

NEWS RELEASE

For immediate release
February 22, 2016

Contact: Ken Blackstone
(408) 453-6662

Students swarm SCCOE for Santa Clara County Spelling Bee

SAN JOSE, CA – The Santa Clara County Office of Education (SCCOE) was buzzing with excitement on Saturday as students from across the county swarmed the offices at Ridder Park Drive with their families, teachers and principals for the first [county spelling bee competition](#).

“This was an exciting time for our students and their parents,” said Dr. Christina Arpante, SCCOE English Language Arts/Development and Humanities Coordinator, who organized the countywide spelling bee. “Their love of spelling and for school really showed.”

During the two-hour event, 30 fourth- through sixth-grade students from 11 different school districts and one private school participated in a “round” competition in which contestants are eliminated as they misspell a word.

“We had quite a large audience stay until the end,” Arpante said. “It was a camaraderie among the students and families that was a joy to see.”

Ria Kalra, a fifth-grade student at Lucille M. Nixon Elementary School in Stanford, was named “Queen Bee.”

“It takes courage to get up in front of an audience of adults and peers, and show confidence and poise while knowing that one is likely to make an error at some point in this public event,” Kalra’s Principal Mary Pat O’Connell said. “I enjoyed watching all of the students and was quite impressed with their spelling skills! We are very proud of Ria at Nixon and know that she worked hard to prepare for the spelling bee. She provides a wonderful example for all of our students that effort and perseverance can bring success.”

Kalra won first place on “progressive” after several head-to-head rounds against Le Hoang Hoai-Phuong, a fourth-grade student at Silver Oak Elementary School in San Jose.

“You do have to try hard, but it’s also a lot of luck,” Kalra said, referring to which word contestants are assigned to spell.

Hoai-Phuong earned second place, while Aarsh Patel, a sixth-grade student at Pearl Zanker Elementary School in Milpitas, took third.

Both Kalra and Hoai-Phuong will advance to the [state competition](#), scheduled for Saturday, April 23 at the San Joaquin County Office of Education in Stockton, California.

For more information about the Santa Clara County Spelling Bee, visit the [website](#).

###