

THE SCHEDULE

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

As you begin to plan for our visit, put together your desired schedule. We will work with you on this. Call me any time for suggestions or to deal with possible problems areas that may be particular to your school's routine schedule. **BEGIN WORKING BACKWARD** from the culminating show:

- **When do you want the student performance?**
- **How long do you want the performance to last?**

The answers to these questions will determine how many students can be part of the show. Our suggested length is 60 – 75 minutes maximum for a single show; longer than this can be weary for both the student actors and the audience.

- **When can the full-cast (dress) rehearsal take place?**
- **The time allotted for the full-cast (dress) rehearsal needs to be a minimum of 15 minutes longer than the desired show length.**

We strongly recommend a full-cast rehearsal. It adds so much to the student's confidence. If the show is to take place Friday afternoon then Friday morning is best. If the show is to take place in the evening, the afternoon is preferable.

THE SPACE

The performance space needs to be large enough to accommodate all the student actors sitting in the front rows and side areas, This way they get to see most of the show rather than be somewhere off stage.

A FEW HIGHLY SUGGESTED RULES

- No props other than the possible use of chairs.
- All members of each group must say some part of the poem.
- Students' lines must be memorized by full-cast rehearsal time.

The Functional 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 three 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) Poetry Alive! representatives must be given at least 30 minutes for lunch.

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

Monday

Tuesday

Wednesday

Thursday

Friday

A Typical Residency Scenario

Poetry Alive! performers will perform one, two, or three shows on Monday morning for the entire student body, if desired. Those involved in the student performance must see a show before any workshops begin. The rest of the week is spent in small workshop sessions with at least two visits and a Dress Rehearsal planned for the classrooms participating in the show. Perhaps one afternoon, teachers may stay after school for a special teacher workshop. On Friday all interested students participate in a poetry show in which they perform in their assigned 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, 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. Some schools choose a combination of shows and one-time follow-up visits to many different classrooms with no student performance at the end of the week.

Grades K-3

Prior to the classroom visit by Poetry Alive! the teacher should have selected a poem or two for the class with copies for Poetry Alive!. Poetry Alive! will 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 students liked about the show. Poetry Alive! will introduce students to three or four performance points and use student volunteers to help demonstrate how to conduct themselves in front of an audience. Poetry Alive! will then use students suggestions to perform the selected poems. Poetry Alive! personnel will end the session with summary and closure. They will also explain how the School Assembly will be run. The teacher is asked to practice these poems with the students throughout the week. If there is time, Poetry Alive! will visit these classes a second time for 10 to 15 minutes to offer suggestions and, of course, encouragement.

Grades 4-12

At some time before the residency week, teachers should divide their students 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 Poetry Alive! representatives begin to work with the students.

FIRST VISIT: Poetry Alive! 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. Poetry Alive! members will circulate, offering advice when needed as the students divide the lines of their chosen poems. If necessary, Poetry Alive! will script the poems for certain groups (with the groups assistance, so we do not become the all knowing directors). By the end of this first session, many of these performance teams will be on their feet "walking through" the poems. The teacher should practice these poems with the students throughout the week.

SECOND VISIT: Students begin in their performance teams and on their feet as they practice performing their pieces. Poetry Alive! 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. Poetry Alive! offers each team director's notes and ideas as the other class members watch. This classroom performance and the full cast dress rehearsal prepares the student for the "butterflies" that will appear at showtime. They will fly in formation

Note: We expect that teachers will devote some of their class time to practice and preparation on those days when Poetry Alive! 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 with poem performance. 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. Still, we suggest the groups have some say in selecting the poems. You may have them choose from a limited teacher selected list.

The length of the poems used should complement 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 twelve-line poem. Find a happy medium. 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. Yet there is no need to limit your students to these.

Further information

Please give each teacher of a participating class a copy of all pages of this document.

Please explain to the teachers involved that they are free to call us 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, or email, poetry@poetryalive.com.

HANDY CHECKLIST FOR PARTICIPATING TEACHERS

- **BEFORE POETRY ALIVE! GETS THERE:**
 - __ Form performance groups (4 students in each is best, 3 or 5 Okay)
 - __ Students search for, or teacher assigns poems.
 - __ Each student should have a copy or 2 of their poem that they can write on. Extra copies come in handy.
 - __ Give out poems the week before we arrive and have students read their poem out loud in their group so they will be familiar with it. A day or 2 is sufficient for short poems (5-15 lines). Take more time if the poem is lengthy.

- **DURING THE POETRY ALIVE! WEEK:**
 - __ Make sure students get time to practice on days PA! is not visiting.
 - __ Have memorization be a part of or all of their homework.
 - __ Get them up in front of each other A LOT!! (this helps with slackers and shy students).
 - __ Are they loud enough?
 - __ Are they fulfilling the performance points?
 - __ Kindly offered class feedback can be helpful. Sometimes students believe their peers over adults.