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Media note: [Click here for b-roll and photos of the finalists.](#)

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First-time Competitor wins 2019 Houston Public Media Spelling Bee

Two Finalists advance to National Spelling Bee

HOUSTON, March 26, 2019 – Raclette. That word earned Aanvi Manda the top spot at the 2019 Houston Public Media Spelling Bee. At nine years old, Manda was this year's youngest competitor to make it to the final rounds. The winning word, which means a dish of Swiss origin consisting of melted cheese traditionally served with tiny boiled potatoes and sour pickles, came up during the tenth round of the competition.

"You never know when something great like this can happen but it starts by trying," said Manda, a fourth grade student at Brandon Elementary in the Lufkin Independent School District, who participated in her first Houston Public Media Spelling Bee.

Sankalp Gautam, a seventh grade student at College Station Middle School in College Station ISD, was runner-up. Gautam and Manda advance to the [92nd Scripps National Spelling Bee](#) May 26-31 in Maryland. They will face off spellers from across the country for the national championship and prizes worth more than \$50,000. The bee will broadcast live on ESPN.

Houston Public Media hosts and broadcasts this major spelling bee competition annually as part of its commitment to education and community outreach. This marks the eleventh year that Houston Public Media has staged this prestigious academic competition.

"We make educational content and resources available to homes and schools throughout the school year," said Lisa Trapani Shumate, associate vice president and general manager of Houston Public Media. "The Houston Public Media Spelling Bee is just one of the many ways that we support teachers and families year-round with learning materials that help students improve their spelling, increase their vocabularies, and build goal-setting skills that will stay with them all their lives."



Participating spellers in the 2019 Houston Public Media Spelling Bee included 25 girls and 27 boys ranging in age from 8 to 14 and in grades third through eighth, representing 1,069 schools in Texas. You can catch all the highlights of this year’s regional competition at 5 p.m., Sunday, March 31 on TV 8 or on the [Houston Public Media website](http://www.houstonpublicmedia.org). For more information on the Houston Public Media Spelling Bee, including photos from the competition and speller rankings, visit www.houstonpublicmedia.org/spellingbee.

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About Houston Public Media

Houston Public Media is a service of the University of Houston and supported with financial gifts from the community. Houston Public Media combines broadcast and digital assets to serve residents of Southeast Texas with trusted local news and entertainment and national programming from NPR and PBS. With a combined weekly audience of more than 1.5 million, Houston Public Media is committed to delivering content that expands minds and possibilities with trusted information.