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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Bentonville Schools Boasts 38 National Merit Semifinalists
Largest Class of Semifinalists in District History

About the National Merit Scholarship Program

- National Merit Semifinalists represent less than 1% of U.S. graduating seniors.
- PSAT scores determine semifinalists.
- Only 16,000 students nationwide earn this honor each year from 1.3 million test takers.
- 95% of semifinalists go on to be named National Merit Finalists in the spring.

Bentonville, Ark.—September 9, 2026—Bentonville Schools is celebrating a record 38 seniors named National Merit Semifinalists, the largest class in district history. These young women and men are amongst the top 1% in the nation based on the Preliminary SAT. More than 1.3 million high school juniors take the PSAT nationwide.

“A National Merit Semifinalist is a rare student. To have 38 in one district is remarkable,” said Dr. Debbie Jones, Superintendent of Bentonville Schools.

Reaching this point in a student’s academic pathway takes years and reflects the investment of many people.

“This recognition speaks not only to the extraordinary work of these 38 students, but also to the families and educators who have challenged, encouraged and supported them throughout their academic careers. Celebrating them together is an honor,” Dr. Jones added.

Semifinalists now have the opportunity to advance to Finalist standing and compete for National Merit Scholarships. In addition, many colleges and universities offer significant scholarship packages to National Merit Finalists, with some covering tuition, room and board and other academic-related expenses.

About Bentonville Schools

Established in 1841, Bentonville Schools is the premier public school system in Arkansas, serving more than 20,000 students in kindergarten through 12th grade. Twenty-four schools, spanning more than 143 miles across Northwest Arkansas, call the district home. Bentonville Schools is critically acclaimed for its academics, arts and athletics and is committed to excellence through innovative, inspiring learning experiences. For more information, visit bentonvillek12.org

