

NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR THE ARTS presents



2026-2027 POETRY OUT LOUD PR Toolkit

This PR toolkit can help schools, organizations, and state coordinators to create and implement a media plan for Poetry Out Loud. 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 awareness of Poetry Out Loud.

Questions on media outreach? Contact National Endowment for the Arts Public Affairs at publicaffairs@arts.gov.

For information on the use of the logo and registered trademark symbol, please review the [Poetry Out Loud website](https://www.arts.gov/poetry-out-loud). Please also make use of the updated logo for the 2026-2027 year.

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Note: Additional promotional materials for the state finals will be available separately this winter.

POETRY OUT LOUD 2026-2027 FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

What is Poetry Out Loud?

Poetry Out Loud lifts poetry off the page, creating community and connection. Through this arts education program, high school students across the country participate in a dynamic poetry recitation competition that is designed to improve their public speaking skills, help build confidence, and teach them about literary history and contemporary life.

A program of the National Endowment for the Arts in partnership with participating state and jurisdictional arts agencies and administered by Mid Atlantic Arts, Poetry Out Loud provides free lesson plans and other educational materials to teachers and organizers, including an online anthology of classic and contemporary poems.

The program starts at the local level with a school or participating organization. Winners then may advance to a regional and/or state competition, and ultimately to the national finals. Visit PoetryOutLoud.org for free materials, including instructions for organizing a local competition.

Since the program began in 2005, more than 4.6 million students and 89,000 teachers from 22,000 schools across the U.S. have participated in Poetry Out Loud.

Where and when will Poetry Out Loud take place?

Poetry Out Loud takes place in participating states and jurisdictions. For a complete list, please visit PoetryOutLoud.org.

Poetry Out Loud starts at the local level with a school or participating organization. Winners then may advance to a regional and/or state competition, and ultimately to the national finals. Awards and placements are determined solely by judges' scores based on the Poetry Out Loud Evaluation Criteria.

The general timeline for the 2026-2027 Poetry Out Loud program is as follows (please contact your state coordinator for exact program dates in your state):

- High schools and organizations that choose to participate in the official competition conduct their programs and competitions in the fall and early winter.
- State competitions take place by early March.
- The 2027 Poetry Out Loud National Finals are planned for April 27-28, 2027, in Washington, DC. More information will be announced in the future.

Who can participate in the official Poetry Out Loud competition?

The official Poetry Out Loud competition is administered at the state level by participating state and jurisdictional arts agencies. Only schools and organizations 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](#).

All types of high schools are welcome to participate, including public, private, parochial, independent, charter, etc., as well as homeschool students. Non-school organizations, such as after school clubs, libraries, or nonprofit organizations, may choose to run Poetry Out Loud as well. Students may only compete in one stream—either with their school or an organization. Students unable to participate at their school or a local organization should contact their state Poetry Out Loud coordinator to discuss other opportunities for inclusion in the state's official competition.

Only currently enrolled students in grades 9–12 are eligible, with an exception made for 8th-grade students participating in a 9th- through 12th-grade class. A Poetry Out Loud National Champion is not eligible to compete in future years.

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

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

All of the Poetry Out Loud program materials are available for free online in the [Teachers & Organizers](#) section of the website. Using these online materials, schools and organizations are welcome to conduct their own “unofficial” poetry recitation competitions and introduce their students to poetry. These unofficial competitions are ineligible for prizes administered by Mid Atlantic Arts.

Are program materials available?

Poetry Out Loud offers educators free, standards-based curriculum materials, which include an online poetry anthology and a teachers’ guide. These free resources are available at PoetryOutLoud.org.

What are the national prizes?

A total of \$50,000 in awards and school or organizational stipends will be given at the Poetry Out Loud National Finals:

- \$20,000 for the National Champion
- \$10,000 for 2nd place
- \$5,000 for 3rd place
- \$1,000 for 4th–9th places
- The representing schools/organizations of each of the top nine finalists receive \$500 for the purchase of poetry materials.
- There will be one honorable mention in each of the three national semifinal competitions. Those students will not advance to the finals, but will each receive a \$1,000 cash award and a \$500 stipend for their school/organization.

