



**INFO PACK
2026**



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Action Education and the South Auckland Poets Collective
are proud to present

WORD - The Front Line 2026

'WORD - The Front Line' is an inter-high school spoken word poetry competition, bringing together teams of young people from across Auckland to share their stories in an explosion of youth expression. It is a poetry slam with the purpose of engaging and growing the potential of our future leaders.

It is the only creative battlefield of its kind, equipping young people with poetry prowess and leadership principles for an opportunity to battle for themselves and the challenges that their generation face. The programme focuses on writing, performance, team work, personal development, youth voice, identity, leadership, and community. WORD - The Front Line is a platform for young people to express themselves, connect with others, and discover how they can change the world.

In 2025 the programme entered it's 12th year and we are excited to witness young people rise, up, discover their voice, and grow in their leadership.



“ W T F L enabled me to appreciate creativity in a whole new way – as a way of life. It made me a better writer, eventually took up a creative writing degree and have written poetry portfolios etc. It also sparked what I want to do for the rest of my life, which is to enhance the world creatively. Ultimately, W T F L taught me the skill of showing up for your people! ”

The Heart

IT'S ALL ABOUT THEM

WORD - The Front Line' was birthed out of a realization that our youth need an avenue where they can be heard; express their views and share their stories, while being supported in an environment that promotes their personal growth. We also wanted to do this in a way that brings the youth and their communities together to support and celebrate their experience.

Outcomes

1. Engaging Our Youth

The target of our first outcome is to engage the youth of Auckland (and other cities in years to come) in a way that is fun, educational, informative and inspiring. 'WORD - The Front Line' will provide a series of workshops for qualifying schools leading up to the main event. These will be set up to facilitate young people exploring their creative ability and to help develop their literary skills. The leadership principles built into this programme will ensure youth take away personal life tools to support them in the future whatever their chosen path. From the young writers taking part, to their peers in the audience, we hope to encourage a love of language, communication and engagement with literature.



2. Engaging Our Community

The target for our second outcome is to engage our community with Spoken Word through the voices of our own young people. To build a stronger community we need to bridge the divide between generations, communication is a key factor in this. 'WORD - The Front Line' attracts the young and old to a stage where this powerful dialogue of connection begins. A platform where young people courageously confront their truth and share their journey in the creative expression of spoken word poetry.

Better Together

AGENTS OF CHANGE

Our young people should know that their city wants to see them as individuals confident and thriving. 'WORD - The Front Line' exists for this purpose. But it will take a collaborative effort from community leaders to see this vision get off the ground successfully. Your support of this exciting programme is invaluable. WORD - The Front Line activates leadership beyond the stage where they are encouraged to engage in their communities and strengthen their leadership skills in this process.



QUOTES FROM PARTICIPANTS

"My usos and I had one of the best journeys of our lives with WORD - The Front Line. We were able to build bonds and friendships with people and were able to build our voices up too. Having the amazing spaces and outlets for our brown stories really helped us all find our own identity and we are forever grateful for what Action Education does."

- Noah Brown, De La Salle College

"It's a space that lets you be open to who you are and tell your stories truthfully and honestly without being judged. It's a space you can always come back to because it never leaves, and your voice never leaves. You can always return because spoken word is community, it's a group of people, it's a space, it's an opportunity to be truthful, to be honest with yourself."

- Kate Laughter, Marcellin College

For the first time in my life, I was in a room full of teenagers who didn't need me to explain myself, they just got it. That is what really changed my life. It was liberating."

- Audrey Butoyi, Rangitoto College

Registrations

TEAMS

Each school can put forward up to 2 teams through to the regional heats. Each team must have a minimum of 4 and maximum of 6 poets, and all team members must be attending the same high school. It is possible for 2 teams from the same school to make it through, We saw this for the first time in 2019 from De La Salle College. If your team makes it through regional heats please know there are strict guidelines regarding team members dropping out and being replaced, whereby no more than half of the original team may be replaced. If this happens, please contact us as soon as possible.

