

Writers Matter

at
La Salle
University



Fall 2019

Annual Writing Institute

On August 22, we opened our doors to 38 enthusiastic Writers Matter Teachers for our 4th Annual Writing Institute.

The Writers Matter Writing Institute brings our teachers together before the school year starts to talk about writing and, more importantly, the students. During this one day workshop, the teachers wrote, read, listened and talked about their own writing, their students' writing, current...

(Continued on Page 8)

Teacher Testimonials

"This program has blended naturally into my classroom environment... It allows the students to analyze their role in the classroom community along with their role in their home communities. Asking students to think about who they are and why/what makes them who they are is very powerful and valued."

* * *

"Writers Matter has allowed me to 'see' my students on a deeper level. They are able to share, reveal and express themselves. I love what the program does to my students' writing, but more than that, I love the therapeutic effects for my students, who have been through so much in their young lives."

"Full STEAM Ahead!"



Students using Ozobots for their stories

La Salle Summer Writing Camp

We were extremely excited to sponsor our first Writers Matter Summer Camp in partnership with La Salle University. Over 80 students attended the three week "Full STEAM Ahead" camp where they engaged in integrated STEM activities throughout the day.

Dr. Kim Lewinski along with Three Writers Matter teachers, Aubrey Stewart, Carl Jackson and Kelly Ann Coughlin, integrated the Writers Matter program with STEM. The teachers focused on the maker-in-the-writer, which invited young writers more deeply and fully into their own writing process and provided an authentic use of STEM.

Students used Ozobots, (little toy robots that blend the physical and digital worlds—and teach kids programming) to create a 3-D world of their narrative. They then coded the Ozobots to move through the story world they created to help illustrate their story.

Through this process students utilized all the components of STEM as they engineered their worlds, coded their Ozobots to react to the emotion and action of their stories, and timed their reading with the Ozobot for a coherent presentation.

We were impressed with the creativity of the final products and look forward to hosting another summer camp this year.

(Turn to Next Page for Student Writing Contest Winners)

Contest Winners

ELEMENTARY

1st Place:

A Look in a Mirror Chole Teti

2nd Place:

A Perfect Me Rose Semmel

3rd Place:

The Reflection I See Samantha Jack

Honorable Mentions:

I See A..... Annya Carty

What I See In

The Mirror Jamie Byiess

I See Me Devyn Sneed

MIDDLE

1st Place:

Reflections..... Aubree House

2nd Place:

Man In The Mirror Marvin Torre

3rd Place:

Can a Reflection be Seen in Another Point of View..... Nevah Woodaras

3rd Place:

The Stressful and The Small Mirror Christopher Knight

Honorable Mentions:

Dear Nana Nasier Connor

VIDEO Morgan Jones

Double Edge Mask Nga Pheng

In My Mirror Ava Moore

My Reflection..... Neyma Gutierrez

What I see

in the Mirror Sahirah Jean-Baptiste

Letter from the Directors

It is with great enthusiasm that we at Writers Matter enter our fourteenth year of operation. Our mission is to provide a unique and innovative opportunity for elementary, middle and lower high school students to learn critical writing skills through the use of journal writing as a vehicle for self-expression.

Each year, Writers Matters continues to expand and grow. Beginning in 2005, Writers Matter was created to motivate and encourage middle school students to become better writers. Now, the program has been widened to include elementary students.

Since the program’s inception, over 23,000 students have participated. This year, our program includes 17 schools, 70 teachers and over 3,300 students (grades 3-9) – a record number. Our schools include both Philadelphia Public and Archdiocesan schools.

In addition, three self-published books have been created with our Writers Matter teachers for use with both students and teachers. We also offer ongoing professional development to give teachers the resources needed to succeed in providing quality writing instruction.

Our other books include Voices of Teens: Writers Matter (2008)--published by the National Middle School Association--and Empowering Young Writers: The Writers Matter Approach—published by Temple University Press. Several articles have also been published about Writers Matter, and the program has been shared at many local and national conferences.

Student Writing Contest

Each spring we host a Writers Matter Writing Contest to demonstrate how students have learned to use writing to express the things they care most about and help give them a “voice” with which they can discuss their own lives and the issues that are important to them.

