



# iWRITE ANNUAL REPORT

January 2018 – July 2019



# Mission

Our mission at iWRITE is to build student confidence through writing.

# Vision

Through writing, students become more creative and confident, which opens the door to opportunities they never had before.



## A MESSAGE FROM OUR CEO AND FOUNDER



As I write this message, we're planning our 10-year anniversary. I have to take a moment right now to acknowledge and applaud all that our students, teachers, and volunteers have accomplished since iWRITE was founded in 2009. Most of all, though, I'm looking at the challenges ahead and making plans to provide students with even bigger and better opportunities to succeed.

In this report, I'm excited to share the progress students are making every day through our four core programs: "i" The Guy, which helps students love learning again; our publishing contest that gives young writers a rewarding sense of accomplishment; summer camps that help students avoid the summer learning slump; and Youth Club that offers valuable leadership opportunities. I'm also pleased to highlight our partnerships and collaborations.

Most of all, I'd like to say thank you to all of you who devote your time and your hard-earned dollars to help these children succeed. We couldn't do it without you, and we are grateful that you have joined us in our commitment to helping kids truly write their success story.

As always, if you have questions, or if you see a place where you'd like to get more involved, I'm just a phone call or email away!

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read "Melissa Williams Murphy". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long, sweeping line extending from the end.

**Melissa Williams Murphy, Founder & CEO**

*August 1, 2019*

Melissa@iwrite.org | 713-845-5811

## Program Update: "i" The Guy



**URGENT:** There is currently a waiting list of classrooms ready to join the "i" The Guy Program. As iWRITE expands its capacity to meet this growing need, it is important to be able to support teachers and students through distribution of the "i" The Guy curriculum and journals, enabling students to learn to communicate confidently at the highest level of literacy.



Classrooms are becoming more and more standardized every day. And yet, no two children are alike. The "i" The Guy curriculum and student journal features a cartoon character and seven-foot mascot, "i" The Guy, who makes learning fun again. He becomes a trusted writing mentor who creates enthusiasm for sharing stories. Children build confidence in a safe and fun environment.

"This past year, we were able to bridge 'i' The Guy and the publishing program," says Murphy. "The mascot, 'i' The Guy gives students the skills and tools they need to work toward entering the contest." Teachers and volunteers have been very involved in identifying students who, with just a little extra support, can create poems and stories strong enough to compete. Even if their work is not selected for publication, knowing they were good enough to submit instills a sense of pride and the determination to continue to write and improve – something that benefits every area of their academics.

In 2018-19, the program served 2,698 students in over 100 classrooms. During the year, students and teachers were assisted by 50 volunteer iWRITE Ambassadors who provided one-on-one and group support for 15 weeks. These ambassadors, who come from local colleges and universities, have experience with education and K-12 literacy.

# Why Teachers Love “i” The Guy:

## SPOTLIGHT ON

### SPRING BRANCH ELEMENTARY



During 2018-19, iWRITE made changes to its curriculum to allow teachers more flexibility and creativity in how the program was implemented. “Other school programs can be strict and prescriptive,” says Murphy. “Instead of limiting teachers’ creativity, we wanted to give them flexibility.” iWRITE simply asks that teachers use the student journals a minimum of 30 minutes, twice a week. For example, teachers can use the journals to open or close the day. Students who finish other assignments early can spend time working in their journals. The structure may vary, but the results are reliable.

