

Thirty district high school students named National Merit semifinalists

Thirty Alachua County Public School students have been named semifinalists in the prestigious 2020 National Merit Scholarship Program, up from twenty-four students who earned that status in the 2019 program.

To be named a National Merit Semifinalist has long been recognized as a strong indicator of academic excellence. To qualify, students must earn among the nation's highest scores on the Preliminary SAT/National Qualifying Test (PSAT/NMSQT). About 1.6 million students take the exam every year, and only the top 1 percent earn semifinalist status. Semifinalists are highly sought-after by the nation's colleges and universities.



Gainesville High School has the largest group of semifinalists this year, with thirteen. Eastside High has nine, Buchholz High seven and Santa Fe High has one student.

All of them are now eligible to become National Merit Finalists. In addition to earning high scores on the SAT, the students must submit applications highlighting their other academic achievements, awards and honors earned and school, community and leadership activities. They must also submit teacher recommendations and an essay.

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

This year's semifinalists are: Vinay Arun, Javier Fernandez-Ambite, Keelyn Fife, Zachary Freeman, Bryan Han, Anna Hennis, Thomas Lancer, Claire Levin, Natalie Oyenarte, Sterling Reed, Nicholas Swanger, Tyler Wycoff and Richard Ye of Gainesville High School; Wilson Bullard, Alexander Dang, Samuel Disabb, Brindha Rathinasabapathi, Lauren Shaw, Ameia Smith, Clara Summerford, Andrew Tran and Himanshi Verma from Eastside High School; Edward Beck, Amy Cohen, Helena Jiang, Jiawei Ma, Kira Nagoshi, Bailey Tucker and Kelly Wang from Buchholz High School; and Lacey Walls from Santa Fe High School.

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