



POETRY OUT LOUD

Poetry Out Loud
in the Schools

2015-2016

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1. Contacts

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2. Rules

The following is a list of some basic rules that apply to Poetry Out Loud. These rules are included in the Teacher's Guide and publicized at poetryoutloud.org, so it is important that they are followed. If you are not certain how a rule will fit within your Poetry Out Loud program structure, please contact poetryoutloud@arts.gov.

Note: Only schools registered with their state Poetry Out Loud coordinator are eligible for the official competition.

STUDENT ELIGIBILITY

- **Grade Level:** Only currently enrolled high school students in grades 9-12 are eligible, with an exception made for 8th-grade students participating in a 9th- through 12th-grade class.
- **Citizenship:** Competitors at the state and national finals must be U.S. citizens or permanent residents with valid tax identification or Social Security number. Tax identification or Social Security numbers are required to receive prizes, including cash payments or travel awards. Students are responsible for verifying their eligibility. State coordinators and teachers are responsible for notifying students about legal participation requirements.
- **State Finals:** A student may not advance to the state finals without competing in a lower-level competition.
- **Homeschooled Students:** Homeschooled students may participate by competing in a contest at a local school (at the school's discretion) or with other local homeschooled students. Contact your state Poetry Out Loud coordinator for specific guidelines.
- **School Not Participating?** Students unable to participate at a local school should contact their state Poetry Out Loud coordinator to discuss other opportunities for inclusion in the state's official competition.
- **Repeat Champions:** Only National Champions are not eligible to compete in subsequent years.

POEM ELIGIBILITY

- **Poem Anthology:** All poems must be selected from the Poetry Out Loud print or online anthology, which is updated every summer. Check the website after September 1, 2015, to view the official Poetry Out Loud anthology for the current school year. **Only versions of poems from the official anthology may be used in the contest.**
- **Can't Find a Poem?** Poems may be removed from the online anthology before September 1, 2015. These poems are no longer eligible for competition. However, any poem in the print anthology is eligible even if it is not online.

Poem Criteria: At the state and national finals, students must have three poems prepared. One must be 25 lines or fewer, and one must be written before the 20th century. The same poem may be used to meet both criteria, and may be the student's third poem.

COMPETITION

- **School Competition:** Schools must hold a competition of at least 2 students to select their champion. If that champion is unable to attend the next level of competition, the runner-up should be sent.
- **Evaluation:** Students must be judged according to the Poetry Out Loud evaluation criteria from the 2015-16 Teacher's Guide.
- **Rounds:** State and national finals consist of 3 rounds of competition. Competitions at lower levels may have fewer rounds, but students must recite only 1 poem in each round.
- **Poem Order:** The order in which the poems are recited is up to the student, but poem order may not be switched once given to the competition organizer. Competition organizers may not dictate poem order.
- **Judging:** Rankings are based solely on evaluation sheets submitted by judges. Judges should not convene to discuss performances during the competition. Judges may not reconsider their scores after they are submitted.
- **Scoring:** Scoring is cumulative. The scores from all rounds should be added together to determine the winner.
- **Ties:** In the event of a tie, the tied student with the highest overall performance score should win; if that also results in a tie, look to the highest accuracy score. If scores remain tied, consider having students pick 1 poem to recite again as a separate score to break the tie.
- **Memorization:** Students must recite their poems from memory.
- **Props:** Students may not use props or wear costumes during their recitations.

LEGAL PARTICIPATION REQUIREMENTS

- No student may be excluded from participation in this program on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, disability, or national origin.
- Schools may determine eligibility for classroom-and school-level Poetry Out Loud programs pursuant to local and state law.
- Participation in both the state and the National Finals is restricted to U.S. citizens or permanent residents with valid tax identification or Social Security numbers, in keeping with federal law.
- Foreign exchange students and other visitors are not eligible to compete for titles or official awards at the state and national level, unless they are U.S. citizens or permanent residents.

