



Report of the Superintendent

November 19, 2025



In The News...

Dr. Scott Neigel, principal of Bernards High School, announced that ten students have been recognized by the 2026 National Merit Scholarship Program. The following nine students were recognized as National Merit Scholarship Competition Commended Students:

Hannah Vinegra
Lucian Spiteri
Robert Lopez
Joseph Kalinowski
Jack Ecklund
Rowan Eckel
Elizabeth Chen
Julian Bonk
Sixten Alstrom

Recognized as a National Merit Scholarship Competition Semifinalist,
Dheirya Tyagi
will have an opportunity to continue in the competition for 6,900+ National Merit Scholarships.

Congratulations to our BHS National Merit Scholars



“Bernards High School takes great pride in these seniors who have earned distinction through the National Merit Program,” said Dr. Neigel. “Their achievements reflect not only exceptional scholarship, but also a deep commitment to our school community. They lead by example - balancing academic rigor with integrity, service, and character.”

Our Student Representatives

Bernardsville Middle School

Callie McCormick

representing Girls Soccer/Girls Basketball

Jillian Pooler

representing BMS School Play/Culture and Climate

Bernards High School

Nolan Baker & Sophia Fazel-Sarjui



On October 21st, it was a louder, and much more colorful evening on Seney Drive! As a way to bring families together, Bernardsville Middle School hosted a Color Run that had parents, guardians, students, and siblings running for their health... and a great cause!

In The News...

Somerset Hills School District PE Teachers, Ashley Oliveira and Elizabeth St. Ours, continuously look for ways to extend fitness and heart health beyond the gymnasium walls. With the goal of bringing family, fun, and fitness together, they collaborated with the American Heart Association and devised a wonderful event.

The BMS Color Run, held at night to allow more parents and guardians to attend, also included an added bonus; parents who joined were able to earn double house points for their students. BMS has a longstanding tradition of students competing throughout the year to earn points for one of their four “houses”: Duke, Penn State, Princeton, and Rutgers. A total of 101 people laced up their sneakers and vied for prizes and coveted house points. The run was a mile long and students from all grade levels took part. With staggered starts, they utilized the new walking path that was installed on the middle school campus last June. “Wear white; leave bright” was the mantra and the BMS Home School Association did not disappoint. They not only supplied the color powders, but also had the pleasure of throwing it on the runners as they completed their first and second laps.

The BMS Color Run raised a total of \$705, all of which was donated to the American Heart Association. Katie Farina, the AHA Development Director for School Engagement, provided prizes such as t-shirts, water bottles and more, for the top three finishers in each grade. Winners also received a gift card from Penguin Ice Cream, a local Bernardsville business. Congratulations to the following students who earned 1st, 2nd, and 3rd place respectively: 8th Grade: Jaison Lopez Marroquin, Grace Healy, and Callie McCormick; 7th Grade: Danny Lopez, Grace Flaherty, and Poppy Pickett; 6th Grade: Daniel Rimassa, Bryce Shaver, and Jacob Pooler; 5th Grade: Nicholas Ferruggia, Fionn Regan, and Aubrey Kane.

While the house that won was Rutgers, the real winners were all of the participants who chose to go outside to breathe in fresh, fall air, and get their hearts pumping and blood flowing, thus reaping the benefits of cardiovascular health! “BMS appreciates the relationship we have with the American Heart Association,” shared BMS Principal Lisa Garofalo. “Ms. Farina, Mrs. St. Ours and Mrs. Oliveira have made an important impact on our school community in fostering heart health awareness.”

On the horizon, the middle school PE Department is planning another family fitness night that will surely be a hit. Stay tuned for information about a Glow Night open to 5th/6th graders and their families. Additionally, Heart Health Week kicks off in February where there will be a ton of daily activities, and where students will learn the critical and life-saving steps of hands-only CPR.

Special thanks to the following SHSD staff who assisted Oliveira and St. Ours with the BMS Color Run: Lisa Garofalo, Keith Koellhoffer, Annie O’Halloran, Jackie Pistilli-Urena, Phil Mahlik and Michael Filieri.



BMS Color Run





Lunch & Learn at BHS

In The News...

Lauren Cava and Abby Alvez are staunch supporters of equipping students with tools to reduce anxiety and stress. They continue to plan monthly “brain breaks” where individuals can learn to let go of stress and acquire new skills, with the goal being to encourage high schoolers to add ten strategies to their repertoire that can be beneficial throughout high school and beyond.

At the end of October, Alvez and Cava orchestrated a collaboration between the Hidden Opponent Club and the Yoga Club. The former is a club focused on raising awareness of mental health for athletes. Student leaders Lucie Robles, Abbie Dooley, and Reagan Panik, with the support of their respective staff advisors Alexa Lavalle and Maria Venezia, spread the word... and the excitement! The event yielded a large turnout, and was a huge success; so many students gathered during lunch in the BHS Media Center to reap the benefits of the yoga session. “We are both so proud of our students who did the planning and marketing for this event,” shared Cava and Alvez. “It is all about students caring for and helping others, as well as themselves. And yoga is a skill they can practice outside of school as well.”

