
SOMERSET HILLS SCHOOL DISTRICT

Pathways to Success



Sept/Oct 2025

Superintendent's Corner by Dr. Brian Brotschul

This fall, the Somerset Hills School District authorized two significant initiatives. The first initiative is commissioning a regionalization and shared services study for the school district.

The District received grant funding to conduct a regionalization study. This study will examine all components that impact efficiency between the Somerset Hills School District and the Bedminster Township School, which sends its students to Bernards High School.



A regionalization study will take approximately one calendar year. It will provide impact statements, analyses, and recommendations in the areas of governance/law, education/programs, demography/facilities, and finance/operations. This study focuses on both districts and their ability to refine efficiency across all areas of operation; despite the title, the study is not designed solely to consolidate districts. The study intends to provide unbiased information to both Boards in the areas noted above as a mechanism to implement possible enhancements to our operations (e.g., transportation), programs (e.g., curricular articulation and transitioning to 9th grade), and student services (e.g., tuition; in-district programming for at-risk learners), among others.

I expect the Boards in Somerset Hills and Bedminster to approve a resolution to appoint the *School Regionalization Study Institute*, which is affiliated with Rowan University, at their respective November Regular Public Meetings. [HERE](#) is what was presented to the Boards in public, and [HERE](#) is a video broadcast of that meeting.

The second initiative is the submission of a long-range facility plan for all three schools and the approval of a [capital project referendum](#) to raise \$38,024,257, to be repaid over 20 years. The referendum election to take place on March 10, 2026, [includes](#) safety and security initiatives (notification systems, security vestibule, new corridor construction), operational initiatives (roofing), and renovations to academic programs in the fields of science (lab renovations), career/technical education (culinary arts, television/podcasting), and Kindergarten (room and restroom renovations).

Whether you are from Far Hills, Bernardville, or Peapack-Gladstone, your [debt service](#) obligation in the District's annual budget will not increase. We have expiring debt and are replacing it with an equal amount of debt to maintain our facilities while ensuring that students are placed in positions to learn in upgraded facilities that prepare them for the college and career of their choosing.

Please join me, the Board, and the District's architects on any of the following dates: November 25, December 18, and/or January 27 in the Bernards High School Media Center at 7 pm to learn more about the [referendum](#).

Scholars' Awards

by Dr. Scott Neigel

Each year, juniors at Bernards High School sit for the PSAT/NMSQT exam during the month of October. This year's juniors will take the exam on October 30th, which may lead toward student recognition from the College Board as a National Merit Scholar. Bernards High School was recently notified that ten senior students have been recognized by the 2025 National Merit Scholarship Program. The following students were recognized as National Merit Scholarship Competition Commended Students: Sixten Alstrom, Julian Bonk, Elizabeth Chen, Rowan Eckel, Jack Ecklund, Joseph Kalinowski, Robert Lopez, Lucian Spiteri, and Hannah Vinegra. Dheirya Tyagi was recognized as a National Merit Scholarship Competition Semifinalist, and will have an opportunity to advance in the competition for over 7,000 Merit Scholarship awards.

Our ten recognized BHS students will be honored by the Superintendent, Dr. Brian Brotschul, and the Board of Education members at the upcoming November 19th Board of Education Meeting.



Sorting Day

by Lisa Garofalo

Bernardsville Middle School held their annual 5th grade Sorting Day event. Every year, during 5th grade lunch, 5th graders find out what house they are in and are welcomed by the 8th grade members of the Culture and Climate Team. Houses are a big deal at Bernards Middle School! Fifth graders all received an email with a letter (an H, O, M, or E). Each letter corresponds to one of the following houses: Rutgers, Princeton, Penn State, or Duke. Students go wild with anticipation as each house is revealed per letter. The 8th grade Culture and Climate students help facilitate this event, which makes it even more special. Every month BMS has competitions, and the winning house for each gets to see their flag flying high in front of the school. We may have four houses at BMS, but we have... *one home!*

Creative Collaboration in Kindergarten
by Jasmine Akauola

Kindergarten students in Ms. Jastrabek’s class recently created their very own nail salon. At first, Ms. Jas was unsure of what she was hearing as a group of students working together was all abuzz. After listening in, Ms. Jas approached the group to learn more about the work they were doing during their play time. Students eagerly shared that they had created a nail salon and then took Ms. Jas step by step through the process. Students explained the job of each child, and demonstrated how they collaborated with each other to create their final product. Ms. Jas was impressed by the well-organized and creative system developed by her students. She plans to encourage them to continue building their “company” by creating signs, advertisements, and a price menu for their clients.



