

Thirty Rwandan students have won a fully funded two-week study trip to the United Kingdom and one year of school tuition after emerging as the top performers in a national English-language competition aimed at strengthening communication skills among young people.

The students were selected from 120 finalists who competed in the national stage of **The Orator English Competition**, an annual contest that assesses public speaking, writing and the ability to articulate ideas in English.

The awards were presented on Sunday at the competition's closing ceremony, where Education Minister Joseph Nsengimana said the initiative is part of broader efforts to improve English proficiency and raise learning outcomes in schools.



Joseph Nsengimana, Minister of Education

"These students will return as role models for others," Nsengimana said. "When learners become more proficient in English, they also improve in other subjects such as mathematics and science because they are taught in that language."

English has been the primary language of instruction in Rwanda's education system for more than a decade, making proficiency in the language a key component of academic performance and future employment opportunities.

Nsengimana said the programme complements ongoing government efforts to strengthen English-language instruction through teacher training, adding that better language skills would enable more Rwandans to compete for opportunities both at home and internationally.

The 30 winners include 15 students from the Ordinary Level and 15 from the Advanced Level of secondary education. During their stay in the United Kingdom, they will receive intensive English-language training.

Mutara Anabella, a student at Lycée Notre-Dame de Cîteaux who emerged as the overall winner, described the award as motivation to continue learning.

"This gives me confidence that I can accomplish even greater things," she said. "Learning a language is a continuous journey."

Second-place winner Mbonimpaye Jean De Dieu said perseverance had been central to his success.

“If I had given up, I would not be here today,” he said. “Even with my level of English, I managed to succeed, and that encourages me to keep improving.”

Youth and Arts Development Minister Abdallah Utumatwishima urged the students to take advantage of the opportunity, saying language skills have become increasingly important in a global economy.

He said many talented young people fail to secure educational or business opportunities because they struggle to communicate their ideas effectively in widely spoken international languages.

The Ministry of Education said The Orator English Competition will now be held annually, with participation from all public and government-aided schools.

The initiative comes as national assessments continue to point to significant challenges in English proficiency among Rwandan learners.

According to the Learning Assessment of the Rwandan Education System (LARS), released by the National Examination and School Inspection Authority (NESA) in June 2026, 76% of students struggled to answer comprehension questions based on passages they had read. The assessment also found that 63% could read individual words, while only 46.6% achieved the national benchmark for oral reading fluency of 35 words per minute.

The survey, conducted in May 2025, assessed 22,950 students from 592 schools across Rwanda in Kinyarwanda, English, mathematics and science. It covered learners in Primary Three, Primary Six and Senior Three, providing a snapshot of learning outcomes across the country’s education system.