

## **A School-Wide Celebration of Poetry**

Here are some suggestions for creating a school wide celebration of poetry during National Poetry Month this April. Involving students, staff and families together in this celebration of poetry creates a close-knit environment. This type of environment supports the development of a literate and respectful community of learners.

### **A Selection of School Wide Activities**

#### **Parents as Poetry Partners on Poem in Your Pocket Day, April 30:**

In "The Reading Environment," Aidan Chambers writes, "One of the most obvious but most notable aspects of reading aloud is its socially binding effect. Those who read together feel they belong together as a community, for nothing unites more than the sharing of their imaginary experiences; and they feel together physically, for reading aloud is essentially a domestic, a family-sized activity."

One of the most important things schools can do is to invite families to become part of the school community by visiting their child's classroom to share the poems in their pockets and to take part in other poetry readings or celebrations. Schools can invite families to come with favorite poems of their own for a special read aloud time together on April 30th. Teachers can display baskets of poetry books in their classrooms and encourage families and children to continue reading poems together.

#### **Give a Poem-Take a Poem:**

Encourage a school wide poetry exchange by creating an interactive poetry wall. Children, staff and families can post some of their favorite poems. These poems may be by "published" poets or by student poets. If someone sees a poem they love, s/he can take the poem and replace it with a favorite of their own.

#### **Poetry in Everyday Places:**

Post appropriately selected poetry all around the school. For example, sports poems may be posted in the gym; poems about water near the water fountain; poems about steps may be posted in the stairwell, etc.

#### **Poetry Portraits:**

Classes may display photos of children in the class accompanied by poems that classmates have written about each other. This might include photos and poems about custodial workers, office workers, lunchroom staff, administration, and teachers, including the entire school community.

#### **Public Poems:**

Poems can be read over the loudspeaker each morning. These can be favorite poems that children have read or poems they have written that they would like to share. Everyone in the school can be involved in this. The crossing guard could read a favorite poem; a parent may be invited to read a poem; the principal might read an all-time favorite.

**Poetry Partners:**

Many schools have inter-age reading partners, with fourth graders, for example, reading regularly with their first grade partners. During the month of April, those meetings could be focused on poetry, with partners sharing favorite poems and perhaps writing poetry together.

**Oral Traditions:**

Have students interview elders for the poems that they carry in their minds. Have students write or record this poem to identify an oral history. This inter-generational project can connect students with their family roots and culture as well as with other cultures.

**Poetry Publications:**

Schools might consider bringing together all of the student poetry published in the month of April in a school-wide poetry anthology distributed prior to the end of the school year.

**Book-of-the-Month:** Some schools add to a sense of community by choosing one book a month that the whole school reads. In April, schools may want to consider choosing a single book of poetry, either an anthology or the work of one poet, to get to know well.

**Poetry Readings:** Poetry readings need not be confined to the loudspeaker, or to a single day. Schools may want to invite students, teachers and other staff to recite a favorite poem during morning line-up or at other times during the day.

**Poetry Studies:** Teachers may want to focus their reading and writing workshops during the month of April on a study of poetry. Some suggestions for lessons supporting such a study may be found in documents attached.

**Poetry Gallery/Publications:** Each school might collect and exhibit copies of student work, posting poetry on bulletin boards as well as displaying class poetry anthologies, magazines or school literary/art magazines in the lobby, the library, or in other prominent spots around the school.

**Poetry Web Pages:** Schools can place student and staff's favorite poems on their school Web sites. Either individuals can submit their favorite poems for publication, or classes can decide on their favorite poem to be featured on the home page of the web site.

**Poetry Slam:** Schools can sponsor a poetry slams that highlight best poems written by students across content areas. Event does not have to be school-specific but can be done on a larger scale, including other schools.

## Suggested Poetry Activities Across Curricula

### In the Arts

- **The Art of Poetry:** Students examine works of art (sculpture, paintings and photographs) and find or create poems that express similar emotions or themes.
- **Draw a Poem:** The teacher distributes lines of poetry from descriptive/metaphorical poems. Working in groups or teams, several students will get just one line of a poem. Once all the lines have been distributed, the students draw the image they picture in their line of poetry. Students might then combine elements of one image with another, thus creating a new image. The whole class can then interpret the pictures and match them to the lines of the poem or to the poem itself.
- **Photo Poems:** Students create a poem from a photograph of themselves or a person or place that is meaningful to their lives.
- **The Music of Poetry:** Students listen to instrumental music (classical, jazz, contemporary, new age, etc.) and select poems that evoke similar emotional responses.
- **Poetry in Film:** Students watch film clips (without sound) and attach poems that reveal connecting themes and feelings.
- **Choreopoems:** Students create a poem or listen to a poem and create a movement/dance to accompany the poem.

### In Social Studies Class

- **History in Poetry:** English and social studies teachers collaborate and prepare lessons that link poetry to both history and current events and encourage students to do the same.
- **Poetry Across America:** Teams of students “travel” with a poet in their writings across America from east to west, north to south, visiting states that will lead to their destinations. As they progress along their journeys, they will complete a variety of activities designed to promote a true understanding of the poet, his/her contemporaries, work and environment, and the social issues of the day. During the course of each team’s journey, all student teams will have an opportunity to present a project to the class. This project will be multidisciplinary and multi-sensory and demonstrate the team’s adventure across America.
- **Writing Poems:** Students can write poems about historical figures or themes from their unit of study. For example, a student may choose to write a poem about the experience of Sojourner Truth, using her voice.

### **In English/Language Arts Classes**

- **Formula Poems:** Students write original poetry following the prescribed format of the sonnet, haiku, tanka, concrete, cinquain, odes, etc.
- **Poetry Celebration Day:** Students, teachers and family members read an original poem or a favorite poem to a group of teachers and family members set in a library, café or poetry slam setting.
- **Teachers' Resource:** Teachers use Kenneth Koch's *Wishes, Lies and Dreams* as a resource and guide to encourage students to write original poetry both individually and collaboratively.

<http://schools.nyc.gov/academics/englishlanguagearts/educatorresources/poetry%2bresources.htm>