DID YOU GET YOUR TICKETS YET?

**Bernards High School Students
Present ‘Arsenic and Old Lace’**

Remember the 1944 film starring Cary Grant? The BHS Performing Arts students are bringing the beloved classic Arsenic and Old Lace to the stage, promising audiences a madcap comedy that will keep them laughing and on the edge of their seats! It is a play full of witty dialogue and an outrageous plot! Every family has secrets, and the eccentric Brewster family is no exception.



When Mortimer comes home to announce his engagement, he discovers his two spinster aunts' secret: their penchant for poisoning lonely old men as an "act of mercy." Chaos ensues with an eccentric brother who thinks he's Teddy Roosevelt and another brother trying to evade the police!

Performances will take place *October 31st - November 2nd* at the BHS Performing Arts Center. Two special performances include: An evening of Arts & Athletics (10/31 at 5 PM). Enjoy the opening performance of Arsenic and Old Lace then head over to the BHS Athletic Field to watch the Bernards Mountaineer football team play the first playoff game of the season. (Show tickets will also gain free entrance to the football game.) The Golden Matinee will be held on 11/1 at 2 PM. Audience members 65 and older attending the Saturday matinee will enjoy priority orchestra seating, a private intermission reception with light refreshments, and a photo opportunity with members of the cast! For further details on *all performances* and online ticket purchases, please [click here](#). Tickets will also be sold at the box office before each show (cash only).

Hispanic Heritage Month
by Dr. Coleen Butler

Hispanic Heritage Month is observed in the United States from September 15th through October 15th. The Somerset Hills School District celebrated in many ways. It is timely that while observing Hispanic Heritage Month, Governor Phil Murphy signed legislation requiring the State Board of Education to adopt New Jersey Student Learning Standards (NJSLS) in Social Studies that will ensure that the contributions, history, and heritage of Latino and Hispanic people are taught in K-12 schools.

Instruction on the history and contributions of Latino and Hispanic people will be included in the curriculum for students in grades Kindergarten through 12 as part of the school district's implementation of the NJSLS in Social Studies.

Staff from the Somerset Hills School District will write this important curriculum during the summer of 2026 in order to be ready for students in September.

Bedwell Celebrates Hispanic Heritage

BES hosted its first Hispanic Heritage Celebration on October 9th. The night was filled with crafts, music, dancing, soccer, artifacts, a traditional board game - Lotería (similar to Bingo), face painting, and more! The night was organized by Bedwell staff and sponsored by the BES HSA. Special thanks to the SHSD middle and high school student volunteers for overseeing the night's activities. It was a beautiful night filled with community and celebration!



Flu Clinic by Jamie Koransky

Once again our dedicated school physician held a Flu Clinic for staff members during the month of October. Flu season presents challenges that impact not only student learning but also staff attendance and overall school operations. By offering a convenient, on-site flu clinic, we aimed to eliminate barriers and encourage staff participation in this important preventive measure. The flu vaccine remains one of the most effective tools in reducing the spread of influenza. It not only helps protect the individual who receives it, but it also contributes to the overall health of our school community by reducing transmission. When more of us are protected, especially those in frequent close contact with children, we help safeguard vulnerable populations. Health and safety are cornerstones of educational success. When staff stay healthy, they are better able to support students...academically, emotionally, and physically. Thank you to our school nurses who helped organize this event.



Transportation by Frank Riccio



Bus Rules

- Stay seated and facing forward for the entire trip.
- Use quiet voices and avoid loud or distracting behaviors.
- Keep body parts inside the bus and avoid throwing anything out of the window.
- Keep aisles and exits clear of bags, books, and other items.
- Do not eat or drink on the bus.
- Respect others' personal space and do not engage in bullying or fighting.
- Follow all instructions from the bus driver and do not tamper with bus equipment.

