



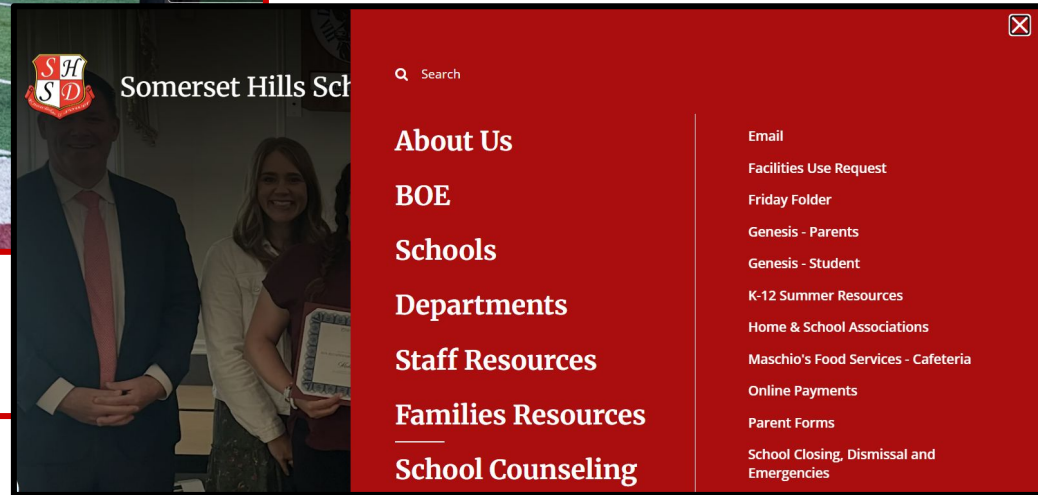
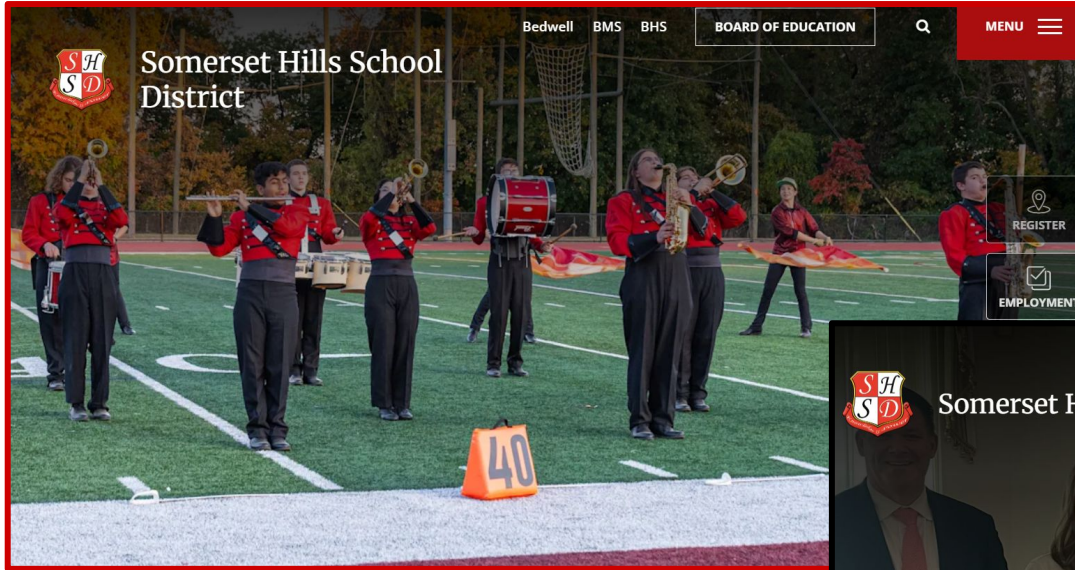
Report of the Superintendent

August 27, 2025

Recognition: Connor Flynn, District Webmaster



Reviewing Our District Website



Quick Links



CALENDAR



DISTRICT NEWS



BUSINESS OFFICE



OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDENT



TECHNOLOGY



FACILITIES



CRITICAL DATES



HOME/SCHOOL ASSOCIATIONS

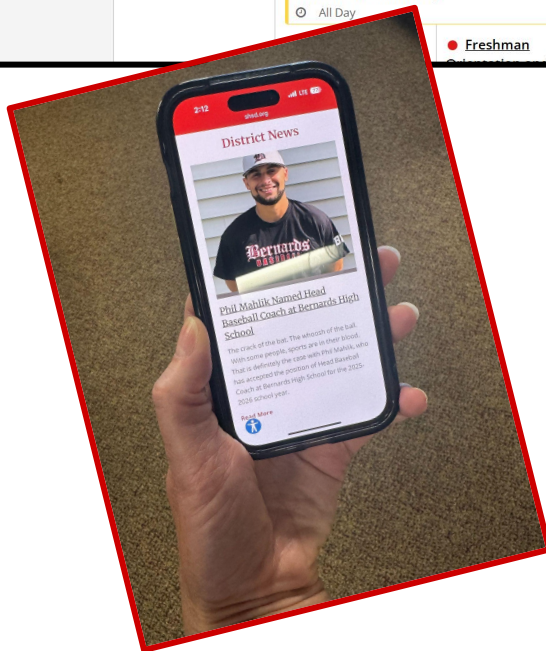
Reviewing Our District Website

All Calendars | Bedwell | BMS | BHS | Athletics | District Calendar

All Calendars

SEPTEMBER 2025

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
31	1	2	3	4	5	6
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Professional Day ○ All Day Madrigals Retreat ○ All Day Staff Professional Day ○ All Day 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1st Day of School ○ All Day Marking Period 1 begins ○ All Day First Day for Students ○ All Day 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Varsity Football Home Game ○ 7:00 PM - 9:00 PM 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ACTs ○ All Day Bilingual Community Event ○ 11:00 AM - 1:00 PM Bilingual Community Event ○ 11:00 AM - 1:00 PM