3. The Basics

PROGRAM STRUCTURE

Poetry Out Loud starts in the classroom, with participating teachers using the Poetry Out Loud teacher toolkit to do a lesson on poetry recitation and run classroom competitions. Following a pyramid structure, classroom winners advance to a school-wide competition, then to a regional and/or state competition, and ultimately to the National Finals.

Regional competitions within a state are not mandated by Poetry Out Loud, but they can be a useful way to winnow down a large number of schools and avoid the cost of bringing every school champion to the state finals—particularly burdensome in large states.

AWARDS

State awards: Each state champion will receive \$200 and an all-expenses-paid trip to Washington, DC, to compete at the National Finals. The state champion's school will receive a \$500 stipend for the purchase of poetry books. The first runner-up in each state will receive \$100; his or her school will receive \$200 for the purchase of poetry books.

National awards: A total of \$50,000 in awards and school stipends will be awarded at the Poetry Out Loud National Finals, with a \$20,000 award for the National Champion. The second-place winner will receive a \$10,000 award; the third-place winner will receive \$5,000; and the fourth- to ninth-place finalists will each receive \$1,000. Their schools will receive \$500 for the purchase of poetry books. There will be one runner-up in each semifinal competition. That student will not advance to the finals, but will receive a \$1,000 cash award and \$500 school stipend.

All prizes are paid directly by the Poetry Foundation. **Poetry Out Loud funding as part of the state partnership agreements may not be used for prize money or to supplement the prize amounts.** (Many states have successfully expanded the awards by soliciting private or corporate donations for prizes.)

Awards from the Poetry Foundation will be made in the form of lump sum cash payouts, reportable to the IRS. Tax liabilities are the sole responsibility of the winners and their families.

POEM SELECTION

Students must choose poems from the online Poetry Out Loud anthology at poetryoutloud.org or from the official Poetry Out Loud print anthology. Students should choose their poems themselves, rather than have a teacher or coach select the poems for them.

The number of poems a student recites will differ by level of competition. At the classroom level, in the interest of time, teachers may elect to have students recite only one or two poems. A school competition should require at least two poems by each participant. Students must have three poems prepared for state and national finals. They may be eliminated before they recite their third poem, which may be a poem that meets the POL criteria.

At the state and national finals, students must include poems in their repertoire that meet the following criteria:

- 1) One of the three poems must be pre-20th century.
- 2) One of the three poems must be 25 lines or fewer in length.

One poem may satisfy both criteria, and may be the student's third poem. Poems that meet these requirements can be found on the Poetry Out Loud website at poetryoutloud.org.

FAQs—POEM SELECTION

Can students choose a poem that's not in the anthology?

No. Poetry Out Loud includes an online anthology of more than 900 poems. Students must choose poems from the print or online version of the Poetry Out Loud anthology. We yearly "retire" popular selections from the online anthology so the repertoire remains fresh—there are plenty of good poems to feature!

Can teachers request additions to the anthology?

Yes. We annually update the selection of poems available on the website. We will try to satisfy anthology requests whenever possible, but please remember that copyright permissions and other issues must be taken into consideration. Poems in the public domain may be easier to include. Poems will be added over the summer, and not while competitions are taking place. Requests should be sent to mail@poetryoutloud.org.

4. Timeline

	Sample State Program Timeline 2015-2016
September	Teacher recruitment; distribute educational materials; teacher workshops; implement media plan
October	Continue to distribute educational materials; teacher workshops; classroom competitions; school registration deadline; integrate guest teaching artists
November	Judges invited; confirm venues & dates for regional and state competitions; school competitions
December	Judges/prompter/event staff finalized for regional and state competitions; school competitions
January	School competitions; regional events; prep for finals; finalize state finals plan/prep judges and volunteers
February	Finish state finals event plan/prep judges by conference call and organize volunteers; state finals
March	State finals; issue final press release/newsletters; prep of state champion for National Finals
April	National Finals; debrief; final evaluations; follow-up and thank partners
May	Groundwork for teacher recruitment—meet with key contacts, including principals and state superintendents; mailing to teachers for next season
June-July	Teacher recruitment; strategic planning; develop media plan; identify possible partners
August	Teacher recruitment; order toolkits; secure partnerships

