NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR THE ARTS PRESENTS

POETRY OUT LOUD®

Dear Teachers, Administrators and Students considering participation in Alaska Poetry Out Loud:

As we enter the new year of Poetry Out Loud, we hope you will join us! The Alaska Poetry Out Loud partnership team at the Juneau Arts & Humanities Council and the Alaska State Council on the Arts is pleased to open registration for Alaska Poetry Out Loud in the 2026-2027 school year! The Alaska Poetry Out Loud partnership will be featuring content about poetry and literary arts in Alaska, to help connect us together through a shared sense of place: follow us on Facebook at Poetry Out Loud: Alaska. This guide is intended to provide teachers, administrators, librarians, community arts partners and other poetry supporters in our schools with the information needed to participate in Poetry Out Loud from the classroom, to your school and community, to the regional, state and national competitions.

Poetry Out Loud is a national arts education program that encourages the study of great poetry by offering free educational materials and a dynamic recitation competition for high school students across the country. Rather than being a simple exercise in memorization, learning to recite poetry encompasses college and career ready skills, including structural analysis, interpretation of meaning, point of view, close-reading and the use of higher order thinking skills.

Why Should I Participate in Poetry Out Loud as an Educator?

- Poetry Out Loud encourages students to develop a personal connection with both classic and contemporary poetry.
- The process moves students beyond surface-level comprehension, by asking them to analyze a poem deeply in order to understand and perform it effectively.
- It strengthens memorization skills—an increasingly uncommon skill in today's technology-driven world.
- Poetry Out Loud Connects the written word with performance arts and gives students the opportunity to perform and be recognized at the local, state regional, national levels.
- Alaska State Poetry Out Loud builds a sense of community among educators and students across the state of Alaska. Hosting local programs can enhance school culture and connectedness of students and educators through a shared endeavor.

Image at right, above: 2026 Alaska State Poetry Out Loud Champion Cassie Lumba recites at the National Poetry Out Loud Competition in Washington DC. Photo by James Kegley.

Both public and private schools are eligible to participate. Alaska students currently enrolled in grades 9-12 are eligible to participate in Alaska Poetry Out Loud, with an exception made for 8th-grade students participating in a 9-12th grade class.

At the school level of Alaska Poetry Out Loud (AK POL), each school including grades 9-12, public or private, coordinates its own competition. School winners participate in a region-wide competition, with regions to be determined in coordination with the AK POL Partnership Team, following the registration period. School Registrants for AK POL should hold a schoolwide competition, and work with regional competition organizers to submit between at least one, and no more than three student competitors to the regional competition, representing your school.

AK POL also offers Individual At-large Student Registration, when there is not an AK POL School Competition available. The AK POL Partnership Team will work with individual, at-large, student registrant to identify a local POL Liaison who can support them through the process, and we will also connect individually registering students with a local school, or AK POL Regional Competition, as available and appropriate.

Image above: Team Alaska State Poetry Out Loud 2026, including Alaska State Finalists, their chaperones and staff gather on the steps of the Alaska State Capitol after visits to their legislators and Legislative introductions.

I**n 2026-2027 Alaska Regional POL Competitions will include both in-person or video-adjudicated competitions, across the state.** The AK POL Partnership is open to the option for schools to come together for in-person AK POL Regional competitions, when two or more schools are available to compete in your region. To host an in-person regional competition in 2026-2027, schools and at-large student registrants must:

1) Coordinate within the region to hold the competition according to the Poetry Out Loud Guidelines at https://poetryoutloud.org/teachers-and-organizers/organize-a-competition/.
2) Include participants from multiple schools within a geographically defined region.
3) Consult with the AK POL Partnership Team on the definition/designation of an in-person region; regional competition coordinators must report AK POL regional winners and runners-up to the AK POL partnership team no later than February 1, 2027.

A student may not advance to the state finals without competing in a lower-level competition. To compete directly in the regional level of competition as an individual at-large student competitor, please consider the following guidelines:

1) An at-large, individual student participant must identify an AK POL School teacher/liaison/coach, who has agreed to be a point of contact with the AK POL Partnership Team, and
2) If the student's school is registered for AK POL, the student must participate in the school competition. If more than three, at-large, individual student participants register from any school entity, the school must determine the students who will proceed forward to the regional level of competition.

We recognize that the experience of participation in video adjudication and in-person competitions is different for students across the state. To increase the parity of experience for students leading into the Alaska State Competition, **each student will be required to recite two poems from the Poetry Out Loud Anthology at the Alaska Regional Competitions—both in-person and via video adjudication.**

The Alaska State Finals Competition gathering will be held in-person, in Juneau, February 27 - March 2, 2027 and the Alaska State Council on the Arts will coordinate with AK POL State Finalists to book travel for the student finalist and a chaperone, to attend the AK POL State Competition.

The AK POL State Competition will be held on the evening of March 1. As required by the rules of the National Poetry Out Loud Recitation Competition, **each student will be required to recite three poems from the Poetry Out Loud Anthology at the Alaska State Poetry Out Loud Finals Competition, in accordance with the Poem Eligibility Rules.** Only versions of poems from the official Poetry Out Loud Online Anthology may be used in the competition. No other criteria for student poem selections apply to the 2027 program.

We are partnering with KTOO Public Media to ensure that people in the State Finalists' home communities and across the state have access to the live web stream of the State Competition.

Alaska Poetry Out Loud Registration for 2026-2027

Deadline to Register is November 16, 2026

Visit https://www.jahc.org/education/alaska-poetry-out-loud/ to learn more and to register online!

