



October 20, 2023

Dear Educator,

I'm excited to announce that at both the regional AND state competition levels in Pennsylvania, [Poetry Out Loud](#) is now back to 100% in-person! After 3 years of working through a variety of virtual and hybrid contests, being back to all live poetry is great news!

Additional great news is that while not yet confirmed, it looks like the state competition will be held at the renowned *Rock Lititz* in Lititz, PA! If you're not familiar with Rock Lititz, it is an amazing production community on a 108-acre campus that supports live productions of all kinds. Keeping our fingers crossed it will work out!

If you haven't yet participated in Poetry Out Loud, as so many schools and students have over the programs 18-year history, this will be a terrific year to get started and experience the power of spoken words in poetry.

The program uses a pyramid structure that starts in the classroom with students advancing to a school competition to determine a school champion, followed by regional and state competitions, and then a national competition. There are cash prizes at both the state and national levels.

In his *Preface to Lyrical Ballads*, William Wordsworth wrote, "Poetry is the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings; It takes its origin from emotion recollected in tranquility." That is most certainly still true, which allows [Poetry Out Loud](#) to not only be a part of students learning, but that emotional release that speaks directly to the many feelings they have experienced over the past 3 years.

On behalf of the Pennsylvania Council on the Arts, the National Endowment for the Arts, and the Poetry Foundation, I invite you and your school's participation in the **Poetry Out Loud** program, taking place again in high schools throughout Pennsylvania this coming school year.

All the necessary materials are available to view or download at the excellent POL website ([www.poetryoutloud.org](http://www.poetryoutloud.org)), and if you have any questions about the program, running the program, etc., simply contact me at either 724-357-4565 or at [jwacker@iup.edu](mailto:jwacker@iup.edu). I look forward to your school participating in this excellent and time-tested program!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Jeff Wacker'.

Jeff Wacker, Coordinator  
Arts-in-Education Services  
The Lively Arts | ArtsPath  
IUP Community Music School

Poetry Out Loud 2023-2024

REGISTRATION FORM

Registration Deadline – January 12, 2024



Please submit ONE registration form per school (may be copied for additional teacher names)

This form should be completed and submitted by the School Project Director/Liaison.

School Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_ City: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

→ POL School Project Director/Liaison: \_\_\_\_\_ Title: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

→ School Principal: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone/Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

→  (check) YES! Our school intends to participate in the Poetry Out Loud Project.

NEA guidelines require multi-classroom participation in individual school competitions. Please indicate those who will participate in your school on the chart below. (You may copy this sheet to indicate names of additional teachers. We welcome as many participating classrooms as are interested.)

→ The classes participating will be (please check all those that apply):

- Language Arts/English  Creative Writing  Theater/Drama  Speech  Other (please describe) \_\_\_\_\_

Table with 4 columns: Teacher Name, Email Address, Grade Level, # Of Students. Includes a row for 'TOTAL STUDENTS PARTICIPATING FROM OUR SCHOOL'.

Access Needs:

If you have a disability and require accommodation to fully participate, please indicate accommodations required: \_\_\_\_\_

Questions?

Please mail, scan/email, or fax this registration form to:

Jeff Wacker, POL Coordinator
Indiana University of Pennsylvania
202 Performing Arts Center
403 South Eleventh Street
Indiana, Pa 15705-1008
(724) 357-7899 (Fax)
jwacker@iup.edu

Contact:
Jeff Wacker – jwacker@iup.edu
(724) 357-4565

## Additional Teachers

	Teacher Name	Email Address	Grade Level	# Of Students
5				
6				
7				
8				
9				
10				
11				
12				
13				
14				
15				



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*Building stronger  
communities  
takes creativity.*

*Poetry Out Loud is made possible in Pennsylvania through the AIE Partnership of the Pennsylvania Council on the Arts, a state agency. The PCA is funded by the citizens of Pennsylvania through an annual legislative appropriation and administered locally by ArtsPath through the college of Fine Arts at Indiana University of Pennsylvania. The Pennsylvania Council on the Arts is additionally supported by the national Endowment for the Arts, a federal agency.*



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## Poetry Out Loud 2023-2024 *Timeline*

### ***Now – Jan 2024***

All materials are free and available on-line at [www.poetryoutloud.org](http://www.poetryoutloud.org). The POL website is always being updated with additional poems – check back regularly!