Mid Atlantic Arts provides and administers all aspects of the monetary prizes awarded and travel arrangements to the Poetry Out Loud National Finals. Awards are 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. Full details on prize requirements and travel and accommodations requirements are available in the [rules and eligibility](#) section of the website.

What are the judging criteria?

All competitors are evaluated on the following criteria:

- Physical presence
- Voice and articulation
- Interpretation
- Evidence of understanding
- Overall performance
- Accuracy

For more information regarding these criteria, please consult the teacher’s guide.

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 competition, and videos of outstanding performances. The [National Endowment for the Arts](#) YouTube channel also includes short videos from students, teachers, and others discussing Poetry Out Loud that you can use to build interest and enthusiasm for the program.

POETRY OUT LOUD TALKING POINTS

This document is for internal use only, not for distribution. Feel free to use this language in your interviews with the media.

BACKGROUND ON POETRY OUT LOUD

- Poetry Out Loud is a dynamic poetry recitation competition for high school students across the country.
- Poetry Out Loud helps students improve public speaking skills, build confidence, and grow their appreciation for poetry.
- To run the program at the local and state level, Poetry Out Loud provides free educational materials.
- Poetry Out Loud is an initiative of the National Endowment for the Arts in partnership with state and jurisdictional arts agencies and managed by Mid Atlantic Arts.
- Since the program began in 2005, more than 4.6 million students and 89,000 teachers from 22,000 schools across the U.S. have participated in Poetry Out Loud.
- Poetry Out Loud begins at the local level with a school or organization. Non-school organizations, such as after school clubs, libraries, or nonprofit organizations, may also choose to run Poetry Out Loud as well. Students may only compete in one stream—either with their school or an organization.
- Participating state and jurisdictional arts agencies administer the official Poetry Out Loud program. Schools or organizations that wish to get involved should contact their [state coordinator](#).
- Winners from the local competitions advance to their state/jurisdictional competitions in February and March, and then to the national finals in April in Washington, DC.
- The National Endowment for the Arts provides free program materials (teacher's guide, online poetry anthology, and posters) for use by participating schools or organizations. Free online program materials are also available for anyone interested. Materials are available online at PoetryOutLoud.org.

WHY IS POETRY OUT LOUD IMPORTANT?

- Arts education programs like Poetry Out Loud matter. National Endowment for the Arts 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.
- Poetry Out Loud can impact students' academic performance by improving writing and analytical skills.
- Poetry Out Loud can increase students' appreciation of poetry. Through participation in Poetry Out Loud students can understand how poetry can reveal new ways to see the world, foster connection and empathy, and reach a greater understanding of ourselves, our past, and others.

- Students who participate in Poetry Out Loud also showed an increase in self-confidence and found that reading and listening to poetry helped them think about situations from multiple perspectives.
- These lasting skills help young people [as they enter the workforce](#).
- Poetry Out Loud can have a positive impact on schools, helping to build community, forging stronger connections between teachers and students, and bringing together students who may not have otherwise formed connections.
- In 2022, more than 29 million adults either read or listened to poetry via broadcasts, recordings, or web streaming, according to National Endowment for the Arts research.

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SOCIAL MEDIA TIPS

Social media channels such as blogs, [Facebook](#), [YouTube](#), [Instagram](#), and [X](#) are useful tools to promote PoetryOut Loud in addition to traditional media (newspapers, radio and TV, magazines, online versions of these outlets). You can find the official Poetry Out Loud social media pages here:

- [Poetry Out Loud Facebook Page](#)
- [Poetry Out Loud Instagram \(@IAmPoetryOutLoud\)](#)

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 (e.g., the blog points readers to the newsroom and vice versa; share your Facebook photos on your Instagram 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? Note that images are key to a successful social media strategy. Social media content with visuals often has a better success rate. If possible, use a cell-phone camera to capture high-quality, digital images of your activities and events. There are multiple sites online that now offer high-quality images under a Creative Commons or Creative Commons Zero license that you can use in addition to your own photos. There are also free graphic design platforms that you can utilize to edit images and create your own graphics.

