



## **2016-2017 POETRY OUT LOUD: NATIONAL RECITATION CONTEST PR Toolkit**

### **TABLE OF CONTENTS**

#### **Getting started**

**New – recruitment letter/blog post from NEA Chairman Jane Chu**

#### **PR tips for schools**

**Promotional ideas for school-level Poetry Out Loud events**

**Sample media advisory for school-level contests**

**Sample follow-up press release after school-level contest**

**Viewing parties for the National Finals**

#### **PR tips for state arts agencies**

**Social media tactics for schools and state arts agencies**

**Sample state arts agency launch announcement press release**

**Media outreach ideas for state Poetry Out Loud finals**

**Sample state finals press release**

**Sample media advisory for state finals**

**Sample public service announcement script for state finals**

**Sample press release announcing the Poetry Out Loud state champion**

**Sample follow-up press release on state champion after National Finals**

#### **Other items**

**Frequently Asked Questions**

**Poetry Out Loud talking points**



## Getting started

You don't have to be a PR expert to create some buzz around Poetry Out Loud!

We have developed this PR toolkit to help you promote your state's Poetry Out Loud program. Included are several tools you can customize to raise awareness of Poetry Out Loud among audiences in your community. Feel free to use some or all of these resources to facilitate your efforts and generate media coverage of Poetry Out Loud in your community.

This virtual toolkit includes:

- A recruitment letter from NEA Chairman Jane Chu. State Arts Agencies can distribute this letter to schools this fall, or share it as a blog post on your website. Remember to share it via social media as well.
- Tips on media outreach for every phase of the program.
- "Swiss cheese" press materials –you'll find accurate, consistent language on the Poetry Out Loud program in these sample press releases and other materials. Just fill in the holes with information on your local events. Use these materials to promote your events in local newspapers, TV news, newsletters, or online media outlets.
- Social media section, including tips and tactics for Facebook, Twitter, and other social media channels.
- Frequently Asked Questions
- Sample talking points about Poetry Out Loud

You can find all of these items on the Poetry Out Loud website, [poetryoutloud.org](http://poetryoutloud.org), in the password-protected "State Partners" section.



Feel free to use this recruitment letter from NEA Chairman Jane Chu in a blog post on your website, or in your recruitment efforts to your state's schools.

*From the Desk of NEA Chairman Jane Chu*

"I wasn't really into poetry before [Poetry Out Loud].... It wasn't something I was reading or even interested in. But through this classroom requirement it really snuck up on me how much I would connect with these poems and how much poetry would be something I could carry with me for the rest of my life." Those are the words of Langston Ward, who won the Poetry Out Loud National Championship in 2013. He, like more than 300,000 students across the country, has experienced the power of the Poetry Out Loud national recitation contest.

Poetry Out Loud helps thousands of teachers nationwide give their students a new outlet into understanding poetry, while also increasing student self-confidence and public speaking skills. For more than ten years, the National Endowment for the Arts, in partnership with the Poetry Foundation and the state arts agencies, has provided this high-quality arts education program to students across the country.

Poetry Out Loud offers high school teachers an easy-to-use, standards-based program to help students discover a range of poets from Emily Dickinson to Richard Blanco to Gwendolyn Brooks. Participating teachers receive free materials including a teacher's guide, lesson plans, and access to audio-visual materials on the art of recitation. Students get to choose from among 900+ poems in the official Poetry Out Loud anthology, then bring them to life through memorization and recitation.

Ninety percent of teachers surveyed agreed that Poetry Out Loud increased their students' confidence. According to Denise Abercrombie, who chairs the English department at a Connecticut high school, "Many students who've never given poetry a second thought or who shy away from public speaking now carry a poem in their hearts and a bit more confidence on stage."

The competition starts in the classroom, with students advancing to school-wide contests, then regional and state finals. By being part of the official program, your student has the chance to win an all-expenses-paid trip to the National Finals in Washington, DC in April 2017. In total, Poetry Out Loud will award more than \$100,000 to state- and national-level winners and their schools.

I invite you to visit [poetryoutloud.org](http://poetryoutloud.org) to learn more about this dynamic program and encourage you to contact your [state Poetry Out Loud coordinator](#) to take part in the 2016-17 program.

Jane Chu  
Chairman  
National Endowment for the Arts



## **PROMOTIONAL IDEAS & PR TIPS FOR SCHOOL-LEVEL POETRY OUT LOUD EVENTS**

The Poetry Out Loud contest is a great way to raise school spirit and generate positive visibility for your school. Now that your school has been selected to participate in the official Poetry Out Loud contest, here are some simple ways to increase awareness of Poetry Out Loud and share your students' achievements with the community at large.

### **In your school**

- Display a Poetry Out Loud poster in the school library, cafeteria, or hallway.
- Post a "save-the-date" notice on the school calendar and on bulletin boards throughout the school.
- Send a notice announcing classroom champions to the school website, newsletter, or Facebook page.
- Publicize the school-wide contest on the school website, Facebook page, or in the student newspaper.
- Write an article about the school-wide contest for your PTA newsletter.
- Announce classroom winners and the school-wide competition in the daily PA broadcast, at assemblies, or on the school's YouTube channel.
- Include a 'poem-a-day' poetry recitation in the daily PA broadcast.
- "Live-Tweet" a classroom or school Poetry Out Loud contest, remember to use the #POL17 hashtag.
- Organize a viewing party of the Poetry Out Loud National Finals. Visit [arts.gov/partnerships/poetry-out-loud](https://arts.gov/partnerships/poetry-out-loud) in spring 2017 to register.
- Use the Poetry Out Loud logo to celebrate your school's involvement in this national arts education program.
- Join the 2017 Poetry Out Loud hashtag campaign on Instagram by sharing your photos with #iampoetryoutloud.