5. Poetry Out Loud Resource List

TEACHER TOOLKIT

Every summer, the teacher toolkit is updated for the new school year. Copies for the upcoming school year may be ordered from our fulfillment house, Cadmus Communication. Shipments will begin on August 1st. (Contact information for Cadmus can be found on page 3.) Order as many toolkits as you will need—up to 300; everything will be sent to your office. Send a copy to each teacher who participates in Poetry Out Loud. Learning Recitation DVDs and additional posters can be ordered separately. Updates for 2015-16 include a revised Teacher's Guide.

The teacher toolkit contains these useful tools for running a classroom Poetry Out Loud contest:

- **Poetry Out Loud Teacher's Guide 2015-2016**
Lesson plans, guidance on classroom contests, evaluation criteria
- **Poetry Out Loud Posters**
A poet poster, student poster, and customizable contest announcement poster

ONLINE RESOURCES

Poetry Out Loud website

poetryoutloud.org

Materials are regularly added to the website to enhance the Poetry Out Loud learning experience. The website includes numerous resources for students, teachers, judges, and state arts agencies, including:

- **Poetry Out Loud online anthology**
Searchable, online anthology of more than 800 eligible poems and poet biographies.

Lists of poems that meet the selection criteria (pre-20th century and 25 lines or fewer) for state and national finals can also be found in the Poems & Performance section of the website.
- **Teacher's Guide**
The guide from the teacher toolkit can also be found online.

- **Poetry Out Loud Learning Recitation: DVD and Companion Guide**
Video recitations and companion guide geared to evaluation categories. A training tool for teachers, students, coaches, and judges.
- **Poetry Out Loud Audio Guide**
Sample recitations and tips on the art of recitation.
- **Lesson plans for teachers**
Twelve different lesson plans tailored to Poetry Out Loud are available online. They cover a wide range of topics related to the study of poetry and will prepare students for successful recitations.
- **Poetry Out Loud Judge's Guide**
Includes information about the role of judges, contest rules, evaluation criteria, scoring rubric, etc. This should be read by anyone organizing a contest and by all judges, and is also useful to students and teachers.
- **Poetry Out Loud prompter handout**
A one-page handout with advice for contest prompter
- **Poetry Out Loud contest evaluation sheet**
Score sheet for judges
- **Poetry Out Loud scoring rubric**
A consistent measure against which to evaluate recitations
- **Poetry Out Loud accuracy score sheet**
Score sheet for contest accuracy judge, explains how to calculate accuracy
- **Poetry Out Loud tally sheet**
A modifiable Excel spreadsheet for score data entry that keeps a running total and shows tie-breaking
- **Poetry Out Loud PR Toolkit**
Tips for promoting Poetry Out Loud, complete with sample press releases, a recruitment letter from the NEA Chairman, and a promotional PowerPoint
- **Poetry Out Loud teacher recruitment flyer**
A one-page handout that may be customized for your state program

6. Teacher Recruitment

The most basic challenge in recruiting schools is lack of response from solicited teachers. However, you have much to offer teachers: free curricular materials geared to NCTE and Common Core standards are almost always welcome in classrooms.

For best results, contact schools at multiple levels—through the local school district offices, individual school’s administrators, and individual teachers. Many school districts may have a district-wide language arts coordinator who can give you a list of all the high school language arts teachers in their district. Contact English teachers, ESL teachers, speech and theater teachers, English department coordinators, language arts specialists, librarians, state language arts curriculum specialists, district arts coordinators, and principals. Mailings, press releases, e-mail listservs, newsletters, teacher learning centers, and educational conferences can be used as vehicles for recruiting educators.

