



El Noticiero

Newsletter of the New Mexico Association for Bilingual Education

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Students Excel at NMABE's 36th Annual State Bilingual Education Conference

Student competition was at its finest at the NMABE State Spanish Spelling Bee and Native American Language Festival held during the 36th Annual State Bilingual Education Conference.

The NMABE State Spanish Spelling Bee brought 34 district champions from across the state together to compete in what was a spell-binding, "sit-on-the-edge-of-your-seat" competition.

The Native American Language Festival had over 250 participants, the largest ever. Festival competitors represented schools across the Navajo Nation in New Mexico and Arizona and also students from Zuni and Jémez Pueblos. It was these Pueblos' first-ever experience at the Festival. NMABE looks forward to the day when all Native tribes and languages are present for the competition. (See related story on Festival, page 3.)

NMABE State Spanish Spelling Bee

Every year, all observers—parents, siblings, district representatives, judges, sponsors, and NMABE Board members—are quietly excited as students tackle the words given. However, this year it was even more compelling.



The Three First-Place Winners

The Bee lasted over four hours! After the first hour, 50% of the district champions were still in the competition. By 11:00 a. m. four students were left and by noon there were only three competitors. There was no stopping these students as they exhausted all of the words on the official spelling list without a single error.

Parents and students had lunch while the judges selected an additional twenty challenging words from the official spelling booklet in hopes of naming a first, second and third place winner. To no avail, these youthful experts spelled these words correctly, and for the first time in the history of the Bee, NMABE declared three first-place winners.

Martín Pescador, Director of the Spanish Resource Center of Albuquerque observed, "We can celebrate the fact that the Spanish language is more than alive in New Mexico. All of the finalists were fabulous, but three of them showed themselves to be impeccable."

Commendations go to the dedicated teachers, parents and school district administrators for their excellent work and support of the students in the local competitions. Every finalist who comes to the competition is already a champion and represents the best Spanish speller of the entire district demonstrating robust academic preparation in Spanish.

Esmeraldo Saenz of Santillana USA, and Martín Pescador, Director of the Spanish Resource Center, sponsors of the NMABE State Spelling Bee, presented the winners their awards.

History of the Bee

NMABE understands that New Mexico is the only state in the nation that conducts a statewide Spanish spelling bee of this nature. The state competition began at the NMABE '95 conference, but its precursor was a south-

ern region Spanish bee held in Las Cruces in 1994.

Juan Sánchez, former director of the Gadsden Independent School District Bilingual Education Program, organized it through the incipient Southern Consortium to "test the water" for a future statewide contest. He said, "I believe only six southern districts participated, but the interest was sufficient for me to proceed with plans for the following year at NMABE." Teresa Lucero, Director of the Bilingual Education Program in the Belén Public Schools at the time, carried out the groundwork preparations for the event for NMABE.



NMABE President Barbara Flores with NMABE State Spanish Spelling Bee Champions

The biggest challenge in the beginning was disseminating information to build interest for it at the local level. A statewide competition meant local districts would have to hold their own Spanish spelling bees in order to send a district champion to the state bee. The Northern and Southern Consortia for Bilingual Education helped a great deal in this endeavor. The first year, NMABE had about 15 district Spanish spelling bee title holders who participated at the NMABE conference.

"I always tried to make the contest as fair and equitable as possible so the judges could not be associated with any public schools.

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Thus, I selected the most highly qualified Spanish language experts from New Mexico's Universities to represent the entire state. They were Western New Mexico University - Dr. Patricia Cano; New Mexico Highlands University - Dr. Loretta Salazar; Eastern New Mexico University - Dr. Julia Rosa López Emslie; the University of New Mexico - Dr. Federico Carrillo; New Mexico State University - Dr. Cecilia Pino," said Sánchez. Dr. López Emslie was the first pronouncer and has continued in this role to the present time. The remaining four experts served as judges that year.

The spelling booklet itself was developed from a list of words used in the Gadsden Independent School District (GISD). By 1995 GISD had been conducting its own bee for over 20 years. Juan Sánchez was the district official responsible for it.

"I updated the booklet every year by replacing about 20% of the words with new ones." said Sánchez. With the help of the Southern Consortium, the rules and regulations were revised for a state-level competition. A few years later, Teresa Lucero and her staff took over its production. Master copies were sent to all school districts for reproduction and use at the local level. NMABE presently handles this task.

