

Mateo does his school proud

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FOR THE first time, Mitchells Plain's Imperial Primary School entered a team in the National Spelling Bee competition.

It would prove to be the right decision, as Mateo Joubert, a Grade 5 pupil from the school, went on to win the provincial level of the competition.

Ten-year-old Mateo was among three Western Cape pupils to advance to the national finals, which will take place in Pretoria on October 1.

Pupils had a list of over 1 200 words to study and Mateo won the provincial competition spelling a word that was not on the list – "acumen", which means the ability to make good judgements and take quick decisions.

The 2016 Provincial Spelling Bee was held at the Nedbank Building V&A Waterfront, in Cape Town on Saturday. "I practiced day and night for this competition," Mateo said. "My mommy, school teachers and principal helped me a lot. I feel good and excited about the prizes I won."

"I couldn't sleep on Saturday night because of the excitement that I had won. I would encourage others to participate because it's good to read."

Mateo's mother, Yvette Joubert, said:



SMILES OF SUCCESS: Portia Smit, Dr Brand, of Professional Development, and Geraldine Raatz with the top three spellers, from left, Caylee, Mateo and Angelina.
PICTURE: MYRTLE BRAND

"I would take him outside to let him play a little and while he played I let him spell the words. There will always be distractions and I let him practice that way. I needed him to get used to that kind of environment."

"I am so excited. I am so ecstatic. He is very gifted and confident on his own."

Caylee Alexander from Erica Primary and Angelina Saunders from Kommetjie Primary rounded out the top three.

The National Spelling Bee was launched by the Department of Basic Education in 2014 to improve pupils' literacy, especially in English. It's part of Minister Angie Mot-

shekga's Read to Lead campaign.

Mateo's coach, Alfonso Smith, said: "Mateo has a deep love for learning and words. I encourage other educators throughout the length and breadth of the country, to regard their calling as serious."

One of the sponsors of the competition is Camp I Am. Its executive director, Kai Crooks-Chissano, said: "We're passionate about the spelling bee, especially with how it is empowering communities such as Mateo's."

"Mateo's win is particularly impressive because he is 10 years old and he won with a word that was off the list. The competition

is meant to get children reading."

"It was a phenomenal success," said Portia Smit, provincial spelling bee co-ordinator.

"Hundreds of children participated on a school level, district level, as well as a provincial level. There has definitely been an increase in the number of spellers participating between 2015 and 2016. We are looking to involve more children next year. "The spelling bee is also meant to encourage learners to learn while having fun. It improves reading, writing and thinking skills. We are definitely looking to improve this in the province."