Our student body has completely embraced the entire notion of Poetry Out Loud and it has become a “staple” of our year. All of our teachers encourage it and the students take it very seriously. During our All-School Poetry Out Loud Competition, one would have thought rock stars had just entered the building when our classroom winners took the stage and recited their poems. Sincere enthusiasm!

—POL Teacher

You may want to try some of these recruitment methods suggested by experienced coordinators:

- Invite interested teachers to your state final; the drama of the competition and the student performances are a powerful recruiting tool.
 - Invite enthusiastic teachers or previous state champions to speak at conferences and other teacher/education gatherings.
 - Send information through Arts in Education partners and the Parent Teacher Association.
 - Attend meetings of the state Teachers of English, Cooperative Educational Service Agencies, and the state High School Forensic Association to introduce teachers to the program and expand its geographic reach.
- Ask county school boards and the state Department of Education to recommend schools for participation. Ask to have an item in a newsletter from one of these groups.
 - Present a Poetry Out Loud information session at the state Speech Convention.
 - Connect with your State Superintendent of Education—make their office aware of the program and invite staff to attend the state finals as special guests.

Finding a Place for Poetry Out Loud

In working with schools, challenges include finding classroom time and ensuring a slot for a schoolwide competition despite demanding standardized testing schedules. Be aware that the program's timing may not coincide with a school's schedule for teaching it.

ARIZONA: RETENTION

Support teachers through frequent communication and local partners. Sending monthly or bi-monthly updates is an easy way to get out in front of questions and keep the lines of communication open; and once you've done this for a season or two, you'll have a bank of updates ready and waiting. We also find that working with local or regional organizations to provide school finals support helps teachers immensely and connects schools to the literary, arts and culture communities in their own backyard.

-Arizona Commission on the Arts

- Make clear to teachers that this is a flexible program easily incorporated even into a short poetry unit. The 2-3 weeks mentioned in the Teacher's Guide is an ideal time frame; weeks need not be consecutive.
- Make materials available to teachers for use early in the school year.
- Show them how Poetry Out Loud materials align with national and state standards.
- Acknowledge that Poetry Out Loud activities may serve as a complement to other ways of teaching poetry such as creative writing and text analysis.

Other classroom challenges include getting schools to involve students beyond Advanced Placement (AP) classes and finding ways to address students with special needs and learning differences.

Poetry Out Loud teachers report that making participation required for classroom contests is essential to reaching a variety of students. Many teachers have reported that students who loved participating in Poetry Out Loud were some of the most unlikely candidates. It may be tempting to have Poetry Out Loud as an extracurricular activity, but this should be a last resort.

Retaining Schools

One of the most important strategies to ensure that all of your recruited schools make it to the state finals is to stay in frequent contact with participating teachers. Keep them apprised of plans for the regional and/or state competition. We've learned that teachers—especially in their first year of participation—may not always follow through and be able to send a school winner onto the next level because of other coursework or conflicting testing schedules. Know what your teachers are doing so you can plan for the right numbers in the upper levels of competition—you don't want to plan a state final for seventeen students and end up with six.

FAQs—ENLISTING SCHOOLS

How many schools should we enlist in the program?

We see state programs grow larger each year, as many schools re-enlist and new ones join. From one year to another, a state could expand from 25 schools to 50. States that are still working to establish their Poetry Out Loud program should aim to have at least 20 schools actively participating. That will ensure a dynamic state final competition, which will surely entice teachers to stay with the program. In past years, states have indicated that approximately 30% of registered schools will not follow through to the state final competition.

How and when should we begin to enlist schools?

We recommend that you begin the enlistment process during late spring, getting in touch with prospective schools. It may begin with something as simple as a save-the-date postcard before the end of the school year. A workshop is often a great way to explain the program to interested teachers. Once you have a good estimate of the number of participating teachers in your area, you can order a complete shipment of materials.

When and where will materials be available?