This year’s theme for the writing contest was What does your reflection show? The Writers Matter Program has a strong focus on who you are as a person, as a student and as a writer. This year, we want the students to think about looking at themselves in the mirror. They thought about what their reflection shows, what their reflection doesn’t show and what they wish it showed?

Here are some things they could consider as they wrote a letter, poem, essay, short story or digital story about finding light in a dark world:

- Write about the person you see in the mirror. What are you most proud of in your life that you wish others knew about you? What are some things that you have accomplished already in your life that make you special?
- Write about what you don’t see when you look in the mirror. Sometimes what you see on the outside isn’t always what you are or how you feel on the inside. Tell us about the “real” you, maybe something others can’t see.

(Contest Continued on Page 3)

- Write about what you wish you saw in the mirror or hope to see in the future. What special powers do you possess and how can you use them to help others or to change the world? What type of leader is in you? What do you hope for yourself in the future?

The contest was opened to both the middle school students as well as the elementary students. The winning entries, are featured throughout this newsletter.

Elementary School Contest Winners

FIRST PLACE

A Look in a Mirror

By Chloe Teti

When I look in a mirror, I see a girl who works **HARD**.

*She has a **LARGE** heart.*

Some people can't see some of these things.

But some of this heart is gold.

*Some parts **SILVER**.*

Some parts are even bronze.

Her soul has colors.

But also tears and fire.

But a calm windy breeze will stroke her heart after these storms come.

She wants a world where rain turns into flower petals and clouds turn into rainbows.

*She knows that after every **storm** comes a rainbow, but maybe not a pot of gold at the end of it.*

And some days for her may be misty, or cloudy, or, rainy, or even snowy, but most of them are sunny.

Her heart is sometimes sunny, and sometimes cloudy.

*She is **unique** like a unicorn.*

Special like a mermaid.

And stands out like a dragon.

*Her emotions can be **STRONG** like a **CENTAUR** or weak like a fairy.*

*Her imagination is **NEVER** cloudy though.*

She can be calm like tea, energetic like coffee, or bored and bland like water.

*She can **POP** like popcorn, or easily break like chips.*

She is like a stained glass window, beautiful, but also meaningful.

She can be like Cinderella's shoe, it fits but it can easily get lost.

She can be wrapping paper or the box under it.

*She can be the **notebook** or the words inside it.*

*She can be as scared as a rabbit, or as **BRAVE** as a **WOLF**.*

*She can be a swarm of **WASPS** or a helpless ladybug.*

She can run but she can also hide.

She knows she's not perfect.

*Her handwriting might be **SLOPPY**, but her heart is **VERY NEAT**.*

SHE IS ME

Chloe

An Interfaith Approach

Writers Matter Interfaith Initiative (WMII) is currently in its third year with high hopes and expectations. It has brought together 55 middle school students from three faith-based day schools in greater Philadelphia who wrote about their religions and lives and shared this information with students in the other schools.

A single class in each school—an 8th grade social studies class at Al Aqsa Islamic Academy, a 7th and 8th grade elective 'major' at Jack M. Barrack Hebrew Academy, and an 8th grade language arts class at St. Christopher Catholic School—participated the past two years. We are currently looking at ways to have public schools in the Philadelphia area participate as well.

One teacher involved in the program said, "Beyond learning about students from the other schools, the goal was to break down barriers and misconceptions and come to the idea of inclusion," and another said the program was "not just about finding commonalities, but learning to be friends and accept differences." Here are a few examples of the student writing:

"We are misunderstood. / We are Muslims. / We are the ones that are thought of as terrorists. / We are the ones that follow only one God. / We are loving people. / We are supposed to be kind to everyone." (Dunia, Al-Aqsa; November, 2017). "I am from a fun family who laughs and cries...

(Continued on Page 5)

SECOND PLACE

A Perfect Me
by Rose Semmel

When I look in the mirror,
not at my body,
but at my soul,
I see a space split in two.

One with many feelings, and one with few.
Let's start at the side with many feelings.

This side has many feelings of both happy and sad sewed up in separate little pouches. With memories of tears and laughter joined with the string of hugs and love. The other side is filled with happy and sad feelings, but instead of sewed up they have all warped together causing a snowy sunrise.

