



April 8, 2009

ATTENTION: South Dakota Poetry Out Loud Coordinators

FROM: Michael Pangburn, Acting Director, SD Arts Council

Thank you to those teachers who returned the Coordinator Questionnaire and accompanying Poetry Out Loud curriculum materials that you have developed. The major purpose of the Poetry Out Loud program is to encourage student appreciation of poetry by getting kids involved in the study and memorization of poetry. It's wonderful when one of your students qualifies for the State or National Finals; however, an even greater overall impact can be achieved by having whole classes of students study and recite poetry, thereby involving a significant number of your school's students. Many of you have developed some excellent curricular materials. Some schools are having many students memorize poetry. Several schools have open contests that any student can enter.

After reviewing the materials submitted by Poetry Out Loud coordinators, the South Dakota Arts Council staff has chosen **Mary Begley** of Vermillion High School as the **2006-2009 Outstanding POL School Coordinator**. She will receive a **\$500** cash award from South Dakotans for the Arts for her efforts. On average, Mary involved 25 percent of the student body in POL activities. She has entered students in the POL memorized state contest and the original poetry competition and has implemented a school contest for both categories each year. The POL memorized contest is held on an evening in the school theater; friends and family are invited to attend. The contest is judged by current or retired English teachers. Mary has developed outstanding curricular and extracurricular materials to be used with POL: she submitted 16 items with her questionnaire.

Honorable Mention Awards this year are presented to **Kim Davidson**, Rosholt High School; **Bryan Hagg**, Sioux Falls Lincoln High School; **Kris O'Brien**, Watertown High School; and **Sharon Prendergast**, Sisseton High School. They will each receive a **\$200** cash award.

Next year's awards will be based on what is accomplished next year, so it will be an award for 2009-2010 only. We plan to give two awards: one for large schools and one for small schools. A school will have to submit a video for the preliminary contest to be eligible for consideration. The major criteria in determining next year's recipients will be (1) the percentage of the student body studying and memorizing poetry and (2) the coordinator's development and implementation of new curriculum materials. Additional credit will be given to having students memorize (rather than just read) their selections. School contests and the submission of original poetry will also be considered. Overall, coordinators should work toward developing a strong program of studying and reciting poetry that reaches a significant number of students in the school.

So . . . we are throwing down a challenge. Even if you did very little this year, you could develop a very strong program and be a contender next year. Start thinking and planning now.



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