



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **Board of Education to Honor U-46 Students for State Achievements**

*Music education program also to be recognized*

**ELGIN** - The School District U-46 Board of Education Monday night will recognize nine students who earned first place in the Illinois Future Problem Solving Bowl. The Board will also honor the District's music education program and music educators after U-46 was recognized as one of the "Best Communities for Music Education" by a national foundation for the fourth year in a row.

The Future Problem Solving Bowl, held in Bloomington-Normal in April, is associated with Future Problem Solving Program International, an organization that seeks to develop the ability of young people to design and achieve positive futures through problem solving using critical and creative thinking. At this year's event, the topic was mining and the impact that mine closures might have on the environment and communities in the year 2042.

Neda Bazys, an 8th grader at Canton Middle School, placed 1st as an individual competitor. A team of 6th graders from Glenbrook Elementary School — Andrew Punnoose, Zinnia Saher, Sophia Lee, Aiken Navarro — placed 1st in the junior division. A team of 7th graders from Larsen Middle School — Nishi Sheth, Michelle Cardozo, Svanik Yachavaram, and Katelyn Wong — placed 1st in the middle division; they also received the "Bucky Award" (named for architect and inventor Buckminster Fuller), given to only one team at the whole competition, for their creative and futuristic solution to a problem.



The students are all coached by Ellen Smith, a 4th grade gifted teacher at Glenbrook Elementary. Smith also took to the competition another 7th grade team from Larsen — Mannat Ashta, Risha Lakkadi, Veer Gupta and Yuwan Ganne — who placed 2nd in the middle division, and a team of Glenbrook 5th graders — Sophia Punnoose, Mantas Bazys, Alisha Siddiqui, and Akshara Sivasankaran — who placed 3rd in the junior division. All are her former students.

“I am very proud of all my teams,” Smith said. “They endured competing during the pandemic when all the competitions were virtual and now they were able to return to an in-person state meet and do really well. I continue to coach because of the students' enjoyment, and the benefits I feel they gain from their participation in this academic competition.”

All of the students who finished in 1st or 2nd place at the state event will now represent U-46 at the International Future Problem Solving Bowl in June on the campus of the University of Massachusetts at Amherst.

The other recognition at Monday’s BOE meeting will celebrate the fact that for the fourth straight year, School District U-46 has been honored with the Best Communities for Music Education designation from The NAMM Foundation. The NAMM Foundation is a nonprofit supported in part by the National Association of Music Merchants and its approximately 10,400 members around the world.

The Best Communities for Music Education designation, now in its 23rd year, is awarded to districts that demonstrate outstanding achievement in efforts to provide music access and education to all students. To qualify for the Best Communities designation, the District answered detailed questions about funding, graduation requirements, music class participation, instruction time, facilities, and support for the music programs. Responses were verified with school officials and reviewed by The Music Research Institute at the University of Kansas.



U-46 was one of just 22 school districts in Illinois to receive the honor.

“In U-46, we already know how wonderful our thriving music programs are, but this recognition allows the public and our greater school district community to recognize the fantastic musical opportunities happening here,” said U-46 Fine Arts Coordinator Jaimie Giraldo. “We are proud of our music programming, and look forward to continuing to share our successes with our community.”

The Board of Education will recognize the students with “Accent on Achievement” certificates during its meeting at 7 p.m. Monday, April 25. Giraldo will also accept an “Accent on Achievement” on behalf of the District’s music educators.

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*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 River Valley, approximately 45 minutes west of downtown Chicago, and includes communities within Cook, DuPage and Kane counties. More than 36,000 pre-K through 12 graders attend the 57 District schools and programs. To learn more, visit the U-46 [website](#), or like us on [Facebook](#) and follow us on [Twitter](#).*