### ***Oct 2023 – Jan 2024***

Contact is made with teachers and schools about implementing POL by ArtsPath, the Pennsylvania Council on the Arts' regional Arts in Education Partner for Armstrong, Butler, Clarion, Indiana, and Jefferson counties, and the DuBois Area SD.

Teachers (English, Drama, Speech, etc.) execute POL in their classrooms.

Classroom and School Finals take place.

### ***January 12, 2024***

Final day for ArtsPath to receive school registrations.

### ***\*February 5, 2024***

ArtsPath Regional Finals, Indiana University of Pennsylvania. The competition will be held in either the Upper Grand Lobby of the Performing Arts Center, or Gorell Recital Hall, 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor of Sutton Hall.

***\*Alternate snow date is February 7, 2024***

### ***March 4, 2024***

Pennsylvania State Finals: TBA, tentatively *Rock Lititz*, Lititz, PA

### ***April 30 – May 2, 2024***

National Finals: Washington, D.C.



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## 2023-2024 PENNSYLVANIA POLICIES & GUIDELINES FOR POETRY OUT LOUD COMPETITION

1. Students must not be given any monetary prizes or gift certificates. (This may be revisited if a sponsor is secured who can provide equal prizes for all regional competitions.)
  - One of the PCA's long-standing funding restrictions is: "PCA funds cannot be used to support cash prizes and awards" even if the money comes from a different source....
  - There is not enough money in the budget to support prizes, even if we were permitted to do so.
  - All participants must receive the same access and opportunities across the state
2. *Each participating school or community group must be given the opportunity for one student to attend the regional competition. No more.*
3. Poetry Out Loud is designed for high school students, which is typically grades 9th-12th. All 9<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> grade students ARE eligible to participate in POL whether they are in a Junior or Senior High School. Eighth graders can be included if they are doing ninth-grade coursework in the classrooms that are conducting the program.
4. Community Groups such as scouts, local arts councils, etc. are permitted to conduct their own POL competitions and send their top winner to the regional competition. Students participating in these community events may only be eligible for regional and state contests if their school district is not participating in POL.
5. *Each school/group champion must be prepared to recite three poems at the regional competition.*
6. From the NEA: re: poem selection for state and national finals. 1) One of the three poems must be pre-20th century. 2) One of the poems must be under 25 lines in length. Both requirements are made to encourage students to look more broadly at the poems available, to encourage their choosing classic poems and those that do not inspire a long, dramatic interpretation. "Sort" categories are on the website anthology to help students find poems that meet these criteria. Be sure that students are not choosing a "retired" poem.
7. Judging/Scoring
  - Each regional competition should strive to have a minimum of three diverse interpretation judges (gender, ethnicity, geography and expertise; for example: actors/directors, poets/writers, government officials-local/county/state/federal, librarians, media managers/artists, educators.)
    - The ArtsPath virtual panel will consist of 5 interpretation judges.
  - One person should be specifically assigned to be the accuracy judge. *Ideally this should be a person in addition to the three judges mention above.* Judges should NOT be the teachers or coaches of any of the contestants.
    - The ArtsPath virtual panel will consist of 1 accuracy judge.
  - In-person competitions will always have one prompter.
  - Judging is based solely on scores. *In case of a tie: the highest "Overall Performance" score should determine the winner. If a tie persists, then the highest accuracy score should determine the winner.* This is consistent with the NEA and PCA.
  - Score sheets provided by the NEA/PCA must be used.
  - Judges must not be paid a stipend to judge. If there might be travel, their travel can be reimbursed. This is consistent with the NEA and PCA.
8. School Contests should take place in time for the school champions information (poems, bio, photo) to be sent to ArtsPath **NLT Wednesday, January 31, 2024.**