The updated teacher toolkit—including posters and a Teacher’s Guide—is made available on August 1st. Please order the kits directly from the distribution center noted on page 3. Be sure that all of your teachers are using the 2015-2016 Teacher’s Guide, the 2015-2016 Judge’s Guide, and the Learning Recitation DVD, available at poetryoutloud.org. Other materials have not changed.

FLORIDA: INVOLVING DIFFERENT TYPES OF SCHOOLS

We wanted to include (and did) private, parochial and home schools. But though it was fairly straightforward to go after the private/parochial schools through their networks and websites, it was more difficult to find and approach homeschoolers. Both of these were small, church-connected groups with 20-30 families involved. We asked for verification and received some assurance that they were legitimate through telephone conversations with a main office and from their Parent Coordinators. We also needed to be assured that they would conduct their “classroom” contests in an environment where a good number of the kids would be in competition with one another, and therefore keep to the program parameters going on in the other schools. We also made sure to discuss the manner in which they would host their “schoolwide” contest to determine a winner to send to Tallahassee for state finals.

—Florida Division of Cultural Affairs

7. Developing Partnerships/Networks

Partnerships are essential to a successful Poetry Out Loud program. Partnerships establish the program in your community and enhance your state final event.

Potential partnership ideas include:

Local chapters of National Council of Teachers of English
County Superintendents Educational Services Association
Local businesses: art galleries, bookstores, coffeehouses
Parent Teacher Associations
Community groups such as Girl or Boy Scouts of America
State Humanities Councils
Libraries
Literary organizations and centers, writers groups
Theater companies
Museums
VSA (to actively include students with disabilities)
Newspapers
Local public broadcasting companies
Independent bookstores or local affiliates of chains
Regional Educational Service Agencies
State Alliance for Arts Education
State Literacy Councils
State Department of Education
State Poets in the Schools programs
State Poet Laureate
State Poetry Society
State Association of Language Arts Teachers
State High School Speech Associations
County Coordinators of English
State Department of Elementary and Secondary Education
Local colleges and universities
School Board
Local and state elected officials—mayors, state
representatives, governor (and First Spouse)
Federal Congressional representatives and senators

CONSISTENCY OF MESSAGE AND RULES

As Poetry Out Loud continues to grow, many SAAs are partnering with arts organizations, writing centers, cultural organizations, etc. Please make sure you share official program materials with each partner to ensure consistency of language used for the program.

Each year you also may be working with more and more teachers and guest teaching artists. Make sure everyone in this group has access to official materials. Students should be coached by those who have read the Poetry Out Loud Teacher's Guide and Judge's Guide so that there is consistent understanding of the review criteria at any level of competition. All teachers, coaches, and students should know about poetryoutloud.org as a resource for poems and model recitations as well as rules.

Partnership Tips:

When you start thinking about which partnerships would be the most beneficial, define the major aspects of your program and decide what you would expand or change with the extra help.

- **Which potential partners would best help you reach your goals?** What would you be able to offer them in return (visibility; a way to help schools and the community)?
- **To get the conversation started, you host an informal community committee meeting or issue a press announcement inviting potential partners to get involved.** Otherwise, just organize a mailing or place calls.

GEORGIA: PARTNERSHIPS

POL funding allows Georgia Council for the Arts to be able to enter into a partnership with the Atlanta History Center/Margaret Mitchell House on a literary arts initiative that would otherwise cause budgetary restrictions for cost and staff resources. This partnership has allowed us to work with an increasing number of GA literary artists and provide an arts education experience for thousands of students in our state. The partnership not only raises recognition for the Council, but allows us to offer a program that underscores our belief in the inherent value of engaging students in the arts.

- Georgia Council for the Arts

- **Follow up.** Be sure to stay in touch with your partners to keep them informed of your plans, make them aware of key dates and events, and ensure that they are engaged and energized about their role in making Poetry Out Loud a success in your community.

