

# KENOSHA NEWS

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## Kenosha student to vie in national spelling bee

**T**ake it from an expert: There's a lot more to spelling than just minding your Ps and Qs.

To become a champion speller, it's important to know your roots.

Hanna Ghouse — a seventh-grade student at Kenosha School of Technology Enhanced Curriculum West — is heading to the Scripps National Spelling Bee in May in large part because she learns the origin and the meaning of each word.

"Knowing the etymology is very important," said Hanna's dad, Mahmood Ghouse, who helps his daughter train for the bees. "That's the main piece; it gives you the meaning of the word, the roots of the word, the prefix, the suffix."

Learning all those words — and expanding her vocabulary — "is great for the SATs and ACTs," he added.

The soft-spoken Hanna traces her interest in spelling to her love of reading.

"I read a lot of books," she said, "and would look up the meaning of words."

In fifth grade, she

won her first spelling bee at school, which was a complete surprise to her family.

"She just came home with the trophy," Mahmood said, laughing. "I said, 'What is this?' We had no idea she was even in a spelling bee, so then we started helping her prepare."



KENOSHA NEWS PHOTO BY BRIAN PASSINO

**Hanna Ghouse, a KTEC West seventh-grader, is heading to the Scripps National Spelling Bee in May.**

### In training

Hanna typically practices spelling one to two hours on weeknights and three hours on the weekends.

Both she and her dad emphasize the importance of preparation.

"At the regional level," Mahmood said, "the kids came so prepared, I felt bad that only one could move on to state."

The most difficult words to learn, she said, "are French words. There are a lot of nasal sounds, which makes it difficult."

Also tough for spellers: homophones, which are words that sound the same but have different meanings and spellings —



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for example, rain, rein and reign.

Her favorite word to spell is “anthropomorphic” — not because of its meaning (to ascribe human traits to non-human beings/objects) —but because she likes the rhythm of spelling it.

## At the bees

Hanna won the middle school spelling bee in January at Indian Trail High School and then went on to win the regional bee.

The regional bee, she said, “is a lot more pressure” because only the top speller goes on to the state competition. She came in second in Madison; the top three state spellers are heading to the national bee.

At each level, the competitors are given a study list more than 1,100 words from 14 different languages.

On stage, Hanna said she stays focused by “clearing my mind and focusing on the word. I spell it in my head first” before having to spell it out loud to the judges.

As a top finisher at state, Hanna won a trip for two to the National Spelling Bee in Maryland. She and her dad are going; her brother may go, too, if he can work the trip around his final exams.

About 300 students, up to eighth grade, from across the United States go to the Scripps National Bee each year. There are two preliminary written spelling tests given. The top 50 finishers will compete on a stage at the bee, televised on ESPN.

Hanna has watched the National Spelling Bee on TV and never imagined

one day she’d be competing in it.

Hanna’s dad said her teachers at KTEC West “play a huge role. They encourage her and accommodate her. Six teachers went to Madison to cheer for her in the state bee.”

No matter what happens at the national level, Hanna and her dad said, spelling bees are a friendly competition.

“You go and meet all the kids,” Mahmood said. “And Hanna always makes new friends.”

Scrupps National Spelling Bee Week is May 28 through June 3.

## Hanna Ghouse: 5-second bio

**Born:** In Milwaukee to parents Dr. Sana Jeffreys, an oncologist/hematologist at Aurora Medical Center, and Mahmood Ghouse, a software system developer. The family moved to Kenosha three years ago from South Dakota. Her brother, Adam Ghouse, is a senior at LakeView Technology Academy.

**School:** She is in seventh grade at KTEC West.

**Spelling bees:** Hanna first went to the state spelling bee in Madison as a fifth-grade student at Nash Elementary School. She tied for fourth place that year. This year, she won the local and regional spelling bees and came in second at state.

**Other interests:** Hanna also enjoys swimming and archery.