

## WHAT'S INSIDE

**E**ACH TIME WE PUT TOGETHER AN ISSUE OF *Teachers & Writers Magazine*, we find themes and ideas overlapping from article to article in ways that surprise and intrigue us. These unplanned connections help weave together pieces from contributors across the country who are mostly unknown to each other. Within these pages, their common interests and concerns spark a conversation that enlarges the scope of their own work and illuminates current thinking in the WITS field.

A case in point: both the winner and finalist in this year's Bechtel Contest wrote essays about teaching writing in prison, visiting similar ideas and themes. We start the issue with **Chris Belden's** winning piece, which paints a moving picture of the challenges of working in a prison environment, both as a teacher and as a student. The drama of the piece is balanced by the straightforward tone of the writing, which takes the form of a list of instructions: how to teach writing in prison.

In a fortuitous follow-up to the Bechtel essay, **Olivia Birdsall** writes on using exactly the kind of "how-to" format Belden chose for his prize-winning piece. Her article is the first in our new series, Creative Writing and the Common Core, and shows how this versatile form can be used to inspire creative writing about almost anything.

Elsewhere in the issue, classroom teacher **Benjamin Gott** details a lesson he designed in which his students write poetry based on family stories; **Caron Levis** describes visiting a classroom in Newtown, Connecticut, scene of last December's tragic school shooting, to help young students learn to talk and write about sadness; **Harriet Riley** writes about a new school-based project in Houston teaching kids to combine writing and filmmaking; and **Liz Arnold** closes the issue with an affecting and thoughtful personal essay on writing and vulnerability.

We invite you to take a look, explore the ideas and lessons presented here, and join the conversation.

— Susan Karwoska

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Winter 2013-2014 Issue

<b>2013 WINNER OF THE BECHTEL PRIZE</b>	
<b>Inside Words</b>	<b>3</b>
<i>How to Teach Writing in Prison</i>	
Chris Belden	
<b>Writing The Past</b>	<b>11</b>
<i>Using Poetry to Explore Family History</i>	
Benjamin Gott	
<b>CREATIVE WRITING AND THE COMMON CORE</b>	
<b>How to "How-to"</b>	<b>15</b>
<i>A Versatile Form Inspires Writing across the Curriculum</i>	
Olivia Birdsall	
<b>IN THE CLASSROOM</b>	
<b>How-to Lesson Plan</b>	<b>17</b>
Olivia Birdsall	
<b>When All is Not Sugar and Spice</b>	<b>21</b>
<i>Helping Kids Explore Sadness</i>	
Caron Levis	
<b>The Moving Story Project</b>	<b>27</b>
<i>Watching Words Come Alive</i>	
Harriet Riley	
<b>ENDNOTE</b>	
<b>Giving More on the Page</b>	<b>29</b>
<i>On Writing and Vulnerability</i>	
Liz Arnold	
<b>T&amp;W Blackboard</b>	<b>32</b>

Cover photographs by **Saskia Kahn**. *Front*: Michelle W. *Back*: Reham M. (left) and Geddes A. (right); students in a New York City public school participating in an after-school poetry workshop sponsored by Ava's Smile, in partnership with Teachers & Writers Collaborative. Ava's Smile was created in memory of 17-year-old artist and poet Ava Hecht, and is dedicated to honoring Ava's legacy of creativity and compassion. Ava's Smile develops and funds creative arts workshops for youth and young adults in order to enrich their lives and help them to reach their full potential.