- **Acknowledge partners' involvement in your materials and press releases,** and remember to thank them at all public events. Afterwards, celebrate your successes with them by sharing photographs, news clippings, and other materials from your program.

- **Consider forming an advisory committee of representatives from partnering organizations and/or exceptional teachers that meets a few times a year**—so partners lend different types of support and are invested in the decision making of the program.

- **The key in working with elected officials is to consider the ways in which what you're asking for will benefit them.** Give them plenty of notice,

expect last minute rescheduling, keep them informed, and make sure they're invited to all events and publicly acknowledged when they attend. Send your congressional representative a picture of himself or herself next to a Poetry Out Loud poster or sign, and ask for a blurb in the next constituent newsletter.

8. Poetry Out Loud in the Classroom

Poetry Out Loud organizers not only recruit teachers, they must also offer support to help train teachers, define logistics, and ensure consistency for school contests.

Supporting Teachers

Poetry Out Loud coordinators often offer professional development for teachers to help them learn elements of teaching poetry and recitation. They make the process affordable and manageable by capitalizing on partnerships, as well as using technology to share advice and information.

Some examples of teacher support include:

- Working collaboratively with the state Department of Public Instruction to present two long-distance learning workshops on creative writing and oral interpretation, with the State Poet Laureate leading the creative writing workshop. A professional performance poet leads the workshop on presenting poetry. Workshops are broadcast to teachers statewide.
- School coordinators and teachers are encouraged to request a visit from the state coordinator to attend departmental or classroom meetings, arrange for telecon meetings or additional Q&A sessions.
- Workshop for teachers focuses on performance techniques and other related activities, conducted by an AIE teaching artist and a performance poet. An application process can also help identify committed teachers for workshop participation.
- Previous state champion's coach serves as a "teacher liaison" for the following year—teachers can contact him or her to get advice on teaching recitation, coaching students, etc.
- Working with school principals to identify ways of including POL teachers and students in the larger school community, leading to better support for teachers and recognition of their work with the program. (A simple announcement congratulating POL teachers by name over the PA would be a good start!)

Incorporating Guest Artists

State arts agencies may provide support to Poetry Out Loud teachers who wish to welcome guest artists and coaches into the classroom. Having a guest teaching artist in the classroom is a wonderful way to engage students and teachers!

Services from these individuals range from one-on-one coaching in the art of recitation to leading classroom workshops on poem explication and interpretation. Guest artists and coaches include local poets, college professors, professional actors, forensic coaches,

former state Poetry Out Loud champions, artists on SAA arts-in-education rosters, state poets laureate, and specialists from literary centers.

If you utilize teaching artists, you should convene them early on to develop consistent curriculum plans. Share the Learning Recitation videos and companion guide with them as well as the Judge's Guide. Both tools will help them teach to the criteria and be aware of what judges are trained to look for in an outstanding recitation. If you have a writer visit, their visit should be early in the classroom process so they can focus the students on selecting and interpreting poems for performance. If you have an actor coach, make sure they visit after students have memorized poems, so they can help hone performances. Be sure to clarify expectations with the teachers before artists visit the classroom. Different types of guest artists can specialize in different areas of the evaluation criteria.

The following are some ways SAAs have helped connect teachers and guest artists:

- Residency sites are selected from applying schools in fall. Schools receive 2, 3-day professional artist residencies for a minimum of 4 English classes per school. Residencies focus first on poetry writing and then on poetry recitation and performance.
- Affiliation with a local university provides mentoring opportunities for students.
- Teacher orientation in October provides introduction to teaching artists available to work in classrooms. In each region, up to four poets with a background in arts education residencies will help teachers implement the curriculum and may serve as resources for teachers, recitation coaches, or artists-in-residence, depending on availability and school needs.
- Creative and leadership opportunities are provided for students who have participated in Poetry Out Loud programming in former years by inviting them to serve as liaisons for students new to the program. Materials and resources are provided to help these students develop activities such as local Poetry Out Loud peer performances and workshops that will teach students how to best use the many tools available on the Poetry Out Loud website.
- Participating schools are given the opportunity to have the current state poet laureate or a past poet laureate visit their campus for a "tour" to conduct a workshop with students and/or give a reading.