<p>Curriculum</p> <p>FIND OUT MORE ></p>	<p>HIB</p> <p>FIND OUT MORE ></p>	<p>School Counseling</p> <p>FIND OUT MORE ></p>
<p>Student Services</p> <p>FIND OUT MORE ></p>	<p>Athletics</p> <p>FIND OUT MORE ></p>	<p>District Health Services</p> <p>FIND OUT MORE ></p>
<p>Transportation</p> <p>FIND OUT MORE ></p>	<p>Maschio's Food Services</p> <p>FIND OUT MORE ></p>	<p>Performing Arts</p> <p>FIND OUT MORE ></p>

***New Jersey School Boards Association Training:
Referendum Communication Best Practices
for Board of Education Members***

***Mrs. Charlene Peterson
NJSBA Field Representative***



Referendum Blueprint for Blending Community Engagement with Legal Compliance

Presented by: NJSBA Field Services

njsba.org |  Facebook: [njsba](https://www.facebook.com/njsba) |  Twitter: [njsba](https://twitter.com/njsba) |  Instagram: [njschoolboards](https://www.instagram.com/njschoolboards) |  YouTube: [njsba](https://www.youtube.com/njsba)

Referendum Information Goals

- Inform the public about the scope and purpose of the referendum.
- Increase community understanding and trust.
- Encourage high voter turnout.
- Maintain legal guardrails.



Agenda



Legal Guidelines

Board Do's and Don'ts

Communication Planning

Partners in the Process

Timeline

Legal Guidance

Citizens v. Parsippany-Troy Hills (1953)

Distribution of an 18-page booklet.

- 17 pages factual info.
- 1 page identified the consequences if the referendum failed – cheat child of 1/3 of education, long bus ride with some children coming home in dark, etc.
- In three places it said, “Vote YES.”



JUST *the*
FACTS

The court distinguishes that reasonable expenditures to “present the facts” is within the Board’s implied power.

“Arguments to persuade the voters that only one side has merit” are not, evidenced by the Vote YES and the overdramatization of the dire consequences if the referendum fails.

Accountability Regulations

N.J.A.C. 6A:23A-5.2 (c)(d)



School district publications shall be produced and distributed in the most cost-efficient manner possible that will enable the school district to inform and educate the target community.



Within 90 days of election – may not send out any publication to the school community at large that includes pictures of board member(s).



Within 60 days of election – publication must be reviewed by the Executive County Superintendent to ensure public funds are spent in a reasonable and cost-effective manner.

Use of Students

N.J.S.A. 18A:42-4 and N.J.A.C. 6A:32-7.1

Students may not:

- be given literature or
- be requested to engage in any activity

that promotes, favors, or opposes any public question.

Student record information is confidential with limited access.



Individual Board Members as Private Citizens

Do not lose rights as a private citizen but as a public official they must be exercised within the School Ethics Act.

Advisory Opinion A03-07

Identify self as board member and indicate opinion is not authorized by the board nor is on behalf of the Board.

Provide accurate information that is not confidential.

Ensure private action does not compromise the Board.

Advisory Opinion A36-14

May place a generic party-created campaign sign on private lawn without a disclaimer.

Disclaimer needed if create own sign or publicly post your opinion.

Can only use personal Social Media account and not one representing you as a Board member.

Consult Board Attorney for legal advice.

Using a disclaimer can help to clarify if a member is speaking in their official capacity and pursuant to their official duties; however, the presence of a disclaimer is not dispositive. C10-24

NJ School Referenda Data

Year	# Referendum Elections	# Proposals Approved	% Proposals Approved	Total \$ Proposed	Total \$ Approved
2025 YTD	20	19	73%	\$898.4 MM	\$754.4 MM
2024	31	23	61%	1.3 B	\$784.5 MM
2023	34	25	66%	1.1 B	\$589.9 MM
2022	53	45	85%	\$1.8 B	\$1.2 B
2021	22	18	82%	\$704.7 MM	\$535.5 MM
2020	13	9	69%	\$410 MM	\$213.8 MM
2019	39	26	66%	\$1.3 B	\$584.9 MM

From NJSBA website: <https://www.njsba.org/news-information/data/>

Special School Election Dates:

4th Tuesday January	2nd Tuesday March	Last Tuesday September	2nd Tuesday December	General Election Apr or Nov
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What the Board Can Do

The Board's role is to be a trusted source of clear factual information and a facilitator of community dialogue, committed to transparency and providing voters the information they need to make their own informed decisions.



Educate, inform, and listen.



Prepare and share factual materials



Encourage two-way public engagement and voter participation



Host public information sessions, building tours, public forums, etc.



Be visible but neutral

What the Board Cannot Do

Advocate	Advocate for a “YES” vote.
Persuade	Use district resources that urge or promote a particular outcome.
Collude	Coordinate campaign efforts or messaging with outside advocacy groups.
Pressure	Pressure employees, parents, or community members to support the referendum.

The difference between informing and advocating matters.

Neutral Messaging or Advocacy?

Messages that assign consequences based on voting outcomes risk being seen as persuasive rather than informative.



“Our children’s success depends on this referendum.”

“This referendum is a must-pass for our community’s future.”

“Without this referendum, students may be left behind.”

Consider “if the message was on district letterhead or sent by the superintendent, would a reasonable person think the district is telling them how to vote?”

When in doubt, consult the Board attorney.