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 your state’s 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 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 community engagement policy.) Consider crowd-sourced content. Think about ways you can encourage the students participating in the program—whether it’s at the classroom or local 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 us on [social media platform]” 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. Tag your posts with **#POL27** and/or **#IAmPoetryOutLoud**. Remember that social media is part of your branding effort; if possible, be consistent with the names you use on each of your social media platforms.

Use visuals—Social media content with visuals often has a better success rate. Use a cell phone camera to capture high-quality, digital images of your events or use images from past events in your promotion. Make sure you have permission to use the images you’ve selected (and adhere to your school or organization’s media/audio/visual permissions policy). Short videos are also a great way to engage followers on social media and do not have to be professionally shot or edited to make great content. Try capturing informal interviews with teachers, coaches, and students to share on your feed.

Use ALT tags and captions—To make sure your content is accessible to people with low or no vision, it's best practice to write ALT tags for any images included in your content. ALT tags are short descriptions of what is shown in each image. Each social media platform has different character limits and procedures for adding ALT tags; you should be able to access this information on the platform's help page. When creating videos, make sure your video has embedded captions. (Platforms like Instagram and YouTube have built-in captioning available.)

Measure what you want to know – Every organization has different ways of measuring engagement. Is it the number of clicks on a certain link? Is it the amount of time a user spends reading your content? Think about which metrics are important to your organization and develop a strategy for measuring those elements. While there are paid services to help with this step, there are also many free services available—including those available in the social platforms themselves (e.g., the “Professional Dashboard” within your Facebook channel)—that you can bundle to get a fairly robust picture of your content’s performance.

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. If you publish less than 3x/week, choose consistent dates.
- 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 competition.

Instagram

- [Instagram](#) is an easy way to share visual content and short videos. Instagram lets you capture moments as they happen via stories, and you can share photos or video after the fact “on the grid.”
- You can share poetry that is in the public domain or snapshots from classroom, school, regional, or state competitions.
- You can also post short videos on Instagram. Instagram content is easily shareable to Facebook, so it’s a great way to get a lot of bang for your buck from one piece of visual content. Images on Instagram can be grouped by hashtags, e.g. **#POL27** or **#IAmPoetryOutLoud**. You can also encourage members of your community to share photos from your events on their own Instagram accounts with these hashtags
- Instagram also allows for collaborative posts—if your school/organization is collaborating with a community partner or inviting a local celebrity to host your competition, consider a collaborative post to increase your reach.

Facebook

- [Facebook](#) is an online community space; you can register for a group page and invite people on Facebook who are participating in your Poetry Out Loud program to join the group. A group page is a great way to keep participants updated on events, share photos, and encourage conversations before and after your events. You can set up your Facebook group page to be public or hidden, and you can also make it a moderated forum. Make sure to create a comment policy for your Facebook page.
- Follow the national [Poetry Out Loud Facebook page](#), and let the [National Endowment for the Arts 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.

YouTube

- Highlight videos that complement Poetry Out Loud learning objectives. Be aware of copyright issues when featuring poetry online—not all poems in the Poetry Out Loud catalog are in the public domain, including those that are pre-20th century.
- 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. Alternatively, 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.
- YouTube shorts are also a great way to repurpose content from Instagram reels.

X

- Use [X](#) to share short thoughts about Poetry Out Loud—at 280 characters or fewer per post
- Invite your audience to follow your handle. Arts agencies can invite other arts organizations. Schools can invite parents to follow their X feed to keep track of the program at the local level. You can ask your followers to retweet your posts and help spread the news. You can also use your account to have conversations with your followers.
- Your X posting frequency will vary based on the content you have to publish. Aim for 1–2 pre-written posts a day. Consider “re-tweeting” (RT, or copying) relevant posts from others you are following on the platform. Be selective and develop guidelines for the types of content you are RTing.
- Include an image with your post. (The platform will allow you to attach up to four images with a post.) If you are using only one image, try to use one that’s oriented horizontally so the platform won’t cut the top off your image
- You can send out interesting trivia about the poems, the poets, and the competitors. You can also post videos of up to 140 seconds, which could be a way to share short interviews with participating students.
- Use a hashtag to help users follow conversations about your competition. You can use **#POL27** for general posts about the competition and tag photos of your Poetry Out Loud community—students, parents, teachers, judges, etc.—with **#IAmPoetryOutLoud**.
- Also use the hashtags **#POL27** and **#IAmPoetryOutLoud** to search for other people who are posting about Poetry Out Loud—and to help them find you.

