



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Beacon Academy of Media & Digital Arts Receives National Certification

Academy at South Elgin High School

SOUTH ELGIN - The Beacon Academy of Media & Digital Arts, one of School District U-46's five specialized high school academies, has been recognized as a nationally certified magnet school for providing high-quality, innovative educational options to families and students that promote choice, diversity and academic excellence.

The certification comes as U-46 continues to strengthen its high school programming to ensure every student is prepared to succeed in college and careers. The District is investing in facility upgrades, enhancing its "Educational Pathways," and redesigning programming at its academies to ensure they remain unique and focused.

The Beacon Academy, located at South Elgin High School, prepares students to become skillful and successful media makers in the areas of audio and video production, broadcast journalism, webcasting, and web design.

It received the certification following a yearlong process in which Beacon staff and SEHS leadership provided evidence that demonstrated the school met or exceeded criteria developed by Magnet Schools of America falling under the pillars of diversity, innovative curriculum and professional development, academic excellence, leadership, and family and community partnerships. In the case of Beacon, it exceeded all the criteria, qualifying it as a "Certified National Demonstration Magnet School." The certification is valid through August 2025.



“Certification through the Magnet Schools of America ensures that our successful academies remain rigorous and relevant,” said School District U-46 Superintendent Tony Sanders. “We’re all very proud of the Beacon Academy and its amazing alums, many of whom are excelling in broadcast news and production careers across the country, and this certification is just another way they are leading our district.”

Out of U-46’s four remaining magnet academies, the ones at Larkin, Bartlett, and Streamwood high schools are also seeking national certification from Magnet Schools of America. The academy at Elgin High School is preparing for International Baccalaureate accreditation.

Meanwhile, the District is also strengthening the “Educational Pathways” for students who are not part of an academy.

For instance, Larkin High School in Elgin is home to a specialized sequence of courses for students in the areas of childcare, health services, or culinary arts. About \$7 million of renovation work was done at LHS in 2020 to turn an existing wing of the building into an improved home for these programs:

Early Childhood: Two new childcare classrooms with a bathroom, sink, and storage were created for LHS students to teach community children enrolled in preschool in the building. A new outdoor playground was added along with an audio system in classrooms so high school students can listen in on the childcare classrooms as they learn about child development.

Culinary Arts: A professional kitchen was added with restaurant-grade appliances, as well as an “introduction” kitchen with residential-grade appliances. A classroom was designed to be multi-purpose, able to accommodate traditional academic work as well as restaurant and catering needs.



Healthcare: A large, multipurpose lab was created so that students can learn and then practice hands-on techniques in the same space. Electrical was upgraded and sanitary spaces added. A new classroom and dedicated lab space was also added.

As part of these facility upgrades, LHS also received renovated science classrooms with new cabinets and countertops, improved layout to create more lab and classroom space, new hoods for ventilation, and new prep rooms.

At Beacon Academy, work included renovations of the broadcast studio, sound room and control room — including a new backdrop with custom lighting and graphics, a new news desk, and new green screen. The academy now also has a new mobile broadcasting truck to take out for assignments away from SEHS.

Students in U-46 apply to attend one of the five Magnet Academies in the fall of their 8th grade year. To help students make the decision on whether and where to apply, the five academies will be offering virtual open houses, tentatively scheduled to be available starting the week of Sept. 6. Families and 8th grade students should visit <https://www.u-46.org/magnetacademies> for updated information on these opportunities. Email and text reminders will also be sent this fall to all families with 8th grade students.

Later this fall, the District will host an open house to showcase the upgrades at Larkin High School and the Beacon Academy.

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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



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includes communities within Cook, DuPage and Kane counties. More than 37,000 pre-K through twelfth 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](#).