Referendum Planning: Do

Develop a clear and transparent communications plan early.

Support the formation of a citizen advisory or support group to advocate (outside of district oversight).

Dedicated referendum page on website with FAQs, project scope, timelines, cost breakdowns, and tax impact.

Host informational sessions, town halls, Q&A's, webinars, etc.

Offer facility/building tours or open houses.

Connect with local officials and other key communicators early.

Communication Steps

Start with listening.
Document what hear
Visible adjustments =
“Your voice matters”

Tell the story.
People vote for what
they care about, not
line items.

**Keep it clear and
relatable.** No jargon.

Repeat.
Communicate often
and distribute widely.

Accessible by all.
Meet them where they
are.

What to Communicate

Highlight the purpose.

Why these improvements are necessary. Use real examples to demonstrate the need.



Clearly identify the proposed projects.

(Include how community feedback helped to shape the list.)



Illustrate the future.

What it will look like after referendum using conceptual images/renderings.



Estimate financial impact in clear, consistent, relatable format.

Total amount

State aid amount - emphasize to illustrate the value to the community

Local share

Estimated tax impact in concrete terms (\$/month or \$/year per household).



How to get your questions answered.



Prepare for Misinformation

One of the reasons a referendum may fail is the spread of misinformation. Plan for it and how to counter it.

- Identify common myths early.
- Use feedback loops to respond quickly to misinformation or fears.
- Share a live FAQ page with real-time corrections.
- Misinformation spreads fastest right before the vote – be ready with facts.
- The Board must be careful to only correct facts without pushing a position.



Encourage Voter Registration/Turnout

Voter registration is the first step to participation.

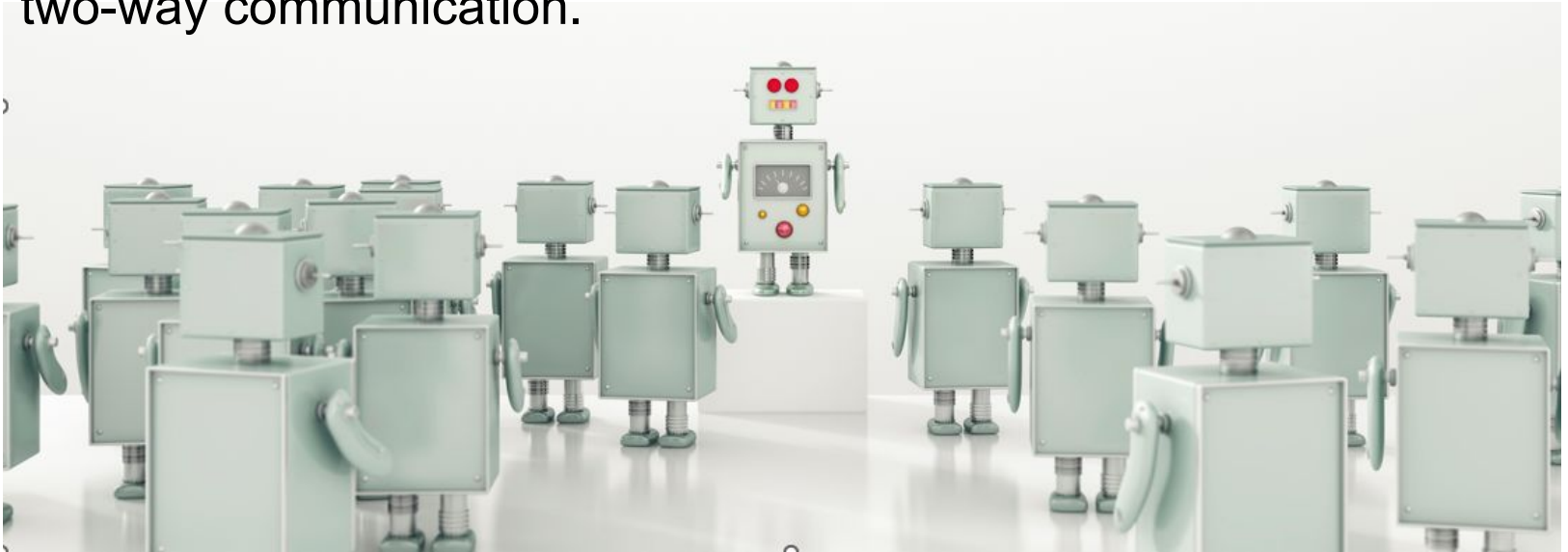
Higher voter turnout leads to a more representative community decision.

- Share resources and information on voter registration procedures and deadlines, including early voting and mail-in ballots if they are options.
- Work with local election officials to hold registration drives.
- Collaborate with school community groups to “Get Out the Vote.”



Key Communicators

Key communicators are individuals or groups who naturally influence public support because of their relationships, expertise, or leadership roles. They build trust, credibility, outreach, and two-way communication.



Consider connecting with:

Local elected officials, religious leaders, businesses, community group leaders, school-affiliated leaders, long-time residents or respected elders, community service providers, youth leaders, coaches, preschools, etc.

Key Communicators

As trusted sources of information, key communicators can:

- Disseminate factual materials through their networks.
- Explain “why it matters” to their networks.
- Facilitate conversations within smaller community groups.
- Provide feedback to the district on community concerns and questions.

The most effective advocates are your neighbors in your community!