There are many more social channels to help share news about Poetry Out Loud. On platforms that use hashtags, make sure to tag your content to help people who are interested in the program find your content.

PR TIPS FOR SCHOOLS AND ORGANIZATIONS—Promotional Ideas & PR Tips

Poetry Out Loud is a great way to generate positive visibility for your school or organization and raise school spirit. 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/organization

- Post notices announcing the competition and champions at your school/organization and/or on your website, newsletter, student newspaper, or social media pages. Use the Poetry Out Loud logo to celebrate your involvement.
- Write an article about the school-wide competition for your PTA/PTO 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 Poetry Out Loud competition or share photos on Instagram. Remember to use the **#POL27** or **#IAmPoetryOutLoud** hashtags.
- Organize a viewing party of the Poetry Out Loud national finals webcast. Visit arts.gov/Poetry-Out-Loud in Spring 2027 for more details on the live webcast. *(Please note that Poetry Out Loud webcast viewing parties are intended solely as educational events to help foster dialogue about poetry, and about the Poetry Out Loud National Finals. Poetry Out Loud webcast viewing parties must be free of charge, no purchase requirements of any kind.)*
- Arrange for your class to watch online or attend your region or state Poetry Out Loud competition.

In your community

- If your competition is open to the public, contact your community newspaper (we suggest the metro section editor) and invite them to attend the competition or watch the webcast.
- Invite a prominent member of the local media to serve as a judge or master of ceremonies for the competition.
- After the event, send the local newspaper a follow-up press release highlighting the competition, your involvement in Poetry Out Loud, and photos from your event or photos of your local champions.
- Send a letter to the editor of your local newspaper. Use the letter to showcase your school or organization's participation in Poetry Out Loud, and to discuss the benefits of taking part in a national program like this.
- Follow other local community or educational organizations on your social media accounts to build a social media network for your school (including Poetry Out Loud) and start sharing your #POL27 news.

PR TIPS FOR SCHOOLS AND ORGANIZATIONS—Sample Local

For schools and organizations participating in the official Poetry Out Loud competition, simply fill in the blanks of this template press release and send it to your local media outlets (newspaper, newsletters, websites, radio, TV, social media channels) after your competition.

Winners Press Release

Contact: [NAME, TITLE]

[HIGH SCHOOL/ORGANIZATION NAME/ LOGO]

[ADDRESS] [PHONE | EMAIL]

[WEB ADDRESS | BLOG ADDRESS | FACEBOOK | X (TWITTER) – EMBED HYPERLINKS TO ADDRESSES]

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

DATE

[HIGH SCHOOL/ORGANIZATION] ANNOUNCES WINNERS OF POETRY OUT LOUD COMPETITION

[CITY, STATE] — [HIGH SCHOOL/ORGANIZATION] announces the winners of the [SCHOOL OR LOCAL] Poetry Out Loud® competition. The student winners are [NAME OF CHAMPION AND OTHER TOP WINNERS].

Poetry Out Loud—presented in partnership with the [STATE ARTS AGENCY] and the National Endowment for the Arts—lifts poetry off the page, creating community and connection. Through this arts education program, high school students across the country participate in a dynamic poetry recitation competition that is designed to improve their public speaking skills, help build confidence, and teach them about literary history and contemporary life. Since the program began in 2005, more than 4.6 million students across the country have participated in Poetry Out Loud. On [DATE], more than [NUMBER] high school students participated in the Poetry Out Loud competition [ONLINE OR AT LOCATION]. Judges evaluated student performances on criteria including voice and articulation, evidence of understanding, and accuracy.

[NAME OF CHAMPION] will advance to the [REGIONAL OR STATE] Poetry Out Loud competition on [DATE]. The [STATE/JURISDICTION] champion will advance to the national finals next spring in Washington, DC where \$50,000 in awards and school/organizational stipends will be distributed. Mid Atlantic Arts provides and administers all aspects of the monetary prizes awarded and travel arrangements for the Poetry Out Loud National Finals. Poetry Out Loud is managed in partnership with Mid Atlantic Arts.

