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BP STEM Academy Earns NAMM Award for Inclusive Music Program

BALDWIN PARK – Baldwin Park Unified School District’s STEM Academy has earned the SupportMusic Merit Award from the NAMM Foundation, celebrating its inclusive music education program that fosters a love for the arts among both typical learners and students in the school’s special education Cornerstone program.

The SupportMusic Merit Award honors schools that demonstrate outstanding achievement in efforts to provide music access to all students. BP STEM Academy is one of 78 schools across the nation to earn the award in 2023.

“Our music classes provide students with a safe and nurturing environment where they can be creative and expressive,” BP STEM Academy Music Director Rebecca Othmer said. “No experience is needed to join one of our classes. We enjoy seeing the growth from the beginning of the year with the first sounds to the end-of-the-year concerts where proficiency is demonstrated.”

To qualify for the SupportMusic Merit Award, Othmer provided a detailed look at program funding, class requirements, music class participation, instruction time, facilities, support for the music program and an overview of community music-making opportunities.

“Ensuring that every student has equal access to an education that includes the arts is vital for the community of Baldwin Park to thrive,” Othmer said. “The music program at BP STEM is unique in that there is student representation from every population including our entire Cornerstone program. Our music students not only learn how to create music, but more importantly, learn how to be responsible, respectful and compassionate citizens.”

Othmer, who has taught music in Baldwin Park Unified for 21 years, is a champion for equal access to arts education.

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News

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Othmer has a congenital arm amputation; throughout her life, she said people told her she could not do things with only one functioning arm. However, with determination and the support of her family, friends and educators, Othmer fought to do what she loves and became a music teacher.

She was named Baldwin Park Unified Teacher of the Year in 2019, and Teacher of the Year at Holland Middle School in 2007, 2012 and 2019. In 2022, the Southern California School Band and Orchestra Association (SCSBOA) named her an Outstanding Middle School Music Educator.

At BP STEM Academy, Othmer serves as the band and choir teacher, Nonna Ayrapetova is the piano accompanist and Jacob Boyd serves as the orchestra teacher.

BP STEM Academy offers fifth-grade beginning violin, sixth-grade beginning band, seventh- and eighth-grade beginning band, concert band, symphonic band, intermediate orchestra and advanced orchestra. In addition, the Academy provides a mixed chorus class that includes students in the Cornerstone program.

“My biggest hope for the music program at BP STEM Academy is to continue growing the program back to the levels and sizes we had pre-pandemic,” Othmer said. “I also hope to continue to partner with the Cornerstone program to ensure students receive a well-balanced education complete with music.”

The NAMM Foundation is a nonprofit supported in part by the National Association of Music Merchants and its 15,000 member companies and individual professionals.

“Baldwin Park Unified is incredibly proud of BP STEM Academy’s music department for going above and beyond to ensure students have the opportunities to learn and grow in the arts,” Superintendent Dr. Froilan Mendoza said.

PHOTO

BP STEM Academy_NAMM: BP STEM Academy Music Director Rebecca Othmer and sixth-grader Starr Fernandez enjoy a quiet moment during the school’s choir festival. BP STEM Academy was recognized with the SupportMusic Merit Award from the NAMM Foundation for the school’s commitment to providing an inclusive music education program.



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