

## **What is POL?**

The California Arts Council has partnered with the National Endowment for the Arts and the Poetry Foundation to support Poetry Out Loud, a contest that encourages the nation's youth to learn about great poetry through memorization and recitation. This program helps students master public speaking skills, build self-confidence, and learn about their literary heritage.

After successful pilot programs in Washington, DC, and Chicago, Poetry Out Loud was launched in high schools nationwide in the spring of 2006 with tens of thousands of students participating. California's program began in the county of Sacramento, and the program has grown throughout the state reaching over 40,000 high school students. Nationwide, POL has grown every year with over 365,000 participants.

## **Contest Structure and Awards**

Poetry Out Loud uses a pyramid structure that starts at the classroom level. In California, winners advance to a school-wide competition, then to a county and possibly district competition, then to the state competition in Sacramento, and ultimately to the National Finals in Washington DC.

Each winner at the county level receives a trip to compete at the state capitol along with a dinner reception and a certificate of recognition from his or her legislative representative. Each winner at the state level receives \$200 and an all-expenses-paid trip with an adult chaperone to Washington to compete for the national championship. The state winner's school receives a \$500 stipend for the purchase of poetry books. The first runner-up in each state receives \$100, with \$200 for his or her school library. A total of \$50,000 in awards and school stipends is awarded annually at the National Finals.

Awards are made in the form of lump sum cash payouts, reportable to the IRS. Tax liabilities are the sole responsibility of the winners and their families.

## **Program Materials and Schedule**

Poetry Out Loud curriculum materials include the print and online poetry anthologies, a comprehensive teacher's guide, an audio CD featuring distinguished actors and writers, a DVD of National Finals performances, and promotional and

media guides. Hard copies of all materials are free for teachers participating in the official program.

While teachers, students, and poetry lovers everywhere can use this website and its free materials to organize their own contests, the official contest is limited to the programs run by each state's arts agency, such as the California Arts Council. If you are interested in participating in the official program, please contact [Kristin Margolis](#).

Materials are sent to high schools beginning in September and early October, and the program is run through the winter. (Poetry Out Loud does not require full class periods and can be completed in 2-3 weeks.) The state competition in California is held in March. Following the state finals, the National Finals will be held in Washington, DC.