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Project Lit celebrates the release of the *3rd Annual Youth Poetry Anthology* and Black History Month

February 2, 2021 (Mesa, AZ) – Despite the challenges brought by the pandemic, Project Lit continues to develop critical literacy in valley students using tools of creativity, such as storytelling, humor, spoken word, hip hop, poetry, and more. Now virtual, the Project Lit workshops create a brave space that allows students to embrace discomfort while exploring their emotions, thoughts, and feelings. Students, educators, and school administrators can still register and participate in the Project Lit Rush Days and Poetry Workshops. In addition to the in-school programs, Project Lit offers community programming, including a free monthly virtual open mic.

"We work with students from the beginning of the year through the spring, and then everything culminates into a Youth Poetry Festival and our annual *Youth Poetry Anthology* book," explained Tomas Stanton, Engagement Manager at Mesa Arts Center. "This year's *Youth Poetry Anthology* is our third, and the release date is in April. We are thrilled by the increased participation in our program during the health crisis. Much of the poetry in this year's book is very heartfelt – students are expressing a lot of anxiety and uncertainty because of the pandemic. Writing gives students an outlet to positively communicate their feelings, which starts the process of healing."

Students can still submit poetry for consideration for the *3rd Annual Youth Poetry Anthology*. To qualify, you must be an active student in grades 7-12 in the state of Arizona. The poetry can be any form or style, must not exceed 1,000 words, and cannot be previously published. Peer editors that participate in Project Lit review and select the poetry included in the anthology. Works are judged based on the quality of content, consistency of voice and style, and language mastery. All submissions must be received by February 28, 2021.

In celebration of Black History Month, Project Lit is adding weekly prompts throughout February that explore topics including the Harlem Renaissance, Hip Hop, Black Arts Movement, and Youth Spoken Word. Each module contains a lesson plan, a writing prompt, and a video from a local artist. To learn more about all Project Lit programs or submit a poem for the 3rd Annual Youth Poetry Anthology, visit MesaArtsCenter.com/ProjectLit.

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About Mesa Arts Center

Mesa Arts Center, owned and operated by the City of Mesa, is a unique, architecturally stunning facility located in the heart of downtown Mesa. Arizona's largest multidisciplinary arts center is home to four theaters, five art galleries in the Mesa Contemporary Arts Museum, and 14 art studios. Guests, patrons, and students come to Mesa Arts Center to enjoy the finest live entertainment, performances and festivals, world-class visual art exhibitions, and outstanding arts education classes. Mesa Arts Center's mission is to inspire people through engaging arts experiences that are diverse, accessible, and relevant. For more information, visit mesaartscenter.com.

About Mesa Arts Center's Engagement Programs

The Engagement Office at Mesa Arts Center offers programming that supports engagement in the arts as a critical component to a healthy and active community. Programming endeavors to ensure that lifelong learners have access to unique and high-quality arts opportunities, students engage in meaningful learning opportunities in creating art, experiencing live performances and developing skills critical to a 21st Century education, and community members participate in relevant and accessible arts initiatives. For more information, visit mesaartscenter.com/engagement.