



Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education

— Making a positive difference through education and service —

October 8, 2008

Dear Superintendent:

Imagine a program where your students would eagerly compete for the opportunity to perform great poetry. A program that builds student's speaking skills, develops their appreciation for poetry, increases their self-confidence, and satisfies both Missouri Show-Me Standards and NCTE English Language Arts standards. In addition to memorizing and performing great poems, students will discuss poems and write poetry of their own.

Poetry Out Loud is a national recitation contest conducted in all 50 states by the National Endowment for the Arts. Last year over 6,000 students from 80 Missouri schools participated. The Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education and the Missouri Arts Council have partnered to bring this program to Missouri.

The schedule and curriculum for *Poetry Out Loud* are designed to fit a teacher's busy schedule. The program takes place over two to three weeks, depending on each teacher's interest and schedule, and will not require full class periods during that time. Teachers or speech coaches may choose to run the contest as an after-school program.

To learn more, request a program package from Virginia Sanders at the Missouri Arts Council. Send your name and mailing address to virginia.sanders@ded.mo.gov. You will receive a CD of poetry, program guide with optional lesson plans, poetry anthology, and a participation form. School registration deadline is November 30, 2008. Additional information can be found at www.poetryoutloud.org.

Poetry Out Loud begins at the classroom level. Winners from each class will advance to the school-wide competition. Each school must identify a finalist by January 31, 2009 to send to the regional competition during the month of February. The regional winners will travel to Jefferson City for the state competition on March 3, 2009. Ultimately, the Missouri champion will receive an all-expense-paid trip (with two parents or other chaperones) to Washington, D. C. for the national finals taking place April 26 – 28, 2009. At the national finals, winners will receive \$50,000 total in scholarships and school stipends, with a \$20,000 college scholarship for the *Poetry Out Loud* National Champion. The State Champion's school will receive \$500 for the purchase of poetry books for their school's library. The second place winner's school will receive \$200.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Stan Johnson".

Assistant Commissioner
Division of School Improvement

P.S. Please share this letter with your principals.