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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
October 5, 2026

**NORTH CAROLINA SCHOOLS AND ORGANIZATIONS HAVE UNTIL OCT. 30
TO REGISTER FOR POETRY OUT LOUD**

*Children's Theatre of Charlotte and North Carolina Arts Council invite high school students
to find their voice through statewide poetry recitation competition*

CHARLOTTE — There's still time for North Carolina high schools and eligible organizations to participate in Poetry Out Loud. This national poetry recitation competition allows high school students to build confidence, strengthen public speaking skills, and discover new connections through poetry. Registration for the 2026–27 program is open through Oct. 30, 2026.

The North Carolina Arts Council and Children's Theatre of Charlotte administer Poetry Out Loud in North Carolina, with Children's Theatre of Charlotte serving as the state coordinator for the fourth consecutive year. The program begins locally, with participating schools and organizations holding their own competitions before advancing students to regional and state-level competitions.

The North Carolina Regional and State Finals will take place at ImaginOn in Charlotte on Feb. 27, 2027. Students who advance through the state competition will have the opportunity to represent North Carolina at the Poetry Out Loud National Finals in Washington, D.C.

"Poetry Out Loud gives students a chance to discover the power of their own voice," said Jean Edwards, Grants and Partnerships Manager of Children's Theatre of Charlotte. "Students learn to do much more than memorize a poem. They learn how to interpret a piece of literature, connect with an audience, and communicate with confidence. We're excited to welcome new schools and organizations into the program this year."



A Competition That Builds Confidence

Poetry Out Loud lifts poetry off the page through dynamic performances of classic and contemporary works. Students select poems from the program's online anthology, memorize them, and perform them before an audience and a panel of judges.

Students are evaluated on physical presence, voice and articulation, interpretation, evidence of understanding, overall performance, and accuracy.

The impact can extend well beyond the competition itself.

At the 2026 North Carolina Poetry Out Loud finals, Caliyah McCall, then a junior at Knightdale High School in Wake County, was named the state champion after previously finishing as first runner-up. McCall went on to represent North Carolina at the national competition.

"Poetry Out Loud inspires me to keep pushing on and keep going," McCall said after winning the 2026 North Carolina championship.

Her teacher, Matthew Raines, described McCall's dedication to returning to the competition after her previous finish as a testament to the program's impact.

Stories like McCall's demonstrate how Poetry Out Loud can give students an opportunity to develop not only their performance skills, but also perseverance, confidence, and a deeper appreciation for poetry.

Who Can Participate?

Poetry Out Loud is open to students currently enrolled in grades 9–12, with an exception for eighth-grade students participating in a ninth- through 12th-grade class.

Participating schools and organizations can include:

- Public, private, parochial, independent, and charter high schools
- Homeschool students
- Libraries
- After-school programs
- Nonprofit organizations and other eligible community organizations



Students participate through a registered school or organization and may compete in only one Poetry Out Loud stream.

Poetry Out Loud provides free educational resources for participating teachers and organizers, including lesson plans, a teacher's guide, an online anthology of classic and contemporary poetry, and materials for organizing a local competition.

Since the program began in 2005, more than 4.6 million students and 89,000 teachers from 22,000 schools across the country have participated.

Nationally, Poetry Out Loud awards a total of \$50,000 in prizes and school or organizational stipends at the National Finals, including a \$20,000 award for the National Champion.

Registration

North Carolina schools and eligible organizations interested in participating in the 2026–27 Poetry Out Loud competition must register by Oct. 30, 2026.

To learn more about Poetry Out Loud, registration, eligibility, and free educational resources, visit PoetryOutLoud.org or contact Children's Theatre of Charlotte at pol@ctcharlotte.org.

ABOUT THE NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR THE ARTS

Established by Congress in 1965, the National Endowment for the Arts is an independent federal agency that is the largest funder of the arts and arts education in communities nationwide and a catalyst of public and private support for the arts. By advancing opportunities for arts participation and practice, the NEA fosters and sustains an environment in which the arts benefit everyone in the United States. To learn more, visit arts.gov or follow us on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), [X](#), [LinkedIn](#), and [YouTube](#).

ABOUT THE NORTH CAROLINA ARTS COUNCIL

The North Carolina Arts Council, a division of the Department of Natural and Cultural Resources, builds on our state's long-standing love of the arts, leading the way to a more vibrant future. The North Carolina Arts Council is an economic catalyst, fueling a thriving nonprofit creative sector that generates \$2.23 billion in annual direct economic activity. We sustain diverse arts expression and traditions while investing in innovative approaches to art-making. The North Carolina Arts Council has proven to be a



champion for youth by cultivating tomorrow's creative citizens through arts education.

<http://www.NCArts.org>

ABOUT CHILDREN'S THEATRE OF CHARLOTTE

Children's Theatre of Charlotte is a nationally-recognized theatre company in Charlotte, North Carolina, founded in 1948. They produce professional theatre experiences for children and families through Mainstage productions, educational programs, and outreach initiatives, inspiring generations to explore the wonder of their world. While reaching more than 250,000 children, families, and educators annually with their programming, Children's Theatre of Charlotte provides a space that cultivates creativity and gives children a sense of belonging. The Theatre takes pride in leading the storytellers of tomorrow, asking children to think and dream big and stay true to themselves. This philosophy, coupled with viewing the world through the lens of kindness, led the company to form the initiative, [The Kindness Project](#). To learn more about the Theatre and its programs, visit ctcharlotte.org or call 704-973-2828.