Bus Evacuation Drills

BHS

September 12, 2025

BMS

October 10, 2025

BES

September 26, 2025

October 3, 2025

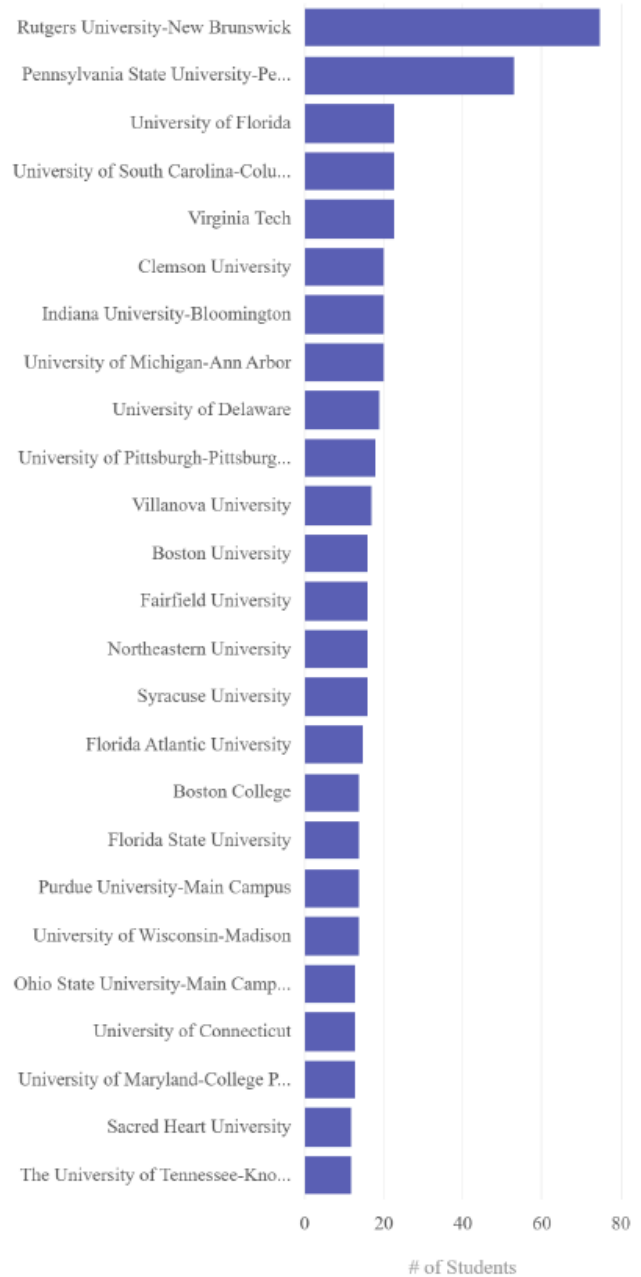
SHSD Counseling Corner: BHS Trends in College Applications Class of 2025
by Dr. Jaime Walker

Fall is a busy season for high school counselors, and seniors, as the college application season gets underway. As many seniors prefer to apply early to benefit from an early response from the college or university, the Counseling Office processes a high volume of applications in the first two months of the school year. Last year with the class of 2025, approximately 78% of the class applied to at least one college prior to November 15th. In total, 200 members of the class of 2025 submitted 2,813 college applications electronically via the Common Application and 108 through institutional applications. Furthermore, 47% of applications were Early Action, 36% were Regular Decision, 12% were Rolling Admissions, 2% were Early Decision, and 5% were either Early Decision II, Early Action II or Restrictive Early Action. In case any current seniors are still finalizing their list of prospective colleges, here are the top 10 most commonly applied to schools from the class of 2025 for consideration:

- (1) Rutgers - New Brunswick;
- (2) Penn State;
- (3) University of Delaware;
- (4) Clemson University;
- (5) University of Pittsburgh;
- (6) University of South Carolina;
- (7) Syracuse University;
- (8) Villanova University;
- (9) Virginia Tech;
- (10) James Madison University.

To view additional data about the class of 2025, please take a look at our current [school profile](#). Best of luck to the seniors as they explore their post-secondary options!

Applications by College (Top 25)



New State-Mandated Tests in Math and ELA
by Dr. Olga Edgerton & Lindsay Barna

After many years administering the New Jersey Graduation Proficiency Assessment and the New Jersey Student Learning Assessments utilizing the Pearson Access Next testing platform, change has come to New Jersey! This year, the New Jersey Department of Education is transitioning to new, adaptive tests in English Language Arts (ELA) and Mathematics, developed in partnership with a new vendor, Cambium Assessment.

