



2018-2019 POETRY OUT LOUD: NATIONAL RECITATION CONTEST PR Toolkit

The following documents are designed to guide you in creating and implementing your own media plan for your participation in Poetry Out Loud. Questions on media outreach? Contact NEA Public Affairs at 202-682-5570.

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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 that state arts agencies can distribute 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.
- Sample 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



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

From the Desk of NEA Acting Chairman Mary Anne Carter

Poetry is everywhere these days, from the sides of buses to song lyrics to the Instagram app on your phone. In fact, for the first time in 15 years, poetry reading is on the rise in the United States. The National Endowment for the Arts captures this excitement and entices students to fall in love with poetry through our national recitation contest, Poetry Out Loud. This free program from the National Endowment for the Arts encourages high school students to learn about classic and contemporary poetry through memorization, performance, and competition.

Through recitation, students create deep connections with poems and discover new meanings, all while developing important public speaking skills and gaining confidence. Since 2005, more than 3.6 million students and 55,000 teachers from 14,000 schools nationwide have taken part in this program.

The competition starts in the classroom—lesson plans and other resources provide teachers with tools to integrate Poetry Out Loud into their curricula, if they so choose. Students select poems that speak to them from an online anthology of more than 900 poems, including poets ranging from Gwendolyn Brooks to Li-Young Lee to Emily Brontë. Students advance to schoolwide contests, then regional and state finals. By participating in the program, your students have the chance to win an all-expenses-paid trip to the National Finals in Washington, DC, which will be held April 30–May 1, 2019. In total, Poetry Out Loud will award more than \$100,000 to state- and national-level winners and their schools.

The National Endowment for the Arts is pleased to partner with the Poetry Foundation and the state arts agencies to make this program available in all 50 states, DC, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands.

Visit poetryoutloud.org to learn more about this program and connect with your [state Poetry Out Loud coordinator](#) to take part in the 2018-19 program.

Mary Anne Carter
Acting Chairman
National Endowment for the Arts



POETRY OUT LOUD 2018-2019 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 free educational materials and a dynamic recitation competition to high schools across the country. Poetry Out Loud uses a pyramid structure. Participating teachers may 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 300,000 students from 2,300 high schools took part in the 2017–2018 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. The national finals take place in Washington, DC, every spring.

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 2018 and February 2019. 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 2019, and the national finals take place April 30–May 1, 2019 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) receives an NEA grant of \$17,500 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. All types of high schools are welcome to participate, including public, private, parochial, independent, charter, etc. Only schools registered with their state Poetry Out Loud coordinator are eligible for the competition; if you would like to get involved, contact your state arts agency at poetryoutloud.org/state-contacts.

No student may be excluded from participating in Poetry Out Loud on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, sexual orientation, disability, or national origin. More information on Poetry Out Loud rules and eligibility may be found at poetryoutloud.org.

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



All schools nationwide may visit 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.

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.

What awards are available as part of Poetry Out Loud?

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.

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.

The Poetry Foundation provides and administers all aspects of the monetary prizes awarded and travel arrangements for Poetry Out Loud. Visit poetryoutloud.org for more details on rules and eligibility.

What is the structure of the National Finals?

On Tuesday, April 30, 2019, 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, May 1. 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.

How can I get more information?

Visit 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.
- Since 2005, Poetry Out Loud has reached more than 3.6 million students and 55,000 teachers from 14,000 schools nationwide.
- 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 30–May 1, 2019.
- 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.
- Any school nationwide may visit poetryoutloud.org to access free 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 poetry, students can master public-speaking skills, build self-confidence, and learn more about literary history and contemporary life.
- Poetry reading is on the rise, particularly among young adults. According to the National Endowment for the Arts’ 2017 Survey of Public Participation in the Arts, poetry readership is the highest on record since 2002, with the poetry-reading rate among young adults more than doubling in the last five years.



