

District 189 student earns third place at Poetry Out Loud regionals

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EAST ST. LOUIS - Three East St. Louis Senior High School students advanced to regional competition after strong performances Friday Feb. 2 in their school's Poetry Out Loud competition.



Keshaun McCray took first place, Mya Glanton was second and Natazzia Mosely finished third to advance to regional competition Feb. 16 at Southwest Illinois College. One of those performers, Keshaun McCray, secured third place overall at the regional competition.

“I am thrilled with the student participants of our building-level Poetry Out Loud contest and the volunteers who helped make it come together,” said Esther Spells who served as a judge during the competition at East St. Louis Senior High School. “The students were quite impressive as they worked through their nerves to deliver their selected poems. To their credit, some of the students were able to deliver their poems and barely show nerves at all.”

Poetry Out Loud, which is a partnership of the National Endowment for the Arts, the Poetry Foundation and state art agencies including the Illinois Arts Council, introduces students to classic and contemporary poetry and helps students develop life skills such as poise and public speaking. It also encourages students to explore their literary heritage and helps to increase the literacy rate among young people by inspiring them to explore the English language. All contestants must deliver a memorized poem in front of an audience and present the material in a manner which demonstrates that they successfully understand the content.

East St. Louis District 189 staff members who organized the event include Spells, Melanie Davis, Tracee Wells, Gina Morris, John Hursey, Johnathan DeBoe and Jill Pisarek.

Poetry Out Loud was created in 2006. Nearly 7,000 students from more than 60 schools across Illinois participate in the annual competition which is conducted in all 50 states, Washington D.C., Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands. Nationwide, a total of more than 3 million students and 50,000 teachers have participated in the poetry contest.



“This was our first year participating in Poetry Out Loud,” said Sydney Stigge-Kaufman, District Director of Strategic Partnerships. “Our English Language Arts department fully embraced this as an opportunity to take poetry to the next level. Our students have done an exceptional job to understand and present their selected poem.”

The regional competition will take place at 4 p.m. in the Schmidt Art Center on the SWIC campus at 2500 Carlyle Avenue in Belleville. Winners will advance to the state competition which will be held March 9 in the LRS Theatre in the Hoogland Center for the Arts at 420 S. 6th Street in Springfield.