INCORPORATING TEACHING ARTISTS

One state provided participating teachers this option to help integrate Poetry Out Loud into the curriculum:

If teachers wish to hire a teaching artist to work in their school, the SAA pays the teaching artist directly and monitors the residencies so as to lift any potential administrative burden from the schools.

Teachers and teaching artists then collaborate to develop a curriculum for students, based on the Poetry Out Loud Teacher's Guide. Residency work may include lessons in how to read poetry, creative writing, modern poetics, and mock recitations.

9. Promoting Poetry Out Loud

PUBLIC RELATIONS TOOLKIT

We have developed an online [public relations toolkit](#) to help you promote your Poetry Out Loud program. Included are several resources you can customize to raise awareness of Poetry Out Loud among audiences in your community.

This PR toolkit includes:

- Tips on media outreach for every phase of the program
- Sample press materials for school-level to state-level contests
- Promotional Poetry Out Loud PowerPoint
- Media FAQs
- Talking points about Poetry Out Loud

STATE WEBSITE

Many states have developed an excellent online presence to promote the program in their state. On these sites, teachers can find state-specific deadlines, schools may register to participate, students can look at photos of local past winners, and the public can find out about local contests. These sites also link to the national site, so teachers can find the Teacher's Guide, students can browse the anthology, etc.

Here are a few outstanding examples:

Alaska: <http://siteline.vendini.com/juneau-arts-humanities-council/poetry-out-loud>

Idaho: <http://www.arts.idaho.gov/ae/pol/poetryoutloudidaho.aspx>

Michigan: <http://www.michiganhumanities.org/poetry-out-loud/>

Minnesota: www.loft.org/programsawards/educationalprograms/poetry_out_loud/

New Jersey: <http://www.jerseyarts.com/pol/>

New Mexico: <http://www.nmarts.org/poetry-out-loud.html>

North Dakota: <http://ndpol.weebly.com/>

Tennessee: <http://tnartseducation.org/events/poetry-out-loud/>

COLORADO: SOCIAL MEDIA

In addition to email and personal contact, Colorado POL employed its Facebook page to convey information and instruction to teachers, as well as to post Poetry Foundations 'Poem of the Day,' and to share links and videos for additional related material. During the 2013-2014 POL program, these efforts resulted in an 89% increase in Facebook page "likes," and a 70% increase in reach from October 2013, to the State Finals in March 2014. POL program teachers, and those who did not participate, comprise a portion of this audience; however, individuals from around the state and those representing arts organizations were engaged with Colorado POL via social media.

- Colorado Creative Industries

10. Inclusivity & Accessibility

The National Endowment for the Arts and the Poetry Foundation are committed to the inclusivity of Poetry Out Loud. Accessibility is considered at all levels, from the development of program materials to the planning of competitions.

Poetry Out Loud must not exclude or limit student participation based on race, color, religion, national origin, sex, or disability in compliance with federal law and regulations, in terms of both facilities and programs. For more information, please contact the NEA and see the NEA website: <http://arts.gov/civil-rights-office/what-we-do>.

Accessibility Awareness

Teachers are encouraged to involve all students in their classroom Poetry Out Loud activities. Teachers who want more information about making Poetry Out Loud accessible to students with disabilities should contact their state [Poetry Out Loud coordinator](#). Each state arts agency also has an accessibility coordinator who may be helpful. They can be a great resource and can also point you in the direction of other experts in the field, as needed. A list of SAA accessibility coordinators can be found on the NEA website: <http://arts.gov/accessibility/accessibility-resources/state-arts-agency-and-regional-arts-organizations>

Additionally, please ensure you are using proper terminology for writing and speaking about students with a disability. A [language guide](#) for discussing disability is available; read through it and share it with others working on the program.