I am joyful for the beauty of the sunrise but cold to the bone with sadness for the snow, that is when I realize two very important things.

One, without the snow and sunrise plants won't grow and neither can I.

Two, I realize the feelings, the moments, the memories that were sewed together are now unweaving themselves, the thread is melting into them and the first section is warping with the second.

That is when I finally realize who I see when I look in the mirror, I see me. I see me talking with friends, falling, dancing, fighting, making mistakes, eating (more like stealing) my friend's food, learning how to ride a bike, learning how to share, wearing princess dresses, chewing gum, reading the Harry Potter series, playing softball, reading the Lord of the Rings series and getting mad that they made the Hobbit a pretty short book into three movies (still not over that).

All of these moments in life and all the others from bitter to sweet to the mistakes that I learned from, to the moments when I succeed, these moments are what makes me me.

If I never fell when I learned to ride a bike, I would never know what to do if I did. If I never mess up I will never fully learn.

If I never fought I would never fully know my friends and family.

All the good things, all the bad things, all the mistakes, all the moments you and I hold close to your heart. All of your memories are what makes you you, no matter who you are your memories in your life those are what makes you you what helps decide your future.

This moment will be one of my moments, the first time I opened my heart and mind to share the ideas I have about what makes me, me. What makes you, you.

It was the first time I was able to understand every paragraph, every sentence, every word, every syllable, every letter, and every note in the song that flows through me and the thoughts of my brain. The first time I was able to peel away every petal to uncover what makes the beautiful flower that is me.

The first time that I fully understood what I see when I look in the mirror, a pile of mismatched feelings, a wild forest of memories that all come together to make
a perfect Rose,



a perfect me.

/ from a family who is religious and loves Jesus like a family member, / I am from a place that is green, white, and red / from a place that can't live without pasta like how a person can't live without water, / and from a place that loves meatballs too" (Joey, St. Christopher; Nov., 2017).

"I am from the scent of wine and fresh baked challah, my watering mouth as we say the brachot. / I am from the scent of chicken in the oven every night. / I am from the begging for something other than chicken every night. / I am from the joyful sounds of voices in synagogue, the prayers make me smile every time... (Claire, Barrack; Nov., 2017).

Throughout the year, the students in each school produced a collective "We Are From" video to introduce their school life to the others, they framed and responded to questions about each other's faith and traditions, each class produced a second collective video that briefly highlighted each student's new year's resolution for participation in WMII or life at school and finally, cross-school teams produced end-of-year 'infomercials' about WMII.

At the end of the year, each school produced an infomercial that described how and what they learned participating in the program. One group of students summarized their WMII experience in the acrostic below.

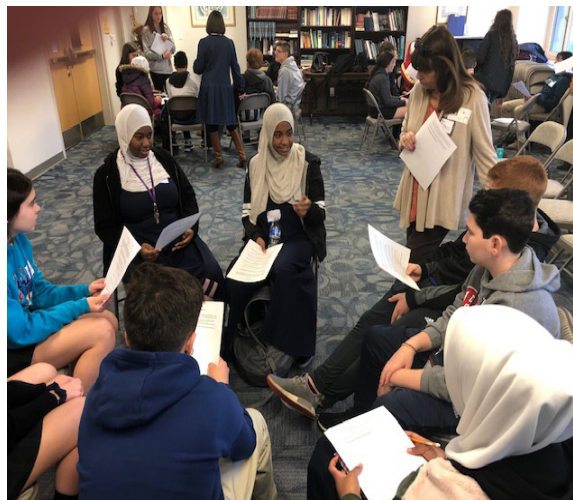
- W means We are divided
- R means Realize we're all the same
- I means Inclusion
- T means Theology
- E means Equal
- R means Respect
- S means Socialize.

- M means Making new friends
- A means Accepting
- T means Together
- T means Trust
- E means Everyone
- R means Religious

(infomercial by Ryan, Talia E., Maryam, Sohaibe, Patrick, Talia W., Paige, Sophie; May, 2018).

Among the keenest measures of learning is the ability to discern what one has learned. As one student wrote in her end-of-year survey: "All I wanted to know [about the other two religions] was answered but there must be more to learn" (Abby, Barrack; May, 2018).