Non-District Advocacy Groups

What outside groups can do:

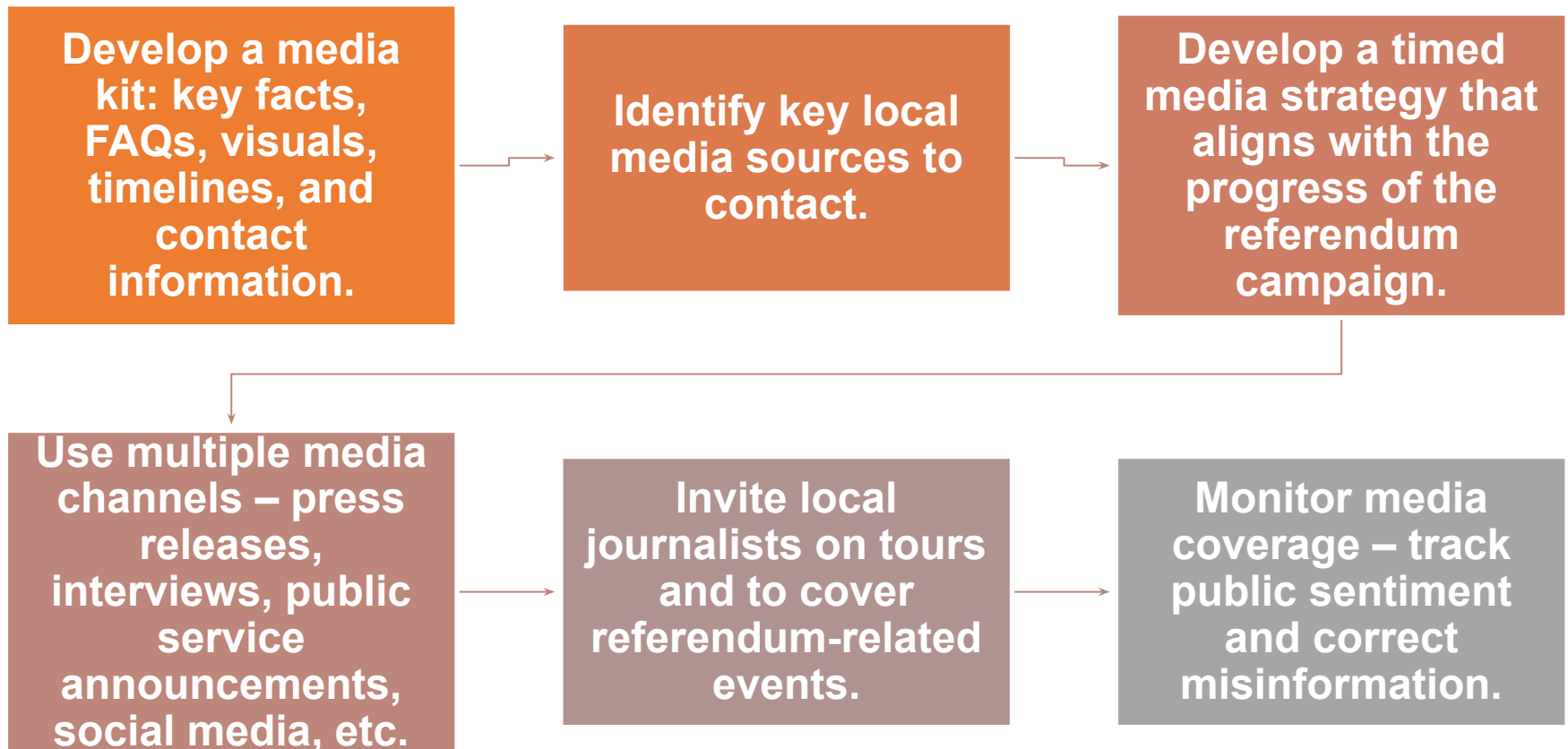
- Advocate for or against the referendum.
- Fundraise and spend funds on campaign materials.
- Organize community events, canvassing, coffee chats, neighborhood info sessions, etc.
- Design and distribute yard signs, flyers, social media blitzes.
- Ask community leaders for public endorsements.
- Testimonials from students, staff, parents



Outside groups should be careful not to:

- Use district/school email, logo, staff time, students, or family contact information for advocacy.
- Coordinate messaging or materials with district officials.

Leverage Local Media



Examples of Successful Practices

Montclair - \$188MM. 80% ↑	“Referendum 101” video and “walkthrough” videos with a tangible sense of improvements planned in clear language.
Princeton - \$89MM. 58% ↑	Colorful easy-to-read flyers and social media graphics. Multi-question structure.
Lawrence Twp - \$95MM. 60% ↑	Multi-prong approach focused on community conversations, financial clarity, and strong leadership by admin & Board.
Clifton - \$168MM. 68% ↑	“Value for Dollar” deal driven by a strong collaboration between community, labor, and management.
Scotch Plains-Fanwood. \$44.8MM. 56% ↑	Refined and reduced scope based on public input after 2024 failure (\$115MM). Emphasized state aid, clear ballot explanation.
Freehold Twp - \$135MM. 52% ↑	Emphasis on safety, a healthy learning environment, and optimization of state aid.

Examples of Successful Practices



Lawrence Twp community conversations.

Some Lessons Learned

Outreach was too technical, described as cold. Voters did not feel connected.

The district provided information, but the community felt there was limited engagement – they were informed but not consulted. “We weren’t asked.”

