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EDUCATION

Schaeffer Academy eighth-grader Isaac Ahn wins Southeast Minnesota Spelling Bee Final

Students from 20 school districts competed in two regional spelling bees. There were six from each regional who advanced to the final on Tuesday.

Written By: [Jordan Shearer](#) | 2:13 pm, Mar. 23, 2021



Isaac Ahn of Schaeffer Academy correctly spells "environs" to win the spelling bee. Twelve spellers from sixth, seventh and eighth grades compete Tuesday March 23, 2021 in the Southeast Minnesota Spelling Bee Final at the Wood Lake Meeting Center in Rochester. (Ken Klotzbach / kklotzbach@postbulletin.com)

Isaac Ahn, an eighth-grader from Schaeffer Academy, took first place at the 2021 Southeast Minnesota Spelling Bee Final and will advance to the national level.

Tuesday's spelling bee final included 12 middle school students from schools across the southeast corner of the state. The top two finalists are Schaeffer Academy students. Seventh-grader Eliana Lanners took second place; third place went to seventh-grader Ardashir Kocer of Rochester Catholic Schools.

Winning the event was a little bit of a culmination for Ahn since he took second place last year. He now will compete in the Scripps National Spelling Bee. There are several qualifying rounds for the national competition, which will be held virtually. A handful of students who rise to the final level of the national event will compete near Orlando in July.

"I feel that God just gave us this opportunity," Ahn said. "It's great that after all the work we've put in that it pays off eventually."



Spelling Bee pronouncer Larry Stacy gives the definition of a word for a speller Tuesday. Twelve spellers from sixth, seventh and eighth grades compete Tuesday March 23, 2021 in the Southeast Minnesota Spelling Bee Final at the Wood Lake Meeting Center in Rochester. (Ken Klotzbach / kklotzbach@postbulletin.com)

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The spelling bee included words such as "loquacious," "maidenhair," "glareous" and "cherubic." Ahn nabbed the first-place title with the word "environs."

With a whole language of words to study, the students used a few different strategies going into the competition.

Students were allowed to get some context for the words they had to spell. They could ask for the definition. In some cases, they were given the etymology of the words, tracking how they migrated into English from, say, Latin, Greek or German.

Kocer used that to his advantage.

"I study the different ways that languages use vowels and consonants," Kocer said. "So when I hear the origin of the word, I can kind of determine how the vowels might be used or how



Ardashir Kocer spells a word for the judges. Twelve spellers from sixth, seventh and eighth grades compete Tuesday March 23, 2021 in the Southeast Minnesota Spelling Bee Final at the Wood Lake Meeting Center in Rochester. (Ken Klotzbach / kklotzbach@postbulletin.com)

For Lanners, it boiled down to a lot of legwork. The students had access to a list of words from Scripps they could use to practice. That's easier said than done, though, since the list includes thousands of words.

"I recorded the words and then I was able to play them back for myself. Also, my mom helped me study as well and just read off the words for me," Lanners said. "I didn't make it through all of them because it's quite a few words. I tried my best."

Ahn and Kocer took to the list as well. Ahn said he went through the whole thing about five times.

All 12 of the students in the final had to spell well even before arriving at the final competition.

- Elsa Blake, 6th grade, Austin Public Schools
- Carly Backen, 8th, Chatfield
- Julia Evans, 7th, Goodhue
- Johanna Herfindahl-Quint, 8th, Kasson-Mantorville
- Spencer Goodale, 7th, LeRoy-Ostrander
- Caroline Brice, 8th, Northfield
- Elle Curtiss, 8th, Plainview-Elgin-Millville
- Ardashir Kocer, 7th, Rochester Catholic
- Eliana Lanners, 7th, Schaeffer Academy
- Isaac Ahn, 8th, Schaeffer Academy
- Grace Torgerson, 8th, Spring Grove
- Mira Paul, 8th, St. Charles



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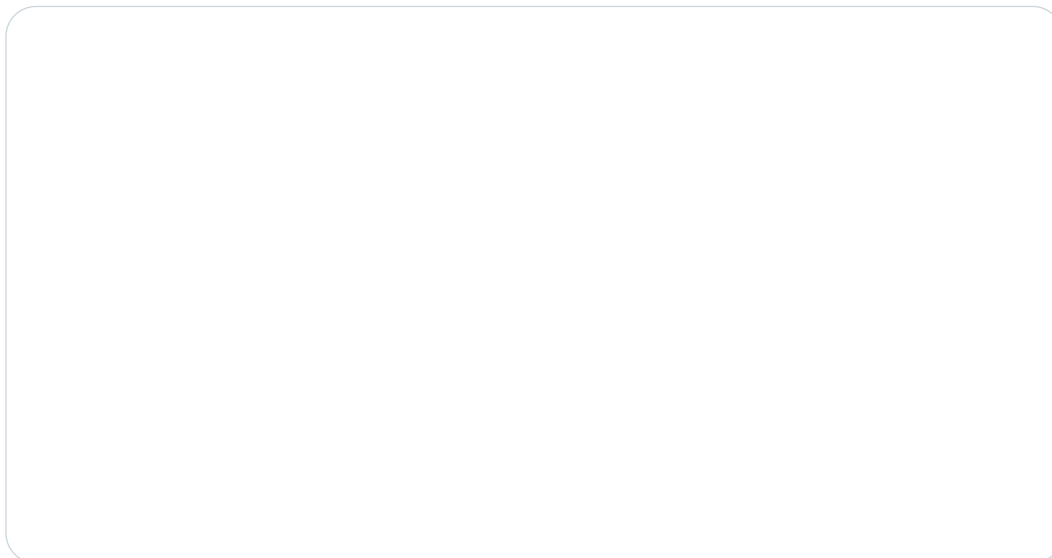