## ***Praise for Poetry Out Loud***

### **Selected School Coordinator Survey Responses**

"LOVED IT! I had no idea, nor did the student who went on to compete in Kansas City, how great this would be. We were thrilled for the winner and every person who presented. What a collection of stars. We are in for next year. It is clear the competition is talented. THANK YOU FOR MAKING THIS EVENT POSSIBLE FOR SMALL SCHOOLS LIKE OURS. We have no forensics team or funding for travel, so the stipend is the only one I have ever gotten for speech contests or performance competitions. I appreciate you building that in."



"There was much more enthusiasm than I expected. The feedback from the students participating and viewing the school-wide contest was very positive. We will be expanding it to many more classes next year. It was absolutely wonderful. I'm so glad I decided to get involved!"

"Poetry is NOT a popular topic in my high school, not no way, not no how. BUT, it is the goal of several teachers to create a change in this attitude. We are extremely grateful for this program and the opportunity it afforded our student who went to regional competition. It was a wonderful experience for her to be among other students with enthusiasm for reciting poetry. Thank you, thank you, thank you. And, also the materials were super fabulous! We will try it again next year!" — Leslie Smith, Grand Rapids, MI

"Our implementation was very successful, particularly since this was the first year. Initially teachers were hesitant, since they had no experience with the program. About half the teachers in the English department ended up participating. However, after seeing the school-wide contest, teachers were very excited about the program. We are already planning to make it bigger and better next year!"

### **Selected Teacher Survey Responses**

"I found the program generated more excitement about poetry than anything else I've done. I loved how it involved the community members."

"I learned from the program: I was wary of using recitation and memorization in the classroom, but this program helped me to understand that it is such an important part of poetry that a person is really not doing a poem justice without those two activities. I'm planning to use more recitation and memorization next year in my classes." — Leslie Smith, Grand Rapids, MI

"I loved this contest! It was a very worthwhile experience for my students; I saw a different side to many of them."

"I have participated in the program all three years. In the past, I have worked with students reading far below grade level. For them, though they felt great trepidation about presenting even in front of their own class, Poetry Out Loud was a novel experience. Their self confidence soared once they realized that they could present aloud in front of their peers. Excitement swirled around the school contest, and the winner was delighted to take part in the state competition." — Leslie Smith, Grand Rapids, MI

"If for no other reason, the search for "just the right poem" exposes to students to such a vast array of forms and poems that the benefits are immeasurable. I heard more poetry being read aloud by students and more discussions about poems than I have heard in over 20 years of teaching!"

## Selected State Champion Survey Responses

"Getting out of my comfort zone and trying something that was completely new to me."

"It gave me a greater appreciation of all the different styles of poetry and the many talented artists that wrote them. Whereas before I only saw poetry as a part of my school curriculum in English, now I see it as an art, kind of like acting and theater, it is very versatile and can be molded into what ever you want it to be."

"By memorizing and reciting a poem, you make it a part of you, which necessitates gaining some understanding of it. You have to figure out what it means and how you are going to present it to your audience. It also becomes more personal to you and you appreciate something new about it with each recitation."

"Reading words is great, but they are also meant to be spoken. The way that you say things is so important, and with poetry, which is meant to convey emotions and tell stories, it's crucial. There are poems I didn't get AT ALL before POL that I now love."

"I entered because I am a competitive speaker. Next year I will enter, because I love poetry."

"It has humbled me in a way to be involved with the poems I read. Instead of worrying if I can understand all the words or if it rhymes, I focus on content with which it describes. Poetry is so wonderful and so mysterious that I wish more people would appreciate it."

"This was a great self esteem builder. The entire experience was one that I will carry with me for the rest of my life."

**NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR THE ARTS  
AND POETRY FOUNDATION PRESENT**



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