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## PRESS RELEASE

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
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### Riley Saenim is Wisconsin's 2026 Poetry Out Loud Champion

MADISON - On March 7th, **Riley Saenim** won the [statewide Wisconsin Poetry Out Loud \(POL\) Competition](#) held at the MYArts stage in Madison, WI. Saenim, a Senior at Racine's The Prairie School, advanced to the Finals from the WI Southeast Regional competition. *Riley is the first student to win Wisconsin's Poetry Out Loud Competition for four consecutive years.*

Riley's coach, Matt Peterson, said the private school placed special emphasis on poetry in English classes. In the winning recitations, Riley presented: "It Was Not Fate" by William H. A. Moore, "The Contrast" by Frances Ellen Watkins Harper, and "An Apology" by Julia Ward Howe.

The Wisconsin Arts Board extends its congratulations to Riley and to **State Runner-up Nyimah Zavaleta**, also a Senior at The Prairie School and coached by Matt Peterson.

More than 550 Wisconsin high school students competed throughout our state in a process coordinated by State POL Coordinator Dr. Penny Parsons and supported by the Wisconsin Arts Board.

As Wisconsin's Champion, Riley will advance to participate in the National Poetry Out Loud Finals in Washington, D. C., during a three-day run starting April 27-29, 2026.

A partnership of the National Endowment for the Arts and the nation's state arts agencies (of which the Wisconsin Arts Board is one), Poetry Out Loud (POL) is a national arts education program that encourages the study of great poetry by offering free educational materials and a dynamic recitation competition for high school students across the country. This program helps students master public speaking skills, build self-confidence, and learn about literary history and contemporary life.

The National Contest awards over \$50,000 in scholarship funds, including a \$20,000 award to the national champion. Each winner at the state level receives \$200 and the state winner's school library receives \$500 for the purchase of poetry materials. The first runner-up in each state receives \$100, with \$200 for their school library for poetry resources.

– MORE –

Since the POL program began in 2005, more than 4.5 million students and 60,000 teachers from 17,000 schools across the country have participated in Poetry Out Loud. This year, 129,892 students, 4,012 teachers, and 1,262 schools participated in POL nationwide. For more information, go to [www.poetryoutloud.org](http://www.poetryoutloud.org), or contact Dr. Penny Parsons.

The Wisconsin Arts Board, a state agency, nurtures creativity, cultivates expression, promotes the arts, supports the arts in education, stimulates community and economic development, and serves as a resource for people of every culture and heritage. Since 1973, the Arts Board has supported artists and art organizations with funds from the State of Wisconsin and the National Endowment for the Arts. For more information on the Wisconsin Arts Board, please visit [artsboard.wisconsin.gov](http://artsboard.wisconsin.gov)

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