In initiating a local or state Spanish spelling bee, the question that would inevitably arise was, "Why have a spelling bee in Spanish? Isn't it easy to spell in Spanish?" It's certainly true that Spanish orthography can be considered "transparent" because of its almost perfect one-to-one grapheme-phoneme correspondence (NABE News, Nov. Dec, 2007, *Dyslexia and the Spanish-speaking and bilingual (English/Spanish speaking) student*, by Dr. Criselda Guajardo Alvarado, p. 5). That fact, however, does not in any way lessen reasons for having a bee. While English may indeed be a more "opaque" alphabetic-based language, a Spanish bee challenges native and non-native speakers alike to excel in important academic arenas within the language arts. Beyond

the act of actually spelling, Spanish diacritical marks are also a challenge for

State Spanish Spelling Bee Winners

1st Place
 Jessica Corral - Hobbs Municipal School District
 José G. Muñoz - Hatch Valley Schools
 Ahmed Shabaneh - Las Vegas City Schools

2nd Place
 Helena Cortina - Las Cruces Public Schools

3rd Place
 Stephanie del Martín - Roswell Independent School District

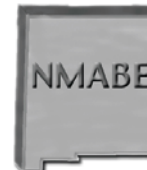
students in the NMABE Bee.

"Spanish spelling bees provide a great opportunity for ALL students to excel in local and state contests. The NMABE Bee is more than just memorizing spellings. Contestants develop dictionary skills as they look up definitions, and this gives them a greater understanding of the language. Additionally, word origins are analyzed, and since thousands of Spanish words come from Greek, Latin and Arabic, the contestants increase their lexical repertoire to excel in many areas of study, such as math, science, literature, etc. State Spanish spelling bees not only validate and give equity to the Spanish language, but they also contribute greatly to the development of a positive self-image of the contestants. Imagine what a national-level competition would do for the Spanish language, bilingual education, and the soon-to-be largest minority group in the country!" said Sánchez.

JUST IMAGINE—¡IMAGINENSE!



BOTTOM ROW: Judges Dr. Loretta Salazar, Dr. Gladys Herrera-Gurulú, Dr. Abe Amendáriz **TOP ROW:** MC Dr. Emma Armendáriz and Pronouncer Dr. Julia Rosa López -Emslie



El Noticiero

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PUBLICATION SCHEDULE

- No. 32:1 Fall, 2007: October**
(Pre-conference issue)
- No. 32:2 Winter, 2008: January**
(Board News, Bilingual Education Day, Call to Action)
- No. 32:3 Spring, 2008: April**
(Conference Edition)
- No. 32:4 Summer, 2008: July**
(Summer Activities, Institutes)

Also, monthly inserts/wraps

Native American Language Festival Was a Great Success

by Carline Murphy
Navajo Representative, NMABE Board

NMABE hosted its sixth annual Native American Language Festival during the State Bilingual Education Conference. NMABE Native American board members Willard Zunie of Zuni Pueblo, Carline Murphy of the Navajo Nation, and Clyde Vicenti of the Jicarilla Apache tribe, organized and coordinated the event. Sponsors included the Zuni Pueblo, the Navajo Nation, the APS-Four Corners Power Plant and the Navajo Times of Gallup, NM.

Held on April 12, 2008 at the Embassy Suites Hotel in Albuquerque, NM, a total of eight schools from New Mexico and Arizona participated. They were *Tse Hootsooi Diné Bi'Olta'* Elementary and Intermediate Schools from Ft. Defiance, AZ; Ojo Amarillo Elementary and Middle Schools and Newcomb Middle and High Schools from the Central Consolidated School District; San Diego Riverside Intermediate Charter School from Jémez Pueblo; and A:shiwí Elementary from Zuni Public Schools.

The Festival gives students the opportunity to demonstrate their talents and skills in their Native language in both academic and traditional arenas. Students can participate in up to three of the five competitive categories: the Navajo Spelling Bee, Navajo Reading, Oral Speaking, Dancing, and Singing. Since the Pueblo languages are not written, these students can participate in the oral speaking, singing, and dancing categories. This year, speakers of Towa (Jémez Pueblo) and Zuni (Zuni Public Schools) joined Navajo-speaking students in these three contests. The dancing and singing was extraordinary. These students can sing and dance!

NMABE enjoyed having about 250 participants. Parents came as chaperones to help their children get ready and to assist the teachers from each school.

While the spelling bee, reading and speaking categories often have academic ties to school-based learning, the students express their traditional values through the singing and dancing contests. Navajo students must introduce themselves in Navajo giving their



San Diego Riverside Singers

name, school, grade, and the clans of their mother, father, maternal grandmother and paternal grandfather. The elders teach their grandchildren to identify themselves with their clans, as it is crucial within the Navajo culture to know one's clan. By introducing themselves in this way, they also show respect for their elders and for the Navajo people.

