

**CONEYBEAR**

*(delighted at all that's new to him today)*

I've never been in a gymnasium before!

**OLIVE**

*(to Barfee)*

What school do you go to?

**BARFEE**

Shut up.

**RONA**

*[Optional ad-libs as spellers get seated "Take your seats, please. Put your things away" only if additional time needed for everyone to settle in. The object is to keep things moving.]*

Ladies and Gentleman, all the children you see on stage are here because of their extraordinary ability and love of language—but only one of them can go on to compete in the National Spelling Bee! And this year, to celebrate our silver anniversary, our local sponsors, the Putnam Optometrists, are offering today's winner a two hundred dollar savings bond toward his or her future education.

*(KIDS respond.)*

**RONA**

But remember, to get here each child had to win—

**CONEYBEAR**

Oh but I —

**RONA**

or place— in their own district bee—so each of them is already a winner.

**BARFEE**

*(may have echolalia problem)*

Already a winner.

**RONA**

Hello, I'm Rona Lisa Peretti, and I'm pleased to be back for my 9th consecutive year as your host. Unfortunately, our usual word pronouncer, Superintendent Spriggs has [fallen ill]\*, so please join me in welcoming back Vice Principal Douglas Panch from Lake Hemingway-Dos Passos Junior High. Vice Principal Panch is returning to us after a five-year hiatus — so thank you Douglas for stepping in on such short notice.

*\*[Ad lib note: "fallen ill" = occasional ad lib space. Illness is sometimes replaced with a topical or local reference. For example, when Dick Cheney's hunting accident was in the news — "has been injured in a hunting accident"; in an area of heavy traffic — "is stuck in traffic on Route x"; but the default is also fine.]*