



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 0-to-10 or 1-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 Unified District Poetry Slam Guidelines in UDPS 2016 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: stopwatch, 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.