



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

April 17, 2025

Contact: Tara Burghart

Phone: 847-888-5000, ext. 5300

U-46 Board of Education Honors Finalists in the National Merit Scholarship Program

ELGIN - The School District U-46 Board of Education on Monday night honored three high school seniors who are finalists in the 70th annual National Merit Scholarship Program.

Kyle B. Depakakibo, Frederick Lorek, and Nina F. Mangriotis, all students at Bartlett High School, will compete for one of approximately 6,800 National Merit Scholarships that together are worth nearly \$26 million. The scholarships will be awarded this spring.

The U-46 students placed among the top 1 percent of juniors nationwide who entered the 2025 National Merit Scholarship Program by taking the 2023 PSAT, which served as the initial screening. They advanced to the finals based on their academic record, participation in school and community activities, demonstrated leadership abilities, employment, and honors and awards received. The students received Accent on Achievement certificates from the Board of Education.

Kyle, who plans to major in nuclear, plasma, and radiological engineering at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, said he felt "overjoyed" when he received the notice he was a finalist.

"It was, ultimately, a culmination of my progress and skills across my high school career, and it was a moment of recognition that made me feel particularly confident in myself and my work," he said.

[Type here]

Kyle said he has appreciated the “interconnected” nature of being a student in School District U-46.

“Extracurricular activities often see the U-46 schools uniting as one front, even if we are in direct competition,” said Kyle, who made special note of BHS band director Eric Hollaway for providing students with “the autonomy to truly flourish and connect with not only our work, but our district, our community, and our fellow students.”

Frederick, who plans to study biomedical engineering on a pre-med track at the University of Texas in Dallas, said he felt “proud and grateful” about receiving the National Merit honor.

“It was nice to see my hard work pay off, and it meant a lot to be recognized alongside other students who’ve also put a lot into their academics,” he said.

Looking back at his U-46 experience, Frederick said one of the best parts has been the support “from some really great teachers,” singling out his AP Biology teacher Neil Katzenbach: “He challenged me, but also created a space where I felt encouraged to grow.”

Nina, who plans to study mechanical engineering at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, said the National Merit finalist honor also felt like recognition of all the hard work she’s put in as a student.

She said the best part about attending U-46 “is the opportunity to join great clubs with friends and to be able to work with great teachers. A class that stood out to me was engineering development and design where we learned to design a product and bring it from the idea stage to the final prototype. The teacher of that class, Ms. Knapp, inspired all of us to solve problems creatively and to have fun with the design process.”

###

School District U-46 serves families in 11 communities: Bartlett, Elgin, Hanover Park, South Elgin, Streamwood and Wayne, as well as portions of Carol Stream, Hoffman Estates, St. Charles, Schaumburg, and West Chicago. In total, the District encompasses 90 square miles within the Fox

[Type here]

River Valley, approximately 45 minutes west of downtown Chicago, and includes communities within Cook, DuPage and Kane counties. Approximately 34,000 preschoolers through 12th graders attend the 55 District schools and programs. To learn more, visit the U-46 [website](#), or like us on [Facebook](#) and follow us on [Twitter](#).