Jordan Shearer

@Jmanassa

Unlike the students competing at today's Southeast Minnesota Final Spelling Bee, I make no claim to being a master speller

Ergo, any misspelled words you see on my end today will be promptly blamed on autocorrect





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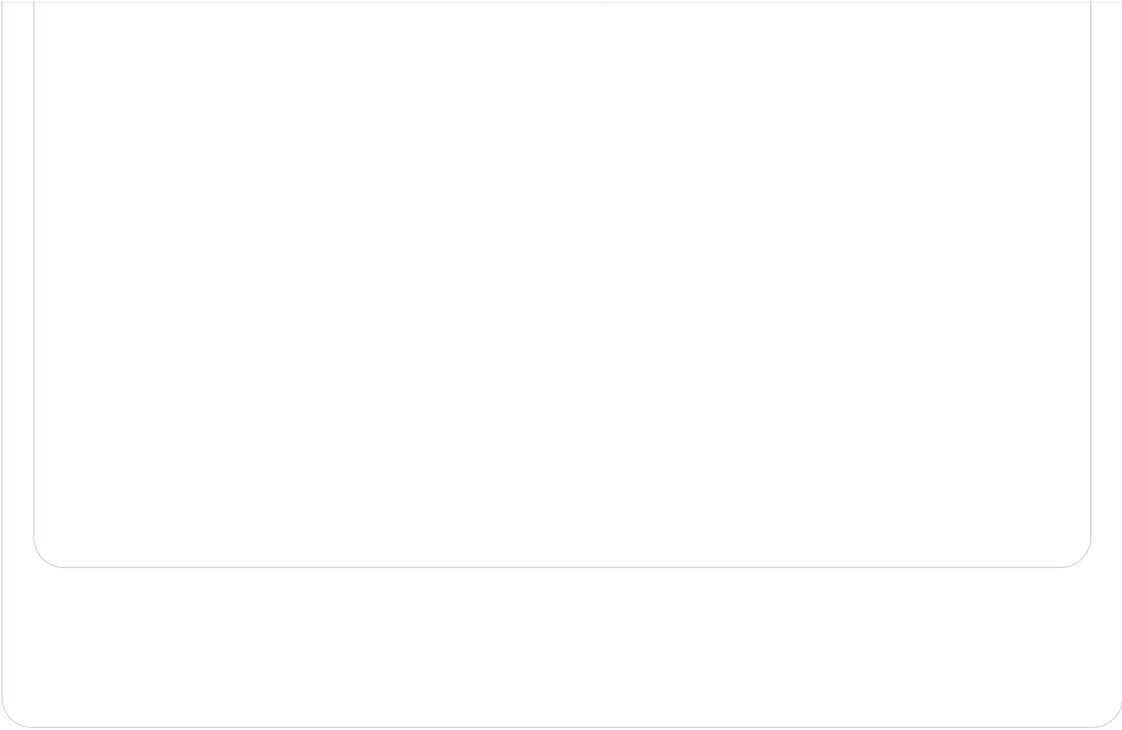
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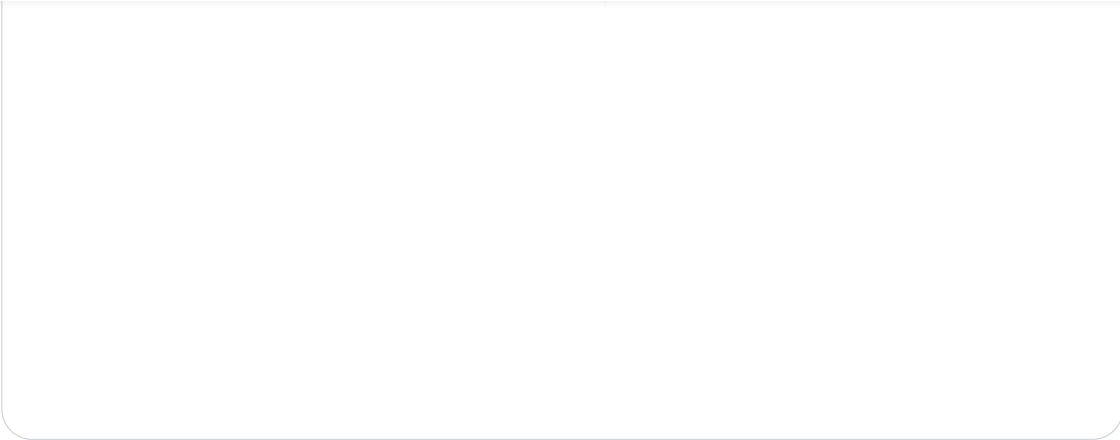
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team, from left: Kesarin Mehta, Mayo High School senior, Gauri Sood, Mayo High School junior, Aidan Khan, Mayo High School senior, Yasmin Ali, Mayo High School junior. (Contributed photos)

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