



**2016 DELAWARE STATE FINALIST BIOS  
(IN ORDER OF APPEARANCE)**

**SAMUEL OGUNWANDE**  
Red Lion Christian Academy  
*Lead Teacher: Rhonda Norris*

Samuel is currently a senior at Red Lion Christian Academy and plans on attending Drexel University, Johns Hopkins University, or University of Pennsylvania to study Biomedical Engineering. After college he would like to go to medical school to become either a neurologist or surgeon. Samuel enjoys playing soccer and lacrosse as well as singing in the church choir. He is interested in the Poetry Out Loud program because he has always “enjoyed reciting the poem in class and the feeling and experience of embodying the poem.”

**JORDAN MCMILLAN**  
Sanford School  
*Lead Teacher: Brianna Smale*

Jordan is a senior at Sanford School, who loves theatre and plans to study musical theatre in college. She has performed in numerous productions with Sanford Repertory Theatre Company and Delaware All-State Theatre. Jordan also sings with Sanford’s Vocal Ensemble and Concert Choir, and is participating with the Delaware All-State Choir during her senior year.

**DYLAN NORMAN**  
Seaford Senior High School  
*Lead Teacher: Penny Austin-Richardson*

Dylan, a sophomore at Seaford Senior High School aspires to attend the Naval Academy in Annapolis to study Aerospace Engineering to become a Navy F-35 Lightning II Pilot. Dylan is in his second year as the President, Class of 2018 and is also active in the Key Club and the Student Government Association. He is part of the NJROTC where he is a Petty Officer Second Class, and serves as the Drill Team Co-Commander and Color Guard Commander. Dylan is interested in participating in the Poetry Out Loud program because he sees it as, “an excellent opportunity to not only experience something new but to refine my public speaking skills as well.”

**ABBEY THOMPSON**  
St. Elizabeth’s High School  
*Lead Teacher: Joan Mangan*

Abbey is known to break stereotypical roles by competing both on and off the field. She is a competitive field hockey and lacrosse player, an avid lover of learning, and active participant in both the Math League and Science Olympiad. As she mentions, “students my age often shut down when it comes to poetry. They refuse to let the words mean something to them; [which] saddens me since poetry has so much to offer whether the ideas are silly or philosophical.” Abbey is proud to participate in Poetry Out Loud in order to show everyone what poetry has offered to her.

**MOLLIE RUSSELL**

St. Mark's High School

*Lead Teacher: Anne Marie Eanes*

Mollie is currently a tenth grader at Saint Mark's High School. She is involved with the Marching and Concert Bands and is active in the school's theater productions, including this year's performance, *The Game's Afoot*. After high school, she would like to study some form of education, such as public speaking. Mollie has adored poetry from a young age and finds that "poetry has a way of bringing out emotions in unique ways."

**KANA TURLEY**

Tall Oaks Classical School

*Lead Teacher: Stephen Rippon*

Kana is currently a junior at Tall Oaks Classical School and has participated in the Poetry Out Loud program every year since starting high school. She is grateful to the program for helping develop her skills in public speaking, confidence on stage, and an overall love of poetry. She is a student athlete, who plays tennis and volleyball year-round. Outside of school, Kana enjoys creative writing, photography, and film analysis. She hopes to combine these passions into a college degree in communications, cinematography, or journalism.

**JANE KRUKIEL**

Ursuline Academy

*Lead Teacher: Erin Pudlo*

Jane is excited to participate in this year's Poetry Out Loud program because she "enjoy[s] the act of reading/speaking out loud," a passion she would like to expand throughout this competition. In addition to her love of public speaking, she enjoys playing volleyball, watching the Philadelphia Eagles, caring for animals, watching movies, and taking photographs. After high school, she aspires to work with endangered animals to help solve environmental issues, or become a teacher.

**SAMANTHA DRUMMOND**

Wilmington Christian School

*Lead Teacher: Elle Straley*

Samantha has always been amazed by the power of words. As she states, "they have the ability to trigger my dormant imagination and explain my deepest feelings. It is through poetry, however, that I feel connected to the emotions and heart of at least one other person on the planet. Poetry has formed a basis for my love for literature, and many other subjects such as science, history, and politics." During these past four years, she has enjoyed being a part of the school-wide Poetry Out Loud competition, and looks forward to the statewide competition where she can vocalize the powerful words of poets.