### **In your community**

- Call your community newspaper (we suggest the metro section editor), and invite them to attend the school-wide competition.
- Invite a prominent member of the local media to serve as a judge or master of ceremonies for the school-wide competition.
- After the event, send the local newspaper a follow-up press release highlighting the contest, your involvement in Poetry Out Loud, and photos from your event.
- Send a letter to the editor of your local newspaper. Use the letter to showcase your school's participation in Poetry Out Loud, and to discuss the benefits of poetry in the classroom.
- Follow other local community or educational organizations on Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube to build a social media network for your school (including Poetry Out Loud) and start sharing your #POL17 news.



## SAMPLE MEDIA ADVISORY FOR OFFICIAL POETRY OUT LOUD HIGH SCHOOL CONTESTS

For teachers and schools participating in the official Poetry Out Loud contest, use this as a template for a media advisory. Send your media advisory to local print and TV stations 3-5 days before your high school contest. If you have a Twitter account, post a tweet (and include the hashtag #POL17) to notify your followers about new Poetry Out Loud-related press releases or media advisories.

**Contact:** [NAME, TITLE]

[HIGH SCHOOL NAME/ LOGO]

[ADDRESS]

[PHONE | EMAIL]

[WEB ADDRESS | BLOG ADDRESS | FACEBOOK | TWITTER – *EMBED HYPERLINKS TO ADDRESSES*]

### MEDIA ADVISORY

#### DATE

#### [HIGH SCHOOL] ANNOUNCES POETRY OUT LOUD CONTEST

**WHAT:** [HIGH SCHOOL] announces a school contest for Poetry Out Loud: National Recitation Contest. The competition, presented in partnership with the [STATE ARTS AGENCY], the National Endowment for the Arts, and the Poetry Foundation, is part of a national program that encourages high school students to learn about great poetry through memorization, performance, and competition. Over the past 11 years, Poetry Out Loud has reached more than 3 million students and 45,000 teachers from 10,000 schools nationwide. On [DATE], more than [NUMBER] students from [HIGH SCHOOL] will participate in the Poetry Out Loud school contest at [LOCATION]. The winner of this competition will advance to the [REGIONAL OR STATE] Poetry Out Loud contest. The [STATE] champion will advance to the Poetry Out Loud National Finals on April 25–26, 2017 in Washington, DC, where \$50,000 in awards and school stipends will be distributed.

**WHO:** Featured speakers and participants will be:

- [HIGH SCHOOL OFFICIALS]
- [THE MASTER OF CEREMONIES]
- [NAMES AND TITLES OF GUEST JUDGES]

**WHEN:** [DATE, TIME]

**WHERE:** [LOCATION]

**OTHER:** Attendance at [EVENT/LOCATION] is free and open to the public, although seating is limited. For further information, call [CONTACT] at [NUMBER].

**FOLLOW:** Poetry Out Loud is on Twitter [your Twitter handle], @PoetryOutLoud, and @NEAarts, #POL17

**CONTACT:** [SPECIFY MEDIA RSVP CONTACT AND RSVP DEADLINE IF APPLICABLE]

###



## SAMPLE “FOLLOW-UP” PRESS RELEASE FOR OFFICIAL POETRY OUT LOUD HIGH SCHOOL CONTESTS

For teachers and schools participating in the official Poetry Out Loud contest, simply fill in the holes of this “swiss cheese” press release and send it to your local media outlets (newspaper, newsletters, websites, radio, TV, social media channels) after the school contest.

**Contact:** [NAME, TITLE]  
[HIGH SCHOOL NAME/ LOGO]  
[ADDRESS] [PHONE | EMAIL]  
[WEB ADDRESS | BLOG ADDRESS | FACEBOOK | TWITTER – EMBED HYPERLINKS TO ADDRESSES]

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
DATE

### [HIGH SCHOOL] ANNOUNCES WINNERS OF POETRY OUT LOUD CONTEST

[CITY, STATE] — [HIGH SCHOOL] announces the winners of the school contest for Poetry Out Loud: National Recitation Contest. The student winners are [NAME SCHOOL CHAMPION AND OTHER TOP WINNERS].

The competition, presented in partnership with the [STATE ARTS AGENCY], the National Endowment for the Arts, and the Poetry Foundation, is part of a national program that encourages high school students to learn about great poetry through memorization, performance, and competition. On [DATE], more than [NUMBER] high school students from [HIGH SCHOOL] participated in the Poetry Out Loud school contest at [LOCATION].

Poetry Out Loud is a national arts education program that encourages the study of great poetry by offering educational materials and a dynamic recitation competition to high schools across the country. Poetry Out Loud uses a pyramid structure. Beginning at the classroom level, winners advance to a school-wide competition, then to [REGIONAL OR STATE] competition, and ultimately to the National Finals in Washington, DC. Over the past 11 years, Poetry Out Loud has reached more than 3 million students and 45,000 teachers from 10,000 schools nationwide.

At [HIGH SCHOOL], students recited works they selected from an anthology of more than 900 classic and contemporary poems. Judges evaluated student performances on criteria including voice and articulation, evidence of understanding, and accuracy. Teachers introduced poetry recitation in the classroom using free, standards-based curriculum materials created by the NEA and the Poetry Foundation, including a teacher’s guide, lesson plans, an online anthology, posters, and video and audio on the art of recitation. Schools are welcome to download these resources at [poetryoutloud.org](http://poetryoutloud.org).

The [HIGH SCHOOL] winner will advance to the [REGIONAL OR STATE] contest on [DATE] at [LOCATION]. Each champion at the state level will receive \$200 and an all-expenses-paid trip to Washington, DC, to compete for the national championship, April 25–26, 2017. The school of the state champion will receive \$500 for the purchase of poetry materials.

To learn more about the [STATE] Poetry Out Loud contest, contact [STATE ARTS AGENCY REPRESENTATIVE] or visit [poetryoutloud.org](http://poetryoutloud.org).

