

Local students score big in state science fair

Alachua County Public School students scored big wins at the recent State Science and Engineering Fair, with two local students among just four statewide to qualify for the International Science and Engineering Fair in Los Angeles in May. They'll be joining another ACPS student who qualified for the international fair in February.

Buchholz High students Nathan Wei and Sophia Rong were both Grand Award Winners and took first place in their divisions. Wei won in the Senior (high school) Chemistry Division for his research into the development of a strong and recyclable plastic made from renewable resources. He was also awarded two special prizes in his division.



Rong won the Senior Mathematics and Computational Science Division with a project related to HIV transmission. She also won a special award in her division.

The two will join GHS sophomore Abhith Kasala, who earned a spot in the international competition earlier this year with his research into the impact of microplastics and other contaminants in water. His project also earned him a first-place state award and two special prizes in the Senior Earth and Environmental Science Division



Lincoln Middle School student David Rong took first place in the junior (middle school) Mathematics and Computational Science Division and an additional prize with a project on edible and non-edible mushrooms.

Altogether the twenty ACPS middle and high school students competing at the state fair brought home 14 awards ranging from Grand Prizes to an honorable mention. They also brought home ten special prizes, which are awarded by various STEM (science, technology, engineering, and math)-related organizations.

The full list of winners is as follows:

Place Awards

Grand Prize, Senior Chemistry	Nathan Wei	Buchholz High
Grand Prize, Senior Mathematics & Computational Science	Sophia Rong	Buchholz High
1 st Place, Junior Mathematics & Computational Science	David Rong	Lincoln Middle
1 st Place, Senior Earth & Environmental Science.....	Abhith Kasala.....	Gainesville High
2 nd Place, Senior Biomedical & Health Science.....	Shiven Sharma	Eastside High
3 rd Place, Junior Environmental Engineering.....	Maggie Gao	Lincoln Middle
3 rd Place, Junior Plant Sciences	Aradhya Kasala	Bishop Middle
4 th Place, Junior Physics and Astronomy	Charlize Moghaddam	Lincoln Middle
4 th Place, Junior Physics and Astronomy	Ivan Shorter	Ft. Clarke Middle
4 th Place, Senior Engineering.....	James Jiang.....	Buchholz High
4 th Place, Senior Mathematics & Computational Science	Luke Xue.....	Buchholz High
Honorable Mention, Junior Engineering (group project).....	Pranav Mannam	Lincoln Middle
	Jaganesh Ramkrishnan	
	Gavin Xie,	

Special Prizes

Nathan Wei, Buchholz High	Dr. Nelson Ying Scholars Grand Award
	American Chemical Society Avogadro Award
Kaayana Sharma, Lincoln Middle	Manatee Regional STEM Competition
Abhith Kasala, Gainesville High.....	Sierra Club of Florida Cantwell Award
	Stockhold Junior Water Prize
Gwen Wendling, Westwood Middle	Polk Regional Science and Engineering Fair
Maggie Gao, Lincoln Middle.....	Tomorrowland Science Award
David Rong, Lincoln Middle	Thermo Fisher Scientific Junior Innovative Challenge
Sophia Rong, Buchholz High	Dr. Nelson Ying Scholars Grand Award
Hamza Khan, Gainesville High	Florida Museum of Natural History Award

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