**GUSTAVO SILVEIRA**

Wilmington Friends School

*Lead Teacher: Jake Rashkind*

This is Gustavo's second year participating in the Poetry Out Loud program. Although his academic passion lies in science and mathematics, Gustavo participates in POL because it reminds him "...of the power of spoken verse to unite lives from every corner of the globe into a single, captivating moment." When not practicing for POL, he trains in martial arts and participates in the Science Olympiad and the National History Bowl.

**TORI BAKER**

Brandywine High School

*Lead Teacher: Martin Caldwell*

Tori is a freshman at Brandywine High School and is currently looking to apply to the University of Delaware, Wilmington University, or possibly Yale or Princeton University. She wishes to major in psychology, and minor in writing. Tori plays clarinet and is a member of the school's jazz band. Tori believes that the Poetry Out Loud program is a wonderful opportunity to further her love of poetry, and to show others her interpretation of various poems.

**PHOEBE CALLARD**

Cape Henlopen High School  
*Lead Teacher: Robert Cerf*

Phoebe is currently studying theatre performance and has always loved performing in plays and musicals, though her real passion is furthering her study of sound design and production. Phoebe believes that the Poetry Out Loud program provides the opportunity to “find a different voice within poetry.” She believes “poetry is a different form of language and [she] adores the honesty that goes into both writing and performing poetry.”

**JESSICA PIGEON**

Caravel Academy  
*Lead Teacher: Kristina Reyes*

Jessica is attending the University of Delaware in the fall to major in Biochemistry and plans to either become a forensic scientist or geneticist. She enjoys reading and drawing and is a proud member of her school’s chess club. Jessica enjoys participating in Poetry Out Loud because it gives her “a good opportunity to learn and experience poems better.”

**CHRISTIAN WILLS**

Concord High School  
*Lead Teacher: Joseph Consiglio*

Christian enjoys playing video games, making jokes, having fun, making artwork, and most importantly, writing lyrics and poems. In his spare time, he writes words to apply to beats so that he can improve his word choice in poems and raps. Christian plans to study Graphic Design at George Mason University or the University of Delaware.

**BRANDON DAWSON**

Middletown High School  
*Lead Teacher: Amanda Chas*

Brandon is currently a senior at Middletown High School where he is involved with the National Honor Society, Middletown FFA, and Puppetry in Education. He has participated in every fall play and spring musical since starting high school and enjoys competing in public-speaking contests. Brandon will be attending Duke University as an Environmental Science and Policy major where he hopes to start his career in environmental activism. Brandon can’t wait to compete in this year’s Poetry Out Loud competition, especially since “...the complexity and styles of spoken word have always intrigued him.”

**REBECCA PEREIRA**

Mount Sophia Academy  
*Lead Teacher: Barbara Varnell*

Rebecca, a senior at Mount Sophia Academy, plans to attend Lee University this fall. She will be studying biochemistry in hopes of becoming an orthodontist. She has a passion for dancing, writing poetry, and reciting poetry, which sparked her interest in Poetry Out Loud.

**NATALIE NWANEKWU**

Newark Charter High School  
*Lead Teacher: Leslie Healey*

Natalie has a strong passion for public speaking and relishes any opportunity for an attentive audience. She has always enjoyed literature and aspired to be a journalist, but never had a particular interest in poetry until now. Natalie’s father has always encouraged his children to make new experiences or try different things, which has influenced her participation in the Poetry Out Loud program. As she says, “it’s a great opportunity to speak in front of an audience and try something new.”

**SHANNON MURRAY**

Padua Academy

*Lead Teachers: Michelle Wrambel and Hilary Sophrin*

Shannon is currently a sophomore at Padua Academy and is excited to compete again in this year's Poetry Out Loud competition. In her free time, Shannon enjoys playing volleyball and participating in her local 4H club. She is interested in math, science, and graphic design. Shannon competed in last year's competition and is looking forward to competing again this year.

**HANNAH STURGIS**

POLYTECH High School

*Lead Teacher: Patricia Masten*

Hannah, a junior at POLYTECH, focuses in Broadcast Media. She hopes to one day inspire others through performance and the written word. In college, Hannah hopes to major in English and minor in Musical Theatre. In her spare time, she enjoys writing her own poems, something that Poetry Out Loud has inspired her to do. Hannah also enjoys reading, writing short plays, and acting in her local and school theatre programs. She has been interested in poetry for many years, but Poetry Out Loud has shown her that words have a power that surpasses the poet and the page.