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Michigan Humanities Announces 2025 Poetry Out Loud State Finals

LANSING, MI—Michigan Humanities and the Michigan Arts and Culture Council are pleased to announce the 2025 Poetry Out Loud State Finals. The competition, presented in partnership with the National Endowment for the Arts and Poetry Foundation, is part of a national program that encourages high school students to learn about poetry through memorization, performance and competition. On March 15, 2025, twenty-seven high school students from communities across Michigan will compete in Lansing at the Poetry Out Loud State Finals. The competition will take place at the Crowne Plaza Lansing, 925 S Creyts Rd, Lansing, MI.

Poetry Out Loud starts in a high school classroom or at the local level with an area organization. Winners then advance to the state competition, and ultimately to the national level. During the Michigan State Finals, contestants will recite works they memorized from an anthology of more than 1,000 classic and contemporary poems. The National Endowment for the Arts and the Poetry Foundation provide free, standards-based curriculum materials—all available online—which teachers may use in their classrooms. This program period marks the 20th anniversary of Poetry Out Loud. Since its launch in 2005, the program has reached more than 4.4 million students and 81,000 teachers from 20,000 schools across the nation, helping students master public speaking skills, build self-confidence and learn about literary history and contemporary life. In Michigan, an estimated 4,100 students and 95 teachers participated in the 2024–25 Poetry Out Loud program.

“The Poetry Out Loud State Finals is always a bright spot in Michigan Humanities’ year, and we are looking forward to seeing students showcase their talent and hard work on March 15,” said Jennifer Rupp, president and CEO of Michigan Humanities. “This program is a reminder of the role that the arts and humanities play in introducing us to new perspectives and fostering deeper understanding, and the ways that poetry can connect us to one another.”

During Michigan's state finals competition, judges will assess the students' recitations based on physical presence, voice and articulation, interpretation, evidence of understanding, overall performance and accuracy. The 2025 Michigan Poetry Out Loud judging panel includes:

- Mable Buchanan Palmer, professor at Cornerstone University
- Guillermo Delgado, interdisciplinary artist and educator
- Cindy Hunter Morgan, poet and professor at Michigan State University
- Ciatta Tucker, poet and program director of the Ypsilanti Youth Poet Laureate Program
- Chad Swan-Badgero (Accuracy Judge), arts education program manager for the Michigan Arts and Culture Council

The Michigan state champion receives a \$1,000 cash award and will compete in the national finals, held in Washington, D.C., from May 5-7, where a total of \$50,000 in awards and school/organization stipends, including a \$20,000 award for the Poetry Out Loud national champion, will be presented. Michigan's Poetry Out Loud program is funded through a partnership between Michigan Humanities and the Michigan Arts and Culture Council. Additional support is generously provided by the National Endowment for the Arts, National Endowment for the Humanities, Poetry Foundation, Michigan State University and Jackson National Life. School champions are listed below alphabetically by school and partner name.

2025 Poetry Out Loud School Champions

Mia Pobocik	Academy of the Sacred Heart
Andre'a Lynch	Arts Academy in the Woods
Olive Frey	Black River Public School
Elli Harju	Calumet High School
Conrad Smith	Calvary Baptist Academy
Christian Bakkal	Detroit Catholic Central High School
Kodie Chandler	Detroit School of Arts
A'Kyla Lewis	Innovation Academies of Muskegon
Lenora Whitney	Interlochen Arts Academy
Abbigail Swartz	Jackson College/Lenawee ISD Academy
Veda Strickland	Kensington Woods Schools
Jennifer Behrenwald	Lakewood High School
Eliza Aldridge	Leland Public School
Reino Ranta	Luther L. Wright High School (Ironwood Area Schools) in partnership with Gogebic-Ontonagon ISD
Sierra Vega	Melvindale High School
Dominik Storm	Negaunee High School
Sadie Hodges	Northwest Education Services Career Tech Writers Studio
Elise Tebeau	Petoskey High School
Evlyynn Clark	Pioneer High School
Naomi Flynn-Whicker	Riverview Community High School
Eli Wicker	Roosevelt High School - Wyandotte
Sylvia Heidtman	Royal Oak High School

Matlyn Haze Miller	Saginaw Arts & Sciences Academy in partnership with Friends of Theodore Roethke Foundation
Jared Peremans	St. Joseph High School
Madelyn Holderbaum	Saline High School
Alaijha Young	The School at Marygrove
Nour Al-Yasseri	Star International Academy

For more information about Michigan’s Poetry Out Loud program please visit michiganhumanities.org.

About Michigan Humanities

Michigan Humanities strives to bring people together through stories, histories, cultures, and conversations. In carrying out this mission, Michigan Humanities builds awareness and excitement for humanities in everyday life, achieves best practices and sustainability for all humanities programs and services in Michigan, and upholds the following key values: inclusion, diversity, and equity; discovery and understanding; authentic conversation; respectful collaboration; and meaningful experiences. Michigan Humanities’ vision is a more thoughtful, connected, engaged, and informed Michigan.

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