

Poetry Alive! Extended Residencies.

Please ensure that each teacher of a participating class has a copy of this document.

Each school should plan its residency activities under the advisement of the Poetry Alive! Representative assigned to the project. The following information, however, will serve as a starting place as you begin to construct your residency schedule.

The 25 Function Week.

Purchasing a Poetry Alive! residency entitles you to five "functions" each day conducted by two Poetry Alive! performers, with one exception: Poetry Alive! will not present more than four theatrical performances in one day. A "function" is defined as a **performance**, a **student workshop**, a **dress rehearsal** or a **teacher in-service** program.

The nature of each residency depends on the number of students involved, the grade levels involved, and the scheduling needs and goals of each individual school. In order to insure the quality of your students' educational experience, here are a few ground rules which must remain constant among any residency we do:

- 1) No more than five (5) functions in one day.
- 2) No more than three (3) stage performances in one day.
- 3) No more than 35 students in each classroom workshop.
- 4) The PA! representatives should not be split up to teach concurrent workshop sessions.
- 5) PA! representatives must be given at least 30 minutes for lunch.
- 6) PA! representatives must be given one (1) continuous hour of planning time each day, free of teaching and performing responsibilities. If possible, schedule this planning period to coincide with the planning period of your school's main contact person.

Outline for a 25-function week (each box represents one 45-60 minute block)

Monday

Tuesday

Wednesday

Thursday

Friday

A Typical Residency Scenario

Poetry Alive! performers will perform 1, 2, or 3 shows on Monday morning for the entire student body, if desired. The rest of the week is spent in small workshop sessions. Perhaps one afternoon, teachers stay after school for a special teacher workshop. On Friday all interested students participate in a poetry show in which they perform individually and in groups. This final poetry extravaganza might take place in the afternoon as an in-school assembly or at night as a special presentation for the school's PTA. The Poetry Alive! performers are the MCs for this final event, performing a few poems themselves and helping to make the show a success. Some schools choose to postpone this final show preferring a full week of classroom workshops. These schools typically conduct their own poetry performance showcases after Poetry Alive! has gone. It is also strongly advised that one of the functions be a Dress Rehearsal time for the students who will perform.

Classroom Workshops

Some schools choose to sponsor a week of performances for the students to watch. Some schools choose a combination of shows and one-time follow-up visits to many different classrooms. Still other schools choose to schedule two or three different visits to selected classrooms. Usually these multiple visits will cumulatively build toward a final public performance. In order to prepare students for a public or in-school assembly, each performer, in the fourth grade or above, should have at least two visits from the PA! crew. Following is a general description of what might happen in the classroom follow-up visits of a residency, which is building toward a final polished show.

K-3 grades

Performers enter the classrooms after the large assembly performance at the beginning of the week. The follow-up session will begin with a discussion of what the kids liked about the show. PA! will introduce kids to 3 or 4 performance points and use student volunteers to help demonstrate how to conduct themselves in front of an audience. PA! will introduce one, two, or three poems to the kids, which they will then perform as a group. Poetry Alive! personnel will end the session with summary and closure. They will also explain how the School Assembly will be run. PA! hands copy(s) of the poems performed during the session to the teacher on the way out. The teacher is asked to practice these poems with the kids throughout the week. If there is time, will visit these classes a second time for 10 to 15 minutes to offer words of explanation and encouragement.

4-12 grades

FIRST VISIT: PA! begins as with the K-3 grades. We will cover more performance points than for K-3, and go into much greater detail over stage conduct. We will also demonstrate how a poem can be turned into a theatrical script for performance. (The term "to script" means to divide the lines of a poem into speaking parts.) Students are then asked to divide into their pre-assigned performance teams. PA! members will circulate, offering advice when needed as the students divide the lines of their chosen poems. If necessary, PA! will script the poems for certain groups. By the end of this first session, many of these performance teams will be on their feet "walking through" the poems. The teacher is asked to practice these poems with the kids throughout the week.

SECOND VISIT: Students begin in their performance teams, on their feet as they practice performing their pieces. PA! again offers advice and directorial notes where needed. The last half of this second visit is spent watching each team, one at a time, perform in front of the class. PA! offers each team director's notes and ideas as the other class members watch and offer advice.

Teacher Preparations

In order to make preparations for the final end-of-the-week poetry extravaganza as expedient as possible, here are a few notes to share with the teachers whose classes are involved:

4-12 grades

At some time before the residency week, teachers should divide their kids into performance teams of 4 (3 or 5 will also work if it doesn't come out evenly). Each team needs to decide upon one poem they would like to perform and have picked that poem by the time our team works with them. They should also look at alternates as their choice might change after seeing the Poetry Alive! show on Monday. Each member of the team should have a copy of the poem that he or she can write on. Teachers may also assign poems to each team. Try to avoid giving two teams the same poem. Students should be told that they will be performing the poem. They should begin early to think of performance ideas but realize these ideas may change when PA! representatives begin to work with the kids.

K-3 grades

No prep work necessary. But if the kids know a poem or two already, we will probably want to work it into the show Friday.

Note: We expect that teachers will devote some of their class time to practice and preparation on those days when PA! workshops are not scheduled in their class. Only by practicing daily will students be ready to perform at the week's end.

Choosing and Assigning Poems

Whether you choose poems for your students to perform or allow them to search for and choose their own will depend on what you hope to accomplish during the poem performance unit. If you want your students to become familiar with library resources, for example, you would have them find their own. However, if you plan to conduct classes that use the poem performances as guided discussion starters or examples of specific literary devices, then you will probably want to choose the poems to be performed.

The length of the poems used should complement the number of students in each performance team, the number of days allowed for preparation, student grade level, and student ability. A team of four average eighth graders will have a struggle to put together a 100-line poem such as *Casey at the Bat*. That same team of four eighth graders will not be challenged by a simple four-line poem. Find a happy medium, but do not be overly concerned with length. Remember, the object of poem performance is to encourage students to read poems, not count lines. Narrative poetry is the easiest to act out, as are poems with lots of action. Do not limit your students to these however.

Further information

Please give each teacher of a participating class a copy of this document. Or, have them download a PDF file from our web site. They should navigate to the Shows page, then to the In-School Residency link to find the PDF file.

Please explain to the teachers involved that they are free to call the Poetry Alive! office personally with any concerns or questions. And of course, we'd like to hear from you before, during, or after the residency with any comments or concerns.

Please use our toll-free number, (800) 476-8172. My email address is rodb@poetryalive.com

Rod Bowling
Residency Coordinator
Poetry Alive!