Many of the students who will be moving to new schools as they enter 9th grade are looking forward to furthering their understanding of the new students they will be meeting. We are planning to use our awareness of other religions, cultures and traditions to broaden our scope of friends.



Students from different faith-based schools share their religious perspectives

Upcoming Events

In November 2019, Dr. Kimberly Lewinski and two other Writers Matter teachers, Kelly Ann Coughlin and Lori Odem, will be presenting at the National Council for Teacher of English Conference in Baltimore, MD. The title of their presentation is *Stories of Urban Students Increase Agency and Change the Way We Teach*. In this presentation, they will discuss the issues that lie in an education system that values test scores and standardization, and where urban student interaction with the curriculum does not ignite

curiosity. They will share how Writers Matters teachers use writing to help students find their voice, share their stories and unleash their power to impact the lives of others.

In February 2020, Dr. Kimberly Lewinski along with two Writers Matter teachers, Aubrey Stewart and Carl Jackson, will be presenting at the Association of Teacher Educators Conference in

Atlantic City, NJ. The title of their presentation is *Bringing Words to Life: Integrating STEAM and Writing Workshop, Imagine the Possibilities*. They will share their work from the Writers Matter camp hosted at La Salle University this summer (**See Page One**).

As educators and scholars, we came together as a community and challenged the traditional educational systems to value the power of youth culture, voice, and technology.

THIRD PLACE

The Reflection I See

By Samantha Jack

1. Reflection, the throwing the back by a body or surface of light, heat, or sound without absorbing it.
2. Reflection(metaphorically) who are you inside?

My reflection is not 2D it's 3D. It has many layers people don't know of. The reflection I see and know is a fifth grade student who is a girl. I look at a reflection that isn't a normal reflection. I see a girl who has an absent parent. I see a girl who only has her mom and her sister, who doesn't live with her. I see a girl a who can't depend on her father for anything because he just doesn't want to be involved with her. I see a girl who can't depend on any of her other family members. I see a girl who comes from a family of mentally tough people but isn't mentally tough one bit. I see a girl who tries her best in school to make her mom proud. I see a girl who tries to her best to satisfy herself. I see a reflection that gets worried easily. I see a girl who fears losing her loved ones. I want to see a girl who doesn't need to try to satisfy herself, I want to see a girl who doesn't get easily worried, I want to look at a girl who has a family to depend on, who has a father she could depend on and talk to, I want to see a girl who will keep trying her best in school. I want to see the girl I want to be.

HONORABLE MENTION

I See Me

By Devyn Sneed

I see a nice young man in the mirror.
I see a kind man who is a lefty that is strong.
I see a brave young man in the mirror.
I see a helpful and amazing man in the mirror.
I see a future teacher.
I see an author.
I see a fix.
I see a millionaire.
I see a cup of coffee.
I see a reader.
I see a 100 year old man.
I see a future world leader.
I see....I see...I see
I see... Me!

Middle School Contest Winners

FIRST PLACE

Reflections by Aubree House

I stare at myself in the mirror thinking to myself that this is what people see everyday, that all throughout my life I can never look at my own face without one looking back at me. Sometimes I wonder what she sees that I don't. I just see a face, but what does she see. I see a fake smile when she sees sadness and a frown. She hears crying in the night while I hear "I'm fine". A lot of times, I don't recognize her. She copies my every move so precisely each time. She is important to me. Once everyday she decides to come out but other times she hides. Silver and exact, she's perfect. She sees light when I'm in the dark. She sees good when I see bad. She looks at me with those eyes and I get chills. She stares back at me and never looks away until I do it first. When I smile she smiles back at me with no hesitation. She looks at me with those big brown eyes and she knows that there is someone special staring at her. Everyday she never lets me down, It's like we are the same person. Sometimes I wonder if she is real, and I'm the one staring back at her. Does she see the same things I do? Even if I hide the truth by wearing makeup or a mask, she can still see me for me. She tells me to wipe off my makeup and look at her, and she shows me the most wonderful person she's ever seen. She says, "you are who you are, and being yourself is enough". She understands me more than anybody I've ever known. She makes me feel special inside. She listens to my problems and takes awhile to respond. Sometimes she doesn't talk at all, she just stares. Each time I see her, my frown turns into a smile. Even when I'm not home, I still see her everywhere I go. When I go out, I see her in a shop window or my phone, but a lot of times she doesn't show the best side of me. Sometimes in the mirror, she doesn't always see the good in me. She knows when I've messed up because when I look at her, she looks away. She is sometimes disappointed in me, and then I get disappointed in myself. I try not to upset her, but somehow I always find a way too. I look down thinking if I look up I will see a face filled with dismal, but she puts all of the sadness and anger away to show me happiness. I always wondered that if I turn around she would still be looking at me hoping I would come back soon, but that never happens. When I leave she leaves too. I say goodbye never knowing when I will see her again, maybe seconds or maybe days...but I know that she will always be there with me until the day I die. I know if I ever need to smile or maybe laugh, there is always someone I can go to. That person is my reflection.

