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Bonita Unified Students Sound out Success at 19th Annual District Spelling Bee

SAN DIMAS/LA VERNE – As curtains rose on the 19th annual Bonita Unified Spelling Bee, 53 elementary and middle school students stepped into the Bonita Center for the Arts, ready to battle it out in a war of words on Feb. 3. With vowels and consonants at the ready, students went up one by one, with a cash prize and yearlong bragging rights on the line.

The competition unfolded over several rounds and students showcased their skills under pressure as the field narrowed with each passing word. In the end, Gladstone Elementary fifth-grader Iresh Oswal claimed first place, securing a \$250 cash prize for himself and an additional \$250 for his school's library. Alex Yang of Shull Elementary finished in second place, followed by Kamsiyochukwu Aniwigbo of Grace Miller Elementary in third.

Oswal will represent Bonita Unified in the Los Angeles County Spelling Bee after securing Gladstone Elementary's third consecutive win in the District contest. Oswal placed fourth in last year's District Spelling Bee and returned with determination, improving his performance this year through dedication and practice.

"I feel really good winning this competition," Oswal said. "Practicing, on top of regular schoolwork, was a tough challenge, and I really want to credit my mom for this win. She was always willing to take the time to study with me, and that's what led to my success tonight."

Oswal has already read 9 million words this school year, with a goal of surpassing 15 million by May, according to data from Bonita Unified's Accelerated Reader (AR) program—a nationwide initiative that encourages students to read independently by tracking their progress through quizzes and comprehension assessments.

Bonita Unified's continued focus on literacy, supported by the AR program, plays a key role in fostering academic success. The District's efforts to boost literacy rates are reflected in students like Oswal, who are committed to independent learning and academic excellence.

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"Our goal is to bring students back to the basics of spelling and reinforce those crucial fundamentals," said Adrian Wong, Gladstone Elementary teacher and spelling bee coach. "While we provide an outlet for academic growth, we're really trying to give the students an opportunity to love learning. It's a lot of hard work to compete at this level, but bonding with their team and working together is something all our students cherish."

PHOTO:

BUSD_SPELLING_2025: Grace Miller Elementary student Kamsiyochukwu Aniwigbo (left), Gladstone Elementary student Iresh Oswal (center), and Shull Elementary student Alex Yang (right) celebrate their success at the 19th annual Bonita Unified Spelling Bee on Feb. 3. Oswal took first place, followed by Yang in second and Aniwigbo in third.

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