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Nothing exorbitant, just deft spelling

■ Two Oakland students advance to state championship

By Joe Proudman
CORRESPONDENT

HAYWARD — The winner of last weekend's Alameda County spelling bee, an Oakland fifth-grader, attributes his stellar spelling skills to his interest in books.

"I just read a lot," said Karl Keck of Chabot Elementary School, explaining his winning strategy. "I don't read the dictionary, but I read a

lot of other things."

Keck was among 37 East Bay elementary school students hoping to be crowned the county's best speller. He correctly spelled "exorbitant" to win the competition at Cal State East Bay in Hayward on Saturday.

"On that word, reading helped me a lot because I saw it in a couple of books," he said. This was the third year that the Alameda County Office of Education has held the elementary school spelling bee.

Sixth-grader Emily De-luna, who attends Oakland's

Alliance Academy, took second place and will join Keck on May 16 at the California State Elementary Spelling Championship at Sonoma State University.

Third place went to Chloe Killebrew-Bruehl of Oakland's Peralta Elementary School, while Kaushik Kashi of Fallon Middle School in Dublin placed fourth. Both are in the sixth grade.

The top four spellers received trophies.

Competitors hailed from Castro Valley, Dublin, Emeryville, Livermore, New Haven, Oakland, Pleasanton

and San Lorenzo after advancing from their district competitions.

"These are really good spellers," Spell Master Anne Harris-Gebb said. "It's the 37 best spellers in the county in elementary schools."

The competition was divided into rounds until the final two competitors were left. When a student misspelled a word, he or she was eliminated. The difficulty of the words, which were secretly chosen before the bee, increased with each round.

In the early going, contestants spelled words like

"hammer" and "cruise," but toward the end, they spelled words such as "septuagenarian" and "proselytize."

When just Karl and Emily remained standing, the rules changed a little. When one of them misspelled a word, he or she was not done yet. The next speller had to correctly spell the word the other person missed, then correctly spell a new word.

If that person spelled the new word wrong, it started all over again with new words.

The pair went through 17 words before Karl won.