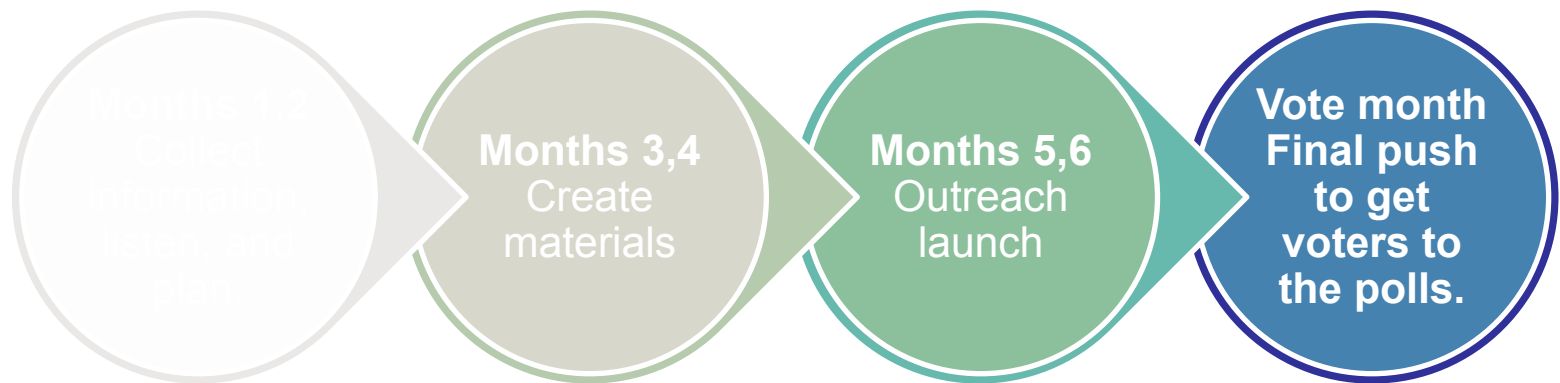
Focused only on parents, thinking they would carry the referendum.

Used a professional firm for messaging but did not localize it – need the grassroots connection.

A failed referendum is not always about money or scope. If voters don't: know, feel heard, feel connected, or trust the messenger failure may occur.

Proposed Referendum Campaign Timeline

The culmination of the lengthy referendum planning process is the campaign to spread the word and engage the community. Timeline is around 6 + months. Start your planning with the vote and work backwards.



Consider the impact of the school district calendar. Time off and breaks could disrupt the campaign.

Keep Communicating after the Referendum

We are excited to announce that the referendum work is starting, and our schools will begin to receive the improvements

From Manalapan-Englishtown website



Project Progress

[See updates and photos of referendum project](#)

Regular, transparent progress updates will show accountability, build continued trust, and demonstrate that the community's investment in your schools is being managed responsibly.

<https://sites.google.com/mersnj.us/mers-referendum-2024/home>

Summary

- Engage early and often.
- Be clear.
- Build trust, not just plans.

The key isn't just what you propose – it's how people feel about it. Even the best proposal can fail if people feel excluded.



**Transparency + Community Ownership + Legal Integrity
=
Public Trust**



In The News...

New Head Baseball Coach

The crack of the bat. The whoosh of the ball. With some people, sports are in their blood. That is definitely the case with Phil Mahlik, who has accepted the position of Head Baseball Coach at Bernards High School for the 2025-2026 school year.

Mahlik has served as Head Baseball Coach at Bernardsville Middle School for three years, where his team won multiple playoff games and reached the championship in 2022. Prior to that, he coached numerous youth and travel baseball teams. Additionally, Mahlik has coached soccer, tennis, basketball and hockey at the middle school and high school levels. His leadership and experience, coupled with core values, have resulted in a coaching philosophy built around developing relationships and emphasizing hard work, trust, and passion for the game.

Raised in Bernardsville and currently residing there as well, the Bernards baseball program is close to his heart. He played shortstop throughout his high school career at BHS and went on to play college ball at Kean University. “I am ready to take on this role, full steam ahead,” said Mahlik. “We will set high standards for the program with the goal of winning championships, and that happens by putting our heads down and going through the process.” He is eager to begin an off-season plan to prepare for the March start. In discussing it with Dr. Brotschul, Superintendent of Schools, Mahlik expressed his desire for community and youth involvement; he wants to work with the local Little League, along with the BMS baseball program to ensure that the values and coaching principles are aligned with a shared vision from the youngest players, up and on throughout high school.

“Phil balances the importance of culture and strategy, which are critical touchpoints with the athlete of 2025. We wish Phil the absolute best and are certain he will positively impact student-athletes across the District,” said Dr. Brian Brotschul, Superintendent of Schools.

Mahlik joined the Somerset Hills School District in 2022 as a Physical Education teacher at Bernardsville Middle School. He graduated from Kean University with a BS in Physical Education and Health with a minor in Coaching. Mahlik recently obtained an MA in Coaching and Athletics Administration. Mahlik will replace Jeff Falzarano who took over the baseball program in 2004.



The Somerset Hills School District is excited for Mahlik to join the team of dedicated and driven coaches, in this new role...
and as they say, ***“Let’s play ball!”***





The Wait is Over!

In The News...

Bernards High School is officially certified as a “**River-Friendly School**” after BHS Green Team members, with the effort and support of their faculty advisor Joe Young, completed a comprehensive checklist of actions to help protect rivers, water quality, wildlife habitats, and educate fellow students.



Green Team projects:

- testing the quality of drinking water in school water fountain
- cleaning up and enhancing the rain garden in the school’s courtyard
- installing bluebird nest boxes on the BHS campus
- building and installing devices to help American eels with their upstream migration
- removing invasive plants from RHA’s Fairview Farm campus in Bedminster
- improving bird and pollinator habitat at New Jersey Audubon’s Scherman-Hoffman Wildlife Sanctuary in Bernardsville
- presenting a program to fellow students about “upcycling” - turning used clothing into new products instead of throwing them away
- preparing a classroom lesson for advanced biology students on “Disruptions to Ecosystems,” such as weather events, human impacts, and invasive species
- organizing a plastics collection for recycling, as well as a poster contest to raise awareness about natural habitats



In The News...

Summer PDI

Somerset Hills Professional Development Institute

Summer Session included 25 diverse and interesting courses!