SECOND PLACE

Man In The Mirror By Marvin Torres

Looking at the man in the mirror and I could see it ain't getting any clearer.
I see the demon hiding in disguise and I be worried when it looks me in my eyes.

Feeling like I'm falling from the sky but I'm too young so I don't really wanna die.

My heart is aching and my insides wanna cry.

The devil on my shoulder telling me it's time.

My trapped soul winding down the road.

Looking at myself but all I see are goals.

They don't know how I'm feeling and I swear I've been feeling like a villain.

Looking at myself and I just feel like failing and I swear my sorrow is flowing to the ceiling.

This is the story never told of a man in the mirror with his heart cold.

(Contest Continued on Page 8)

THIRD PLACE

The Stressful and the Small Mirror
by Christopher Knight

I didn't, I didn't see anything,
Only just once, I couldn't peek
Because there was a sad leak in my mirror.
I, I really think I am a freak
in my reflection.
Some think I am a baby, who's weak...
Wow, that smell will reek this week.
Tweet, Tweet, Tweet,
baby birds chirping...
Aww come on stop this kid from burping...
Some 6th graders think I am a wimp.
Hey, hey, hey,
Stop calling me a shrimp.
My best friends do the best deeds,
I don't follow, I just take the lead.
6th graders see me as a 1st grader.
Too bad... because I know who I am.
When I look in the mirror
I see a 12 year old boy,
Who is older than some of his siblings who annoy.
This is me, I am already free, you all see.
I would not go to the dark
Because sadly, I have the devil's cursed mark.
From now on I won't understand this world.
To be honest I don't have any words...
Because I am shocked...
And my personality is locked.
No one else should feel this type of pain.
I just hate little kids who are the ones to blame,
But help always came...
Even if everyone or no one knows my name...
I know who I am.

Increase in Teacher Leaders

We are excited about our increase in number of students, teachers and schools involved in the WM program as this is our largest year ever. We increased our number of teacher leaders to accommodate our growing population and to assist with ongoing professional development in their schools. The teachers continue to meet at La Salle four times throughout the year in addition to the Summer Writing Institute. The teachers also participate in bi-weekly meetings led by the teacher leaders. In these meetings, teachers share their students' writing and a one page analysis of the drafts with the other teachers in their school. Each piece of writing is followed by a group discussion where questions are asked and further analysis is provided. This form of professional development provides each teacher an opportunity to reflect on their current practices and learn about the methods of their colleagues. The teachers also present

(Continued on Page 11)

CONT., Writing Inst., Page 1

...writing research and the Writers Matter program. The teachers engaged in several activities that they can use with their students such as writing an "I am From" statement and sharing them with the group as well as learning how to use the students' wonderings to kick start lots of writing ideas and curriculum links.

During our writing workshop,

we spent some time looking at the structure of writing workshops and trouble shooting some issues



Teachers sitting down and discussing a writing prompt

that may arise. The day concluded with a look at the Writers Matter books and an opportunity to meet as a school to discuss what WM will look like this year in their classrooms, in their school and as a professional learning community. As always, it was an inspiring day of learning from one another. The excitement for the new school year filled the room.