## Here’s how it’s working for Spring Branch Elementary:

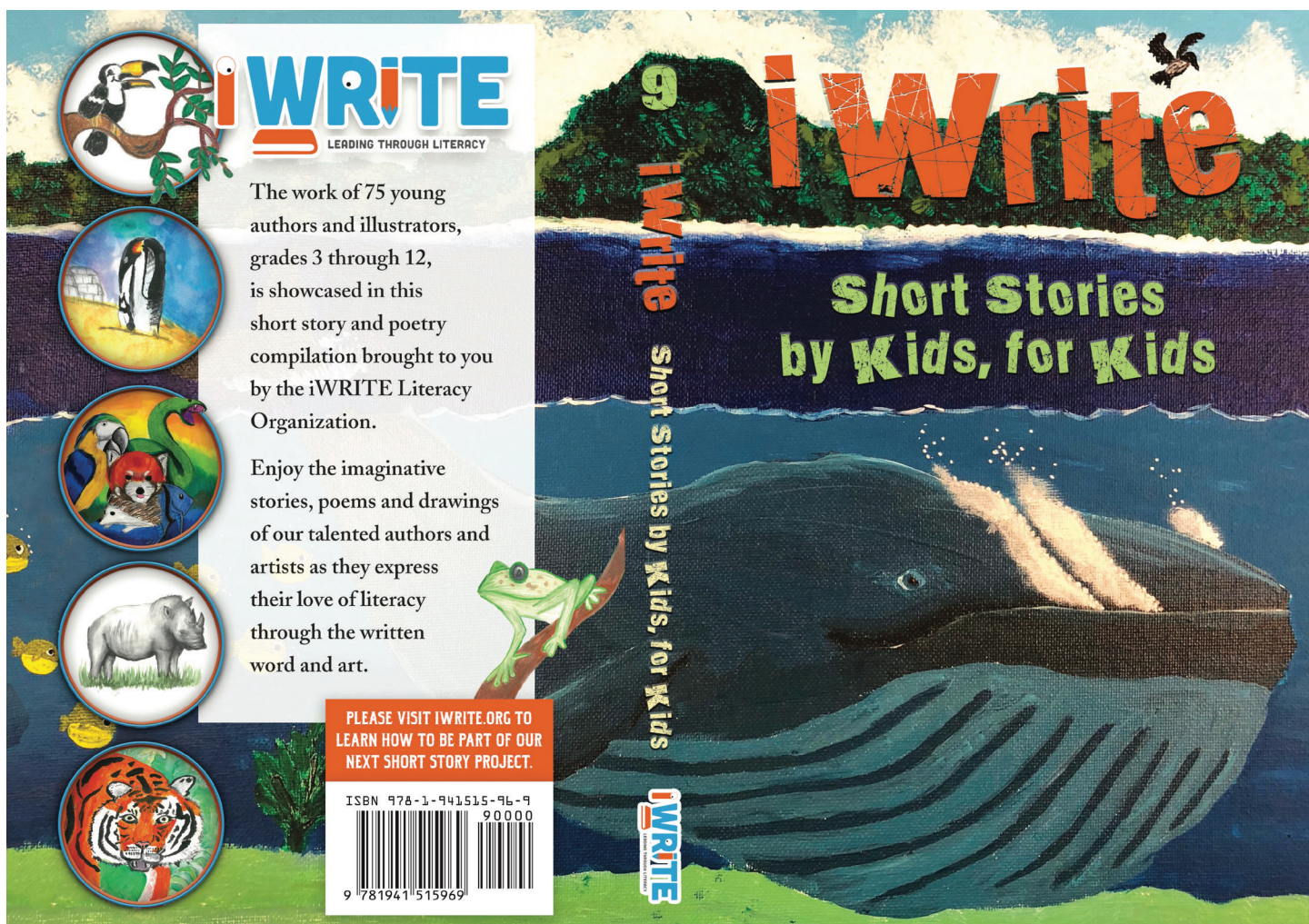
Spring Branch ISD has made implementing “i” The Guy a priority in its elementary school, and it’s paying off for students. The story-writing exercises offer what can sometimes be a rare moment of spontaneity and discovery in the classroom, and the friendly, encouraging cartoon mascot is someone the kids know they can trust.

“When you’re at a school that might not have all the extras, you are faced with doing a lot of your own research to find the materials that are going to be the most powerful,” says SBISD Teacher Robin Pardue, who found that “i” The Guy offered just what she was looking for. “It has the grammar pieces; it has the different parts of speech. It’s going to talk about things like students needing to write in first person, second person, and third person. Because it’s done in chunks that are friendly and fun, it’s not overwhelming.”

ELA Lead Interventionist Chaquitha Cherry agrees. “I think the teachers are really excited about the program and the fact that it has given their students a voice when it comes to writing. Writing has been sort of an arduous task for these students in the past, and the “i” The Guy journal helps awaken their sense of imagination.”

“So we’re finding as we do iWRITE, we’re stronger writers and we’re stronger in our collaboration,” says Pardue. “We’re stronger in our ability to raise the bar.”

# Program Update: iWrite Contest: Annual Anthology



Not many students – especially those who live in high-poverty communities served by iWRITE – feel that they have a voice. iWRITE believes in the power of publishing as an incentive for learning and a validation that every child's voice should be heard.

Through its annual writing contest, iWRITE produces an anthology called *I Write Short Stories by Kids for Kids*, encouraging young writers across the globe to submit their stories and poetry. Student artists also submit artwork to be considered for cover designs.

In 2019, iWRITE and the Houston Public Library system began collaborating, and librarians from across Houston are serving as judges for the contest. Students who are selected for publication are then honored at an annual fall luncheon where students walk the red carpet and sign books for attendees. In 2018 (289) students entered the contest and (75) were selected for publication. In 2019 (390) students entered the contest, and (100) were selected for publication. While the majority of students were from the U.S., there were also students from China, United Arab Emirates and Taiwan. A new ESL category, introduced for the fall anthology, will encourage even more submissions from students who are not native English speakers. In addition, the collaboration with the Houston Public Library will significantly increase the numbers of students participating.

