telling, you suggested changes that dramatically improved my poems and my writing skills. It is because of you that I am now proud of my writing and able to defend it.... Thank you for your time and patience—Kim Grenier, Student, Richelieu Valley Regional High School, McMasterville, Quebec*

*It has been an amazing experience for this class. Several of them have made radical changes from apathetic and cynical to eager, enthusiastic and empathetic - the power of being truly seen and heard can work (I was going to say 'minor', but some are more than that) miracles—Lea Lund, Teacher, Parrsboro Regional High School, Nova Scotia*

*I can think of two of my writers who matured before our eyes as a result of this project. One had long discussions with me about how she found critiques which were not fulsome in their praise difficult to take but was now trying hard to accept feedback of her creative work in a positive light. One other has a very difficult time socializing with his peers, but boy did he come through during this project and when I was really concerned that the reply of a group of students might crush him, he never blinked an eyelid but got right onto his reply. I think that if he was the only one of my group to benefit from WiER (and I know he's not) I would consider it a very successful undertaking—Jean Anne Lewis, Teacher, Mount Prevost Middle School, Duncan, B.C.*

*Whether or not these students become novelists or screenwriters—and I don't think that's WiER's intention at all—they are gaining skills essential to every citizen: how to clearly express what they think and feel and how to evaluate what others have to say about what they, in turn, think and feel.*

—Guillermo Verdecchia, Playwright, Toronto, Ontario

*There is a flip side to the program: we read work from a broad range of sources and critique these works from our own point of view. This allows us to expand as critical readers. By giving encouragement and offering suggestions, we learn to become more particular and precise.—Boon H. Chang, Student, Malvern C. I., Toronto, Ontario*

*This is a wonderful achievement in support of writing, learning, literacy and the future.—John O'Leary, President, Frontier College, Toronto, Ontario*

*WiER provides the authentic audience for their writing which many learners do not find in their local environment. WiER also provides an opportunity for students to participate in the type of collaborative online team which is becoming more a regular component of both education and work.—Michael G. Jeffrey, Director, Nova Scotia Education Learning Resources and Technology*

*When I was in high school our creative writing teacher signed our class up for WiER. My poem was chosen as the Cool Poem of the Week. I thought I should share with you the news that just last year I had my first book of poems, *Small Arguments*, published by Pedlar Press. I wanted to say thanks for setting up a community where we can get feedback from practising poets. It's hard to find someone who will take you as seriously as you do when you are young.—Souvankham Thammavongsa, Poet, Toronto, Ontario*

