

POETRY SLAM

“Speak Out!” Communications Club, Spokane Community College
Club Leaders: Trinity Topp and Chelsea Sellers-McIvor Advisor: Amy Anderson



Project & Goals

Project Details: “Speak Out!” hosts an annual Poetry Slam and invites the 3rd graders from Stevens Elementary School to attend to learn about poetry, public speaking, and a yearly theme related to character development (resilience, bravery, inclusion).

Outcomes: Third graders leave with improved confidence in poetry and public speaking skills. College students leave with communication and leadership skills.

Background & Critical Issue

Many elementary students, especially those from low socioeconomic backgrounds, may not see college in their future. They may also lack skills to process their feelings and emotions in healthy ways. Moreover, these students may not have access to character development topics outside of their classrooms.

Partner Organization

Stevens Elementary School is one of 12 Title 1 schools in the Spokane School District. These schools are part of a federal program designed to provide children significant opportunities to receive a fair, equitable, and high-quality education with the goal of closing educational achievement gaps.



Caption: SCC student volunteers and 3rd graders

What We Did

Each February, the “Speak Out!” communications club at SCC hosts the Poetry Slam for the 3rd graders from Stevens Elementary School. At the event, students learn about poetry, write poems on a variety of topics, and practice sharing their poem with their peers.

“Speak Out!” also includes a character-building theme, such as inclusion, kindness, and resilience to their annual event so students can continue to work towards becoming their best selves.

The last few years, the SCC basketball team has come to the event to promote our theme and engage with the elementary students.

Since we want all students to have the opportunity to attend college, “Speak Out!” also invites the 3rd graders to come to SCC when they are ready for college!

What We Learned

The “Speak Out!” students learn a lot of transferrable skills during the planning and implementation of the Poetry Slam.

- We learned about event planning, which includes decorating, menu coordination, and activity designs.
- We also learned about leadership as many students led smaller working groups to assist with preparation for this event.
- Club members and SCC volunteers also got to learn about multi-generational communication as they were interacting with children who are younger. Student parents were able to share tips for communicating with children in this age group.
- Since we pick the annual themes, we also get to learn about those character development topics.



Caption: Poetry Slam '23 with 60 third graders in attendance

What is Next

The Poetry Slam is an annual event that has been going on for over a decade. With sustained funding and support, this community service project will be ongoing. Our goal is to continue to serve the third graders at Stevens Elementary School for many years to come.

We also hope to continue to encourage these young people to build their character. In the future, we want to offer themes to help students build confidence in their own abilities to pursue their goals and dreams. For example, hard work and determination are important skills to achieving goals, like attending college. We want them to see Spokane Community College as an option for their academic future.



Caption: SCC basketball team sharing about bravery.



Caption: Elementary and college students learning about poetry, public speaking, and bravery.

Civic Perspective

The Poetry Slam meets three component of civic engagement: direct service, philanthropic giving, and advocacy/education. SCC student volunteers are serving 3rd graders in a hands-on way, donating time and classroom resources, and advocating for skill and character building.

Academic Knowledge

The Poetry Slam is a high-impact activity that helps college students solidify transferrable communication skills, such as multi-generational communication and leadership. These academic skills are put into practice in a practical and relevant project.

Community Needs

The Poetry Slam helps the third graders at Stevens Elementary School by providing a fun and engaging field trip with multiple benefits:

- Poetry skill building that can help with emotional regulation and stress management
- Public speaking practice