



## For Immediate Release

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# ***Renowned Slam Poet, Taylor Mali to Hold Four Workshops with BART Students and Free Community Performance***

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**ADAMS, Ma** – On Tuesday, December 6 and Wednesday, December 7, renowned slam poet and educator advocate Taylor Mali will host four workshops for students at Berkshire Arts & Technology Charter Public School (BART) culminating with a free community performance at 7 p.m. on Wednesday in the BART atrium.

Mali has been a full-time poet for 11 years after spending nine years as a teacher in middle and high school as well as college. He taught a wide-range of subjects; in June, 2000 he left the teaching field to concentrate on his slam poetry and advocate for teachers around the world.

Slam poetry is a live performance competitive art form in which a poet reads his work aloud within a pre-determined timeframe. Springing up in the mid 1980s slam poetry gives life and context to the written word, forcing the performer to excel at both the written word and their performance. Not only is the poem judged, but so is delivery, cadence, and memorization.

As one of the most well known poets to emerge from the poetry slam movement, Mali has used his voice to advocate on behalf of teachers around the world. His accolades are too many to list. He has appeared on the “Russell Simmons Presents Def Poetry” program several times and has been a member of seven national slam poetry teams, four of which went on to win their respective titles.

“We are unbelievably excited to have Taylor come to BART,” said Julia Bowen, executive director at BART. “It’s an incredible opportunity for our students to learn from Mr. Mali and, given his view of the importance of the teaching profession, our teachers are equally excited.”

Mali might be most well known for his performance of “What Teachers Make” in which he exhorts an imagined dinner crowd to think about the impact good teachers have on students.

The poet will work with the creative writing class taught by BART’s sixth-grade math teacher Curtis Asch, the most recent winner of the Pittsfield Word X Word Slam Poetry Contest, and other students throughout the school. In addition, Mr. Asch will select students to “open” for Mali with their own material to warm up the audience.

BART held it’s own slam poetry contest in the spring of 2011. Nearly a dozen students participated. With Mali’s visit and Asch’s inspired teaching, BART hopes to turn the contest into an annual event.

“Having seen Taylor perform live, I’m thrilled to have him here,” said Asch. “I think with Taylor’s inspiration and editing assistance not only will the students’ performances be that much stronger, but the they’ll be able to take those writing lessons with them as they grow and mature as writers.”

BART is a nationally recognized, award-winning, tuition-free public middle and high school focused on preparing students for college. One hundred percent of BART’s graduates have passed a college course and have been accepted into college prior to graduation. BART does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, national origin, disability or sexual orientation.