[BOILERPLATE INFORMATION ON YOUR HIGH SCHOOL]

###



## VIEWING PARTIES FOR THE NATIONAL FINALS

The Poetry Out Loud National Finals will be webcast live on April 25–26, 2017. If you can't make it to DC, you can bring the poetry celebration to your classroom, home, library, or community center with a viewing party to learn more about the art of poetry and cheer on the state champions. Visit [arts.gov/partnerships/poetry-out-loud](http://arts.gov/partnerships/poetry-out-loud) in spring 2017 for full information on how to register, host, and promote your viewing party. After you've registered your viewing party, you can customize the sample press release and distribute it two weeks before your viewing party to media outlets in your area (state arts agency newsletter, PTA newsletters, school district websites, and local consumer newspapers, TV and radio stations).

Contact: [NAME, TITLE]  
[ORGANIZATION/LOGO]  
[ADDRESS] [PHONE | EMAIL]  
[WEB ADDRESS | FACEBOOK | TWITTER – EMBED HYPERLINKS TO ADDRESSES]

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE – [DATE]

### **[NAME OF ORGANIZATION] HOSTS A POETRY OUT LOUD VIEWING PARTY**

#### ***Live webcast makes viewing parties available to poetry fans nationwide***

[CITY, STATE] — [NAME OF ORGANIZATION] invites [SPECIFY YOUR TARGET AUDIENCE] to a viewing party of the live webcast for the Poetry Out Loud National Finals. On April 25–26, 2017, 53 students from across the country will converge in Washington, DC, to compete in Poetry Out Loud, the nation's largest youth poetry recitation competition. [NAME OF ORGANIZATION] along with others across the country are hosting viewing parties to cheer on their favorites and learn more about the art of poetry during this live, one-time-only webcast available at [arts.gov](http://arts.gov).

The Poetry Out Loud viewing party will take place on [DATE] from [start time] to [end time] at [location].

The viewing party will also feature [insert your activities here: discussions, local speakers, student recitations, food, etc.]. Follow the conversation on Twitter with the hashtag #POL17.

People who would like to attend this free event should contact [name/number/email/other RSVP information].

To learn more about this Poetry Out Loud viewing party, visit [website, Facebook page] or call [contact name/number].

### **About Poetry Out Loud**

Poetry Out Loud is a partnership between the [National Endowment for the Arts](http://www.ned.gov) and [the Poetry Foundation](http://www.poetryfoundation.org). The program encourages the study of great poetry by offering educational materials and a dynamic recitation competition to high schools students across the country. Poetry Out Loud gives students an opportunity to master public speaking skills, build self-confidence, and learn about their literary heritage. Over the past 11 years, Poetry Out Loud has reached more than 3 million students and 45,000 teachers from 10,000 schools nationwide. More information is available at [poetryoutloud.org](http://poetryoutloud.org).

###



## SOCIAL MEDIA TIPS

Social media channels such as blogs, [Facebook](#), [YouTube](#), [Instagram](#), and [Twitter](#) are useful tools to promote Poetry Out Loud in addition to traditional media (newspapers, radio and TV, magazines, online versions of these outlets). With social media, you play a different role: in addition to persuading traditional media to cover your story, you take on the role of the journalist—you tell your story about Poetry Out Loud directly to the public. Here are social media tips and tools to enhance your overall Poetry Out Loud communications plan.

### KEY SOCIAL MEDIA IDEAS TO CONSIDER

**Look at the big picture** – Social media is a tool and not a strategy. Integrate social media tactics into your overall media outreach plan for Poetry Out Loud. Make sure your traditional media and social media tactics cross-reference each other (i.e., the blog points readers to the newsroom and vice versa; share your Facebook photos on your Twitter account).

**What’s your goal?** Clarify why you are using particular social media channels to promote Poetry Out Loud. Are you trying to reach a new audience? Drive more people to your website?

**Pick and choose** – Every day there are more social media platforms. Pick the ones that will best help you share your Poetry Out Loud stories and news. What type of content do you have? How much time do you have to manage a particular platform? Which platforms are popular with your target audience? Make sure you understand the social media platform, its community, and rules.

**Make a game plan** – Social media tactics are as time-intensive as traditional media tactics. Know what you can sustain and create a plan. Who will write, edit, produce, and approve new content, and how frequently? Who will respond to queries; will you respond to negative posts? Will you create content to share with partners, such as tweets or photos?

**Find your voice** – Social media users join communities that offer interesting, informative, useful, and fun content. This is a great opportunity to make poetry come alive through humor, personality, interesting perspectives, and discussion.

**Use the “80/20” rule** – Social media is about sharing so a good rule of thumb is to use 80 percent of your social media content to reference content by other organizations and experts. Invite the State Poet Laureate to guest post on your blog. “Retweet” a relevant post or link to an article about poetry. Then use the other 20 percent of your posts to highlight your state or school’s Poetry Out Loud announcements and conversations.

**Engage!** It’s called social media for a reason. Aim for two-way conversations. If possible, enable comments on your blog, or YouTube. (But don’t forget to include a comment policy.) Consider crowd-sourced content.

**Make it easy to share** – Make sure your social media channels are easy to find on your website. For example, add the “follow me on Twitter/Facebook/YouTube/other” buttons to your website home page or newsroom page. Include social media channels on your press announcements and in your organizational e-signature. Mention them at your events.



## SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS

### Blog

- If your arts agency or participating school has a blog, post updates on Poetry Out Loud at least once a week.
- Blog content might include a student interview with a teacher or artist involved in Poetry Out Loud, a student writing about their favorite poem, tips for participating in the competition, or a link to a press release on statewide or school contests.

### Twitter

- Use Twitter to share short thoughts about Poetry Out Loud—at 140 characters or less per tweet. Set up a free Twitter account for your school or classroom (register for a free Twitter account at [www.twitter.com](http://www.twitter.com)).
- Invite your audience to follow your Twitter feed. Arts agencies can invite other arts organizations. Schools can invite parents to follow their Twitter feed to keep track of the program at the local level. You can ask your followers to retweet your post and help spread the news. You can also use Twitter to have conversations with your followers.
- Use Twitter to provide “play-by-play” commentary during the live school and state competitions. You can also send out interesting trivia about the poems, the poets, and the competitors.
- Use a hashtag to help users follow conversations about your competition. You can use #POL17 for general tweets about the competition and tag photos of your Poetry Out Loud community—students, parents, teachers judges, etc.—with #iampoetryoutloud.
- Also use the hashtags **#POL17** and **#iampoetryoutloud** to search for other people who are tweeting about Poetry Out Loud -- and to help them find you. A sample tweet: *Lincoln High hosts Poetry Out Loud contest [link] #POL17.*
- Use your 140 characters economically; when possible make your tweets 90-110 characters so others can retweet your post without editing.