THIRD PLACE B

Can a reflection be seen in another point of view?

by Nevah Woodards

A mirror is a reflective surface typically covered with glass that reflects a clear image. What I don't see when I look in the mirror is change. I'd like to us to see change in the world, change in society, change in the future. I wish to see more young African American women like myself in the world making a change because this is our future. Many young African American women have been turned down and denied jobs, access to a college education ,and other opportunities because of the color of their skin. IT ISN'T RIGHT! But what are we doing? We are standing up for what we know is right. A lot of Black Influencers, Models, and Actors are showing pride in their culture by showing off their natural hair and heritage.For example Lupita Nyong'o is a stunning actress from Kenya who celebrates her dark complexion as a actress and model.Another example is Whoopi Goldberg who is an amazing actress and comedian and has won a Grammy award,Academy award, and has been nominated for 13 Emmy awards.Or Oprah Winfrey who is a media executive, actress, talk show host, and television producer.As many might know that oprah has a rough childhood but that didn't stop her from becoming who she is today.What about Issa Rae who is an African Queen and I say this because she is a Black influencer that is behind a popular HBO comedy called " Insecure "and she even created and played in " Awkward Black Girl " which is a internet based comedy series.All these African American Queens are powerful,inspirational,women who are and have been making a difference. Even this year Miss USA, Miss Teen USA, and Miss America are all African American women for the first time in history. We are rewriting history and this time we are making it so that we are equal. Miss America says "I want to break down racial stereotypes and advocate for equality."We want to see change and to know that we are nonetheless and we should be judged by the content of our character not the color of our skin, just as Martin Luther king famously said.These young ladies will feel powerful and incredible because they will know that they can do anything they put their mind to.Now I'm inspired by these beautiful women because I know that I could be a model, run a television show, be an actress or movie star and won't be judged because the color of my skin. I will not be different,shamed,or bullied because of my gorgeous complexion.This all tells you that YOU CAN BE YOU! BE DIFFERENT! CELEBRATE YOUR SKIN COLOR AND DON'T BE ASHAMED! YOU ARE POWERFUL AND TALENTED AND DON'T ANYONE TELL YOU DIFFERENTLY! Young African American young ladies one day will be empowered by their reflection in the mirror.

(Contest Honorable Mentions on Page 10)

Mentorship Program and Campus Visits

The Writers Matter program continues to provide La Salle University mentors to many of the participating schools. The after school programs continue to be very successful. In addition to the continued program at Lowell Elementary, we have added another afterschool program at St. Athanasius. It is a great opportunity for students to work

with their teachers and La Salle mentors on learning more about themselves and how to face the challenges ahead of them through the vehicle of writing. These after school programs are a collaboration of lead teachers at each of the schools, the teacher consultant and La Salle University undergraduate student mentors. opportunity for students to work



with their teachers and La Salle mentors on learning more about themselves and how to face the challenges ahead of them through the vehicle of writing. These after school programs are a collaboration of lead teachers at each of the schools, the teacher consultant and La Salle University undergraduate student mentors.

HONORABLE MENTIONS

**Dear Nana
NaSier Connor**

Dear Nana,

It's been 1,585 long and treacherous days without you. I've grown into the young man you always wanted me to be, I wish you could see me. Every time I would see you, I couldn't wait to leave, and every time I said I love you it was forced. Every day I live with the regret of not giving you the love that you gave me. And for that I'm sorry. Your passing has helped me appreciate the things I have while I have them. You always told me that I'm the man of the family in absence of my dad. When I was younger, I was too stubborn to actually give that any mind or thought and I was just too lazy to take that responsibility. Five years later and I truly understand what you were saying and I take care of everyone.

A man is someone who provides for the family, someone who puts their family before anything, someone who takes responsibility for the things he did including his wrong doings. Now I take full responsibility on being the man of the family. Proudly! You met Ashiq once, you held him once. As he gets older, I will make sure he knows how much of a great woman you were. Your passing has helped me grow as a person, in some people's eyes I'm not great, but only you and the rest of the family know how far I've come and how hard I worked on bettering myself. I have learned how to deal with my emotions better because you would always told me that Ashiq will do what I do, I have to lead by example. Even though you're not physically here, for my mental sake, I WILL make you proud. I wish you were here to witness the young man you and the rest of the family developed.

