

Unified District Poetry Slam 2017 Guidelines

(Updated 3/24/17)

*updates/changes from last year
highlighted in teal

Dear Bay Area Students and Teachers

*Greetings from Youth Speaks! We are excited to announce the **8th Annual Unified District Poetry Slam**. Building off of the success of Youth Speaks' In-School and After-School Workshops, School Visit Program, Under 21 Open Mics and the annual Youth Speaks Teen Poetry Slam, the Unified District Poetry Slam is an exciting opportunity for your school's students to perform, dialogue, and speak their minds with other high school youth throughout the district and the entire Bay Area.*

Please read on for information on team eligibility, how to register, bout guidelines and for this year's slam dates!

*Sincerely,
Youth Speaks*

Eligibility & Registration

The Unified District Poetry Slam is a TEAM slam
Open to all Bay Area High Schools

Eligibility Requirements

- Only 1 team per school may compete in the Unified District Poetry Slam
- Each team must consist of 4-6 team members
- All team members must be currently enrolled at their school. If there are special circumstances, please contact us.
- One adult coach and one youth poet from each team must attend one of our MANDATORY orientations on:

Option 1

Saturday, March 18, 2017

Location: Oakstop, 1721 Broadway, Oakland, CA 94612

Time: 11:00 AM – 1:30 PM

Option 2

Saturday, April 1, 2017

Location: Oakstop, 1721 Broadway, Oakland, CA 94612

Time: 11:00 AM – 1:30 PM

Register Online @ youthspeaks.org/district-poetry-slam

Note: Registration is limited & priority goes to schools with Youth Speaks residencies & SLAM clubs

Eligibility & Registration (...continued)

Deadline to register for fieldtrip bout tickets & potential transportation:
Saturday, April 1, 2017

In addition to your team members, we strongly encourage you to bring a larger group of students (20-40) to participate in the day's festivities and to cheer on their peers. Free buses may be provided for some participants and audience members for the Quarter Final bouts on a limited basis. We will honor those who RSVP their teams on a first-come, first-serve basis.

Program Overview

Up to 25 teams will represent schools from throughout San Francisco, Oakland, and the Greater Bay in this year's District Slam. Each school team will participate in one Quarter Final Bout. The top-scoring team at Finals will be crowned the 2017 Unified District Poetry Slam Champions.

Quarter Finals: There will be three rounds at each Quarter Final bout. Teams should prepare 3 poems for this bout, including a Lightning Round poem for the second round (see "*Lightning Round Poems*" below). At least 1 poem **must** be a group poem. Group poems can be duets, trios or quartets but no more than 4 poets can participate in a single group performance. The team with the highest score from each bout will advance to Finals.

Finals: Teams should prepare 4 poems for this bout, including a Lightning Round poem for the second round (see "*Lightning Round Poems*" below). At least 1 poem **must** be a group poem. The top-scoring team at Finals will be crowned the 2017 Unified District Poetry Slam Champions.

2017 Unified District Poetry Slam Finals | Friday, May 5, 2017

Oakland Museum of California, James Moore Theater

1000 Oak Street | Oakland | Lake Merritt BART

Time: 7:00-9:00PM

Check-in: 6:15PM

Free and open to the public! Space is limited. Doors open at 6:30PM

***For rules regarding the Unified District Poetry Slam, see "*Rules & Guidelines*"
below

BOUT SCHEDULE

QUARTER FINALS

Schools must participate in one of the following Quarter Final Bouts to qualify for Finals. OUSD schools will be assigned to a bout at the New Parkway and SFUSD schools will be assigned to a bout at the Mission Cultural Center. Schools will not be assigned to specific bouts until after they attend orientation

Quarter Final Slam 1* | April 25, 2017 (*if needed)

Mission Cultural Center | 2868 Mission Street | SF | 24th Street BART
Bout 1: 2PM - 4PM
Check-in: 1:15PM

Quarter Final Slam 2 | Wednesday, April 26, 2017

Mission Cultural Center | 2868 Mission Street | SF | 24th Street BART
Bout 1: 10:00AM – 12:00PM
Check-in: 9:15AM

Quarter Final Slam 3 | Wednesday, April 26, 2017

Mission Cultural Center | 2868 Mission Street | SF | 24th Street BART
Bout 2: 2:00PM – 4:00PM
Check-in: 1:15PM

Quarter Final Slam 4 | Thursday, April 27, 2017

New Parkway Theater | 474 24th St | Oakland | 19th Street BART
Bout 1: 10:00AM – 12:00PM
Check-in: 9:15AM

Quarter Final Slam 5 | Thursday, April 27, 2016

New Parkway Theater | 474 24th St | Oakland | 19th Street BART
Bout 2: 2:00PM – 4:00PM
Check-in: 1:15PM

Note: Quarter Final slams take place during school hours making it a great field trip opportunity for students beyond the slam team. Free transportation is available on a first-come, first-serve basis for competing teams.

