

**Unified District Poetry Slam 2016  
Orientation Packet**





## **2016 UNIFIED DISTRICT POETRY SLAM**

Dear Bay Area Students and Teachers:

Greetings from Youth Speaks! We are excited to announce the 7th 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!

### **ELIGIBILITY**

#### **It's a TEAM slam!**

This means each participating school is required to have a team of 4-6 poets to represent them, rather than 1 individual poet. Each school can only have 1 team.

#### **Open to all Bay Area High Schools**

One adult coach and one youth poet from each team must attend a mandatory Orientation on:

- Saturday, March 19, 2016
- Location: Oakstop, 1721 Broadway, Oakland, CA 94612 (International Room, Basement)
- Time: 11:00 AM – 1:30 PM

You are encouraged to attend the following open mic:

- Friday, April 8, 2016
- Location: SoleSpace, 1714 Telegraph Ave., Oakland, CA 94612
- Time: 7:00 PM – 9:00 PM (6:30 to sign up for open mic)

### **FORMAT**

There is space for up to 25 teams representing San Francisco, Oakland, and the Greater Bay in this year's District Slam. Each school team (4-6 poets) participates in one Preliminary Bout.

**Preliminaries:** There will be three rounds at each preliminary bout (the second round is a lightning round for 1 minute poems). Teams should prepare 3 poems for this bout. 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 the UDPS Finals.

**Finals:** The winning team of each bout advances to the Unified District Poetry Slam Finals, **May 6, 2016 11AM - 1PM** at Laney College Theater. The Unified District Poetry Slam Finalists will have opportunities to feature at Youth Speaks' public events the following year.



## **REGISTRATION**

*Registration is limited, and priority is given to schools with Youth Speaks residencies and SLAM clubs.*

**Register Online @ <http://youthspeaks.org/district-poetry-slam/>**

Our goal is to have representation for up to 25 high schools. 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 preliminary bouts on a limited basis. We will honor those who RSVP their teams on a first-come, first-serve basis.

**Deadline to register to complete in UDPS: Friday, March 11, 2016**  
**Deadline to register for Fieldtrip bout tickets & potential transportation:**  
**Wednesday, March 23, 2016**

**\*\*Due to capacity, Youth Speaks will NOT be able to organize any in-school qualifying slams.** If you need guidance, please contact us and we can offer support on a case-by-case basis. You can determine your school's team of 4-6 poets however you wish (i.e. you do not have to hold a full in-school slam). However, if you choose to hold one, the key is that it is a fair, clear process for students to make your school's slam team.

## **PRELIMS**

Schools must participate in one of the following preliminary bouts to qualify for the UDPS 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 registration closes on March 11, 2016:

### ***Preliminary Slam 1\* | Tuesday, April 26, 2016 (\*if needed)***

**Mission Cultural Center | 2868 Mission Street | SF | 24th Street BART**

Bout 1: 2PM - 4PM

Check-in: 1:15PM

### ***Preliminary Slam 2 | Wednesday, April 27, 2016***

**Mission Cultural Center | 2868 Mission Street | SF | 24th Street BART**

Bout 1: 10:00AM – 12:00PM

Check-in: 9:15AM

### ***Preliminary Slam 3 | Wednesday, April 27, 2016***

**Mission Cultural Center | 2868 Mission Street | SF | 24th Street BART**

Bout 2: 2:00PM – 4:00PM

Check-in: 1:15PM



**Preliminary Slam 4 | Thursday, April 28, 2016**

**New Parkway Theater** | 474 24th St | Oakland | 19th Street BART

Bout 1: 10:00AM – 12:00PM

Check-in: 9:15AM

**Preliminary Slam 5 | Thursday, April 28, 2016**

**New Parkway Theater** | 474 24th St | Oakland | 19th Street BART

Bout 2: 2:00PM – 4:00PM

Check-in: 1:15PM

**Note: Preliminary 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**

**2016 Unified District Poetry Slam Finals | Friday, May 6, 2016**

**Laney College Theater** | 900 Fallon Street | Oakland | Lake Merritt BART

Time: 11:00AM-1:00PM

Check-in: 10:15AM

Free and open to the public! Space is limited. Doors open at 10:30AM.

**UDPS GUIDELINES – Prelims & Finals**

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

- **Every member of the team must be physically present and checked in with the Slam organizers 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 1<sup>st</sup> round. Tardiness after the 1<sup>st</sup> round results in disqualification from competing but you are still able to perform on stage.
- Only one team per school can compete in UDPS.
- All participating poets must be currently enrolled at their school. If there are special circumstances, please contact us.
- There can only be 4-6 members per team.
- Teams can only perform original writing by the individuals slamming. (Plagiarism has disqualified teams in the past.)
- 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.
- 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 in the Slam.
- Each **individual and group piece** must be under **3 minutes, 30 seconds** in length. **There is a 10 second grace period, after which significant time penalties will incur.**
- **There is also a lightning round consisting of 1 minute, 30 second poems in each bout.** The same time penalties apply to all rounds. Please be prepared with a 90 second poem (it can be a group poem or individual poem) for every bout you compete in.
- If individuals or teams go over the time limits, their scores will be penalized .5 points for each 10 seconds beyond the limit. For example, penalties for 3 minutes 30 second poems start at 3 minutes 40 seconds. (i.e. up to 3:39 – no penalty; 3:40 to 3:49 - .5 point penalty; 3:50 to 3:59 – 1 point penalty, etc.)
- There is no censorship whatsoever, but gratuitous use of profanity could work against you when it comes to scoring. It is recommended that teams regulate themselves and try to avoid excessive violence, sexually explicit content and/or language that is degrading to any group of people. Please, do it for the love. Take responsibility for your words. Be smart.
- **NO PHONES are allowed on Finals stage.** Plan accordingly with paper and/or memorization of pieces.
- Coaches and adults accompanying their youth will be responsible for their conduct.
- Each team will be assigned to compete in ONE Preliminary bout.
- The highest scoring team from each bout will advance to Finals. If needed, in the event of a tie, there will be a one-poem lightning round slam-off between the tying teams.
- 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 (non-competitive).
- Many judges will be pre-selected, and some may come from the audience. We will aim for diversity and fairness in the judging panel.

### **Primary Authorship**

1. Each poem must have at least 1 "primary author". A primary author is the main writer of a poem.
2. You cannot repeat a primary author in any one bout. You can't ghostwrite for your team.
3. Group poems may have multiple primary authors, which means they are the only way individuals can touch the stage multiple times.
4. At the end of the bout, coaches must identify 1 primary author for each poem to the scorekeeper. Simple as that.



### **Elimination of Teams at the UDPS Preliminary Bouts:**

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 the UDPS 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) moves on to UDPS Finals

### **Elimination of Teams at the UDPS Finals:**

The final competing UDPS teams who advance from prelims will compete at the Finals on Friday, May 6 at the Laney Theater College. There will be four rounds during that evening, each team should prepare 4 poems (including a 90-second poem and a group piece). Each team member must perform on the stage at least once during the bout. 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 UDPS Championship

= 1 Team will be crowned the UDPS 2016 Champion

### **Tips & Advice**

- 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 poem.
- Judges will be given criteria for judging on both writing and performance quality, and will serve more as supporters of young writers than as 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".
- Judges will be seated together at a table. Their scores will be passed down to the event host, who will read them off from low to high. We do this because we want to allow the judges some anonymity, and to not have poets get angry or too happy with any one judge.
- Be respectful of yourself, the youth writing community and the school you represent.
- Have fun in this process. If you don't get high scores, so what? It says nothing about your abilities and potential as a writer, thinker, and cultural leader.