I still have a very bad temper and somehow I developed "depression" over the years. Some nights when I fall asleep I hope that I don't wake up. But I will keep going and never stop, for your sake and my brothers. You wouldn't want me to give up. You wouldn't want me to leave the family and have them aching in mental and emotional pain just like me. Even though you're not here, you're still leading me in the right direction. And for that I applaud myself - for growing up mentally and physically, and thinking of what you would tell me to do in certain situations. I have very little self-confidence. People may think that because I crack jokes and laugh a lot, it means I have no internal conflicts within myself. In all reality, it's the exact opposite. I try to keep a smile on my face because I know that's what you would want me to do.

I miss your voice, your soft touch, your encouraging words and most importantly I miss you as a whole. I love you, until we meet again.

Adoringly yours,

NaSier

Double-Edged Mask
by Nga Pheng

A girl with a mask is who I am.
Someone with two faces, maybe more.
So many comments, yet so fake.
Struck by the chains of expectations.
Enduring through all the aches.
Smile in their faces,
While screaming inside.
Say, "Im fine."
Inside is a great divide.
I hate you yet I love you.
The heart wrenching feelings of conflict,
Conflict stuck together with glue.
"This is so fun!"
It really isn't.
Just tryin' to please you,
But who doesn't?
You question me, "Are you for real?!"
Honestly, it's been so long,
I forgot how I feel.
"You hurt me!"
I can say the same.
But you know what?
I'll, alone, take the blame.
This is my mask,
A double-edged sword.
"Why double-edged?" I'd reckon you'd ask.
Well, I guess you can say it hurts both hearts of those
involved.
A mask is useful to hide your pain,
Yet all it does is create more.
Not only more pain,
But more hate.
It's an endless cycle,
It really is.
Like Friedrich Nietzsche said,
"If you stare into the abyss long enough,
The abyss stares back at you."
I think I've stared long enough,
My troubles are staring back at me.
I've been fake for so long,
Fake is what I am.
Who is in the mirror?
Wear the uncomfortable, skin-tight dress

(Contest Continued on Page 11)

CONT., Writing Inst., Page 8

various classroom discoveries and lesson plans providing an optimal forum... for meaningful and ongoing professional development. ...

...The teacher leaders designated to each school plan the bi-weekly meetings, keeping the meetings focused and provide mentoring to the other teachers in the program as they get WM started in their classroom. This year, we are also adding special Teacher Leader meetings in the fall and spring as an opportunity to provide professional development for the leaders at each school to ensure that they are able to bring back new ideas and help them grow as leaders. The directors make regular visits to the schools observing WM lessons being taught in the classroom as well as attending at least one meeting each month.

The teacher leaders designated to each school plan the bi-weekly meetings, keeping the meetings focused and provide mentoring to the other teachers in the program as they get WM started in their classroom. This year, we are also adding special Teacher Leader meetings in the fall and spring as an opportunity to provide professional development for the leaders at each school to ensure that they are able to bring back new ideas and help them grow as leaders. The directors make regular visits to the schools observing WM lessons being taught in the classroom as well as attending at least one meeting each month.

Or the casual sweater and jeans?
 Let's avoid all the stress
 By asking society, "What's the standard for teens?"
 Of course it'd be the dress!
 Everyone would like me.
 They'd pay attention to me looking undressed.
 Once again, gotta decide.
 The sneakers I bought last night
 Or the high heels full of pride?
 Pick the high heels and I'll be in the spotlight!
 With the outfit all picked out,
 I'll confidently walk,
 With my head held high to go about.
 Chains of society
 Bind us all.
 Different standards of all variety.
 An obstacle like a tall wall.
 Even so, we accept, endure, and take it in on the daily.
 We regard society's view above all.

4-Week PD Course

This summer we offered our first summer professional development workshop. We offered this opportunity to those who wanted to learn more about writing, to better implement and coordinate WM in their classrooms, to run effective meetings and to be a teacher researcher. We met once a week for four weeks. As a learning community, we shared ideas and wonderings throughout our time together. It was especially beneficial for new teacher leaders and teachers new to the program, but benefited everyone who attended.

My Reflection Neyma Gutierrez

I awake,
 Sit up, and think
 "I feel that being myself is a terrible thing."
 I stand up,
 Go to the mirror.
 I see myself, "Wow, I'm such an error."

