



Unified District Poetry Slam Orientation Packet

2015 UNIFIED DISTRICT POETRY SLAM TOURNAMENT



Dear Bay Area students and teachers:

Greetings from Youth Speaks! We are excited to announce the return of the 6th 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 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 high school youth throughout the district and the entire Bay Area.

Please read on for information on team eligibility, how to register 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.

Open to all Bay Area High Schools

You must attend a mandatory Orientation on Saturday, **March 14, 2015.**

Location: Oakstop, 1721 Broadway #201, Oakland, CA 94612, Oakland, CA

Time: 11:00 AM – 1:00PM

You are encouraged to attend at least one of the following open mics:

- Friday, **March 13th** at SoleSpace, Uptown Oakland, 7-9pm
- Friday, **March 27th** at 826 Valencia in the Mission, San Francisco, 7-9pm
- Friday, **April 10th** at SoleSpace, Uptown Oakland, 7-9pm

The list opens at 6:30pm. Please arrive early to sign up.



FORMAT

There is space for up to 20 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.

Preliminary Bouts: There will be three rounds at each preliminary bout. Teams should prepare 3 poems for this bout (1 must be a group poem). Group poems can be duets, trios or quartets but no more than 4 poets can be on stage at a time. 1-2 teams with the highest score will advance to the UDPS Finals.

Final Bout: The winning team(s) of each bout advances to the Unified District Poetry Slam Championship. The Unified District Poetry Slam champions will have opportunities to feature at Youth Speaks' public events in the spring.

REGISTRATION

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

– Register Online @ <http://youthspeaks.org/methodology/district-slam/>

Our goal is to have representation for up to 20 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 their peers on. Free transportation will be provided via buses for participants and audience members for the preliminary bouts. We will honor those who RSVP their teams on a first come, first serve basis.

***Deadline to register is Friday, March 6, 2015.**

****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 do a full in-school slam. However you choose to do it, the key is that is a fair, clear process for students to make your school's slam team.



PRELIMINARIES

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 San Francisco Public Library. All Greater Bay and private high schools will be assigned to the other remaining bouts on either side of the Bay. ***Bout assignments will be sent out a week after registration closes on March 6:***

Greater Bay Preliminary Slam | Tuesday, April 21, 2015

Intersection for the Arts | 925 Mission Street, #109 | SF | Powell Street BART

Check-in: 1:15PM
Bout 2: 2PM - 4PM

Preliminary Slam | Wednesday, April 22, 2015

San Francisco Public Library | 100 Larkin Street | SF | Civic Center BART
Koret Auditorium

Check-in: 9:15AM
Bout 1: 10:00AM – 12:00PM

Check-in: 1:15PM
Bout 2: 2PM - 4PM

Preliminary Slam | Thursday, April 23, 2015

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

Check-in: 9:15AM
Bout 1: 10:00AM – 12:00PM

Check-in: 1:15PM
Bout 2: 2PM - 4PM

(Note: Preliminary slams take place during school hours making it a great field trip opportunity for students beyond the SLAM team. Free transportation is on a first come, first serve basis.)

FINALS

Unified District PS 2015 Grand Slam Finals | Friday, May 1, 2015

Oakland Museum of California: James Moore Theater. 1000 Oak Street, Oakland, CA 94607
7PM | Free and open to the public!
Space is limited. Doors open at 6:30pm



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 30 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. Tardiness after 1st 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.)
- Group pieces constructed and performed as duets, trios, and quartets are MANDATORY. Each performing member of a group piece must have participated in the writing of the group piece.
- 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. **We will have a 10 second grace period, after which significant time penalties will incur.**
- If individuals or teams go over the time limits, their scores will be penalized .5 for each 10 seconds beyond 3:30 minutes, 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.)
- 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.
- **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 1-2 highest scoring team(s) from each bout will advance to finals. If needed, in the event of a tie, there will be a one-poem slam-off between the tying teams.
- 6 Teams will advance to the Finals as competitors in the preliminary bouts. 2 teams that showed extraordinary showmanship and superior artistry will be invited to showcase at the Finals (non-competitive).
- Each Bout will have a scorekeeper/timekeeper, bout manager, host, DJ, and emcee.
- Many judges will be pre-selected, and some will come from the audience. We will shoot for diversity and fairness in the judging panel.

