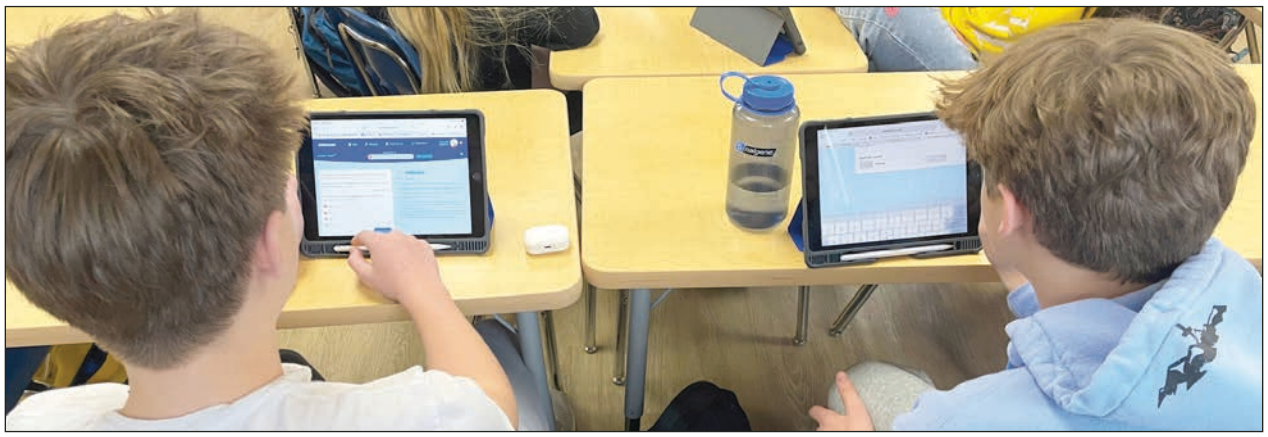
Word Power: Minnetonka Middle School West ranks No. 1 in Minnesota

Minnetonka Middle School West ranked top place in Fall 2025 Vocabulary Bowl

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(SUBMITTED PHOTO)

TOP: Eighth-grade students at Minnetonka Middle School West pose with a celebratory banner for their top ranking in the Fall 2025 Vocabulary Bowl. **ABOVE:** Two eighth-grade students complete vocabulary modules for the Fall 2025 Vocabulary Bowl.

Eighth-grade students at Minnetonka Middle School West ranked first place in the Fall 2025 Vocabulary Bowl for the state of Minnesota after mastering 9,045 words. This marked the second consecutive season that MMW students claimed the state title in their division.

Hosted by Vocabulary.com in the fall and spring, the Vocabulary Bowl is the world's largest academic contest. The Fall 2025 Vocabulary Bowl drew in nearly 1 million students and 65,000 teachers from 6,000 schools across 120 countries. More than 5.3 million words were mastered at the Bowl, setting a new record high.

"So we were looking for ways to extend the vocabulary instruction that we were doing in our class and make it more meaningful, connecting it in ways that students can see in real-life experiences outside of just a book that we were working in," said Alex Griffith, eighth-grade language arts teacher at MMW. "And so this provided an opportunity for that, where it's not just the assignment that we're assigning to them, they get to work on mastering or demonstrating knowledge on the words that are assigned to them, but then they get to explore words, or just subjects and lists, that are interesting to them and that they want to learn about."

To become involved, schools must first opt into the competition. Students are then given a list of vocabulary words to work through and must identify synonyms, antonyms, context and meaning for each word. A leaderboard is available for students and teachers to track their standing in the competition.

In the United States, the competition is broken into three divisions based on school enrollment size. Division I includes schools with upwards of 1,000 students, Division II involves schools with 500-999 students, and Division III is for schools with up to 499 students. International participants compete in their own brackets.

While students are handed a list of vocabulary words to kick off the competition, they are also encouraged to master words in subject areas that are of personal interest to them. MMW students used Vocabulary.com for competition activities.

"I think that students really respond well to some level of competition or, like a gamified experience, and I think that that's ultimately what this provides," Griffith said. "Ultimately, while there can be competition among students, or that aspect of it, it's also a unifying experience as a building where we can say, 'Look, we did all this together, too.' So you feel like you're a part of something as a class and as a building that you can see where you are in the state or in the national standings. And I think that's really cool for students to feel like they're a part of that."

As a teacher, Griffith shared that one of the most rewarding aspects of the competition is hearing students incorporate their newly learned vocabulary terms into everyday conversations. His general language arts classes work on content-specific vocabulary relating to each class unit, while his honors students operate under a slightly different curriculum.

Elliot Pilon, an eighth-grader at MMW, is one of Griffith's honors students who shared that the Vocabulary Bowl has helped her gain a better understanding of definitions compared to educational techniques used in previous school years.

"Well, the way that you complete [the Vocabulary Bowl] is you have to go through what they call 'mastery,' so you have to understand the words to a certain extent before you pass, or whatever. In seventh grade, we just had a booklet that we filled out our words with, so I didn't fully understand them, like to the same extent that I do this year, because I didn't have to study them as hard."

Pilon, who personally mastered 162 words at the Fall 2025 Vocabulary Bowl, credited the competition for adding excitement to her school work and giving her more motivation to complete required activities. She feels her peers feel similarly about the competition's impact on overall student motivation.

While the Vocabulary Bowl season has come to an end, students and teachers at MMW look forward to when the fall competition comes around again.

Griffith believes that the Vocabulary Bowl helps students build resilience and confidence in their problem-solving skills, both in school and in everyday life.

"I think ultimately it does build some resilience for students, where they might not understand what the word is or what the other terms that are on a question totally mean, and so they have to build in some resilience or the ability to problem solve on their own to say, 'Okay, I don't know what this word means, but it looks like this word or it uses the same word part as a word that I do know,' or 'I can use one of my resources and look up what the meaning of this word is and understand if that is similar enough to the thing that I'm looking for,' and really break down what they're trying to figure out and to understand what the question is asking," Griffith said.

Visit www.vocabulary.com/bowl/rule for more information on the Vocabulary Bowl.

ABOUT VOCABULARY.COM

Vocabulary.com was founded in 2010 to transform vocabulary instruction and teach students the words they need to know in school and life. The personalized learning platform identifies each student's vocabulary needs and creates individualized learning plans.

ABOUT THE VOCABULARY BOWL

The Vocabulary Bowl makes vocabulary learning fun and rewarding for learners of all demographics. Students use Vocabulary.com's adaptive technology to master words at individualized paces. Students can earn points for both themselves and their schools. These vocabulary terms help students develop reading, writing

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