The new assessments, called the New Jersey Student Learning Assessments - Adaptive (NJSLA-A) and the New Jersey Graduation Proficiency Assessment - Adaptive (NJGPA-A), will be aligned with the New Jersey Student Learning Standards for ELA and Mathematics, and are designed to continue to give students the opportunity to demonstrate their knowledge and skills in a meaningful way.

In this computer-adaptive format, as students progress through the test, future questions are determined based on student responses, creating a more personalized and appropriate experience for each learner. This approach can help reduce testing anxiety by presenting students with questions closer to their current level, encouraging confidence and focus.

District schools have prepared and practiced for this change with a Field Test in the fall. The official assessment windows will be as they have been in the past, with NJGPA-A in March and NJSLA-A in May.

Testing....Testing!
by Jeremy Schwarz

A shout-out goes to the SHSD Technology Department. In addition to workstation and laptop upgrades, and troubleshooting a variety of tech issues for staff and students during the first months of school, the Tech Team has been active in procuring additional chromebooks and iPads, and setting them up to meet the needs of increased testing within the district.



History Happened Here by Michael Catelli



In honor of the 250th anniversary of the founding of our nation, SHSD is excited to be participating in the New Jersey Department of Education “History Happened Here” program. This program highlights local history and calls on getting students involved in learning about local history in their own community. We feel this is a fantastic opportunity to highlight the unique and storied history of our local communities including: Bernardsville, Far Hills, Peapack & Gladstone, Bedminster, and Bernards Township.

To connect students with local history, the Bernards High School Social Studies Department is collaborating with a variety of local history organizations that include the following: The Historical Society of the Somerset Hills, Peapack & Gladstone Historical Preservation Society, Bedminster Historic Preservation Committee, and The Farmstead Arts Center. The organizations are looking for volunteers to help with upcoming historical events, to digitize materials, and to transcribe audio records. Sophomores are encouraged to connect with these organizations for their community service requirement, though all students are welcome to join as volunteers. At the end of the year, sophomores will present in their US History classes about their work, what they learned from volunteering, and how they impacted their community.

To participate as a volunteer, students should complete this [Local History Google Form](#) or use the QR code above. After completing the form, students will be connected with a local history organization to coordinate their participation.



District Openings for the 2025-2026 SY



<p><u>BERNARDS HIGH SCHOOL:</u> ESL Long Term Substitute #746 Lacrosse: Men’s Head Coach #732</p> <p><u>BERNARDSVILLE MIDDLE SCHOOL:</u> Special Education Leave Replacement #726 Baseball: Boy’s Assistant Coach #747</p> <p><u>BEDWELL ELEMENTARY SCHOOL:</u> ML/ESL Teacher Leave Replacement #697</p>	<p><u>SUBSTITUTES:</u> Teachers #426 Paraprofessionals #705 Nurses #293 Custodians #492 Maintenance #656 Bus Drivers #491</p> <p>Apply under the Employment Tab. Contact: Kathy Mehan, HR Specialist kmehan@shsd.org or 908-636-2939</p>
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Sports Spotlight: Coach Boudreau
by Michael Hoppe



The spotlight is shining on our Bernards High's Girls Soccer Coach, Derek Boudreau! Coach Boudreau and his Girls Soccer teams have captured four straight division titles and are on course to capture a fifth title this season. His record over the last four years was 54-22. We lost the sectional title last year in OT. This is new territory when you look at the history of the Girls Soccer program.

Coach Boudreau played high school soccer at Mendham and club soccer at Bloomsburg University. He received his first master's in Literacy Instruction from Caldwell University, and also went to the University of Scranton for Educational Administration. He began coaching high school soccer at age 22, just 2 months after graduating college, so this is his 18th year. He started as an assistant for the Ridge boys soccer team for a number of years, and eventually ended up splitting time as a goalkeeper coach for Ridge and Bernards boys' and girls' soccer teams. In between this, he spent time coaching high school basketball at Ridge, Pope John, and Bernards, and won a TOC title as an assistant lacrosse coach for Ridge.



This is also his 18th year in teaching. His first nine years were spent between Ridge High School and Cedar Hill Elementary in Basking Ridge, and now this is his 9th year as the BMS Reading Specialist. Coach Boudreau said, "I am as happy as ever teaching and coaching at Somerset Hills; it is absolutely the best place to be!"

