

## Local students named National Merit semifinalists

Twenty-four Alachua County Public School students have been named semifinalists in the prestigious 2019 National Merit Scholarship Program based on their high scores on a college entrance exam and are now eligible to compete for more than \$30 million in scholarships through the program.

Semifinalist status has long been recognized as a marker of academic excellence. To achieve semifinalist status, the students had to earn among the nation's highest scores on the Preliminary SAT/National Qualifying Test (PSAT/NMSQT). This year more than 1.6 million students in more than 22,000 high schools took the college entrance exam, with only 16,000 earning semifinalist status, placing them among the top one percent of high school seniors in the nation who took the exam. National Merit semifinalists are highly recruited by the nation's colleges and universities.



Ten of this year's semifinalists are Eastside High School students. There are nine semifinalists from Buchholz High School and five from Gainesville High School.

The students named semifinalists are now eligible to become National Merit Finalists. In addition to earning high SAT scores, the students will have to submit scholarship applications that include information about their academic achievements, school, community and leadership activities and any awards or honors they've earned. They must also submit teacher recommendations and write an essay to achieve finalist status.

Finalists will be announced in the spring and are eligible for thousands of dollars-worth of scholarships provided by businesses, colleges and universities and other organizations.

This year's semifinalists are: Abhimanyu Banerjee, Emma Kyes, Nathan Parks, Shreya Pathak, Julie Peeling, Isabella Quintana, Alexander Robertson, Grace Tovkach, Kathleen Yang and Ying Yu from Eastside High School; David Buffkin, Bryan Cao, Benjamin Gao, Theodore Jiang, Justin Kim, Konwoo Kim, Jeanna Storey, Bahar Tehranipoor and Andy Wu from Buchholz High School; Jackson Avery, Grace Engel, Zachary Goff, Benjamin Rodriguez and Baleigh Sweeney from Gainesville High School.

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