Schools, and at-large individual students must register for Alaska Poetry Out Loud. The online registration form will ask questions about teachers participating in Poetry Out Loud at your school and will ask you to identify a POL Liaison to help facilitate communication with the Alaska Poetry Out Loud Partnership Team. If you are a community arts partner to a school or in a geographical region, please contact the AK POL Partnership Team about registration.

Should more than three students register at-large from a single school, where the school is not already registered, the AK POL partnership team will consult and coordinate with that school in mounting a school competition. Guidance for organizing a competition at the classroom and school competition is available at: https://poetryoutloud.org/teachers-and-organizers/organize-a-competition/. Please note that in the case where a school does not have enough students to hold a classroom or school competition, AK POL's Regional level of competition will meet the program guidelines for eligibility.

Visit https://www.jahc.org/education/alaska-poetry-out-loud/ to access the following resources:

- Online Registration for 2026-2027 Alaska Poetry Out Loud (by November 16, 2026)
- News and updates on the Alaska Poetry Out Loud Program
- Information about the Alaska Poetry Out Loud Process and complete timeline
- Video archive of past Alaska Poetry Out Loud State Competitions
- Recommended tools and resources for Alaska Poetry Out Loud

Visit https://poetryoutloud.org/ to access the following resources:

- National Poetry Out Loud Anthology
- Lesson plans and other Teacher resources
- Resources for organizing and judging a contest
- Video and audio recitations from student Poetry Out Loud competitors, tips on reciting and information about what it's like to compete

Follow the Poetry Out Loud: Alaska Facebook page for ongoing updates about Alaska Poetry Out Loud and literary arts in Alaska.

We encourage teachers and families to use the many free resources included on the National Poetry Out Loud website at https://poetryoutloud.org/, in working with students who love poetry, whether you register for Alaska Poetry Out Loud, or not. The Poetry Out Loud Anthology, Lesson Plans and other resources on the site are geared to high school-aged students, but we hope that educators seeking resources for teaching poetry will consider adapting materials as developmentally appropriate for your students.

Alaska Poetry Out Loud Partnership Contacts:

- Summer Christiansen at Juneau Arts & Humanities Council at summer@jahc.org (907) 586-2787
- Laura Forbes at Alaska State Council on the Arts at laura.forbes@alaska.gov (907) 269-6682
- Tey Anderson-Johnson at Alaska State Council on the Arts at teshawn.anderson-johnson@alaska.gov (907) 269-6603

Complete Alaska Poetry Out Loud Timeline for 2026-2027

September 2026
Poetry Out Loud online anthology live for 2026-27 school year

Mid-August – November 16, 2026
Alaska Poetry Out Loud (AK POL) Registration for schools and at-large participants open

November 16, 2026
Deadline for AK POL Registration

Prior to winter break

- Recommended completion of classroom/school competitions
- Communication/Coordination with AK POL School Liaisons and At-large Individual Student registrants about in-person and video-adjudicated regional competitions.

January 22, 2027
Deadline for submission of video recitations for Alaska Video-adjudicated Regional Competition

January 29, 2027
Deadline to hold In-person Regional Alaska Poetry Out Loud Competitions

January 27 – January 31, 2027
Alaska Regional Poetry Out Loud Video Adjudication

February 1, 2027 - Announcement of AK POL State Finalists!

February 3, 2027
AK POL State Finalist online meet-and-greet (zoom)

February 4 – 26, 2027
AK POL distance coaching, coordination, and preparation

February 27 - March 2, 2027
Alaska State Poetry Out Loud in Juneau (Competition to be held the evening of March 1st)

March 10, 2027
Deadline for state champs and chaperones to register for National Finals

April 26 - 28, 2027 - Poetry Out Loud National Finals in Washington, DC

More about Poetry Out Loud

Poetry Out Loud is an initiative of the National Endowment for the Arts in partnership with state and jurisdictional arts agencies and managed by Mid Atlantic Arts. Juneau Arts and Humanities Council and KTOO Public Media are key partners in Alaska Poetry Out Loud. This program helps students master public speaking skills, build self-confidence, and learn about literary history and contemporary life.

Since the program began in 2005, more than 4.5 million students across the U.S. have participated in Poetry Out Loud. Poetry Out Loud begins at the local level with a school or organization. Non-school organizations, such as after school clubs, libraries, or nonprofit organizations, may also choose to run Poetry Out Loud as well. Students may only compete in one stream—either with their school or with an organization.

Poetry Out Loud students must read closely to determine what the text says and are then asked to use the highest order thinking skills possible to develop what they know about the text into a unique performance that uses subtle gesture, posture and physical presence to embody the meaning of words. Poetry Out Loud supports learning for all students, as each one is able to approach it from his or her own level AND as the program aligns with the Alaska ELA standards.

Image above: Alaska State Poetry Out Loud finalists for 2026—from L to R—Lumi Fermin, Grace Yang, Mette Miller, Freya Tucker, Kieri Dot Tuttle, Jocelyn Oettinger, Robert Wilson, Cassie Lumba, and Jasminka Jaksic. Image credit to Spencer Edgers, courtesy of Juneau Arts and Humanities Council.

Our hope for Poetry Out Loud, is that teachers will embrace the program as a teaching and learning tool that supports ongoing curriculum. We know that many of the greatest successes happen by surprise, and often students who would never view themselves as successful in this area may discover a new opportunity and strength. Students can discover important ideas and concepts that will stay with them forever. Please consider involving ALL your students in every class regardless of the level. Poetry Out Loud can increase students' appreciation of poetry. Through participation in Poetry Out Loud students can understand how poetry reveals new ways to see the world, fosters connection and empathy, and reach a greater understanding of ourselves, our past, and others. Poetry Out Loud can have a positive impact on schools, helping to build community, forging stronger connections between teachers and students, and bringing together students who may not have otherwise formed connections. Our goal is to support you in using the arts to reach your students.