

Four National Merit Scholarship Award Semifinalists Applauded

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Date : September 21, 2015

Four of Darien High School's five National Merit semifinalist students were presented to the Board of Education at Monday night's meeting and received praise from their principal and applause from the room.

Darien's five semifinalists are among 16,000 students who were named by the National Merit Scholarships organization out of 1.4 million students from 22,000 high schools across the nation who took the PSAT or some other qualifying test, Darien High School Principal Ellen Dunn told the board.

"We are so proud of all of you," Dunn told the students in a statement that ended with the room applauding

them. "Not only for your scholarship but also because of who you are, because of the many contributions you make to our Darien High School. So we say congratulations to all of you and wish you the very best for the next stage of this process."

Schools Superintendent Dan Brenner said the students were to be commended, but also their teachers and parents.

"These are really great moments for school districts because it's typically the culmination of a lot of hard work [...] not only from the teaching staff who work very hard to help children excel, but also we know that you don't get great students like that without a high level of parent commitment. It's not an accident that those young women are there, so my congratulations to all. It's really great stuff — thanks."

In February, according to the National Merit Scholarship Corporation [website](#), about 15,000 students are typically told by mail that they've advanced to "finalist" standing, and their high school principals receive awards certificates that they can present to the students.

"To become a finalist," according to an announcement from the corporation, "the semi-finalist and his or her high school must submit a detailed scholarship application, in which they provide information about the semi-finalist's academic record, participation in school and community activities, demonstrated leadership abilities, employment, and honors and awards received.

"A semi-finalist must have an outstanding academic record through-out 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."

Then from March to mid-June, according to the website, about 7,500 of the students are notified that they've received scholarships.