

**For Immediate Release**

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## Media Release

### **Kumarasinghe Takes Top Spot in CCSD's 2019 Spelling Bee**

**Charleston, SC** – It took 30 rounds to get to the final word of the night in the Charleston County School District (CCSD) 2019 Spelling Bee held January 17, 2019 at Burke High School. Orange Grove Charter School 7<sup>th</sup> grader Ranitha Kumarasinghe spelled “debaacle” with ease, giving him the title.

Forty-two students from 38 schools began the competition. Only four scholars took the top four spots. Eighteen students total advanced to the SpellBound! 2019 competition sponsored by the Post and Courier on March 7, 2019.

Kumarasinghe was the 2018 CCSD Spelling Bee runner-up and the winner of the Post and Courier’s SpellBound! 2018 competition.

“I was much more confident this year because I knew the words from last year,” said Kumarasinghe. “I studied every chance I got.”

Kumarasinghe edged out John Ryan Ottaviano, an 8<sup>th</sup> grader from Camp Road Middle School.

Kumarasinghe also had to spell “prosciutto” once Ottaviano barely missed it.

“I am very nervous about moving forward to SpellBound!, but I’ll just enjoy the moment right now,” Kumarasinghe said. “I’ll just continue to study.”

The winner of SpellBound! 2019 moves on to the Scripps National Spelling Bee in Washington, D.C., which will be held in May.

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

1st place: Ranitha Kumarasinghe, Orange Grove Charter School, 7th grade  
2nd place: John Ryan Ottaviano, Camp Rad Middle School, 8th grade  
3rd place: Randolph Villariza, School of the Arts, 6th grade  
4th place: Grace Reed, Laing Middle School, 6th grade

Additional top 18 spellers:

Amulanga Adyaeva, Drayton Hall Elementary, 5th grade

**Office of Strategy and  
Communications**

**Gerrita Postlewait, Ed.D.**  
Superintendent of Schools

**Erica Taylor**  
Chief Officer

Wes Baldwin, Thomas C. Cario Middle School, 8th grade  
Aayush Bansod, Oakland Elementary School, 5th grade  
Henley Bilbro, Stiles Point Elementary School, 5th grade  
Pierce Brewer, Springfield Elementary School, 5th grade  
Celeste Gamble, Charleston Charter for Math and Science - 8th grade  
Finn Hayes, C.E. Williams Middle School, 6th grade  
Destiny Mambo, Deer Park Middle School, 5th grade  
Sophia Milner, Orange Grove Elementary School, 5th grade  
Harold Mullin, Haut Gap Middle School, 7th grade  
Luke Nestleroad, Buist Academy, 5th grade  
Zuriel Nyamutsaka, A.C. Corcoran Elementary School, 5th grade  
Dinystee Porcher, St. James-Santee Elementary Middle School, 8th grade  
Keerthana Samuel, St. Andrew's School of Math and Science, 5th 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.

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 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. 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.