### Facebook

- Set up a Facebook page for Poetry Out Loud at your arts agency or school; post updates on the program.
- Follow the national [Poetry Out Loud Facebook page](#), and let the [NEA Poetry Out Loud staff](#) know you have a Facebook page so they can follow you.
- Use the Facebook page to share news about the program, content from your blog, photos from your events.
- Have students create a Facebook page for their favorite character from a poem.

### YouTube

- The average viewer spends only 1-2 minutes watching a YouTube video, so plan your videos accordingly.
- Highlight videos that compliment Poetry Out Loud learning objectives. Be aware of copyright issues when featuring poetry online. For more on “fair use” for poetry, see this [article](#).
- In 2015-2016, several state schools for the deaf participated in Poetry Out Loud. Make your video accessible to deaf or hard of hearing audiences by using YouTube’s easy captioning options. Alternately, you can post a transcript of the poem with the video.
- Fill out the “description” section in detail, and include a link to your website. Use YouTube video tags (descriptive words) to help viewers find your video when using the YouTube search engine.



## SAMPLE POETRY OUT LOUD LAUNCH ANNOUNCEMENT PRESS RELEASE FOR STATE ARTS AGENCIES

This is a sample “swiss cheese” press release that you can customize and send to local education and consumer media to announce Poetry Out Loud. With your help, we can encourage more teachers and students to participate in this program. To use this release, simply fill in the holes (the date, your state arts agency’s name, your contact information, etc.) and distribute it to media outlets in your area (state arts agency newsletter, PTA newsletters, school district websites, and local consumer newspapers, TV and radio stations). Distribute this announcement at your earliest convenience.

**Contact:** [NAME, TITLE]  
[ORGANIZATION/LOGO]  
[ADDRESS] [PHONE | EMAIL]  
[WEB ADDRESS | BLOG ADDRESS | FACEBOOK | TWITTER – *EMBED HYPERLINKS TO ADDRESSES*]

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE – [DATE]**

### [NAME OF STATE ARTS AGENCY] ANNOUNCES POETRY OUT LOUD: NATIONAL RECITATION CONTEST

*High school students in [STATE] invited to compete  
in national poetry recitation contest*

[CITY, STATE] — The National Endowment for the Arts and the Poetry Foundation present the Poetry Out Loud: National Recitation Contest, in partnership with [STATE ARTS AGENCY] and [OTHER LOCAL PARTNERS]. Poetry Out Loud is a program that encourages high school students to learn about great poetry through memorization, performance, and competition.

During [CLARIFY TIME FRAME], schools are invited to participate in classroom and school wide contests, advancing to a state competition on [DATE]. State champions will advance to the National Finals, to take place on April 25–26, 2017, in Washington, DC.

[NAME OF 2016 STATE CHAMPION] from [SCHOOL, CITY] was selected as the 2016 [STATE] Poetry Out Loud champion and represented the state in the 2016 National Finals in Washington, DC, last April. More than 315,000 students from 2,300 high schools took part in the 2015–2016 Poetry Out Loud program.

The program encourages the study of great poetry by offering educational materials and a dynamic recitation competition to high school students across the country. Poetry Out Loud gives students an opportunity to master public speaking skills, build self-confidence, and learn about their literary heritage.

“Poetry Out Loud, at its core, is about the power of poetry,” said NEA Chairman Jane Chu. “By memorizing these poems, students are internalizing the beauty of the arts and developing a deep personal connection with our shared literary heritage. The NEA is proud to work with our state partners and the Poetry Foundation to make this opportunity available to students throughout the country.”

“Poetry Out Loud is often the beginning of a lifelong love of poetry in a young person’s life,” said Poetry Foundation President Henry Bienen. “I’m reminded of Emerson’s encouraging words to Whitman—‘I greet you at the beginning of a great career, which yet must have had a long foreground somewhere, for such a start.’”



[QUOTE FROM STATE ARTS AGENCY REPRESENTATIVE, GOVERNOR, OR STATE POET LAUREATE]

The NEA and the Poetry Foundation have partnered to provide administrative grants to state arts agencies and awards, and will coordinate the National Finals next April. With this support, the [STATE ARTS AGENCY] will target [CLARIFY SCOPE WITHIN STATE] in [STATE].

Additionally, the NEA and the Poetry Foundation provide state arts agencies with free, standards-based curriculum materials for use by participating schools. These materials include an online poetry anthology containing more than 900 classic and contemporary poems, a teacher's guide, lesson plans, posters, and video and audio on the art of recitation. Schools are welcome to download these resources at [poetryoutloud.org](http://poetryoutloud.org).

### **How to get involved in Poetry Out Loud**

High school teachers who are interested in participating in Poetry Out Loud should know that the program may be incorporated with existing poetry units. High schools that wish to be part of the official Poetry Out Loud program must contact [STATE ARTS AGENCY] to participate. [STATE ARTS AGENCY] will determine which schools are eligible to take part in the official Poetry Out Loud program. Schools that are not in the official program may conduct their own contests using the online resources. Contact [LOCAL CONTACT INFORMATION] or visit [poetryoutloud.org](http://poetryoutloud.org) for more information.

### **Poetry Out Loud awards**

Students who participate in the official Poetry Out Loud program may be eligible to compete in the state and National Finals in 2016-2017. Each state champion will receive \$200 and an all-expenses-paid trip to Washington, DC, to compete for the national championship. The state champion's school will receive a \$500 stipend for the purchase of poetry materials. The first runner-up in each state will receive \$100, with \$200 for his or her school library. Poetry Out Loud will award a total of \$50,000 in cash and school stipends at the National Finals, including a \$20,000 award for the Poetry Out Loud National Champion.