REGISTRATION

To register your team(s), please complete the online registration form at our website www.actioneducation.co.nz. All teams must submit their registrations by Monday 8th May. **We are happy to work with you so please reach out with any questions you may have.**

Once you have submitted your registration form you will receive an email confirming your registration and the details of which regional heat you will be participating in. Please make sure your team has thoroughly read through this pack BEFORE registering your team to compete. It is important that your whole team is aware of the dates for the entire programme (workshops, semi-finals, the Grand Slam) to make sure team member can commit should they make it through.

PREPARING FOR REGIONAL HEATS

In order to help teams prepare for regional heats, especially those who have not participated in the programme before, we offer each school 2 free workshops. These presentations and workshops can be extremely helpful to advertise the programme, gather interest, introduce students to spoken word poetry, answer questions, and support them to work on their poems before regional heats. We can also help your school set up an ongoing spoken word poetry club. Please note that teams do not need experience in order to be a part of the programme. Additional workshops can also be arranged at a cost. **We are also available to meet with your teams online at anytime.**

If you are wanting to organise a workshop for your team(s) please be sure to get in touch as soon as possible as our calendars fill up fast.

Regional Heats

REGIONAL HEATS STRUCTURE

For 2026 there will be 4 evenings of Regional Heats with times and dates listed below. Once you are registered you will receive confirmation of which heat your team(s) will be competing in. There will be 2 heats for South & West Teams held at the Mangere Arts Centre, and 2 heats for Central and Northwest Teams held at TAPAC. If you are unable to make your scheduled date, please let us know as soon as possible. Changes to your assigned heat will only be made in exceptional circumstances. Please note there are rules about competing outside of your region (please see 'Advancing Teams' for more information).

Each evening will have 1 heat which will run from 5-7 PM. Prior to the heats (once registrations have closed) we will do a draw to determine which teams will be participating in each bout, and all teams will be notified. We suggest making note of both Heats taking place in your region and making sure that your team can attend. Your team must be onsite 15 minutes prior to your bout starting to register. Once all teams have arrived the order will be drawn. Rules for the Regional Heats are on the next page.



Regional Heats

SOUTH & EAST # 1	Tue 12 May	5 PM	MANGERE ARTS CENTRE
NW & CENTRAL #1	Wed 13 May	5 PM	TAPAC
NW & CENTRAL #2	Tue 19 May	5 PM	TAPAC
SOUTH & EAST #2	Wed 20 May	5 PM	MANGERE ARTS CENTRE

JUDGING CRITERIA - REGIONALS

Poems do not need to be memorized. Regional heats are not about performance but more about the writing ability and content of the poem. Each poem will be judged on the following:

Writing Technique - This is their ability to write a poem. The structure. The use of poetic devices such as metaphor, simile, alliteration etc. How does it sound? Does it sound good? Can you follow it?

Uniqueness - The uniqueness of the story or message which is being portrayed. Is there something about the poet which stands out, grabs your attention or captures your interest?

Content - This is about impact. How well were you able to understand their message? How did it resonate? Did it move you? Did it make an impact?

RULES FOR REGIONAL HEATS

For all rules please see the rule book at actioneducation.co.nz

1. Each team is required to perform 3 poems
2. Poets must perform their own work and cannot read a poem on behalf of someone else. Plagiarised material will result in disqualification
3. At least 3 poets from each team must perform at regional heats. Teams can perform solos, duets, or group pieces. Although duets and group pieces are not necessary for regional heats, it will be for teams that advance to Semi-Finals and Grand Slam
4. Poems do not need to be memorised at this stage of the competition
5. Each poem should be between 1-4 minutes. Poems outside of this time frame will not receive any penalties, but may be difficult to judge if they are too long or too short.
6. No accompaniment by sound, props, or costume is allowed.

ADVANCING TEAMS

In total, 14 teams will be advancing to the next stage of the competition.

6 teams from each region will be selected to advance. Please note that at least 5 of the teams teams selected from each regional heat must be from those regions (Northwest, Central, and South & East). For teams who are unable to make their assigned heat and are therefore competing outside of their school's region, there will only be one spot up for grabs. Therefore it is in your best interest to compete at your own regional heat.