Fall Session will run October-December.

Staff survey highlighted interest in:
Differentiated Instruction
Special Education
Technology
SEL



Sarah McShane and Grace Kartelias were co-advisors for the course called *Text Sets with Purpose!* Participants were able to develop text sets centered around specific content areas to support deeper student understanding and engagement.

Lauren Volosin taught *O.P.T. In.* Her PDI course focused on helping students develop organization, planning, and time management skills!





- ✓ Chromebook and iPad preparation
- ✓ Workstation and laptop upgrades
- ✓ Website migration
- ✓ Genesis rollover
- ✓ From copper to fiber at BES/BMS
- ✓ Redundant links and internet connections between buildings

THANK YOU

**E
C
H**





In The News...

Administrative Retreat...

and Welcoming New Staff

On August 12th and 13th, Dr. Brotschul hosted *Review-Preview: An Administrative Retreat* for a team of Somerset Hills School District administrators, school leaders, supervisors, and department heads. There were various trainings, discussions, and breakout sessions on topics that included: leadership teams, lesson planning software, testing, HIB, student cell phone usage, climate and culture, law primer, the FY27 budget and more!



Beginning on August 25th, the district hosted a three-day New Educator Orientation. New staff were warmly welcomed by all SHSD administrators, as well as by SHEA representatives.



They received training in areas that included: technology, classroom management, student and staff wellness, lesson planning, Title IX, HIB, Genesis, and more! Time was scheduled for school tours as well which enabled staff to orient themselves to their buildings, and to set up their classrooms. They are beyond excited for the 2025-2026 school year to begin!



Joining our TEAM!

Bedwell Elementary School

Scott Wolfe, Principal; Jennifer Adams, Kindergarten; Diana Heesemann, Nurse;
Mercedes Lippert Lozano, Preschool; Claire Lodato, Kindergarten;
Gabriela Matos, Special Education; Yarelis Pacheco, Bilingual; Shannon Vitale, Grade 1;
Terri Johnson, Art - Leave Replacement; Deborah Cortigiani, ESL/MLL - Leave Replacement

Bernardsville Middle School

Max Fritsche, English; Ashley Kellett, School Psychologist; Julie Weinstein, Special Education

Bernards High School

Stephanie Camooso, Spanish; Indira Gonzalez, ESL/MLL; Mark Mason, Special Education;
Tyler Nadolny, Physical Education/Health; Joanna Neiss, Biology;
Tori Resnick, School Counselor; Rachael Richard, Social Studies; Kristina Rovtar, Art;
Maiya Torres, Social Studies; Julie Blackstock, Permanent Sub

District

William Paltan, Driver; Desiree Noland, BCBA; Kerry Lucas, Maintenance - Leave Replacement

Fall
is alive
and...



...kicking!



...spiking!



...running!



...making music & creating a show!



...blocking!



...building team spirit!

Cheerleading ... 8
Cross Country ... 45
Field Hockey ... 51
Football ... 63
Marching Band/Color Guard ... 24
Soccer- Boys ... 48
Soccer- Girls ... 38
Tennis - Girls ... 33
Volleyball - Girls ... 44



Summer of Lights!



Let's Go Mountaineers!



Come cheer on the
BHS Mountaineers,
under the new lights,
in their quest to pummel Cranford
on Friday, August 29th at 7pm!



Stay Informed



[Messages from the Superintendent](#) (Third Thursday of every month and as needed)

[District News](#) (ongoing)

[Superintendent Reports](#) (posted after each Board meeting)

[Board Briefs](#) (Monday following each Board Meeting)

[Pathways](#) (Every other month)

[YouTube Channel](#) (ongoing)

School Friday Folders (Every Friday, except winter/spring break)



Referendum 2026



SOMERSET HILLS SCHOOL DISTRICT

Upgrading Our Facilities to Support Our Educational Programs

To keep up-to-date on the referendum scan the QR code below
Please send questions to: referenduminfo@shsd.org

REFERENDUM 2026

DISTRICT-WIDE FACILITIES RENOVATIONS PROGRAM

VOTE TUESDAY, MARCH 10TH



Referendum 2026

Key Points

- March 10, 2026 public vote
- Seek to replace expiring debt with the same debt over the next 20 years
- State Aid is available to defray overall costs
- Total projected costs: \$38,024,257
- Total projected State Aid: \$12,578,787
- Total tax impact to Somerset Hills taxpayers: \$0
- Bedwell: Security Infrastructure, Security Vestibule, STEM, Roofing, ADA toilets, Kindergarten access, Branding
- BMS: Security Infrastructure, Science, Roofing, Branding
- BHS: Security Infrastructure, Science, STEM, Culinary Arts, Technology, Branding

Referendum 2026

>> PROJECT CATEGORIES



Arts



Learning



Wellness



Safety



Operations

ENHANCED LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS



STUDENT & STAFF SAFETY



KEEP UP-TO-DATE WITH OPERATIONS



FACILITIES ENHANCE LEARNING

Referendum 2026: Priorities

» REFERENDUM PRIORITIES



SPECIAL PROJECTS HAVE A HIGH VISUAL IMPACT AND CREATE EXCITING LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS AND DIRECTLY IMPACT OUR CHILDREN:

- » Science Labs - Chemistry, Biology, Physics
- » S.T.E.M. Labs and Technology Classroom Space
- » Media Center Upgrades / Renovations
- » Kindergarten Classroom Renovations
- » Special Education / STARS Program
- » Creation of a Culinary Arts Classroom
- » Visual Arts Classroom Renovations

