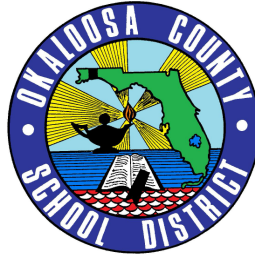


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Niceville High School Junior Emma Michel Named Sunshine State Scholar and Awarded Statewide STEM Scholarship

Niceville High School (NHS) junior Emma Michel has been recognized as one of Florida's top STEM students and selected as a 2026 Sunshine State Scholar scholarship recipient, an honor awarded to just 10 students statewide. Emma represented Okaloosa County at the Sunshine State Scholars Conference in Orlando, hosted by the Florida Department of Education, where the state's most accomplished 11th-grade students in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) are recognized for their academic excellence and leadership. Earlier this school year, Emma was named one of the Sunshine State Scholars Program representatives for the Okaloosa County School District, alongside Fort Walton Beach High School student Penelope Gordon.

Each Florida school district nominates outstanding 11th-grade STEM students for a prestigious program that highlights academic excellence and introduces higher education and STEM career opportunities. After the statewide event, Emma advanced and was one of ten Florida students awarded a one-year scholarship through the Florida Prepaid College Foundation and the Florida Education Foundation. For selection, Emma completed six additional essays about her STEM passion and academic goals, competing against top students statewide.

"Emma represents the very best of Okaloosa County students," said Superintendent Marcus Chambers. "Her academic dedication, passion for STEM, and commitment to excellence truly set her apart. Being selected as one of only ten students in the entire state to receive this scholarship is an extraordinary accomplishment, and we are incredibly proud of her."

Niceville High School Principal Charlie Marello said Emma exemplifies the dedication and talent found within the Eagle community. "We are so proud of Emma for receiving this state-level recognition and award," said Marello. "Emma is enrolled in five different Advanced Placement courses at Niceville High School, carries a 4.57 GPA, and is a standout performer on the NHS swim team. She is one exceptional Eagle."

Through the Sunshine State Scholars Program, Emma gained opportunities to engage with representatives from universities, colleges, and industry leaders while exploring academic and career pathways in STEM. Her achievement highlights her determination and the strong support for academic excellence in Okaloosa County.



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