To learn more about the [STATE/JURISDICTION] Poetry Out Loud competition, contact [STATE/JURISDICTIONAL ARTS AGENCY REPRESENTATIVE] or visit PoetryOutLoud.org.

[BOILERPLATE INFORMATION ON YOUR HIGH SCHOOL/ORGANIZATION]

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

This is a sample template 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, organizations, and students to participate in this program. To use this release, simply fill in the blanks (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, ORGANIZATION, PHONE, EMAIL]
[ORGANIZATION/LOGO]

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE – [DATE]

[NAME OF STATE/JURISDICTIONAL ARTS AGENCY] ANNOUNCES 2026-2027 POETRY OUT LOUD

High School Students in [STATE/JURISDICTION] Invited to Compete in National Poetry Recitation Competition

[CITY, STATE] — This school year, [STATE/JURISDICTIONAL ARTS AGENCY] invites high school students to participate in Poetry Out Loud, an arts education program of the National Endowment for the Arts. This dynamic poetry recitation competition is designed to improve public speaking skills, build confidence, and teach about literary history and contemporary life.

“Each year, students, parents, and teachers tell us that Poetry Out Loud has a lasting impact on participants,” said Mary Anne Carter, chairman of the National Endowment for the Arts. “By studying and reciting poetry, young people discover new ways to connect with language, express complex ideas and emotions with confidence, and stand before an audience ready to use their voice.”

During [CLARIFY TIME FRAME], schools are invited to hold classroom and school wide competitions, with students advancing to a state competition on [DATE]. Non-school organizations, such as after school clubs, libraries, or nonprofit organizations, may also choose to run Poetry Out Loud. Students may only compete in one stream—either with their school or an organization. As part of Poetry Out Loud, free, standards-based curriculum materials are available online which teachers may choose to use in their classrooms. These include an online poetry anthology, a teacher's guide, and videos on the art of poetry recitation. These materials are all free to access at PoetryOutLoud.org.

State champions will advance to the national finals in Washington, DC, April 27-28, 2027, where \$50,000 in awards and school stipends will be distributed. More information will be announced in the future.

[INFORMATION ON YOUR 2026 STATE CHAMPION OR YOUR STATE'S PARTICIPATION IN THE PAST.] Since the program began in 2005, more than 4.6 million students across the country have participated in Poetry Out Loud. An initiative of the National Endowment for the Arts, Poetry Out Loud is administered at the state level by the state and jurisdictional arts agencies and is managed in partnership with Mid Atlantic Arts.

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

How to get involved in Poetry Out Loud

High schools and organizations that wish to be part of the official Poetry Out Loud program must contact [STATE ARTS AGENCY] by [DATE] to participate. [STATE ARTS AGENCY] will work with interested schools and organizations to include them in the official Poetry Out Loud program. Schools and organizations that are not in the official program may conduct their own competitions using the online resources. Contact [LOCAL CONTACT INFORMATION] or visit PoetryOutLoud.org for more information.

About the National Endowment for the Arts

[Established by Congress in 1965](#), the National Endowment for the Arts is an independent federal agency that is the largest funder of the arts and arts education in communities nationwide and a catalyst of public and private support for the arts. By advancing opportunities for arts participation and practice, the Arts Endowment fosters and sustains an environment in which the arts benefit everyone in the United States. Visit arts.gov to learn more.

[BOILERPLATE ON YOUR ORGANIZATION]

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**PR TIPS FOR STATE ARTS AGENCIES—Sample Poetry Out Loud
Script for a Public Service Announcements (PSA)**

Promote participation among schools and organizations in Poetry Out Loud by tailoring this sample script for public service announcements on your local radio or television stations.

Public Service Announcement
30-second live read script

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

:30 – Who will be the next [STATE/JURISDICTION] Poetry Out Loud Champion? Registration is now open for schools and organizations to sign up to participate in Poetry Out Loud. This national arts education program includes free online educational materials for high school students to learn about poetry through memorization, recitation, and competition. For more information, contact [PHONE/WEBSITE/EMAIL] or visit PoetryOutLoud.org.