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 its 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. Think about ways you can encourage the students participating in the program—whether it’s at the classroom level or state level—to share their participation in Poetry Out Loud. See what your school’s social media policy will allow and if exceptions can be made to encourage participation at the school level.

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 280 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).
- 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. You can also post videos of up to 140 seconds.
- Use a hashtag to help users follow conversations about your competition. You can use #POL19 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 **#POL19** and **#iampoetryoutloud** to search for other people who are tweeting about Poetry Out Loud—and to help them find you.

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.
- Each year, several state schools for the deaf participate 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.



PR TIPS FOR SCHOOLS—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 signed on 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. Use the Poetry Out Loud logo to celebrate your school's involvement.
- 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 or share photos on Instagram. Remember to use the #POL19 or #iampoetryoutloud hashtags.
- Organize a viewing party of the Poetry Out Loud national finals. Visit arts.gov/partnerships/poetry-out-loud in spring 2019 to register.
- Arrange for your class to attend your region or state Poetry Out Loud competition.

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 and taking part in a national program like this.
- 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 #POL19 news.



PR TIPS FOR SCHOOLS—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. Use social media to notify your followers about this event.

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. 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 30–May 1, 2019 in Washington, DC, where \$50,000 in awards and school stipends will be distributed.

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—both classic and contemporary—through memorization, performance, and competition. Since 2005, Poetry Out Loud has reached more than 3.6 million students and 55,000 teachers from 14,000 schools nationwide.

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, #POL19

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

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PR TIPS FOR SCHOOLS—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 – both classic and contemporary – through memorization, performance, and competition. Since 2005, Poetry Out Loud has reached more than 3.6 million students and 55,000 teachers from 14,000 schools nationwide. On [DATE], more than [NUMBER] high school students from [HIGH SCHOOL] participated in the Poetry Out Loud school contest at [LOCATION].

At [HIGH SCHOOL], students recited works they selected from an anthology of more than 900 poems. Judges evaluated student performances on criteria including voice and articulation, evidence of understanding, and accuracy. Teachers have access to 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 free resources at poetryoutloud.org.

Poetry Out Loud uses a pyramid structure, beginning at the classroom level. 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. The school of the state champion will receive \$500 for the purchase of poetry materials. The first runner-up in each state will receive \$100, with \$200 for his or her school library. The national finals will take place April 30–May 1, 2019, where \$50,000 in awards and school stipends will be distributed.

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

[BOILERPLATE INFORMATION ON YOUR HIGH SCHOOL]

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PR TIPS FOR STATE ARTS AGENCIES—Media Outreach Ideas and Media Event Tips for State Finals

For state arts agencies, the state Poetry Out Loud contest is a great platform to raise visibility of your work in the community. Here are some ideas to showcase the Poetry Out Loud state finals.

Things to do as soon as possible

- Develop a media outreach plan for the state finals. 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 high-resolution 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.



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 2-3 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 your photographer (for example, “shots of students performing, group shots of finalists with VIPs, audience reaction shots, candid”).
- Generate social media buzz and promote attendance through blog posts, Facebook updates and “tweets” about the upcoming contest. Remember to use the hashtag #POL19 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.
- Encourage your audience to tweet using the hashtag #POL19 by providing signage at the event or an announcement from the stage.
- 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). Provide a link to download high-resolution photos (with captions and credits) or provide information on how to request photos.
- Send a photo of your state champion to the NEA at poetryoutloud@arts.gov so we can share the news on the NEA's social media channels.
- 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.
- Share the NEA's press release announcing the national finals in Washington, DC with your state media contacts.



PR TIPS FOR STATE ARTS AGENCIES—Sample Poetry Out Loud Launch Announcement Press Release

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 2018-19 POETRY OUT LOUD

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 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—both classic and contemporary—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 30–May 1, 2019, in Washington, DC.