The best part was the luncheon! As I watched several students, I saw how surprised they were with food they are not quite familiar with, the catering, the amount of

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Native American Language Festival Winners

DANCING

- 1st A:shiwí Elementary
- 2nd San Diego Riverside Intermediate High School
- 1st Gourd Dancing, Newcomb High
- 2nd Basket Dancing, Newcomb High

NAVAJO SPELLING BEE

Elementary Level

- 1st Naash Tallman, Ojo Amarillo
- 2nd Jolan Shirley, Ojo Amarillo
- 3rd Frank Lujan, Ojo Amarillo

Newcomb Middle

- 1st Ravonelle Yazzie
- 2nd Angel Hicks
- 3rd Kaleigh Bekis

Newcomb High

- 1st Cordell Smith
- 2nd Yoland Chee
- 3rd Cornelius Tsipai

DUET

Newcomb Middle

- 1st Tommy Begay & Terold Charley
- 2nd Terold Charley & Zachary Smith



ORAL SPEAKING

- Ojo Amarillo Elementary
- 1st Raelene Silversmith
- 2nd Tristan Harvey
- 3rd Talia Yazzie

Newcomb Middle

- 1st Derrick Silversmith
- 2nd Rodney Toya
- 3rd Craig Lucero

Newcomb High

- 1st DeAnna Yazzie
- 2nd Denise Wood

CHORAL READING

Newcomb High

- 1st Cornelias Tsipai, DeAnna Yazzie and Teresa Allen
- 2nd Yolanda Chee, Kaylene Morris and Arianna Peshlakai

INDIVIDUAL READING

- 1st Del Peshlakai, Newcomb High

INDIVIDUAL SINGING

- 1st Cordell Smith, Newcomb High
- 2nd Theresa Allen, Newcomb High
- 3rd Yoland Chee, Newcomb High

GROUP SINGING

Elementary Level

- 1st Alicia Neswood and Group, *Tse Hootsooi* Elementary
- 2nd Ojo Armillo Group
- 3rd Brianna McNeal and Group, *Tse Hootsooi* Elementary

Middle Level

- 1st Ravonella Yazzie and Group, Ojo Amarillo Intermediate
- 2nd Naat'aani Toledo and group, *Tse Hootsooi* Intermediate



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silverware in front of them, and the number of people they had to share the table with.

This year, many Arizona schools wanted to become involved in the festival. However, the timing of the event, testing, spring break and funding limited their involvement. It is hoped that as the Festival expands each year, these barriers can be overcome since the Navajo Nation encompasses a large part of Arizona as well as New Mexico, Colorado and Utah.

The Navajo language and culture are important and essential for the continuance of the ways of the *Diné*. Parents are making an effort to help their children learn to speak the language; they also provide the appropriate clothing to wear while engaged in language and cultural events.

The Navajo Nation supports the development of Navajo in the high schools by providing the Manuelito Scholarship Award for students demonstrating competence and proficiency through Navajo language courses. The Navajo Nation Title 10 Code also supports teaching the Navajo language and culture in the classroom. Miss Navajo is the cultural ambassador for the Navajo Nation across the USA and Miss Indian World represents indigenous people worldwide.

As lifelong learners we, the Native people, are committed to develop our language with support from home, school, and the nation. We must encourage our students to learn more about the richness of the Native American and indigenous cultures, past and present, to continue to find truth, and to enlighten ourselves about who we are and where we are from. We anticipate greater involvement from the schools in order that students can become more engaged in their language and culture and ultimately pursue their dreams, one day, as world leaders.



**Proud Winners
Native American Language
Festival**



**NMABE NATIVE LANGUAGE FESTIVAL
APRIL 12, 2008 -- Embassy Suites Hotel -- Albuquerque, NM**

NAVAJO JUDGES

CATEGORIES	NAMES OF NAVAJO JUDGES
Navajo Spelling Bee Louise Benally - MC	Louise Benally – Coordinator (GMCS) Loretta Ortiz – Torreon School
Navajo Reading (Individual; Group) Carline Murphy - MC	Vangee Nez – Coordinator (UNM) Mammie Becenti – Central Consolidated Nellie Chavez – Torreon School
Oral Speaking Presentation Emily Vigil – MC	Barbara Morgan – Coordinator (NN) Mae Chavez – Torreon School
Singing Clyde Vicenti - MC	Terri Becent – Coordinator (NM Ind Ed) Lena Peter – Torreon School Maria Toledo – Torreon School
Dancing Willard Zuni - MC	Marcella Billy – Torreon School Mabel Penn – Torreon School