

For Immediate Release

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Media Release

“Vernacular” Clinches 2018 CCSD Spelling Bee for Charles Pinckney Elementary 5th Grader

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Communications

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Charleston, SC — Jenna Zimmerman knew she had the title. Well, at the end anyway. Once the 5th grader from Charles Pinckney Elementary School heard the word she had to spell in the final round to win the 2018 Charleston County School District (CCSD) Spelling Bee last night, she spelled it out with confidence.

“I studied the word “vernacular” a ton because that was a word I was actually having trouble with,” explained Zimmerman. “I was studying it a lot, then I just got that word, and I knew I had [it].”

Zimmerman edged out Ranitha Kumarasinghe, a 6th grader from Orange Grove Charter School, in the finals; the top two went back and forth for six rounds. Zimmerman also had to spell “notochord” once Kumarasinghe barely missed it; then she closed it out with “vernacular.”

“Knowing that I just won the Spelling Bee, I am really excited,” Zimmerman exclaimed. “I was really surprised, because I studied so hard, but I just wasn’t getting it. I was so surprised when I won; I’m just so happy.”

Thirty-three scholars from 29 different schools competed in this year’s CCSD Spelling Bee, which was held in Burke High School’s auditorium. The top 18 advance to the Post and Courier Spellbound! Spelling Bee in March. The winner of that tournament moves on to the Scripps National Spelling Bee in Washington, D.C., which will be held May 29-31, 2018.

The following CCSD students advanced to The Post and Courier SpellBound! Spelling Bee:

1st place: Jenna Zimmerman, Charles Pinckney Elementary, 5th grade

2nd place: Ranitha Kumarasinghe, Orange Grove Charter, 6th grade

3rd place: Baker Storey, Moultrie Middle, 7th grade

4th place: Dalton Muse, C.E. Williams Middle, 6th grade

Additional top 18 spellers:

Jackson Horst, Drayton Hall Elementary, 5th grade
Emily Russell, Charleston County School of the Arts, 8th grade
Kanai Peoples, Charleston Charter School for Math and Science, 7th grade
Petton Fishburne, Advanced Studies Magnet - West Ashley Middle, 8th grade
Michael Button, Oakland Elementary, 5th grade
Robert White, Laing Middle, 6th grade
Erin Baylock, Deer Park Middle, 6th grade
Christopher Inabinet, Camp Road Middle, 8th grade
John Anderson, Edmund A. Burns Elementary, 5th grade
Melinda Guo, Lambs Elementary, 5th grade
Elias Doughty, Orange Grove Charter, 5th grade
Finn Hayes, Ashley River Creative Arts Elementary, 5th grade
Maggie Garrigan, Haut Gap Middle, 8th grade
Asher Wallen, Buist Academy, 8th grade

Gretchen Looney, an assistant principal at Wando High School, served as the pronouncer, and Zoe Roff, a math teacher at Northwoods Middle School, was the lead judge.

The Post and Courier SpellBound! Spelling Bee is scheduled for 6:30 p.m. on March 8, 2018 at Charleston Southern University's Lightsey Chapel. The competition will feature 50 students from four Lowcountry counties.

For more about the 2018 CCSD Spelling Bee, contact the Office of Strategy and Communications at (843) 937-6303.

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About the Charleston County School District

Charleston County School District (CCSD) is the second largest school system in South Carolina representing a unique blend of urban, suburban, and rural schools that span 1,000 square miles along the coast. CCSD serves more than 50,000 students in 86 schools and several specialized programs. With approximately 6,100 employees district-wide, CCSD is the fourth largest employer in the region.

CCSD offers a diverse, expanding portfolio of options and specialized programs, delivered through neighborhood, charter, magnet, IB (international baccalaureate), and Montessori schools, and is divided into three Learning Communities led by associate superintendents. Options include specialized programs in science, engineering and mathematics; liberal arts; music and other creative and performing arts; career and technical preparation programs; and military and other public service enterprises.