

Homeschooler Edith Fuller Becomes Youngest Qualifier of National Spelling Bee

By now you may have heard of Edith Fuller. At the tender age of 5, she's the youngest child to win a regional spelling bee. And because of this win, she will also be the youngest to ever compete in the national spelling bee in Washington, D.C.

NPR [explains](#) how this little peanut took home top honors at the Tulsa, Oklahoma regional spelling bee:

"Fuller beat kids more than twice her age at the Scripps Green Country Regional Spelling Bee this past weekend, outlasting dozens of other students and correctly spelling 37 words in around five hours of competition. Her final word, 'jnana,' is a Sanskrit word that refers to an elevated state of knowledge."

Other words Fuller had to spell to earn her way to the national bee in Washington, D.C., include sevruga (a type of caviar); virgule (an accent mark); Nisei (a child of Japanese immigrants who is born in the U.S.); jacamar (a long-billed bird); and alim (a Muslim scholar)."

While little Edith is certainly talented, it's unlikely this talent would have been recognized at such a young age except for one thing: she is homeschooled. Judging from the Fuller family's account of Edith's rise to success, there are three components of homeschooling which made it possible:

1. Family Mealtimes

The Fuller family first discovered Edith's talent last summer while conversing at the dinner table. As *Tulsa World* [explains](#):

“The parents were quizzing the kids on spelling, and when Edith spelled ‘restaurant’ without having been taught the word they were impressed.”

While family mealtime still exists in some homes, its regular presence seems to be increasingly rare. Yet because the Fuller family placed a priority on taking time to converse and use the dinner table as an occasion for extended learning time, they were, perhaps unconsciously, fostering a love, interest, and eagerness for spelling in little Edith.

2. Parental Interaction

Once the Fuller family discovered Edith’s interest in spelling, their homeschooling situation enabled them to better cultivate her talent, as Edith’s father explains to local news station [KJRH](#):

“We have the freedom to answer her questions, to help her advance... at her own pace.”

In a normal school setting, Edith would still be in kindergarten, where her advanced ability might be viewed as a detriment to other children still struggling to learn the alphabet. Unfortunately, [advanced children](#) are often placed in the proverbial corner to wait while the others catch up.

3. Freedom from Electronics

When asked what she likes to do for fun, conspicuously absent from her response is the mention of electronics, television, or any other tech interests so commonly loved by kids today. Instead, she cites playing outdoors, practicing piano, and learning about animals as things she intends to do in the months before the Scripps Spelling Bee in D.C.

Not every family has the ability to homeschool, nor does every

family have the desire. But the fact is, the above components practiced by the Fuller family – such as family mealtimes, increased parental interaction, and an unplugged lifestyle – aren't impossible to transfer to children who attend public, private, or charter schools. Would we see more Ediths rise to the surface if our education system placed greater emphasis on incorporating the family into learning, instead of simply leaving it to institutional experts to solve?

Image Credit: YouTube