

For Immediate Release

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Media Release

More than 40 CCSD students named 2020 National Merit Scholarship Semifinalists

Office of Strategy and
Communications

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Charleston, SC — Charleston County School District (CCSD) is proud to announce 42 of its talented scholars from a total of four schools are Semifinalists for the 65th annual National Merit Scholarship Program; the National Merit Scholarship Corporation (NMSC) released the names of approximately 16,000 Semifinalists yesterday.

Congratulations to the following 2020 Semifinalists:

Academic Magnet

Caelen J. Bailey
Cademon B. Bitting
Christian W. Blackburn
Molly M. Dickerson
Sophia Discolo
Josephine R. Drake
Vivian S. D'Souza
Gabrielle A. Gagnon
Robert K. Gourdie
Michael L. Hammer
Jennifer E. Hsu
Brendan S. Kelleher
Richard T. Keys
Ameen M. Khan
William C. Kronsberg
Claire A. Kunkle
Sabrina K. Lawrence
Davis J. Leath
Jonathan T. Lemon
Allison M. Li
Caroline E. Lucas
Ellyn L. Marino
Samuel A. Rosenberg
Shreyon Roy
Michelle Sun

Amber Z. Tu
Dhillon R. Wegner
Sophia C. Wilson
Sophia Zhang

Charleston Charter School for Math and Science

Andre Rodriguez

Charleston County School of the Arts

Caroline W. Conway
Maya J. Green
Christina S. Lewis

Wando

Richard J. Battles
Molly M. Bynum
Brooklyn M. Cantey
Reid B. Chave
Marissa Coll
Jolie E. Crunelle
Jack D. Mays
Akshay S. Patwardhan
Gillian L. Richard

Academic Magnet High School leads the state with 29 Semifinalists; that is the largest number of NMSC Semifinalists in school history as well, and the third year in a row the Raptors have had 20 or more.

"The Class of 2020 has been on our radar for some time as a collective group of extremely high-potential students," said Principal Catherine Spencer. "The number on this year's list of National Merit Semifinalists is extraordinarily impressive as nearly 17% of our seniors earned this honor! We are extremely proud of the efforts of these students, as well as our Raptor staff and learning environment that support the realization of the highest in student achievement."

These high school seniors now have an opportunity to continue in the competition for some 7,600 National Merit Scholarships worth a total of about \$31 million that will be offered this spring.

"We are so excited to announce our nine Wando National Merit Semifinalists," stated Principal Sherry Eppelsheimer. "This prestigious distinction is an honor for these students. Wando students have a rich tradition of excellence in academics, athletics, and co-curricular activities. They invest tremendous time, talent, and energy balancing academics with other areas of school life. These nine represent the best of the best."

More than 1.5 million juniors from about 21,000 high schools entered the 2020 National Merit Scholarship Program by taking the 2018 Preliminary SAT/National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test (PSAT/NMSQT), which served as an initial screen of program entrants. The nationwide pool of Semifinalists, representing less than one percent of U.S. high school seniors, includes the highest scoring entrants in each state. The number of Semifinalists in a state is proportional to the state's percentage of the national total of graduating seniors.

To become a Finalist, the Semifinalist and a high school official must submit a detailed scholarship application that includes the Semifinalist's academic record, participation in school and community activities, demonstrated leadership abilities, employment, and honors and awards received. A Semifinalist must have an outstanding academic record throughout high school, be endorsed and recommended by a high school official, write an essay, and earn SAT scores that confirm the student's earlier performance on the qualifying test.

"We are so proud of our gifted Semifinalists and their academic achievement," added Charleston County School of the Arts Principal Shannon Cook. "This level of success results from their hard work, the rigorous instruction provided by their teachers, and the support they receive from their families. We applaud these young artists and look forward to their future contributions and accomplishments!"

2020 National Merit Scholarship finalists will be contacted by NMSC in February and winners will be announced in four nationwide news releases beginning in April

and concluding in July. These scholarship recipients will join more than 345,000 other distinguished young people who have the Merit Scholar title.

“Andre Rodriguez represents the potential of scholars within the Charleston Charter School for Math and Science mission,” explained Principal Mary Carmichael. “His range of accomplishments include leading our VEX robotics team to new heights and serving as an actual teaching assistant in math classes. I hope he knows how proud we are of him and his impact at our school.”

For more information, please contact the Office of Strategy and Communications at (843) 937-6303.

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About the Charleston County School District

Charleston County School District (CCSD) is the second largest school system in South Carolina representing a unique blend of urban, suburban, and rural schools spanning 1,300 square miles along the coast. CCSD serves more than 50,000 students in 87 schools and specialized programs. With approximately 6,100 employees district-wide, CCSD is the fourth largest employer in the region.

CCSD offers a diverse, expanding portfolio of options and specialized programs, delivered through neighborhood, charter, magnet, IB (international baccalaureate), and Montessori schools, and is divided into three Learning Communities. Options include specialized programs in science, engineering and mathematics; liberal arts; music and other creative and performing arts; career and technical preparation programs; and military and other public service enterprises.