



# NEWS RELEASE

Department of Communications and Community Outreach  
6901 Charles Street Towson, MD 21204  
443.809.5908 (English) 443.809.7801 (Español) [www.bcps.org](http://www.bcps.org)

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**CONTACT:** Dept. of Communications/Community Outreach, 443.809.5908

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## **Four BCPS seniors earn \$2,500 National Merit Scholarships**

*Students represent Catonsville, Dulaney, Eastern Tech, Pikesville high schools*

Towson, MD -- Four Baltimore County Public Schools students are among the approximately 2,500 distinguished high school seniors from across the nation who have won \$2,500 National Merit® Scholarships. The scholarship recipients were chosen from a pool of 16,000 finalists in the 2021 National Merit Scholarship Program.

The scholarship winners are:

- Grace Cong, a Dulaney High senior who plans a career in bioinformatics
- Benjamin S. Matz, a Pikesville High senior interested in a career in mathematics
- Sean O. Nowak, a Catonsville High senior pursuing a career in aerospace engineering
- Lena Wang, an Eastern Tech senior focused on a career in medicine

National Merit \$2500 Scholarship winners are the finalists in each state judged to have the strongest combination of accomplishments, skills, and potential for success in rigorous college studies. The number of winners named in each state is proportional to the state's percentage of the nation's graduating high school seniors.

These scholars were selected by a committee of college admissions officers and high school counselors, who appraised a substantial amount of information submitted by both the finalists and their high schools: the academic record, including difficulty level of subjects studied and grades earned; scores from the Preliminary SAT/National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test (PSAT/NMSQT®); contributions and

leadership in school and community activities; an essay written by the finalist; and a recommendation written by a high school official.

National Merit Scholarship Corp. (NMSC®) finances most of these single-payment National Merit \$2500 Scholarships. Corporations and company foundations that sponsor awards through NMSC also help underwrite these scholarships with grants they provide in lieu of paying administrative fees. Scholars may use their awards at any regionally accredited U.S. college or university.

This is the second announcement of National Merit Scholars in 2021 by the NMSC, which named recipients of National Merit® corporate-sponsored scholarships on Apr. 22 and will name winners of college-sponsored Merit Scholarship awards on June 2 and July 12. By the conclusion of this year's competition, about 7,500 academic champions will have won National Merit Scholarships worth approximately \$30 million.

### **2021 National Merit Scholarship Competition**

More than 1.5 million juniors representing about 21,000 high schools entered the 2021 National Merit Scholarship Program when they took the 2019 Preliminary SAT/National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test (PSAT/NMSQT®), which served as an initial screen of program entrants. In September 2020, approximately 17,000 semifinalists were designated on a state-representational basis in numbers proportional to each state's percentage of the national total of graduating high school seniors. Semifinalists were the highest-scoring program entrants in each state and represented less than 1 percent of the nation's seniors.

To be considered for a National Merit Scholarship, semifinalists had to fulfill requirements to advance to finalist standing. Each semifinalist was asked to complete a detailed scholarship application, which included writing an essay and providing information about extracurricular activities, awards, and leadership positions. Semifinalists also had to have an outstanding academic record and be endorsed and recommended by a high school official. From the semifinalist group, some 16,000 met finalist requirements.

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[Baltimore County Public Schools](#), the nation's 25th largest school system, is focused on raising the bar and closing gaps to prepare our students for the future. Thanks to innovative and talented leaders, teachers, staff, and students, BCPS celebrates [many honors](#).