

September 2015

Dear Superintendent,

Please allow me to introduce you to *Poetry Out Loud*, a national recitation contest open to all high school students and conducted in all 50 states by the National Endowment for the Arts. The Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education and the Missouri Arts Council have partnered to bring this program to Missouri. Last year over 5,000 students and 200 teachers from Missouri schools participated.

The schedule and curriculum for *Poetry Out Loud* are designed to fit a teacher's busy schedule. The program may take place over two to three weeks, depending on each teacher's interest and schedule. Teachers or speech coaches often choose to run the contest as an after-school program.

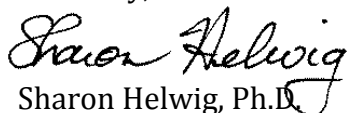
Poetry Out Loud winners from each class advance to a school-wide competition. Each school identifies a finalist by January 15, 2016. That student attends the regional competition during month of February. On the evening of March 9, 2016 the 10 Regional Champions (along with their chaperons) travel to Jefferson City for a dinner with their fellow participants, legislators and *Poetry Out Loud* partners. On March 10, 2016 these students compete for the title of Missouri State Champion at the Truman Building in Jefferson City.

Ultimately, the Missouri champion receives an all-expense-paid trip (with two parents or chaperones) to Washington, D. C. to compete in the national finals May 2-4, 2016. National finalists receive \$50,000 total in scholarships and travel stipends. The State Champion's school receives \$500 for the purchase of poetry instructional materials. The second place winner's school receives \$200.

To learn more, contact Virginia Sanders from the Missouri Arts Council at virginia.sanders@ded.mo.gov. She will send you a DVD of best performances, poetry, a program guide with optional lesson plans, a poetry anthology, and a participation form.

School registration deadline is December 4, 2015. Additional information can be found at www.poetryoutloud.org.

Sincerely,



Sharon Helwig, Ph.D.
Assistant Commissioner