Poet in Residence Program

What is the Poet in Residence program?

Mass Poetry-certified Poets in Residence, or those with comparable education and work experience, can work in Massachusetts public schools for a semester or full-year placement. Poets can co-teach in a classroom setting or co-coach in a student club setting.

Residencies include:

- writing workshops
- performance/recitation coaching
- one-on-one mentorship or office hours
- in-school performances or open mics
- participation in school programs, such as judging poetry contests or working on a literary magazine

Residencies are customizable based on your school’s schedule, size, curriculum, and demographics. Poet-educators can work in-depth with a single teacher/class or can work more generally with a group of teachers/classes, depending on the scope of the residency.

What is the impact?

Students who work with Mass Poetry’s poet-educators over the course of one or more semesters:

- Develop their writing skills
- Develop their critical reading skills
- Develop their public speaking and in-class discussion skills
- Build their self-confidence and their empathy for others

Mass Poetry piloted one in-class residency at New Mission High School in the 2018-2019 school year, starting their first ever full-semester creative writing course. In 2019, we expanded at New Mission to add an afterschool poetry club and added three additional school partners: Edward M. Kennedy School for Health Careers, Burlington High School, and Brookline High School. All of the
teachers are requesting the return of poets in the 2020-2021 academic year and we’re looking to expand the program to six new partner schools. Here’s what some of our partner teachers had to say:

“[My students] are more confident with their work. There is more willingness to present work out loud. [The poet] was able to connect with students, demonstrate what he was moving them towards, and break down the steps of writing and performing a poem. It was incredible.”

“[The poet] made every student feel connected and able to contribute, even if it was a word. Every student participated at some level. I also was impressed by his care and concern for students on an individual level, reaching out to students who were reticent to participate...Honestly, I wish he were full-time part of the team.”

“[My students] are more confident. They speak up more in class. They share their own writing more. Our students gained knowledge, perspective, and empowerment through their work with [the poet]. We are so grateful that he was able to spend time with our students. I wish there was more funding to have him back. We miss him already.”

What does the process look like?

We typically start with an informational meeting with the teacher(s) to discuss what residency model might work best at their school. We discuss:

- funding options, including the school’s eligibility for grant funding.
- particular poets, skill sets, or demographics that might be a good match for the school
- a culminating project(s) or event(s) that would represent the residency’s work in a school-wide or public way
- a timeline that works with the school calendar and any funding constraints.

We’ll work from there to recruit the right poet, apply with the school for any grant funding, and coordinate poet-teacher planning before the residency begins. We are in regular contact with our partner teachers and poets to ensure the residency runs smoothly. We provide administrative support to both parties to keep the program running as smoothly as possible from start to finish.

We also develop a pre- and post-residency evaluation based on the learning objectives established by the grant, the teacher(s), and the poet-educator. The evaluation data we
collect will be shared with the granting agency, the teachers and administrators, and the poet-educator after the residency has been completed.

**What does it cost?**

Poet residencies cost between $1,000 - $10,000 depending on the length and scope of the poet’s involvement at the school. Mass Poetry’s administrative fees are 10% of the total residency cost. Schools can also expect materials fees, such as the cost of printing a literary magazine, depending on the cumulative project/event of the residency. All of these costs can often be built into a grant application.

**How do we get started?**

For more information or to start planning your residency, please email our Education Director at erica@masspoetry.org.