For further information on Poetry Out Loud, visit [poetryoutloud.org](http://poetryoutloud.org).

[BOILERPLATE ON YOUR ORGANIZATION]

###



## **MEDIA OUTREACH IDEAS AND MEDIA EVENT TIPS FOR STATE POETRY OUT LOUD FINALS**

For state arts agencies, the state Poetry Out Loud contest is a great platform to raise visibility of your work in the community. The following are some ideas to showcase the Poetry Out Loud state finals as one of the contributions your state arts agency brings to audiences in your state.

### **Things to do as soon as possible**

- Develop a media outreach plan for the event. Identify local media you wish to reach, and what type of stories you'd like to see in the news about the program. Determine how to use your social media channels (Facebook, blog, Twitter, etc.) to promote Poetry Out Loud.
- Develop a local media list (local consumer print, radio, TV, online, and local educational and arts media, etc.).
- Develop press kit materials (see "sample materials" provided in this toolkit).
- Determine if participating students require media waivers to appear on the news (check with schools and/or school district communications offices).
- Hire a photographer to capture professional-grade images for both promotional use and media outreach.
- Visit the event venue, identify the room setup, and identify good visual opportunities and any logistical challenges for media.
  - Identify a location for the media check-in desk.
  - If you expect TV coverage, identify a space in the venue where they can get an unobstructed view.
  - Determine audiovisual needs – if the students reciting poetry on stage will be using microphones, find out if the venue will provide a “mult box.” A mult box is a piece of equipment that allows a clean audio feed for TV and radio reporters.
  - Assess nearby parking for reporters and TV trucks.
  - Identify a quiet area or separate room where reporters might conduct “one-on-one” interviews away from the crowd.



## **MEDIA OUTREACH IDEAS AND MEDIA EVENT TIPS CONT.**

### **Two or three weeks before the event**

- Send a press release to reporters on your media list (see “swiss cheese” press release).
- Send a public service announcement to local radio and TV stations (see “swiss cheese” PSA).
- Make follow-up calls to reporters and assignment editors to ask for coverage. Also notify public service editors and ask them to put the event on their community calendars.
- Highlight last year’s state champion as part of your media outreach. Ask if he/she can serve as a spokesperson for this year’s program and share with the media their experiences with Poetry Out Loud.
- Notify major outlets in state competitors’ hometowns to generate additional coverage.
- Post items in your social media channels to build excitement leading up to the contest.

### **One week before the event**

- Email the media advisory two days before the event (see “swiss cheese” advisory). Make follow-up phone calls to target print, radio, and TV outlets.
- Provide a basic “shot list” to hired photographer (for example, “shots of students performing, group shots of finalists with VIPs, audience reaction shots, candid”).
- Generate social media buzz and promote attendance by filing blog posts, Facebook updates and “tweets” about the upcoming contest. Remember to use the hashtag #POL17 to join in the national conversation.

### **The day of the event**

- Email the advisory again on the morning of the event, and conduct another round of follow-up calls to confirm if media will attend the event. Call TV stations before 9 am to reach them before their morning team meetings.
- If a newspaper reporter declines to attend, call the photo editor and ask if they can send a photographer to cover the event.
- At the event, have a well-marked table for media check-in, staffed at all times. People staffing this table should collect reporter contact information with a sign-in sheet, offer them a press kit or other media materials, and have them escorted to the designated media seating area and/or area for TV crews.
- Provide a reserved seating area for journalists.



- Just before and after the event, PR staff should facilitate any interview requests between media and students and appropriate spokespeople.
- During your contest introductions, consider using the following language. “[STATE ARTS AGENCY] will be live-tweeting this event. If you are following us on Twitter, please use the hashtag #POL17.” This acknowledges that audience members (including students) may tweet, and this will help you track what’s being “tweeted” about the contest.
- Before or after the contest, use a camera or mobile device to conduct spot interviews with student competitors and judges, then post them on your blog, Facebook, Instagram, YouTube channel, or other social media platform.
- Take photos of the live event with your smart phone or tablet and upload them to Twitter or Facebook.

#### **After the event**

- Send out a follow-up press release announcing the winner and runners-up (see sample follow-up press release).
- Email images in .jpg format of event photos (with captions and credits) to no-show print outlets.
- Post news briefs and photos on your blog, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and other social media channels.
- Monitor the media for event coverage and collect news clips in a media report.



## SAMPLE POETRY OUT LOUD STATE FINALS PRESS RELEASE

This is a sample “swiss cheese” press release you can use to send to your local media outlets (newspaper, newsletters, websites, radio, TV). Simply fill in the holes (the date, your organization’s name, your contact information, etc.) and distribute it to your local media outlets to promote the event.

**Contact:** [NAME, TITLE]  
[STATE ARTS AGENCY / LOGO]  
[ADDRESS]  
[PHONE | EMAIL]  
[WEB ADDRESS | BLOG ADDRESS | FACEBOOK | TWITTER – *EMBED HYPERLINKS TO ADDRESSES*]

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
DATE

### [STATE ARTS AGENCY] ANNOUNCES POETRY OUT LOUD STATE FINALS

#### *High school students in [STATE] compete in national poetry recitation contest*

[CITY, STATE] — [STATE ARTS AGENCY] and [OTHER LOCAL PARTNERS] announce the state finals for Poetry Out Loud: National Recitation Contest. The competition, presented in partnership with the National Endowment for the Arts and the Poetry Foundation, is part of a national program that encourages high school students to learn about great poetry through memorization, performance, and competition. On [DATE], more than [NUMBER] high school students from [NUMBER] high schools will participate in the Poetry Out Loud state finals at [LOCATION].

Poetry Out Loud is a national arts education program that encourages the study of great poetry by offering educational materials and a dynamic recitation competition to high schools across the country. Poetry Out Loud uses a pyramid structure. Beginning at the classroom level, winners advance to a school-wide competition, then to the state competition, and ultimately to the National Finals in Washington, DC. More than 315,000 students from 2,300 high schools took part in the 2015–2016 Poetry Out Loud program.

At [LOCATION], contestants will recite works they selected from an anthology of more than 900 classic and contemporary poems. Students participating in the Poetry Out Loud program have benefited from educational materials created by the National Endowment for the Arts and the Poetry Foundation. These standards-based curriculum materials include an online anthology, a teacher’s guide, lesson plans, and video and audio on the art of recitation. Schools are welcome to download these resources at [poetryoutloud.org](http://poetryoutloud.org).

[QUOTE FROM STATE ARTS AGENCY REPRESENTATIVE, GOVERNOR, OR STATE POET LAUREATE]



## Poetry Out Loud Awards

The winner of the Poetry Out Loud [STATE] finals will receive \$200, and the winner's school will receive a \$500 stipend for the purchase of poetry materials. The first runner-up will receive \$100, with \$200 for his or her school library. Additional awards for state contenders include [ANY AWARDS FROM LOCAL SPONSORS]. The state champion of the Poetry Out Loud [STATE] final will receive an all-expenses-paid trip (with an adult chaperone) to compete in the National Finals in Washington, DC, on April 25–26, 2017. The Poetry Out Loud National Finals will present a total of \$50,000 in awards and school stipends, with a \$20,000 award for the Poetry Out Loud National Champion.

## [STATE] Poetry Out Loud finals at [LOCATION]

The Poetry Out Loud [STATE] finals will take place on [DATE] at [TIME] at [LOCATION]. The master of ceremonies will be [TBA]. Guest judges for the event include [NAMES AND TITLES OF GUEST JUDGES]. The event is free and open to [CLARIFY AUDIENCE AS NEEDED]. For more information on the state finals, contact [PHONE/WEBSITE/EMAIL] or visit [poetryoutloud.org](http://poetryoutloud.org).

## About the National Endowment for the Arts

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. For more information, visit [arts.gov](http://arts.gov).

## About the Poetry Foundation

The Poetry Foundation, publisher of *Poetry* magazine, is an independent literary organization committed to a vigorous presence for poetry in our culture. It exists to discover and celebrate the best poetry and to place it before the largest possible audience. The Poetry Foundation seeks to be a leader in shaping a receptive climate for poetry by developing new audiences, creating new avenues for delivery, and encouraging new kinds of poetry through innovative literary prizes and programs. For more information, please visit [www.poetryfoundation.org](http://www.poetryfoundation.org)

[BOILERPLATE INFORMATION ON YOUR ORGANIZATION]

###



## SAMPLE POETRY OUT LOUD MEDIA ADVISORY FOR STATE FINALS

Use this as a template for a media advisory that you can send to local print and TV stations 2-3 days before your event.

**Contact:** [NAME, TITLE]

[STATE ARTS AGENCY/ LOGO]

[ADDRESS]

[PHONE | EMAIL]

[WEB ADDRESS | BLOG ADDRESS | FACEBOOK | TWITTER – *EMBED HYPERLINKS TO ADDRESSES*]

### **MEDIA ADVISORY**

DATE

### **[STATE ARTS AGENCY] ANNOUNCES POETRY OUT LOUD STATE FINALS**

**WHAT:** [STATE ARTS AGENCY] and [OTHER LOCAL PARTNERS] announce the state finals for Poetry Out Loud: National Recitation Contest. The competition, presented in partnership with the National Endowment for the Arts and the Poetry Foundation, is part of a national program that encourages high school students to learn about great poetry through memorization, performance, and competition. On [DATE], more than [NUMBER] high school students from [NUMBER] high schools will participate in the Poetry Out Loud state finals at [LOCATION]. The winner of this competition will advance to the National Finals in Washington, DC, on April 25–26, 2017, where \$50,000 in awards and school stipends will be distributed.

**WHO:** Featured speakers and participants will be:

- [STATE ARTS AGENCY SPOKESPERSON]
- [NEA AND/OR POETRY FOUNDATION SPOKESPERSON]
- [THE MASTER OF CEREMONIES]
- [GUEST JUDGES]
- [SCHOOL DISTRICTS/SCHOOLS]

**WHEN:** [DATE, TIME]

**WHERE:** [LOCATION]

**OTHER:** Attendance at [EVENT/LOCATION] is free and open to the public, although seating is limited. For further information, call [CONTACT] at [NUMBER].

**CONTACT:** [SPECIFY MEDIA RSVP CONTACT AND DEADLINE FOR MEDIA RSVPS IF APPLICABLE]

###



**SAMPLE POETRY OUT LOUD SCRIPT FOR A PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENT (PSA)**

Promote the state finals of Poetry Out Loud by tailoring this sample script for public service announcements on your local radio or television stations.

For immediate release  
[DATE]

Contact: [NAME]  
[PHONE NUMBER]

Public Service Announcement  
30-second live read script

start date: [DATE]  
end date: [DATE]

:30 – Watch local high school students compete to be the [STATE] state champion of poetry recitation. The Poetry Out Loud [STATE] state finals will take place on [DATE] at [TIME] at [LOCATION]. The master of ceremonies will be [TBA]. Guest judges for the event include [NAMES AND TITLES OF GUEST JUDGES]. The event is free and open to [CLARIFY AUDIENCE AS NEEDED]. For more information, contact [PHONE/WEBSITE/EMAIL] or visit [poetryoutloud.org](http://poetryoutloud.org).

###



## SAMPLE PRESS RELEASE ANNOUNCING THE POETRY OUT LOUD STATE CHAMPION

Distribute this release immediately after your Poetry Out Loud State Finals. Send the release to media in the state capital as well as the hometown of the state champion and other finalists.

**Contact:** [NAME, TITLE]

[STATE ARTS AGENCY / LOGO]

[ADDRESS]

[PHONE | EMAIL]

[WEB ADDRESS | BLOG ADDRESS | FACEBOOK | TWITTER – *EMBED HYPERLINKS TO ADDRESSES*]

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

DATE

### [STATE ARTS AGENCY] ANNOUNCES [NAME OF STUDENT] AS THE 2017 POETRY OUT LOUD STATE CHAMPION

[CITY, STATE] — From a competitive field of more than [NUMBER] students across the state, [NAME OF STUDENT] from [NAME OF HIGH SCHOOL] in [CITY, STATE], won the title of 2017 Poetry Out Loud [NAME OF STATE] State Champion at the state finals held in [LOCATION, CITY] on [DATE]. The first runner-up was [NAME OF STUDENT] from [NAME OF HIGH SCHOOL] in [CITY, STATE].

[NAME OF STUDENT]'s final recitation was [NAME OF POEM] by [NAME OF POET], [BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF POEM].

[QUOTE FROM NEW STATE CHAMPION]

Poetry Out Loud is a national arts education program that encourages the study of great poetry by offering educational materials and a dynamic recitation competition to high schools across the country. Poetry Out Loud uses a pyramid structure. Beginning at the classroom level, winners advance to a school-wide competition, then to the state competition, and ultimately to the National Finals in Washington, DC. More than 315,000 students from 2,300 high schools took part in the 2015–2016 Poetry Out Loud program.

At the state finals in [LOCATION], Poetry Out Loud contestants recited works they selected from an anthology of more than 900 classic and contemporary poems. The online anthology, a website ([poetryoutloud.org](http://poetryoutloud.org)), a teacher's guide, posters, and media samples of poetry recitation were created by the National Endowment for the Arts and the Poetry Foundation as free educational resources for high school students and teachers.

The [NAME OF STATE] State Champion [NAME OF STUDENT] received an award of \$200 and an all-expenses-paid trip to Washington, DC, to compete for the national championship. [NAME OF STUDENT]'s school received a \$500 stipend for the purchase of poetry materials. First runner-up [NAME OF STUDENT] received \$100, with \$200 for [his or her] school library. [REPORT ON OTHER FINALISTS AS APPROPRIATE]



Guest judges presided over the competition, including [NAMES OF JUDGE, TITLES]. Judges evaluated student performances on criteria including physical presence, evidence of understanding, and accuracy.

**Poetry Out Loud** encourages the study of great poetry by offering educational materials and a dynamic recitation competition to high school students across the country. Poetry Out Loud gives students an opportunity to master public speaking skills, build self-confidence, and learn about their literary heritage. To find out how to get involved in the Poetry Out Loud National Recitation Contest, visit [poetryoutloud.org](http://poetryoutloud.org).

### **National Finals webcast and viewing parties**

Supporters can cheer on [NAME OF STATE CHAMPION] through a live, one-time only webcast of the National Finals on April 25–26, 2017 at [arts.gov](http://arts.gov). Fans can also host a Poetry Out Loud Webcast Viewing Party to learn more about the art of poetry recitation. Register at [arts.gov/partnerships/poetry-out-loud](http://arts.gov/partnerships/poetry-out-loud) this spring and find tips on hosting your party, promotional materials, and details on other viewing parties around the country.

[BOILERPLATE ON YOUR ORGANIZATION]

### **About the National Endowment for the Arts**

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. For more information, visit [arts.gov](http://arts.gov).

### **About the Poetry Foundation**

The Poetry Foundation, publisher of *Poetry* magazine, is an independent literary organization committed to a vigorous presence for poetry in our culture. It exists to discover and celebrate the best poetry and to place it before the largest possible audience. The Poetry Foundation seeks to be a leader in shaping a receptive climate for poetry by developing new audiences, creating new avenues for delivery, and encouraging new kinds of poetry through innovative literary prizes and programs. For more information, please visit [poetryfoundation.org](http://poetryfoundation.org)

###



**FOLLOW-UP PRESS RELEASE ON STATE CHAMPION AT NATIONAL FINALS**

Use this press release to showcase your state champion’s presence at the National Finals in Washington, DC.

**Contact:** [NAME, TITLE]  
[STATE ARTS AGENCY/ LOGO]  
[ADDRESS]  
[PHONE | EMAIL]  
[WEB ADDRESS | BLOG ADDRESS | FACEBOOK | TWITTER – *EMBED HYPERLINKS TO ADDRESSES*]

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
DATE

**[STATE] TEEN PARTICIPATES IN POETRY OUT LOUD:  
NATIONAL RECITATION CONTEST**

[CITY, STATE] — [NAME], a student from [CITY, STATE] was among the 53 Poetry Out Loud champions from every state, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands who participated in the National Finals of Poetry Out Loud: National Recitation Contest. Held in Washington, DC, on April 25–26, 2017, the national poetry recitation contest was sponsored by the National Endowment for the Arts and the Poetry Foundation. For the National Finals, [STATE CHAMPION] presented poems including [POEM] by [AUTHOR].

[NAME], a student at [SCHOOL], received an all-expenses-paid trip to compete in the National Finals after advancing from high school and state-level competitions.

[QUOTE FROM STATE CHAMPION]

The Poetry Out Loud National Finals were judged by special guests including [NAMES TBD]. Judges evaluated the student performances based on criteria including physical presence, voice and articulation, accuracy, and evidence of understanding. At the National Finals, a total of \$50,000 in awards and school stipends was distributed.

[QUOTE FROM SCHOOL OR STATE ARTS AGENCY REPRESENTATIVE]

Poetry Out Loud is a national arts education program that encourages the study of great poetry by offering educational materials and a dynamic recitation competition to high schools across the country.

Information on Poetry Out Loud is available from the [STATE ARTS AGENCY] at [web address] and at [poetryoutloud.org](http://poetryoutloud.org).

###



## **POETRY OUT LOUD 2016-2017 FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS**

### **What is Poetry Out Loud: National Poetry Recitation Contest?**

Poetry Out Loud is a national arts education program that encourages the study of great poetry by offering educational materials and a dynamic recitation competition to high schools across the country. Poetry Out Loud uses a pyramid structure. Participating teachers use the Poetry Out Loud toolkit to teach poetry recitation and run classroom competitions. Students select, memorize, and recite poems from an anthology of more than 900 classic and contemporary poems. Beginning at the classroom level, winners will advance to the school-wide competition, then to the state competition, and ultimately to the National Finals in Washington, DC. More than 315,000 students from 2,300 high schools took part in the 2015–2016 Poetry Out Loud program.

