

2016 Oregon Writing Festival Information

The Oregon Writing Festival: What is it?

The Oregon Writing Festival is an annual springtime event designed to recognize and encourage the efforts of Oregon students and teachers to improve writing. It is sponsored by the Oregon Council of Teachers of English and the Graduate School of Education at Portland State University. Almost 1000 students from across the state participate every year.

Goals of the Festival:

- ♦ to increase the interest and involvement of students and teachers in writing
- ♦ to encourage effective classroom practices and home support for the improvement of writing
- ♦ to spotlight writing as an art, craft, and basic skill for Oregon students, grades 4-12
- ♦ to recognize that writing teachers are responsible for the high level of student achievement in writing
- ♦ to honor outstanding student writers for their accomplishments
- ♦ to promote writing activities and festivals in local districts and communities
- ♦ to connect student writers with Oregon authors and other student writers

Process:

Each year the festival is announced to all Oregon school districts. Districts are invited to reserve space for student participation in the festival. Interested districts are required to pay for every student they send, to arrange transportation to Portland for their participants, to arrange for adult supervision for the students (as well as any necessary overnight lodging if necessary), to designate a contact person responsible for coordination, and to decide at the local level how students will be chosen for this experience.

Each district must also provide a teacher (Day Group Leader) for every 10 students, or portions thereof, who will serve as a Day Group Leader to work with a group of 10 students from districts throughout the state on the day of the festival.

Students:

Districts that decide to be involved in the festival are allotted participant spaces based on their student population. The participation formula ensures that the festival will have representatives from all parts of the state. In 1999, about 1000 students came to the festival from more than 70 different Oregon private and public school systems. Because of funding and space issues, the festival has had to be reduced in the last few years.

Big Day:

On the festival Saturday, May 7, participating students arrive at the Portland State University campus between 8:15-8:45 AM. Each student joins the assigned Day Group Leader, along with nine other students of the same approximate age who have come from different parts of the state. The Day Group Leaders are volunteer teachers who are in

charge of a group of young writers and accompany their students to the scheduled sessions throughout the day. The Day Group Leaders also serve as facilitators for the Sharing Session with their group. A nurse is on site for the students from 7:30 AM to close at 2:45 PM.

General Session:

Each age group will have one General Session with a professional writer and accomplished author. The authors are carefully selected for their ability to work with students and to inspire writing.

Student Workshops:

In addition to the general session, students attend two writing workshops with their Day Group Leader. The workshop presenters are experienced writing teachers or working writers. These workshops are intended to give students a stimulating writing experience and a chance to put pen to paper in some writing experiences.

Sharing Groups:

Students have time to share with the other members of their Day Group the piece of writing they brought to the festival in an "author's circle". Under the guidance of the Day Group Leader, students read their piece to their fellow young authors and the pieces are discussed by the group in a positive, supportive way. The sharing sessions have been among the most popular activities of the students at the prior festivals.

Adult Workshop:

Because of limited space, parents and teachers are not able to attend sessions with their students; therefore, while students are involved in their activities, interested parents or other adults who have accompanied youngsters to the festival may attend an adult workshop where they will get ideas for writing projects at home or for lessons in teaching composition.

Books and Autographing:

A local bookstore will offer books for sale by the authors who are making presentations at the festival. Other books will also be available for purchase as well.

Finale:

At the end of the day, student participants say goodbye to their new friends and return home. It is the hope of the volunteers who make the festival a success---the planning committee, local school and district contact people, Day Group Leaders, Workshop Presenters, and countless other helpers---that these students will return to their homes and classrooms full of contagious enthusiasm for writing, and they will maintain contact with some of their newly acquired, supportive friends.