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For Immediate Release

District 50 Debuts Harvard Mic Drop

HARVARD, Ill. — Featuring spoken-word performances by junior high and high school students, District 50 hosted its first Mic Drop on Thursday, October 3, at Harvard High School.

The event was created to raise awareness of the importance of oral language development. Students performed poems, stories, and songs alongside acclaimed poet José Olivarez and Emmy award-winning storyteller Jim May.

Olivarez read poems from his debut book, “Citizen Illegal,” the winner of the 2018 Chicago Review of Books Poetry Prize. Before the event, Olivarez visited with students and teachers to discuss writing poetry.

“It’s an opportunity to see how the poems connect with readers,” Olivarez said. “My first book was written with young people in mind. It’s important that they feel good about it.”

Shifting between English and Spanish on stage, Olivarez drew laughs from the audience when he recited a poem about the power of Vaporub to fix bank accounts and help him remember his Spanish.

Chicago writer Luis Carranza and May conducted writing workshops for students in the weeks leading up to the event.

May worked with students to help craft their stories, including sophomore Ulysses Fernandez, who saw the night as an opportunity to face his fears. “My story is an ode to my family, both an apology and a thank you,” Fernandez said.

Amber Bowgren, District 50’s bilingual and dual language coordinator, was elated with the event. “The workshops and evening gave our scholars an outlet to express themselves while developing their self-confidence and public speaking skills,” Bowgren said.

Media Contact

Guy Clark | District Communications Coordinator | gclark@cusd50.org | 815-943-4022 Ext. 2103

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