

INSPIRING  
STUDENTS



**POETRY**  
**OUT LOUD**

**Poetry Out Loud  
in the Schools  
2014-2015**

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# 1. Contacts

## **Program Administration: National Endowment for the Arts**

Eleanor Billington, Program Manager

Poetry Out Loud  
National Endowment for the Arts  
400 7th Street SW  
Washington, DC 20506

Phone: (202) 682-5001

Fax: (202) 682-5669

[poetryoutloud@arts.gov](mailto:poetryoutloud@arts.gov)

## **Program Administration: Poetry Foundation**

Anthology, Website, and Prize Payment

Steve Young, Program Director  
Justine Haka, Program Associate

Poetry Foundation  
61 West Superior Street  
Chicago, IL 60654

Phone: (312) 787-7070

Fax: (312) 787-6650

[mail@poetryoutloud.org](mailto:mail@poetryoutloud.org)

## **Teacher Toolkit Distribution**

Sadie Jones, Customer Service Representative  
Cadmus Communication, a Cenveo Company  
Hurlock Fulfillment Center  
4810 Williamsburg Rd., Whse #2  
Hurlock, MD 21643

Phone: (410) 943-4734

Fax: (410) 943-0993

[Hurlock-CSR@cadmus.com](mailto:Hurlock-CSR@cadmus.com)

## 2. Rules

The following is a list of some basic rules that apply to Poetry Out Loud (POL). These rules are included in the Teacher's Guide and publicized on the POL website, [poetryoutloud.org](http://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 the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA).

### 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 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 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, 2014, to view the official Poetry Out Loud anthology for the current school year.
- **Can't Find a Poem?** Poems may be removed from the online anthology before September 1, 2014. These poems are no longer eligible for competition, unless they are in the print anthology.

**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 2014-15 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.
- **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.
- **Props:** Students may not use props or wear costumes during their recitations.

## 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](http://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. Lists of the poems that meet these requirements can be found on the Poetry Out Loud website at [poetryoutloud.org](http://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 800 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, and we do not include poems in translation at this time. Poems will be added over the summer, and not while competitions are taking place. Requests should be sent to [mail@poetryoutloud.org](mailto:mail@poetryoutloud.org).

## 4. Timeline

	<b>Sample State Program Timeline 2014-2015</b>
<b>September</b>	Teacher recruitment; distribute educational materials; teacher workshops; implement media plan
<b>October</b>	Continue to distribute educational materials; teacher workshops; classroom competitions; school registration deadline; integrate guest teaching artists
<b>November</b>	Judges invited; confirm venues & dates for regional and state competitions; school competitions
<b>December</b>	Judges/prompter/event staff finalized for regional and state competitions; school competitions
<b>January</b>	School competitions; regional events; prep for finals; finalize state finals plan/prep judges and volunteers
<b>February</b>	Finish state finals event plan/prep judges by conference call and organize volunteers; state finals
<b>March</b>	State finals; issue final press release/newsletters; coaching of state champion
<b>April</b>	National Finals; debrief; final evaluations; follow-up and thank partners
<b>May</b>	Groundwork for teacher recruitment—meet with key contacts; mailing to teachers for next season
<b>June-July</b>	Teacher recruitment; strategic planning; develop media plan; identify possible partners
<b>August</b>	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. Individual components of the toolkit—DVD and posters—can also be ordered separately. Updates for 2014-15 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 2014-2015**  
Lesson plans, guidance on classroom contests, evaluation criteria
- **Poetry Out Loud Posters**  
A poet poster, student poster, and customizable contest announcement poster
- **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

## ONLINE RESOURCES

### Poetry Out Loud website

[poetryoutloud.org](http://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-20<sup>th</sup> century and 25 lines or fewer) for state and national finals can also be found in the Poems & Performance section of the website.

## 10—POETRY OUT LOUD IN THE SCHOOLS

- **Teacher’s Guide and Learning Recitation DVD**  
These materials from the teacher toolkit can also be found online
- **Poetry Out Loud Audio Guide**  
Sample recitations and tips on the art of recitation
- **Lesson plans for teachers**  
In addition to those in the Teacher’s Guide
- **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 and a promotional PowerPoint about POL
- **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.

### 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. It is not necessary to check up on them, but 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 25 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, Learning Recitation DVD, and 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 2014-2015 Teacher’s Guide, the 2014-2015 Judge’s Guide, and the Learning Recitation DVD. Other materials have not changed. (Program materials are also available online for the use of schools not involved in the “official” contest.)

## 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. Though we didn’t grill them needlessly, 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](http://poetryoutloud.org) as a resource for poems and model recitations as well as rules.

**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 might 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.

- As much as with any other partner, 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 from Poetry Out Loud programs 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.

### 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 may want to convene them early on to develop consistent curriculum plans. Share the Learning Recitation DVD 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 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

You can find all of these items at [www.poetryoutloud.org](http://www.poetryoutloud.org), in the password-protected “State Partners” section.

### 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>

**Illinois:** <http://www.arts.illinois.gov/poetry-out-loud>

**Minnesota:** [www.loft.org/programsawards/educationalprograms/poetry\\_out\\_loud/](http://www.loft.org/programsawards/educationalprograms/poetry_out_loud/)

**Nevada:** [http://nac.nevadaculture.org/index.php?option=com\\_content&id=1957](http://nac.nevadaculture.org/index.php?option=com_content&id=1957)

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

### 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 2013-2104 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. 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 be accessible to individuals with disabilities, in compliance with federal law and regulations, in terms of both facilities and programs. For more information, 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 their 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) 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 accessibility needs are considered for Poetry Out Loud, we recommend the following process at all levels of competition:

## 20—POETRY OUT LOUD IN THE SCHOOLS

- 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 as appropriate. Ask the students if they want their disability disclosed to the judges. Some may see it as a way to educate judges about how the disability may impact their performance, while others may not want it disclosed. In some cases, judges may ask for additional information about how the disability may impact the recitation or the accommodations that have been made for that student. To the best of your ability, provide that information for them. If the impact is complicated, you might consider asking the student/parent/advocate to provide some written explanation for maximum clarity.
- 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.

### **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 may 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](#)

### **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](mailto:poetryoutloud@arts.gov).



The National Endowment for the Arts was established by Congress in 1965 as an independent agency of the federal government. To date, the NEA has awarded more than \$5 billion to support artistic excellence, creativity, and innovation for the benefit of individuals and communities. The NEA extends its work through partnerships with state arts agencies, local leaders, other federal agencies, and the philanthropic sector.



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.*