

Merna Ann Hecht

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Poetry/Creative Writing

Residencies Offered:

POETRY AND CREATIVE WRITING RESIDENCIES (GRADES 5 THROUGH 12): Connected to broad themes of American History, social justice, global voices including refugee and immigrant poetry, peace studies through poetry and integrating visual images with poetry. The poetry residencies include creating visual poems for showcase in the larger community and oral presentation of student poetry with poetry cafes to which other students and/or community members are invited.

ARTIST/TEACHER MENTORSHIPS for teachers working with grades 5 through 12 on integrating poetry and children's literature into the social studies, American History and language arts curricula.

Supplies, Equipment, Space and Time Considerations: Prefer to work in the mornings.

Teaching Experience: A former children's librarian, I have expertise in bringing global children's literature and poetry into the curricula. I am a practiced teaching artist with over twenty five years of experience. I teach Poetry, Social Justice, Arts, Humanities and Creative Writing for the University of WA in Tacoma. I have worked on many collaborative projects with other artists from various disciplines, especially pairing literacy with visual arts. I offer graduate courses to educators on teaching social studies and social justice through integrating arts and literacy. I have worked on a number of innovative projects through Tacoma Art Museum bringing collaborative arts and literacy projects into the Tacoma Public Schools. I've also worked extensively in literary arts projects with persons with disabilities, at-risk youth, homeless teens, hospitalized children and children dealing with grief and loss. I'm a nationally known storyteller, frequent conference presenter and a recipient of numerous storytelling and poetry awards and grants. I founded and currently co-direct The Stories of Arrival: Refugee and Immigrant Youth Voices Poetry Program at Foster High School in Tukwila which is one of the most language and culturally diverse schools in the U.S.

Artist Statement: I believe that engaging young people in explorations of diverse global voices can contribute to teaching us how to live in closer community with others. I think that educating young people through the arts supports them in learning to embrace and respect viewpoints that differ from their own. I also believe that every student deserves opportunities to discover their own imaginative, creative and participatory capacities. I am concerned that poetry and other art forms have taken a back seat in this era of the Common Core. Poetry is not to be analyzed as much as it should be savored for its richness of language and its power to speak to deep emotions and sing praises of the natural world. My teaching artistry is designed to foster self-expression, creativity, joy in language, compassion for others and listening skills that will help create a spirited and safe space in the classroom for experimentation and expression. In recent years I am devoted to using the arts to help educate students toward becoming informed and compassionate community minded citizens who are inspired to hold and work toward a vision of a more peaceful, sustainable world.