

GARDEN CITY SPELLING BEE: ENSURING CHILDREN'S MENTAL, EDUCATIONAL AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

The day my 2-year-old boy (now 5), after some little grooming, put the letters of the English alphabet **B+O+Y** together and screamed **BOY!** I was exceedingly elated. Who wouldn't be when his/her child has proven that he/she is mentally healthy and alert? Needless to say, that his learning experience, from that moment, was activated with that sterling performance of a 2-year-old by all standards. Indeed, the act itself is formally called **Spelling**. And put simply, Spelling is the activity of writing or mentioning the letters of a word. In this instance, the naming of letters of English words.

Interestingly, in 1808, spelling activity as a competition was conceptualised in the United States of America to encourage literacy in children. It was first called **SPELLING MATCH** and later renamed **SPELLING BEE** in 1850 where contestants were given key reference materials (such as the Noah Webster's spelling books) to practice and prepare for the competition. Currently, in the US, Webster's Third New International Dictionary is the key reference for competitions.

Overtime, it was realised that Spelling Bee did not only enhance literacy by giving children positive goals to work towards, it also gave them avenues to showcase the products of their hard work. This is where **Garden City Spelling Bee** gets its inspiration from.

As Chief Pronouncer at Garden City Spelling Bee (2017 - till date) and an academic with quality experience in English pedagogy, I have garnered enough experience to educate the general public on the impact this competition has made on every child that has participated in its previous editions. For the fact that I am given to keeping things brief and simple, I categorically state that Garden City Spelling Bee qualifies to be ranked alongside America's foremost Spelling Bee event, 'Scripps National Spelling Bee'. And as far as I am concerned, it is even more audacious and innovative with its introduction of edutaining segments that challenge contestants to employ their psychomotor skills.

It is my utmost pleasure to encourage the one reading this piece to enquire of the different categories that his/her/their ward(s) could participate in and get him/her/them to be part of the experience. Rest assured, your ward(s) would live with beautiful memories that would not only inspire him/her/them to academic excellence, but would also boost his/her/their self confidence.

Ikiemoye Iniamagha PhD