FINALS BOUT

2017 Unified District Poetry Slam Finals | Friday, May 5, 2017

Oakland Museum of California, James Moore Theater
1000 Oak Street | Oakland | Lake Merritt BART
Time: 7:00-9:00PM
Check-in: 6:15PM

Free and open to the public! Space is limited. Doors open at 6:30PM

Rules & Guidelines

Although we de-stress the competition, we have come up with the following guidelines to clarify the rules of the slam. Please abide by them so as to avoid controversy and keep the focus on the fun and expansive nature of poetry and the slam.

❖ **Every member of the team must be physically present and checked in with Youth Speaks staff at least 45 minutes before their bout begins.** Teams will be penalized for tardiness as follows: Tardiness to check-in results in being put in earliest slots to compete. Tardiness to showtime results in 0.5 score deduction in the 1st round. Tardiness after the 1st round results in disqualification from competing but you are still able to perform on stage.

❖ Coaches and adults accompanying their youth will be responsible for their conduct.

❖ *Bring Original Work:* Poems must be original writing by the competing poet. NOTE: Plagiarism has disqualified teams in the past.

❖ *Group Poems aka Group Pieces:* Each team must present at least one group piece (constructed and performed as duets, trios, or quartets) per bout. Each performing member of a group piece must have participated in the writing of the group piece. No more than 4 poets may participate in the performance of any one poem.

❖ *Standard Length Poems:* must be under 3 minutes, 30 seconds long. The poet will also have a 10 second grace period, after which scores will be penalized 0.5 for each 10 seconds beyond, starting at 3 minutes 40 seconds (e.g. up to 3:39 – no penalty; 3:40 to 3:49 - .5 point penalty; 3:50 to 3:59 – 1 point penalty, etc). In Quarter Finals, the first and third rounds will be standard length poems. In Finals, the first, third, and fourth rounds will be standard length poems. Standard Length Poems can be either individual or group poems.

❖ *Lighting Round Poems:* every bout will have a Lightning Round. Poems performed during the Lightning Round can be either an individual or group poem but they must be under 1 minute, 30 seconds in length. We will also have a 10 second grace period, after which scores will be penalized 0.5 for each 10 seconds beyond, starting at 1 minute 40 seconds (e.g. up to 1:39 – no penalty; 1:40 to 1:49 - .5 point penalty; 1:50 to 1:59 – 1 point penalty, etc.). In both Quarter Finals and Finals, the Lightning Round will take place in the second round of the slam.

❖ *Tie Breakers:* In the event of a tie at the end of any of the bouts, an additional Lightning Round will be added in order to break the tie. **NOTE: Tie Breakers DO NOT count against the Primary Authorship rule** (see below).

❖ *Primary Authorship:*

1. Each poem must have at least 1 "Primary Author." A Primary Author is the main writer of a poem.
2. At the end of each bout, coaches must check in with the Host and identify 1 primary author for each poem their team performed.

3. You cannot repeat a Primary Author in any one bout or else your team will be disqualified. This is to ensure the entire team participates in the writing of your team's poems. Ghostwriters are not permitted in the Unified District Poetry Slam

4. Group poems may have multiple primary authors, which means they are the only way individuals can touch the stage multiple times besides Tie Breakers (see above)

5. Each team member MUST perform on stage at least once during their Quarter Finals Bout

❖ *No Props:* No props may be used in the Slam. Props are defined as any non-body piece of equipment. Musical accompaniment (excluding mouth/body percussion) may not be used.

❖ *Phones:* Phones are discouraged at Quarter Finals. No phones are allowed on Finals stage. Plan accordingly with paper and/or memorization.

❖ *Be Responsible For Your Words:* There is no censorship whatsoever, but gratuitous use of profanity could work against you when it comes to scoring. It is recommended that you try to avoid excessive violence, sexually explicit content and/ or language that degrades any group of people. Please, do it for the love.

❖ *Judges:* The slam will be judged by a mixed panel of volunteer poets, adults and young people. Many judges are preselected, and some may come from the audience. We will aim for diversity.

❖ *Silent Scoring:* We won't be announcing scores at this year's slam in order to keep the focus on the poetry, not on the points. If you like, you can get your scores from the host at the end of each bout.

Content / Trigger Warnings

- *What are Content/Trigger Warnings?*

We believe that poetry is charged and can be therapeutic and healing. We also believe in emotional safety and disrupting retraumatization. A content/trigger warning is a statement that warns the audience that the content they are about to witness contains material that could cause distress. Some trauma survivors or people living with PTSD (post traumatic stress disorder) appreciate hearing a content/trigger warning before listening to a performance because it helps them prepare themselves to manage trauma responses while witnessing the piece. Content/trigger warnings are just one way we can help respond to the emotional and psychological wounds we constantly carry with us. We will strive to have a SPOKES support table at each Bout with resources for poets and audience members.

