



Dear English/Language Arts Chair:

August 28, 2009

Are there some poems that are always available to you because you memorized them, perhaps years ago in your English class? Are there poems that made you love the sound of language, those that made you feel the emotions and ideas of the poet as the words flowed out of you? Now there is an extraordinary new opportunity to share that experience with your students.

On behalf of the Juneau Arts and Humanities Council, we want to invite your participation in *Poetry Out Loud: National Recitation Contest*, an exciting new program taking place in high schools throughout Alaska this spring. The National Endowment for the Arts, the nation's largest funder of the arts, and the Poetry Foundation, the nation's largest literary organization, have partnered together with the Alaska State Council on the Arts and the Juneau Arts and Humanities Council to bring *Poetry Out Loud* to high schools across Alaska and America.

Poetry Out Loud builds on the recent resurgence of poetry as an oral art form, as demonstrated by the slam poetry movements and the immense popularity of rap music among our youth. The program encourages the nation's youth to learn about great poetry through memorization and performance, which help students master public speaking skills, build self-confidence and internalize our rich literary heritage. The program is open to students in all kinds of high schools – public, private, parochial, independent and charter.

What is particularly exciting is that there are many ways that you, your colleagues and your students may participate. The activity ties in with national and State of Alaska English Language Arts/Arts Standards, and is an activity that will bring excitement to your classrooms. *Poetry Out Loud* takes only a couple of weeks to implement in classrooms.

The competition will be handled by each high school at the school level. The winners (one + a runner up) will participate in a community/region-wide competition. The community/region winners will travel to Juneau for the statewide competition. The winner of the statewide competition will travel to Washington DC for the national finals. The winner of *Poetry Out Loud: National Recitation Contest* will receive a \$20,000 college scholarship AND will have the honor of reciting his or her poem on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial as part of its 200th Anniversary!

Transportation and lodging for the community/regional winners and their chaperone will be provided for the statewide competition in Juneau and for the statewide winner and a chaperone to the national competition in Washington DC. Statewide participants will compete and have a fun-filled weekend in Juneau prior to the competition on February 23. Plans include a visit to the University of Alaska SE campus, and a tour of the city.

The Alaska *Poetry Out Loud* Project will have the following schedule:

October 22: Last date Alaska teachers may submit a registration form to participate.

December 22: Participating schools should have a finalist selected;

January 22: Deadline for community/regional competitions to be held;

February 23: *Poetry Out Loud: Alaska Recitation Contest* in Juneau;

April 25-27. *Poetry Out Loud: National Recitation Contest* in Washington, DC.

We ask that you copy this information, share it with all of your colleagues and **complete and return the registration form before October 22.** For additional information, poems and resources for *Poetry Out Loud*, visit the National Poetry Out Loud Website: www.poetryoutloud.org. Contact the AK *Poetry Out Loud* Committee attention Mary Becker at Info@JAHC.org, call her at (907) 586-1900, or leave a message for her at the Juneau Arts and Humanities office (907) 586-ARTS (2787).

Sincerely,
AK *Poetry Out Loud* Committee
Juneau Arts and Humanities Council