

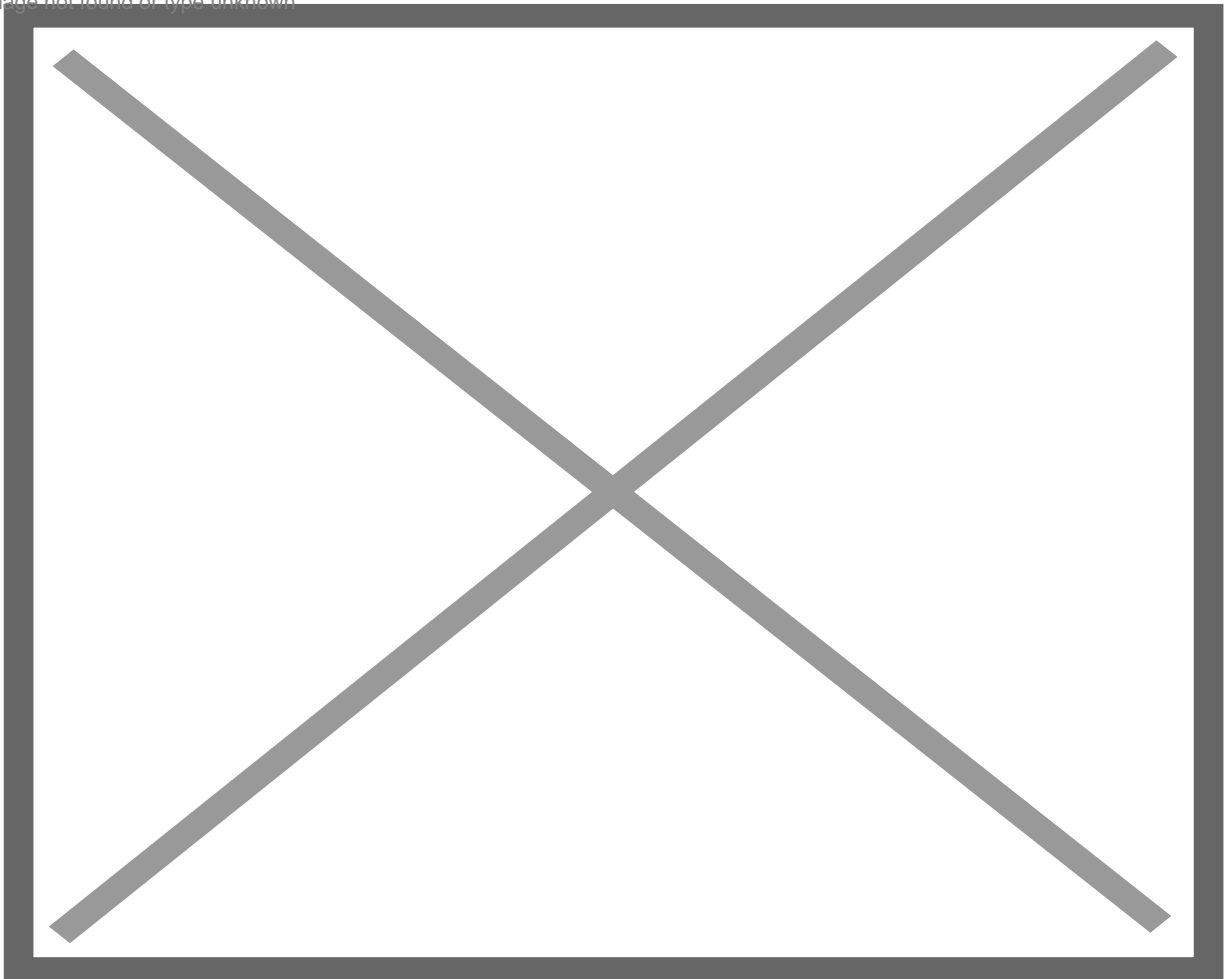
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In-Person Spelling Bees Return After Two-Year Pause

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**A collage of students from various schools participating in the competition this year.
By. THE V.I. DEPT. OF EDUCATION**

The V.I. Department of Education Intermediate Spelling Bees will return to in-person competition on Feb. 24 in both school districts, D.O.E. announced Wednesday. The competition returns after a pandemic-induced two-year pause.

According to the release, the academic competitions were conducted virtually over the last two years, and that while they are being conducted in-person this year, they are by invitation only and are not open to the public.

Organizers expressed their excitement at the in-person return of the spelling competitions, D.O.E. said.

“I am anxious and excited to finally get the opportunity to be in the presence of students and to get to witness them demonstrating their endurance and resilience,” said Kendra Vicars, St. Thomas-St. John District English Language Arts and Spelling Bee coordinator. “This marks the beginning of a ‘new normal’ and I am thrilled to see campuses coming alive and being able to witness students, teachers and coaches pushing through and adjusting. The Spelling Bee, as well as other rigorous academic activities, will remind students that they can persevere through life’s challenges. These are the great lessons of life, and I am happy to be one of the persons charged with facilitating their greatness.”

St. Croix District English Language Arts and Spelling Bee Coordinator Paulina Croskey offered similar sentiments.

“It gives us great pleasure to once again have an opportunity to conduct an in-person Spelling Bee,” she said. “The excitement is in the air! Our Spelling Bee coaches’ and spellers’ perseverance, commitment, and preparation will all come to fruition on Thursday. Their hard work will finally be witnessed by everyone present at the Bee. Our spellers’ knowledge of word usage, etymology, definition, and of course spelling will elevate the competition into a top-notch event.”

According to D.O.E., on St. Croix, 12 top spellers from the District’s schools will compete: Jae’Quan Greaux, John H. Woodson Junior High, 8th Grade; Kaden Concepcion, Juanita Gardine K-8 School, 8th Grade; DaMione Christopher, Ricardo Richards Elementary School, 6th Grade; Kayden Theodore, Alfredo Andrews Elementary School, 6th Grade; M’Kai Asani Encarnacion, Pearl B. Larsen PreK-8 School, 6th Grade; Shadya Coureur, Free Will Baptist Christian School, 8th Grade; Nyan Bedminster, Good Hope Country Day School, 5th Grade; Caiden Rivera, St. Patrick’s Catholic School, 8th Grade; Makayla Walcott, Lew Muckle Elementary School, 6th Grade; D’Nya Harvey, St. Croix Christian Academy, 6th Grade; Khamron L. Eugene, Eulalie R. Rivera K-8 School, 4th Grade; Madison X. Davis, Church of God Holiness Academy, 4th Grade.

On St. Thomas-St. John, seven top spellers from the District’s schools will compete: Micah Dominique, New Testament Academy Inc., 12 Years Old, 7th Grade; Samuel De La Rosa Luciano, Joseph Gomez Elementary School, 10 Years Old, 5th Grade; Ja’Hejah Joseph, Ulla F. Muller Elementary School, 10 Years Old, 5th Grade; Isabel Ethen, Antilles School, 14 Years Old, 8th Grade; Naitik Jhanwar, All Saints Cathedral School, 11 Years Old, 7th Grade; Kahlil Tano, Addelita Cancryn Intermediate/Junior High School, 11 Years Old, 6th Grade; and De’Andre Mills, Yvonne E. M. Bowsky Elementary School, 9 Years Old, 4th Grade.