# Program Update: Youth Club

Whether it's building a college resume or simply learning new life skills, every leadership opportunity for students counts. The iWRITE Youth Club members become leaders, serving as officers, organizing meetings, communicating with speakers, planning and implementing community projects, and even becoming public speakers in their own right. They also serve as summer camp counselors, and as important mentors for the younger writers who follow in their footsteps.

## 2018-19 Student Officers:

**President** — Alyssa Reied

**Vice-President** — Sofia Bajwa

**Secretary** — Katie Giveon

**Treasurer** — Kurt Kauffman

**Historian** — Eshaan Mani

**Junior Officer** — Annie Jones



*"I'm proud of the students who lead our Youth Club," says Murphy. "They're creating and updating their own website. They're brainstorming and implementing community projects. In 2018, they raised money and decorated reading nooks in libraries. And most recently, they became pen pals with students in Title 1 classrooms at Ashford Elementary in Houston ISD and exchanged letters monthly. They are students that the younger ones can look up to."*

## Program Update: Summer Camps



According to the Brookings Institute, on average, students can lose an entire month's worth of learning over what's become known as the "summer slide." The learning loss has been shown to vary depending on income, which means that access to learning resources such as iWRITE's summer camps can be essential in sustaining academic momentum.

In 2018-19, iWRITE offered summer camps from Pearland to Spring Branch, and added special programming in partnership with the Bryan Museum. "The kids we're seeing in summer camps love to write," said Murphy. "They love working with the Youth Club mentors and the Ambassadors from the universities. These kids forge a deep connection with each other, and challenge each other to set bigger goals. We see them going from feeling hesitant to feeling confident about their ideas. And most of all, they're having fun doing it."

The partnership with the Bryan Museum included publication of a special edition of the writer's journal for young historians and the camp itself offered hands-on opportunities to experience history. Students freely explored the exhibits, got sneak peeks behind the scenes at the museum, went outside to meet a horse that fueled their imaginations, and then worked on character exercises based on the horse.

During 2018-19, iWRITE and 18 volunteer camp counselors served 54 campers. Students ranged from 3rd through 5th grades attended the camps in Galveston, Pearland, and Spring Branch. Many students were scholarship recipients from Title 1 schools who attended at no charge. It is especially exciting to note that all campers from Spring Branch Elementary (Summer 2019) were ultimately selected for publication in the annual anthology (Volume 10).



# WHAT'S AHEAD FOR



iWRITE has big plans for the future, and would like to acknowledge Phillips 66, The Barbara Bush Houston Literacy Foundation, Ms. Cheryl Murphy, and Ms. Mary Moreland for their foresight in supporting iWRITE's expansion plans for 2020.

"It's time to build on the strong foundation iWRITE has created to support students," says Murphy. "We know publishing opportunities are key. Let's create more. Summer camps promote creativity and spark the imagination. Let's expand our workshops throughout the year. "i" The Guy inspires students who once thought they couldn't succeed in the classroom. Let's make sure those students on the waiting list get a chance to participate. Can we do more with after school programs? Absolutely. Can we reach students online? You bet.

If writing creates opportunities (and it does!) then we're committed to giving more students than ever a chance to dream bigger.

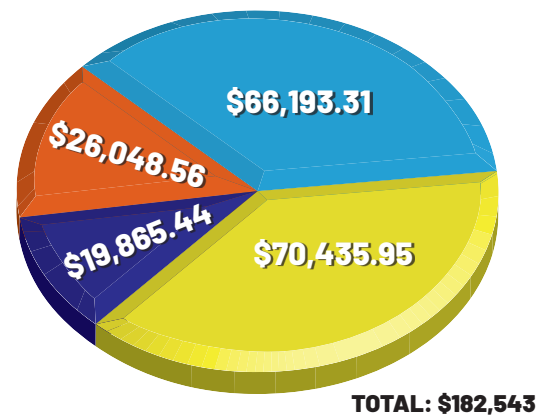
## FINANCIALS AT A GLANCE

January 2018 - July 2019

### PROFIT AND LOSS

\$350,498.59	-	\$346,355.67	=	\$4,142.92
REVENUE		EXPENSES		NET INCOME

### PROGRAM EXPENSES



- PUBLISHING
- PROGRAM ADMINISTRATION
- "i" THE GUY
- WORKSHOPS

Our Balance Sheet and Profit and Loss Statement can be found online at [iwrite.org](http://iwrite.org)



# PARTNERS



## Aldine ISD

Carroll Elementary

## HISD Schools

Ashford Elementary  
Scroggins Elementary  
Thompson Elementary

## Spring Branch ISD

Edgewood Elementary  
Ridgecrest Elementary  
Spring Branch Elementary  
Westwood Elementary

# 2019

## BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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**MELISSA MURPHY**

*Founder & Executive Director*

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**MARY LOU HOLLENDER**

**STEPHANIE TSURU**





*Students published in the 2018 anthology attended a luncheon in their honor and posed for photos with "I" The Guy.*



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