[NAME OF 2018 STATE CHAMPION] from [SCHOOL, CITY] was selected as the 2018 [STATE] Poetry Out Loud champion and represented the state in the 2018 national finals in Washington, DC, last April. More than 300,000 students from 2,300 high schools took part in the 2017–2018 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 helps students to develop analytical and public speaking skills, while building self-confidence.

“Reciting poetry allows students to more fully immerse themselves in a poem and understand it in new ways,” said Mary Anne Carter, NEA acting chairman. “The National Endowment for the Arts is proud to join the Poetry Foundation and our state partners to provide this opportunity for students nationwide.”

“In today’s tumultuous world, poetry is a space for youth to find and use their voice in a powerful way,” said Poetry Foundation President Henry Bienen. “Students involved in Poetry Out Loud spend time with the poems they recite, learning to see them from many angles. That deepened connection makes poetry an extension of young people’s lives and experiences that they are eager to share.”



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

Additionally, the NEA and the Poetry Foundation provide free, standards-based curriculum materials which teachers may use in their classrooms, including 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.

How to get involved in Poetry Out Loud

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 work with interested schools to include them 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 for more information.

Poetry Out Loud awards

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. The Poetry Foundation provides and administers all aspects of the monetary prizes awarded and travel arrangements for Poetry Out Loud.

For further information on Poetry Out Loud, visit poetryoutloud.org.

[BOILERPLATE ON YOUR ORGANIZATION]

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PR TIPS FOR STATE ARTS AGENCIES—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 300,000 students from 2,300 high schools took part in the 2017–2018 Poetry Out Loud program.

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

The [STATE] Poetry Out Loud finals will be hosted by [NAME OF HOST]. Guest judges 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.

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 30–May 1, 2019. 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. The Poetry Foundation provides and administers all aspects of the monetary prizes awarded and travel arrangements for Poetry Out Loud.



At the [STATE] finals, contestants will recite works they selected from an anthology of more than 900 classic and contemporary poems. The NEA and the Poetry Foundation provide free, standards-based curriculum materials which teachers may use in their classrooms, including an online poetry anthology, 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.

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.

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 partnerships, prizes, and programs. For more information, visit poetryfoundation.org.

[BOILERPLATE INFORMATION ON YOUR ORGANIZATION]

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PR TIPS FOR STATE ARTS AGENCIES—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 30–May 1, 2019, 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]
- [HOST]
- [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]

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PR TIPS FOR STATE ARTS AGENCIES—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 host will be [NAME OF HOST]. 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.

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PR TIPS FOR STATE ARTS AGENCIES—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 2019 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 2019 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]

[NAME OF STUDENT] received an award of \$200 and an all-expenses-paid trip to Washington, DC, to compete at the Poetry Out Loud national finals. [NAME OF STUDENT]'s school received a \$500 stipend for the purchase of poetry materials. [NAME OF STUDENT] received \$100, with \$200 for [his or her] school library. [REPORT ON OTHER FINALISTS AS APPROPRIATE] The Poetry Foundation provides and administers all aspects of the monetary prizes awarded and travel arrangements for Poetry Out Loud. Visit poetryoutloud.org for more details on rules and eligibility.

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

Poetry Out Loud is a national initiative of the National Endowment for the Arts in partnership with the Poetry Foundation and the state arts agencies that encourages high school students to learn about great poetry—both classic and contemporary—through memorization, performance, and competition. 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 300,000 students from 2,300 high schools took part in the 2017–2018 Poetry Out Loud program.

Additionally, the NEA and the Poetry Foundation provide free, standards-based curriculum materials which teachers may choose to use in their classrooms, including 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.

National Finals webcast

Supporters can cheer on [NAME OF STATE CHAMPION] through a live, one-time-only webcast of the Poetry Out Loud national finals on April 30–May 1, 2019 at 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/poetryoutloud 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.

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 partnerships, prizes, and programs. For more information, visit poetryfoundation.org.

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