Referendum 2026: Security, Operations, and Branding

» DISTRICT-WIDE CAPITAL PROJECTS



- Upgrade and expand camera systems and implement school notification & lockdown system (All Schools)
- Provide secure vestibule and lockdown capabilities (doors & hardware) (Elementary School)
- Provide ballistic window film (All Schools)
- Provide much needed replacement of leaking & deteriorated roofing sections (All Schools)
- Replace Building-wide Fire Alarm Systems (Middle School and Elementary School)
- Bleacher Replacements (ADA Compliance) (High School - Main and Lower Gymnasium)
- Enhance the school community through school spirit and branding by installing graphics at core spaces such as cafeterias, multipurpose rooms, gymnasiums and corridors (All Schools)



Referendum 2026

Bernards High School

- STARS Program Renovation
- Culinary Arts Lab
- Science Lab, STEM and Robotics Renovations
- TV Broadcasting Studio Renovations
- Roofing System Replacement - Various Sections
- Upgrade / Expand existing Camera/Security Systems
- Installation of ballistic safety film on all lower level windows
- Enhance the school community through school spirit and branding by installing graphics at core spaces such as cafeterias, multipurpose rooms, gymnasiums and corridors.

Referendum 2026

Bernardsville Middle School

- Science Lab Renovations
- Roofing System Replacement - Various Sections
- Upgrade / Expand existing Camera/Security Systems
- Installation of ballistic safety film on all lower level windows
- Enhance the school community through school spirit and branding by installing graphics at core spaces such as cafeterias, multipurpose rooms, gymnasiums and corridors.

Referendum 2026

Bedwell Elementary School

- Renovation of Kindergarten Classrooms including updating for ADA accessible toilets
- Construct an exterior corridor to provide direct access to Kindergarten classrooms.
- Construct new security office to tie into new security vestibule
- Upgrade / Expand existing camera and security Systems
- Installation of ballistic safety film on all lower level windows
- Roofing System Replacement - Various Sections
- Enhance the school community through school spirit and branding by installing graphics at core spaces such as cafeterias, multipurpose rooms, gymnasiums and corridors.

Referendum 2026: Common Questions

Will my children be impacted by construction?

Safety, security and superior education are just three of the variables we take into consideration when planning District operations.

In most cases, construction and renovations will be scheduled to be completed during the summer months or at other times when students are not in the schools.

When school is in session, students will be separated from work at all times; this way, students can attend classes with minimal disruption.

Referendum 2026: Common Questions

Can more money be spent than the amount approved in the question?

No. The cost of the referendum projects cannot exceed the amount approved by the voters. The amount approved by the voters includes a reasonable budget under which to complete the work, as well as required contingencies to address unforeseen conditions and construction issues.

Referendum 2026: Common Questions

Why hasn't the Board of Education done any of this work over the past 20 years?

Capital & Maintenance Reserve funds have been used for repairs and upgrades on an annual basis and have done so since the last Referendum.

Due to the District's 2% cap, it is impossible to complete the amount of work necessary out of the capital account. While some work has been completed, other work has been deferred.

Referendum 2026: Common Questions

How will my taxes be impacted if I'm part of the NJ Senior Tax Freeze Program?

If you are currently participating in the NJ Senior Tax Freeze Program, your taxes will remain unaffected by this Bond Referendum.

If the Bond Referendum Passes - your taxes remain the same.

If the Bond Referendum Fails - your taxes remain the same.

Referendum 2026: Common Questions

When would work begin?

The schedule for implementation of the projects will be carefully reviewed & crafted into a detailed timeline that works best.

Some projects could begin as early as summer of 2026; however, we would determine our ability to strategically bid projects at appropriate times to maximize funding.

This means that some projects could commence in 2026, or the summers of 2027 and 2028.

Referendum 2026: Tax Impact

» TAX IMPACT SHOULD REFERENDUM PASS...



**CURRENT
DEBT SERVICE
PAYMENTS
DECLINE AFTER
MARCH OF 2026**

**THESE PROJECT
COSTS REPLACE
THOSE DEBT
SERVICE PAYMENT
REDUCTIONS**

CAPITAL & EDUCATIONAL RENOVATIONS

Including classroom renovations and alterations as well as facilities Infrastructure projects like roofing and security enhancements.

AVG.
ASSESSED
HOME
(\$975,586)

AVG.
ASSESSED
HOME
(\$1,293,740)

AVG.
ASSESSED
HOME
(\$956,693)

**TOTAL
PROJECT COST:
\$ 38,024,257
STATE AID:
\$ 12,578,787
=
\$25,445,470**

**BERNARDSVILLE
BOROUGH**

**CURRENT TAX
IMPACT WILL
NOT INCREASE**

**FAR HILLS
BOROUGH**

**CURRENT TAX
IMPACT WILL
NOT INCREASE**

**PEAPACK-
GLADSTONE
BOROUGH**

**CURRENT TAX
IMPACT WILL
NOT INCREASE**

- » The tax impacts have been calculated to assume a net neutral / zero increase scenario
- » *Current Debt Service Aid Calculations are estimated and subject to change during the DOE review process.*
- » Costs projections based upon a 4.00% interest rate over 20 years; costs may fluctuate slightly prior to vote.

