

Thirty district high school students named National Merit finalists

Thirty Alachua County Public School students have been notified that they are finalists in the prestigious 2020 National Merit Scholarship Program, a significant increase from the twenty-three students who earned that status in the 2019 program.

The National Merit Scholarship Corporation mailed letters to students' home this week to inform them that they had earned finalists status. Earning that status 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. About 16,000 of those students were named semifinalists in the program back in the fall, with about 15,000 reaching finalist status.

All of the ACPS students who were named semifinalists for the 2020 program made it to the finalist standing in the competition. In addition to earning high scores on the SAT, the semifinalists were required to submit applications highlighting their other academic achievements, awards and honors earned and school, community and leadership activities. They also had to submit teacher recommendations and an essay.



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

The finalists are all eligible for thousands of dollars in scholarships provided by businesses, colleges and universities and other organizations.

This year's finalists 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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