### **Where will Poetry Out Loud take place?**

State arts agencies in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands have enlisted high schools to participate in the official Poetry Out Loud program. For more information on state finals, visit [poetryoutloud.org/competition/state-finals](http://poetryoutloud.org/competition/state-finals).

### **When will Poetry Out Loud take place?**

Schools that are participating in the official competition will conduct their classroom and school-level programs and contests between September 2016 and February 2017. High school teachers who are interested in participating in Poetry Out Loud should know that the program may be incorporated with existing poetry units. State contests will be held by early March 2017, and the National Finals take place April 25–26, 2017 in Washington, DC.

### **Who created Poetry Out Loud?**

The National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) and the Poetry Foundation created Poetry Out Loud. At the state level, each state arts agency (SAA) has received an NEA grant of \$20,000 to assist with expenses of program coordination and the state final event.

### **Who can participate in the official Poetry Out Loud contest?**

The official Poetry Out Loud contest is administered at the state level by state arts agencies in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands. State arts agencies will define the scope of participation on a state-by-state basis. All types of high schools are welcome to participate, including public, private, parochial, independent, charter, etc. The official contest will be limited to schools identified by the state Poetry Out Loud coordinator. If you would like to get involved, contact your state arts agency at [poetryoutloud.org/state-contacts](http://poetryoutloud.org/state-contacts).

### **Are schools that are not part of the official contest welcome to participate in other ways?**

All schools nationwide may visit [poetryoutloud.org](http://poetryoutloud.org) for free program materials. Using these online materials, they are welcome to conduct their own “unofficial” poetry recitation competitions and introduce their students to classic and contemporary poetry.



## FAQS CONT.

### **Are program materials available?**

Poetry Out Loud offers educators free standards-based curriculum materials, which include a poetry anthology with more than 900 classic and contemporary poems, a teacher's guide, lesson plans, and video and audio on the art of recitation. Schools are welcome to download these free resources at [poetryoutloud.org](http://poetryoutloud.org).

### **Is there an award for state finalists?**

Each state final competition will award \$1,000 in cash and school stipends. Each champion at the state level will receive \$200 and an all-expenses-paid trip to Washington, DC, to compete for the national championship. The state champion's school will receive a \$500 stipend for the purchase of poetry materials. The first runner-up in each state will receive \$100, with \$200 for his or her school library.

### **What is the structure of the National Finals?**

On Tuesday, April 25, 2017, from 9:00 am to 8:00 pm, all 53 champions compete in three regional semifinals (17-18 students each compete in Eastern, Central, and Western/Pacific regional rounds). The top three contestants from each semifinal will advance to the National Finals on Wednesday, April 26. At the Finals, all nine will compete in two rounds of recitation. The top three advance to recite a third poem, and the contestant with the highest scores from all three rounds will be named Poetry Out Loud National Champion.

### **What are the judging criteria?**

All contestants are evaluated on these criteria: physical presence, voice and articulation, evidence of understanding, dramatic appropriateness, accuracy, and overall performance.

### **Are there awards at the National Finals?**

Poetry Out Loud will award a total of \$50,000 in awards and school stipends at the National Finals, including \$20,000 for the Poetry Out Loud National Champion, and \$10,000 and \$5,000 for the second- and third-place finalists. The fourth- to ninth-place finalists will each receive \$1,000. The schools of the top nine finalists will each receive \$500 for the purchase of poetry materials. There will be one honorable mention in each of the three semifinals competitions. Those students will not advance to the finals, but will receive a \$1,000 cash award and a \$500 school stipend.

### **How can I get more information?**

Visit [poetryoutloud.org](http://poetryoutloud.org) for more information on this program. The website features educational resources for teachers and students, including standards-based educational materials, tips on hosting a school contest, and videos of outstanding performances.



## POETRY OUT LOUD TALKING POINTS

*This document is for internal use by SAA spokespeople only. Feel free to use this language in your interviews with the media.*

### BACKGROUND ON POETRY OUT LOUD: NATIONAL RECITATION CONTEST

- The National Endowment for the Arts and the Poetry Foundation have created Poetry Out Loud: National Recitation Contest, an innovative arts education program, which is managed in partnership with the state arts agencies and their partners.
- Poetry Out Loud is a national arts education program that encourages the study of great poetry by offering educational materials and a dynamic recitation competition to high schools across the country.
- Over the past 11 years, Poetry Out Loud has reached more than 3 million students and 45,000 teachers from 10,000 schools nationwide. As a way to teach poetry, we think we're on to something.
- Poetry Out Loud uses a pyramid structure. Beginning at the classroom level, winners advance to a school-wide competition, then to the state competitions in February and March, and then to the National Finals in Washington, DC, on April 25–26, 2017.
- The state arts agencies in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands have enlisted high schools to participate in the official Poetry Out Loud program.
- The NEA and the Poetry Foundation provide program materials (Teacher's Guide, online poetry anthology, and posters) for distribution to participating schools. Materials are available online at [poetryoutloud.org](http://poetryoutloud.org).
- Any school nationwide may visit [poetryoutloud.org](http://poetryoutloud.org) to access online program materials. Using these materials, they are welcome to conduct their own "unofficial" poetry recitation competitions to introduce their students to classic and contemporary poetry.

### WHY WAS POETRY OUT LOUD CREATED? WHY IS POETRY OUT LOUD IMPORTANT?

- Arts education programs like Poetry Out Loud matter. NEA research tells us that children who have arts opportunities in and out of school are much more likely to become adults who participate in the arts.
- To encourage the nation's youth to learn about great poetry, the NEA and the Poetry Foundation are jointly supporting Poetry Out Loud.
- By performing great works of literature, students can master public-speaking skills, build self-confidence, and learn more about their literary heritage.