His coaching philosophy is that "the best programs are player-run, and that culture trumps everything. A day of team-building is often more vital than a rigorous practice. Bernards Girls Soccer has a home for every type of player. If you want to be a player that helps plan practice, breaks down film, and works towards a Division 1 scholarship, we have a home for you here. If you want to just be a part of a team, make new friends, and get some competitive fresh air, we also have a home for you here. While we compete every day and season for a divisional and sectional title, we also appreciate and treat all players equally. While everyone has a different role in the program, each player's status is the same. I also truly love the lifelong connections that evolve from these soccer fields!"

In conclusion, his overall "current" record (as of this newsletter publication) is 62-25-4. The "current" divisional record is 41-8-1, which over his five years is the best mark amongst all 20 public schools in the Skyland Conference.

Read all about it!

In our newly developed website there is a hot spot for district news spanning all three campuses. You can access the District News section from the main page, from any school tab, or simply [click here](#) to catch up on the greatness of our students, staff, events, and more!








Innovation in the Classroom: Growing the Future Together

by Olga Christie, SHEF Chair

This school year, innovation is taking root across the Somerset Hills School District and it all starts with our teachers. Through the SHEF Classroom Mini-Grants, educators are transforming fresh ideas into hands-on, inspiring learning experiences that spark curiosity, creativity, and connection.

These grants are fueling growth in:

-  The Arts – expanding creative expression through visual art, music, and performance
-  STEAM & Literacy – fostering critical thinking through hands-on, experiential learning
-  Character Development & Leadership – equipping students with the social and emotional skills to thrive
-  Vocational & Cross-Curricular Learning – connecting the classroom to the wider world
-  Wellness Initiatives – building healthier, more resilient school communities

SHEF’s story in 2025 is one of growth, transparency, and impact. Recognized with the Silver Candid Seal of Transparency, our Board of Trustees continues to ensure that every dollar directly supports students and strengthens our schools.

We’re also proud to welcome new community partners whose generosity — \$20,000 in commitments so far this year — is helping seed innovative educational programs and empower both teachers and students districtwide.

♥ Join the effort! [DONATE TODAY](#) ➔



***A Note from
Sam Frenda,
SHSD Board
President***

On a monthly basis the Superintendent makes recommendations to the Board for district improvements and/or actions that will positively impact our students and continue to drive their growth, achievement and enhance their educational experience. At the end of last year one such recommendation was to approve a change to an unused office space at the high school to create a dedicated podcasting studio. The growth in popularity of podcasting and our students' interest and dedication to creating quality content, which is of interest not only to the student body but the larger community, made this an easy and exciting decision for the Board.

I was invited by members of the Crimson Podcasting team to participate in an interview regarding the March 10th Referendum vote and I was able to do so on September 24th. It was my first podcasting experience and I was so excited to be able to see the new space and how the students used it firsthand. I cannot overstate how impressed I was with this entirely student-led and produced process. I was able to witness their setup and testing of all required equipment and how they modified and refined different elements until they had things set up to ensure the highest quality production. The way the students interacted and worked collaboratively in their different roles was a model for how to achieve successful outcomes. Their preparation, research and knowledge on the referendum was extraordinarily evident in the questions they asked and the way they engaged on specific

matters, such as tax implications, throughout the interview. The level of professionalism they exhibited and their ease and comfort with the entire process was absolutely remarkable. They made me feel so comfortable that I forgot I had never done this before... and I had an absolute blast from beginning to end!

I would like to commend Jack Martin, Charlie Quinn, Ben Balian and their advisor Ms. Hunkele, for their incredible work and what they have built with their peers to develop such a successful podcasting program, as well as all of the work done by our Crimson staff to inform and engage our school community. It speaks to the wider passion of our student population to explore their interests, have a positive impact on others and to practically apply the skills and content they are learning in their classrooms. It also illustrates the tremendously positive impact and dedication of our district staff not only in the classrooms but in their role as advisors, to ensure that our students have a truly complete and meaningful educational experience. I am so proud to be able to support the work of our students and staff that takes place every day in the Somerset Hills!

**Somerset Hills School District
Board of Education**



Check out the [Board of Education Bios](#) on our new SHSD website!