Other useful resources include:

- [Design for Accessibility: A Cultural Administrator's Handbook](#): (esp. chapters 7 and 9) provides specific guidance on how to make cultural events accessible.
- [VSA](#) staff at state and national offices work with arts and accessibility issues every day. They can provide guidance on how to make your POL program more inclusive; they also serve as program partners in some states.
- Service organizations (for example, the Muscular Dystrophy Association or United Cerebral Palsy) can help you better understand a particular disability.
- Your [State Vocational Rehabilitation Agency](#) might also be helpful in providing insight about appropriate accommodations if a student or their advocate is unclear about what is needed.

Making Your Poetry Out Loud Program Accessible

To ensure that a student's needs are considered for Poetry Out Loud, we recommend the following process at all levels of competition:

- **Engage in an interactive process.** Don't assume that you know what a student may or may not need in terms of accessibility—instead, start a conversation with the student and/or his or her advocate. Their input will ensure that everyone is comfortable with the process and its outcome.
- **Level the playing field.** Use the information you gleaned from the interactive process to make accommodations that will enable each student to deliver their best performance. Provide accommodations that seem appropriate and reasonable. Accommodations might include a microphone for a student whose voice may be unclear or quiet, or the opportunity to sit during the recitation for a student who cannot comfortably stand for a length of time.
- **Brief your judges by providing general guidance on accessibility.** The interactive process involving students and their parents/guardians/advocates may also provide valuable insight with respect to educating the judges on accessibility and disability. There may be instances in which students would like their disability disclosed to the judges and other instances in which they would not. Please disclose only what the students and his/her parent/guardian would like the judges to know, if anything. In some cases, a judge might request additional information about how a student's disability may impact his/her recitation. Before discussing this with the judges, please confer with the student and his/her parent/guardian to determine the best approach to this inquiry.
- **Set high expectations for every student.** Remind your judges that lowering their expectations for a student with a disability does a disservice to that student and his or her competitors. All students should be judged fairly against the POL evaluation criteria.

American Sign Language (ASL) and Poetry Out Loud

Poetry Out Loud was piloted at a school for the deaf during the 2008-09 school year, providing us the framework to create a national model for including deaf and hard-of-hearing students in Poetry Out Loud. The following materials will help you include deaf and hard-of-hearing students in your own school.

[ASL Supplement to the POL Teacher's Guide](#)

[ASL Supplement to the POL Judge's Guide](#)

[ASL Supplement to the POL Organizer's Guide](#)

Accessibility Accommodations at State and National Finals

A school champion who requires any accommodations in order to compete at the regional or state finals should notify the state Poetry Out Loud coordinator immediately upon being selected as school champion.

A state champion who requires any accommodations in order to compete in the National Finals should notify the National Endowment for the Arts Poetry Out Loud Program Manager immediately upon being selected as state champion.

11. Credits and Acknowledgments

We gratefully acknowledge all state arts agencies, students, and teachers for their assistance in helping us shape this guide. We also acknowledge NEA's Accessibility and Public Affairs staff for their recommendations and revisions.

We appreciate your feedback to improve this guide. Please send comments to poetryoutloud@arts.gov.



Established by Congress in 1965, the NEA is the independent federal agency whose funding and support gives Americans the opportunity to participate in the arts, exercise their imaginations, and develop their creative capacities. Through partnerships with state arts agencies, local leaders, other federal agencies, and the philanthropic sector, the NEA supports arts learning, affirms and celebrates America's rich and diverse cultural heritage, and extends its work to promote equal access to the arts in every community across America.



The Poetry Foundation, publisher of *Poetry* magazine, is an independent literary organization committed to a vigorous presence for poetry in our culture. It has embarked on an ambitious plan to bring the best poetry before the largest possible audience.

Poetry Out Loud: National Recitation Contest is a partnership of the National Endowment for the Arts, the Poetry Foundation, and the State and Jurisdictional Arts Agencies of the United States.