On top of the 12 teams from the Regional Heats we will also be choosing an additional 2 teams who have not competed in WORD - The Front Line over the last two years, who we believe have great potential and would benefit highly from the competition.

The teams who are advancing will be announced via our WORD - The Front Line Facebook page after all regional heats have been completed and will receive further information about the competition.

Advancing Teams

WORKSHOPS

All team members are expected to attend both workshops and the Semi-Finals. If your school requires notice in order for your team to participate please make sure to let them know as soon as possible. There are only 2 weeks between the announcement of which schools have made it through and the first workshop which is an all day event,

We suggest that if your team does make it through that you notify your school as soon as possible. If your school needs more than 2 weeks' notice we suggest that you notify them prior to auditions in case your team make it through they will be required to participate.



PERFORMANCE OPPORTUNITIES

One thing that we highly recommend for competing teams is to take a stage BEFORE the slam. For many poets, Word - The Front Line will be the first time they have performed. Competing poets should try to get as much stage time as possible before the Semi-Finals.

Through-out the year there are multiple opportunities for poets to perform, whether in person OR online. Stand Up Poetry Open Mic or SUP Slam are just some of the events that we run outside of Word on a regular basis.

THE SLAM

After attending both camps all teams will participate in 1 of 2 Semi Finals Heats. The top 3 teams from each heat will progress to the 2026 WTFL Grand Slam.

IMPORTANT: Every year we reshape and recharge the rules of competition better fit the needs of our dynamic community of young poets. PLEASE REFER to the official **WTFL 2026 Rule Book** so that you fully understand the competition.

Calendar

Event	Date	Time	Venue
Teacher's Night	Tue 3rd Mar	630PM	Studio Toi Tū
WTFL Regional Heat #1	Tue 12th May	5PM	Māngere Arts Centre
WTFL Regional Heat #2	Wed 13th May	5PM	TAPAC
WTFL Regional Heat #3	Tue 19th May	5PM	TAPAC
WTFL Regional Heat #4	Wed 20th May	5PM	Māngere Arts Centre
Rā Toikupu – Day Camp	Sat 20th June	10AM-4PM	TBC
He Reo Rangatahi	Tue 7th July	10AM-5PM	TBC
WTFL Slam Camp	Sat 1st & Sun 2th August	Overnight	Peter Snell Youth Village
Semi Finals Heat #1	Sat 15th Aug	1PM-4PM	Herald Theatre
Semi Finals Heat #2	Sat 2nd Aug	1PM-4PM	Herald Theatre
Grand Slam	Sat 19th Sept	7PM	Hunua Room @ Aotea Centre

He Reo Rangatahi

FOR PARTICIPANTS WHO DO NOT QUALIFY FOR WTFL...

For the teams who do not make it through to Word - The Front Line, in 2026 they will now qualify to participate in the He Reo Rangatahi Slam!

This is a spoken word incubator which fast tracks the participants to take part in a solo slam. They will take part in a full day of workshops with some of Aotearoa's finest slam poets preparing them for the slam later that night.

This is an incredible opportunity for participants to both develop and flex their skills!



Contact Us

WHO ARE WE?

Action Education is a non-profit organisation set up to engage and empower young people through creative and action based methods. South Auckland Poets Collective are a group of storytellers with a passion for using Spoken Word to engage and inspire the youth of Aotearoa. Together we form a dynamic team of youth workers, artists, poets, educators, and mentors that care about the community and drawing out the leadership potential in young people.



ACTION EDUCATION



For all questions about WORD - The Front Line or Action Education, and for all booking inquiries please email us at info@actioneducation.co.nz

Check out our website for more information about our organisation and what we do at www.actioneducation.co.nz

Instagram - [actioneducationnz](https://www.instagram.com/actioneducationnz)

Facebook - www.facebook.com/actioneducationinc

YouTube - [Action Education](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC...)

Action Education Inc.
4 Kitchener Road, Sandringham
Auckland

Word-The Front Line is made possible with generous support from:

