

**ACTFL 2011
Denver, CO
Saturday, November 19**

*Cruzando Fronteras: Voices Crossing Borders
Teacher/Professor/Students Collaborate on L1/L2 Literacy in an SNS Class
Dr. Freddie Bowles and Ms. Jessica Fay Sliger*

POETRY SLAM 101

Difficulty Level: Moderate

*The planning for steps 1, 2, and 3 was done in a one-week period during planning periods. This is very doable!

1. Venue ideas: school auditorium, local coffee shop, theatre, local café, etc.

*If hosting the poetry slam at the school, make sure to look at the school's event calendar so it does not conflict with other events.

*Have information about the date, the time, and the expected number of attendees when applying for space.

*To get the space for free, play up the fact that this is an opportunity to support literacy education for our youth. Promise to acknowledge the venue in the program.

2. Beg for prizes and freebies!

*Contact local business for help with prizes. Give them a "sponsor" letter for documentation.

*Once one or two businesses signed on to help, it was easier to convince others to want to participate. We told them that they would get recognized in the program after a convincing sales pitch about how they were helping the local children.

*These are the prizes that we secured for our poetry slam.

a. Grant money to offset costs of hosting the event.

b. Ten trophies

(1st, 2nd, 3rd, Most Creative, and Most Passionate in two categories)

c. \$600 in prize money from local businesses

d. Journals for the winners

e. Gift bags for the winners' prizes

f. Spanish dictionaries and thesauruses for the winners

g. Students' poems printed on scrolls as a souvenir

h. CD's made with all the students' poems on them

i. Students' poems published in the local newspaper

j. Air time on the local TV station to read their poems

k. Air time on the local Latino radio station to read their poems

l. Water donated for the event

m. Discounted price on pupusas for the event

n. Donated programs

o. Frames for the winners' poems

p. Recognition in the school newspaper and news channel

q. Thank you prizes for the judges

*In addition, students were required to attend. They didn't have to compete, but we felt the need to expose them to aesthetic literacy as audience members.

3. MC and DJ

- *Find someone fun, vivacious, and “cool” to host the event...for FREE!
 - We used a hip, Latino DJ from the local radio station.
- *The event needs music to give it that definitive poetry slam feel. We got a local DJ to donate his time and equipment.
- *Our grant money allowed us to pay \$50 to each as a small honorarium.

4. Present a poetry unit in the classroom.

- *After all the above is secure, present the poetry slam idea to your class. Get them excited about the poetry unit by enticing them with what they are working toward.
- * Go to *Read, Write, Think* for the lesson plan that we modified to work with our students. Make sure to plan for enough time before the poetry slam to present all of the material.
<http://www.readwritethink.org/resources/resource-print.html?id=30525&tab=4>

5. Generate interest in the poetry slam

- *Talk about it EVERY day in the classroom. Make it a big deal. It’s all about presentation! It needs to sound like the “coolest” thing they’ll do all year. The kids need to buy in to it. Feature the prizes on the board.
- *Advertise for the poetry slam plenty of time in advance.
- *Make flyers including the who, what, where, why, and how. Include the prizes! Make the flyer flashy and visually appealing.
- *Email your school’s faculty and get the word out.
- *Recruit students to make large banners to hang in the school.
- *Contact the local newspapers. Our local Latino newspaper featured an article about the poetry slam a couple weeks before the event. They interviewed several students to generate interest.
- *Contact local radio stations. Our local Latino radio station advertised for the poetry slam during the weeks leading up to the competition.
- *Contact local TV news stations. Our local Latino news station promoted the poetry slam on air.
- *Send personal invitations to the Spanish teachers in other school districts.
- *Send a letter home to parents about the poetry slam giving them the invitation to attend to see their child perform in the competition.

6. Judges – Find qualified competition judges

- *The best judges are usually writers or performers themselves.
- *We used a newspaper editor, a college professor of Spanish literature, a retired college professor of education, and a Latino activist.
- *Don’t give the judges too much to judge or they will become overwhelmed. Have each judge evaluate a different component of each poet’s presentation. Appoint that judge the “expert” on that topic so that they will judge consistently throughout the competition.
- *Hold a judges’ meeting 30 minutes before the poetry slam to go over rules and expectations with the judges.
- *There will not be time for the judges to tally up their totals after they fill out the grading rubrics after each performance. Have two or three different people designated to tabulate the scores so that the judges can focus on judging.

7. Props

- *Before the day of the event, secure the lighting, the microphones, the podium, and anything else to make the performances sound better.
- *We had four tables: one for the stage to display trophies, one for student registration, and two for the restaurant to set up their food.

8. Volunteers

- *You will need many!
- *We had four judges, three tallyers, one MC, one DJ, one adult standing in the wings to help kids know when to go on stage, four adults to set up the stage and registration table, two adults to register kids, one adult to assist the Pupuseria, one adult to take pictures, one adult to videotaped the event, and three adults to clean up afterward.
- *Trusted students could be given some of these tasks.

9. Rehearsal

- *Students should be given the opportunity to practice their poems in front of their peers for feedback before the actual event. Many had never even held a microphone before. This alleviated their nervousness. We also went to the auditorium so that they could stand on the stage and practice their entrances, exits, and recitations.

10. THE EVENT

- Refreshments? – Based on your venue, you may decide to have a gathering beforehand to ease everyone's nervous energy. We served pupusas from a local restaurant. The kids and parents really enjoyed this get together.
- Sign in station – Have one or two adults in charge of the registration table
- As people file in to the venue, have high-energy music playing to set the mood.
- Have ushers to hand out programs.
- MC should introduce the judges, explain the rules, discuss crowd expectations, remind people to be respectful, and get everyone excited about the event. The MC should have a photocopied list of all the participants and the order that they will present in to make transitioning easier.
- Poets will be called up in small groups to read based on the number assigned to them at check-in. Students will wait in the wings to prevent lag time between contestants. The DJ will play music between performances. The MC will introduce each student.
- Intermission? We had one.
- Tallying should be completed soon after the last student performs.
- Winners will be announced.
- Have all winners on stage for a photo. Have all participants on stage for a photo.

11. Remember

- *Don't forget to have someone in charge of taking pictures!
- *Someone should record the poetry slam.
- *If things don't run perfectly smoothly, it's okay. Really! Poetry slams are supposed to have a relaxed feel to them.
- *Who will clean up afterward?
- *Send out thank you notes to all the volunteers and donors.

Documents created with the help of the following sources:

http://www.poetryslam.com/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=10&Itemid=25

http://www.ehow.com/how_5394360_host-poetry-slam-event.html

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7fODIPR9z8M>