- *How Will Content/Trigger Warnings Be Used In The Slam?*

There will be a collective content/trigger warning issued by the MC at the top of each slam. Poets are invited (though not required) to do more specific content/trigger warnings at the beginning of their poems, if they so choose. Participants may also have the MC issue the more specific content/trigger warning for them. If participants are interested in having the MC issue a content/trigger warning, they can arrange this by talking to a SPOKES member

at the SPOKES support table. Content/trigger warnings will NOT count against the poet's time (i.e. the Host will still start the stopwatch at the beginning of the participants' poem, not the content/trigger warning).

- *How Do I Give a Content/Trigger Warning?* Content/trigger warnings can take many forms but for first-timers, you should focus on being brief and letting the audience know what sensitive topic(s) will come up in your piece.

Here are a few examples (feel free to use them!):

1. "Content warning: sexual violence"
2. "Trigger warning: domestic violence and self-harm"
3. "Content note: gun violence and suicide"

Round Order & Elimination of Teams at Quarter Finals

Elimination of Teams: Competing teams will all participate in all 3 rounds. The aggregate score from the 3 rounds will determine each team's final score. The team with the highest score will advance to Finals.

Round 1: All teams perform one poem each

Round 2: All teams perform one poem each (Lightning Round: 90-second poems)

Round 3: All teams perform one poem each

= 1 - 2 teams with highest score(s) move on to Finals

**NOTE: 6 Teams will advance to the Finals. 2 teams that showed extraordinary showmanship and artistry (but didn't advance) will be invited to showcase at the Finals as calibration poets.*

Round Order At Quarter Finals: the order in the first round will be determined by draw in the poet's circle. Each round thereafter will begin with the highest scoring team **from the previous round** and proceed successively until it ends with the team with the lowest score from the previous round.

****NOTE:** Each team member must perform on stage at least once during their Quarter Finals Bout.

Round Order & Elimination of Teams at Finals

The final competing UDPS teams who advance from Quarter Finals will compete at the Finals on Friday, May 5 at the James Moore Theater in the Oakland Museum of California. There will be four rounds during that evening, each team should prepare 4 poems (including a Lightning Round poem and a group piece). After the second round, 2 of the teams will be eliminated:

Round 1: 6 teams perform one poem each

Round 2: 6 teams perform one poem each (Lightning Round: 90-second poems)

Round 3: 4 teams perform one poem each

Round 4: 2 teams perform one poem each to compete for the championship

= 1 Team will be crowned the Unified District Poetry Slam 2017 Champion

Round Order At Finals: the order in the first round will be determined by draw in the poet's circle. The following rounds will proceed as charted below to ensure the order is as fair as possible.

Round 1: Team A, Team B, Team C, Team D, Team E, Team F

Round 2: E, F, A, B, C, D

Round 3: C, D, E, F, A, B

Round 4: D, C, B, A, F, E

Tips & Advice

- *Practice Your Poems:* We encourage you to become intimately familiar with the poems you will compete with. Memorization is not required (music stands will be available at all venues), but you want to really bust your piece. Rehearse! Know your poems.

- *Don't Worry 'Bout The Judges:* Judges will be given criteria for judging on both writing and performance quality, and will serve more as encouragers of young writers than judges. This will be as standardized as possible, but like each of us, judges come with their own biases for and against certain topics and styles. Remember, the standard is yourself. Be your own best "judge."

- *No Really, Don't Worry 'Bout The Judges:* Judges will be seated together at a table. Their scores will be passed down to the event host, who won't even announce them aloud this year. We do this because we want to keep the focus on the poetry, not on the points.

- *Do It For The Love:* Be respectful of yourself, the youth writing community, and the community you represent. Come to share your story *and* receive.

- *Have Fun:* If you don't get high scores, so what? It says nothing about your abilities and potential as a writer, thinker, and cultural leader. By getting on the mic and telling your story, you are already doing something powerful, helping to fight alienation and bring the noise from the margins to the core.

- *Where Can I Practice My Poems Before My Slam?* You and your team are encouraged to attend the following open mics. Individual and group pieces are welcome during the open mics!

- **FINAL FRIDAYS** - Friday, March 31st
@ 826 Valencia St., San Francisco
Time: 7:00 PM – 9:00 PM (6:30 to sign up for open mic)

- **OAKLAND MIC** - Friday, April 14th

@ SoleSpace, 1714 Telegraph Ave., Oakland, CA 94612
Time: 7:00 PM – 9:00 PM (6:30 to sign up for open mic)

BEYOND THE SLAM

We are so excited that you are participating in this year's Unified District Poetry Slam! We sincerely hope the slam is just one part of your experience with Youth Speaks. Please join us at some of our other FREE upcoming programs:

Writing & Performance Workshops (Weekly)

Under 21 Open Mics (every 2nd & Final Friday)

Oakland Youth Poet Laureate (February)

SPOKES Youth Advisory Board (Apps Due May 26)

Brave New Voices (July 19 - 22)

Brave New Voices California Regionals (Late June)

MC Olympic (Mid-May & @ Brave New Voices)

20th Annual Queeriosity (@ Brave New Voices)

Teen Poetry Slam (returning SPRING 2018!)

For more, please visit YouthSpeaks.org