Referendum 2026: Tax Overall Project Cost

» PROJECTED COSTS: RENOVATIONS / UPGRADES

SOLUTIONS
ARCHITECTURE +



REFERENDUM BUDGET BREAKDOWN

PROJECT	TOTAL PROJECT COST	DEBT SERVICE AID	FINAL COST AFTER DEBT SERVICE AID
BERNARDS HS RENOVATIONS	\$ 21,962,755	\$ 7,467,337	\$ 14,495,418
BERNARDSVILLE MS RENOVATIONS	\$ 6,834,941	\$ 2,318,780	\$ 4,516,161
BEDWELL ES - RENOV / ADDITIONS	\$ 9,226,561	\$ 2,792,670	\$ 6,433,891
TOTAL - REFERENDUM	\$ 38,024,257	\$ 12,578,787	\$25,445,470

33.08% DEBT SERVICE AID PENDING

Referendum 2026: Community Engagement

Date	Event
August 28 and afterwards	Somerset Hills Region Mayors
August 29	BHS v Cranford (Football)
September 6	Hispanic Family Welcome Back
September 10	BMS Back-to-School Night
September 18	BES Back-to-School Night (Hispanic Families)
September 18	Bedwell Back-to-School Night
September 25	BHS Back-to-School Night
October 11	Bedminster Fall Festival

*Referendum 2026: Schedule a Meeting
with your Community Group*



Atlas Curriculum Resource for Staff and Parents

Curriculum management with Atlas

Empowers alignment

Enables staff articulation

Facilitates meaningful collaboration

Safe, consistent repository for our curriculum



Achievement

Academics: Dual Enrollment

Raritan Valley Community College
Multivariable Calculus (H)

Kean University
Tomorrow's Teachers (H)

University of Delaware
Entrepreneurship (H)

Seton Hall University
French IV (H)
Latin IV (H)
Spanish V (H)
Journalism 2



Academics: 2025 Advanced Placement Testing Results

Examining BHS, NJ and Global Results

Number of Tests taken by BHS Students	Mean Score on 778 AP Tests Taken by BHS Students	Average Mean Score-NJ on Subject Tests taken by BHS Students	Average Mean Score-Global on Subject Tests taken by BHS Students
778	3.77	3.41	3.24

Summary of AP Results

Tests taken in 26 subjects by BHS students

21 subjects had an average score above the NJ average

22 subjects had an average score above the Global average

BHS students generally outperformed their NJ and Global peers.

All Means All: Supporting Multilingual Learners

Access 2.0 Results

- Students score 1-6.
- Information is used for goal setting.
- Students can exit the program at 4.5 overall.
- Each student has an individual growth goal set by the state.

Access 2.0: Bedwell Elementary School

Growth Goal

- 44% expected to meet the state goal; 56% likely did.
- Our Exploremos students met their proficiency goals, with strong reading growth.
- Students who were serviced by our Title 1 teachers had 88% met growth and 52% had double growth.

Instructional Targets

- We targeted speaking this year and saw progress.
- Developed strategies to make sure all MLs are included in class activities.

Access 2.0: Bernardsville Middle School

Growth Goal

- 22% expected to meet state goal; 21% likely did.
- Students showed strong growth in speaking after encouraging classroom strategies.

Instructional Targets

- Reading was slower than expected though additional strategies were used.
- Developed “ML Goals” using Ellevation to ensure all staff are supporting students in the same way.

Access 2.0: Bernards High School

Growth Goal

- 22% expected to meet state goal; 25% likely did.
- SIFEs need 8-10 years for proficiency; 47% of them met that goal.
- Newcomer students showed strong growth in all domains.

Instructional Targets

- Upperclassmen and long-term MLs showed slower or stagnant growth.
- We are re-evaluating our supports and curriculum for these students.

Student Safety Data System Submission

Any incident that meets Incident Type Definitions for one of the SSDS incident types must be reported through the SSDS system, regardless of whether any disciplinary action was taken.

The incident types are as follows:

Arson • Assault • Computer Trespass • Damage to Property • False Public Alarm • Fight • HIB Alleged • HIB Confirmed • Kidnapping • Restraint • Robbery/Extortion • Seclusion • Sexual Assault • Sexual Contact • Substance Offense • Theft • Threat – Criminal • Threat – Simple • Trespass • Weapon Offense • Other Incident Leading to Removal

Student Safety Data System Submission

School Name	Incidents**	Other Incidents Leading to Removal	Restraint/ Seclusion	HIB Alleged	HIB Trainings	HIB Programs
030-BES	4	1	1	20	0	0
040-BMS	11	30	0	14	4	0
020-BHS	18	35	0	10	2	0
District	**	**	**	**	3	1

Cell Phone Usage

Task Force Composition, Summer 2025

Board Representative: Nicole Cooper

Pediatric Physicians

District Physicians

District Mental Health Professional Service Providers

Administrative Chair: Dr. Coleen Butler

Cell Phone Usage

Bedwell

No Changes

Bernardsville Middle School

No Changes

Bernards High School

No phones in classes - placement in *photels*

Permitted during passing time

Permitted during lunch

District

Gradebook tab in Genesis opens at 2:30 pm daily

Winter 2026 evaluation

School Regionalization Study

The New Jersey Department of Community Affairs awarded the Somerset Hills School District \$130,000 to conduct a *regionalization study* to assess the feasibility of merging Somerset Hills and Bedminster Township (Pre K-8) into one Pre-K through Grade 12 District.

A joint meeting between the Somerset Hills Board of Education and Bedminster Township Board of Education is in the process of being scheduled (Fall).

The Sweeney Center for Public Policy led by the *Rowan University School Regionalization Institute* will present to both Boards in a public meeting.

The study will determine whether or not regionalization is feasible and if variables have changed since the last study was conducted in 2003. The outcome of the study does not determine or guarantee future actions considered by both Boards; they only inform the Boards.

Looking Ahead

Debut of Field Lighting

Return of SHSD Staff

First Day of School

Back-to-School Nights

Community Engagement: Referendum 2026

Grand Reopening & 25th Anniversary Celebration of Bernardsville Library

Committee Meetings: September 2, 3, and 4

FY27 Budget Development begins in October

Joint Meeting with Bedminster (K-8) Board of Education

Regionalization Study