

September, 2015

Dear Ohio high school principal,

The Ohio Arts Council invites all Ohio high schools to register now for the *Poetry Out Loud* National Recitation Contest, a free national program sponsored by the National Endowment for the Arts and the Poetry Foundation, and administered in Ohio by the Ohio Arts Council. *Poetry Out Loud* is entirely free to participating schools: we provide your registered teachers with free multi-media poetry curriculum materials, training workshops and the services of a coordinator. The contest, also free, has a pyramid structure, beginning in the classroom and culminating in an exciting national competition with \$50,000 in prize money at stake. Participating students compete by selecting poems to memorize and recite from a large online anthology. Their recitations are scored in six categories using a national rubric. Last year more than 8000 students and 100 high school teachers participated in Ohio.

Poetry Out Loud aims to expose students to our shared literary heritage in poetry and improve their public speaking skills; it also helps teachers meet required NCTE and Common Core benchmarks in close reading, text analysis, practice with complex texts, speaking and listening. Choosing and learning a poem by heart, and then interpreting it for an audience, has been a transformative experience for many students, with lasting benefits in their deeper understanding of language.

A great introduction to the program is this short video, "10 Years of Poetry Out Loud!", at <http://www.poetryoutloud.org/articles/2014-recitations-now-on-youtube>.

Would you please recommend *Poetry Out Loud* to your English teachers, your theater teachers, or your school librarian? Registration is conveniently online at www.oac.state.oh.us. Choose the "Events" tab, then *Poetry Out Loud*. Scroll down to click on "Register"; teachers are also encouraged to contact me with questions. For more information about *Poetry Out Loud*, see www.poetryoutloud.org.

Thank you.

Cordially,
Katie Swett