 Everyone always judges the exterior, always!
 The skin, hair, eyes, smile, and size.
 No, we can't change our skin, nor dye our eyes.
 Yes, we can straighten our teeth or even exercise.

 None of us is perfect.
 We all doubt ourselves,
 Have our flaws and faults,
 Want to leave our stories on the shelves.

 But I must remember.

I am perfect, just the way I am.
 I am gifted, I am special
 I am my biggest fan.

 I love the girl in the mirror.
 That reflection looking back at me.
 I am Neyma Guterrez,
 And I love what I see!

IN MY MIRROR
AVA MOORE

IN MY MIRROR I SEE A GIRL AND IT'S ME.
I SEE MYSELF WONDERING.
WONDERING ABOUT MY FUTURE.
AND WHEN I LOOK IN THE MIRROR I SEE MYSELF IN THE FUTURE AND I SEE ALL
OF MY ACCOMPLISHMENTS. ONE THING I SEE IN MY MIRROR IS MY FAMILY
TOGETHER AGAIN. THIS TIME THEY'RE HAPPY. I'M HAPPY. I DIDN'T SEE
ANYONE SAD OR MAD... I JUST SAW HAPPINESS.

BUT I WISH THIS WAS HOW IT WAS NOW IN MY HOUSE.

WHEN I LOOK IN THE MIRROR I SEE MY HUSBAND AND MY BEAUTIFUL LITTLE
GIRL THAT WILL GROW UP AND BE A STRONG WOMAN LIKE HER MOMMY. BUT
FOR NOW I'M STILL THAT 13 YEAR OLD GIRL LOOKING IN THE MIRROR
WONDERING. AND I'M GONNA KEEP ON WONDERING UNTIL I BECOME THAT
STRONG INDEPENDENT WOMAN IN LIFE.
BUT FOR NOW, I LOVE MYSELF. AND I'M GOING TO TURN THAT REFLECTION
INTO A QUEEN.

What I see in the mirror...
Sahirah Jean-Baptiste

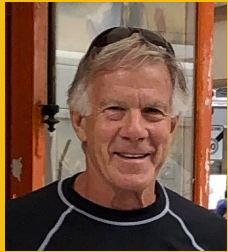
I see a girl who isn't doubting herself.
From face, to hair, to body, to voice.
Wishing that I can change, but I wasn't on the right lane.
I see a real girl who mustn't be called fake.
I see a weird, funny, somewhat smart girl.
A girl who likes real friends.
A girl who loves her family.
A girl who enjoys drawing.
From hate, to fake, to lying, from dying.
I can see the nightmares zooming across my eyes.
From bullying, to teasing.
Does that stop me from being me?
Of course not, I'm hardworking, helping, confident.
The hate can break me
Down to dust, but I know that there's a place for us, because we are warriors,
Talented, never offended, strong, beautiful.
No matter what happens to you, never let someone stop you from being you.
In the mirror, clear mirror, I see me.

Special Thanks

This Program is generously supported by the following lead funders: PTS Foundation (Pam and Tony Schneider), Jeff and Dana Berstein Family Foundation; Howard and Michele Kessler Family Foundation and Drs. Mark and Melissa Cornfeld.

A heartfelt thanks to these special individuals for their vision to help those less fortunate than themselves.

Thank You.



Bob Vogel
Founding Director, Writers Matter Program at La Salle University
Professor Emeritus, Department of Education, La Salle University

&



Kimberly Lewinski
Associate Director for the Writers Matter Program at La Salle University
Associate Professor, Department of Education, La Salle University

Consider Giving to Writers Matter

Please consider making a contribution to Writers Matter. Your contribution goes directly towards the purchase of books and writing materials for the students, as well as for after school programs.

If you are interested in participating in our adopt-a-school program, please contact Bob Vogel. All contributions are tax deductible and La Salle University meets all requirements for a 501C3 organization.

Checks can be made out to La Salle University – Writers Matter and mailed to 1900 West Olney Avenue, Box 809 Philadelphia, Pa 19141. If you prefer to make a contribution on-line, please go to https://lasalle.force.com/connect/dn8n__SiteDonation?id=a1Nf40000015BcI. Type “Writers Matter” in the comments section when you complete your donation form.