Group Pieces & Authorship

Duos, trios, quartets and quintets (otherwise known as team, group, or collaborative pieces) are allowed, even encouraged, so long as all of the primary authors perform them.

1. Each poem must have at least 1 "primary author"
2. You cannot repeat a primary author in any one bout
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 1-2 teams with the highest score(s) will advance to the UDPS Finals.

Round 1: All teams perform one poem each

Round 2: All teams perform one poem each

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 1 at the Oakland Museum of California. There will be four rounds during that evening, each team should prepare 4 poems (including a 1 minute 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: 1 minute 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 2015 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 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”.
- 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. Take responsibility for your words. Be smart.
- 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.



How to Organize an In-School Slam

A good strategy to organize a poetry slam at your school is to identify a student or a group of students (SLAM Club) that will work with you- the Advisor and/or Coach- to make the slam happen.

Empower this group to take the lead in coordinating, marketing, and producing the performance. The secret to a successful slam is good communication and shared decision-making between Coach(es), Advisors, and Youth Poets.

WHAT IS A SLAM?

A poetry slam is an event in which poets perform original work and are judged by members of the audience. Typically, the host or another organizer selects the judges, who are instructed to give numerical scores (on a zero to 10 or one to 10 scale) based on the poets' content and performance. Youth Speaks' slams emphasize writing and performance, encouraging students to focus on **WHAT** they're saying and **HOW** they're saying it. We de-stress the competition by speaking to the special kind of community that is created through poetry. **The points are not the point, the point is poetry.**

SLAM RULES

Please refer to Guideline Page in Orientation Packet.



PRE-SLAM CHECKLIST

Secure Date & Time for the Slam

Secure a Venue

Venue should host most, if not the entire student body; auditorium and/or school theatre is preferable. Sound system and mic should be set-up prior to the event.

Publicize the Slam

The SLAM Club will be key in helping spread the word on campus. Promotion for the poetry slam should kick-off 3-4 weeks prior to the event. Publicity can consist of:

Facebook/Twitter
School Website
Flyers (to student groups, staff/faculty mailboxes, faculty mtgs)
Posters
P.A. Announcements
School newspaper
Faculty meetings

Create Slam Sign-Up Sheet

Post a sign-up sheet in your class for students interested in performing in the slam.

KEY PLAYERS

MC

Welcomes the audience
Explains slam rules
Introduces poet

Keeps the show alive and moving!

They'll need: a list with the names of performers

Host (can double as score-keeper)

Read scores after each poet
Keep time with stopwatch
Calculates final scores
Shows LOVE to every poet!

Reminds the audience that the points are not the point, the point is poetry.

They'll need: stop watch, score sheet, microphone (depending on venue and size of the show)

5 Judges (including 1 youth judge)



Scores each poet/poem on scale of 0-10 using decimals

They'll need: score cards (1 card/poet/round), markers, judges table or row of seats

DJ

Plays as audience arrives and in between poets

They'll need: table, sound system, extension cords

It's good to feature experienced spoken word youth and adult artists at the open mic/slam performance. Youth Poets should identify and invite the guest artist. At the end of the show, have interested students sign up to be a part the SLAM Club.

MORE KEY PLAYERS

Advisor: An adult employed by the school that communicates with Youth Speaks to familiarize the team with all UDPS rules and expectations, including what to prepare for competition and when to be where.

Coach: Can also be the advisor, though this person should be able to knowingly guide youth through their writing process, performance techniques, and slam strategy (if valued by the team). Sometimes this person can be on school faculty, but this person can also be a hired teaching artist.

Youth Poet: For the purposes of the UDPS competition, performers need to be in 9th to 12th grade or in a GED program and must be under 19 years old. They will be expected to write and perform original work by themselves and in a group of four youth poets performing a group piece together.