Additionally, with the support of the Counseling Department, Red Ribbon Week celebrations took place the week of October 26th. To reinforce the importance of drug and alcohol prevention, there were many activities for students at lunch including visits from Community in Crisis who set up tables with information and interactive games that are always engaging!





In The News...



Spread
your
wings...



Ms. Terri Johnson has a teaching philosophy that reflects collaboration and community, and the students have been loving it! This fall at Bedwell Elementary School, students were invited to participate in a school-wide project where their individual creation would ultimately come together to form a large piece of artwork! Encouraged to design unique feathers, students explored lines as an element of art, playing with thickness and patterns. Then they used mediums such as watercolor, crayons, and markers based on specific color schemes for their grade level, being warm or cool colors. Putting the hundreds of feathers together created one large set of butterfly wings. The school bonding project resulted in an expansive mural housed across from the Bedwell Library. “I was so proud of the creativity and teamwork,” shared Johnson.



Following that eye-catching art, students worked on fall projects based on grade levels. Kindergarteners created pumpkin collages while first graders made monster prints. Grades 2 and 3 designed Día de los Muertos animals and plaster masks respectively. Fourth graders diligently constructed papier-mache jack o’ lanterns, however their work will be displayed next month instead...with a Nightmare Before Christmas twist! The Somerset Hills School District continues to support the Arts and we cannot wait to see more!



In The News...

BHS
Everyday
Hero

Anakh
Sawhney



Anakh Sawhney, a junior at Bernards High School, was recognized by the school as the “Everyday Hero” for October.

Nominees for the monthly Everyday Hero Program are students who have a positive influence on the student body through exemplary qualities. Selected students inspire others, are responsible and respectable and have a commitment to peers and the school community. Students are nominated by one or more teachers, selected by the Everyday Hero committee, and announced schoolwide by either Principal Scott Neigel or Assistant Principal Mike Corbett.

The October Everyday Hero is an extremely selfless student. Anakh is a leader in the Bernards High School drama program and goes out of her way to mentor younger students, while always bringing a positive energy to every rehearsal and performance! She is the founder of a nonprofit organization, [Rice Kids](#), which has mobilized communities worldwide to address food insecurity through various programs and partnerships. The organization focuses on raising awareness, collecting food donations, and providing resources to those in need. Her leadership has inspired others to join the cause, demonstrating the impact of youth-driven social change. Through her efforts, she has helped over 70,000 individuals dealing with food insecurity. She was recently honored at the [October 15th BOE Meeting](#) by Dr. Brotschul and members of the Board of Education. Congratulations to Anakh Sawhney!

In The News...

BHS Everyday Hero

*Patryk
Grabowy*



Patryk Grabowy, a senior at Bernards High School, was recognized by the school as the “Everyday Hero” for November.

Nominees for the monthly Everyday Hero Program are students who have a positive influence on the student body through exemplary qualities. Selected students inspire others, are responsible and respectable and have a commitment to peers and the school community. Students are nominated by one or more teachers, selected by the Everyday Hero committee, and announced schoolwide by either Principal Scott Neigel or Assistant Principal Mike Corbett.

Our November Everyday Hero exemplifies a heart of gold that bleeds respect.

Though his presence in the classroom and hallways may be understated, his kind and courteous nature speaks volumes. He models what it means to treat others with dignity - not through grand gestures, but in the countless small ways that reveal true character.



This hero’s genuine concern for the well-being of others shows up in his daily interactions. Patryk goes out of his way to greet his teachers - both current and former - when he passes them in the halls, creating a sense of warmth and community that is often overlooked during busy school days. Recently, he was observed helping a teacher whose hands were full with quite a few heavy items. It is these quiet, thoughtful actions that make this hero extraordinary. In a world that often rewards the loudest voices, this young man reminds us that respect, kindness, and integrity can shine just as brightly through humility. Students and people like Patryk, who lead with heart and not spotlight, should be celebrated for the difference they make every day.

Congratulations to November’s Everyday Hero, Patryk Grabowy!

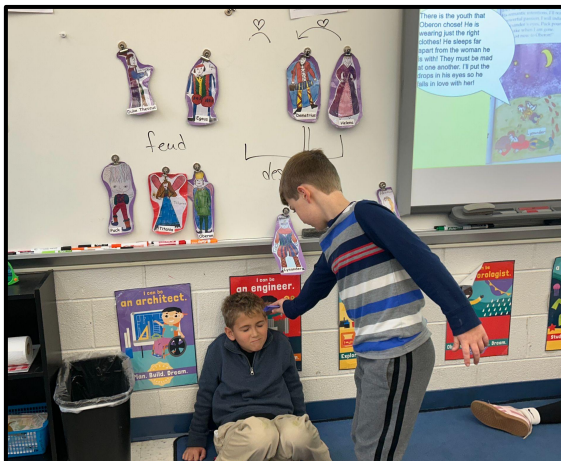


In The News...

Bedwell

Enrichment

During 2nd grade enrichment with Melissa Leonard, students were completely engaged in the study of Shakespeare. Blending history and literature, they acted out scenes from *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and even created their own puppet show!



Fire Prevention Week

During their visit to BES, our Fire Chief and firefighters took the time to review fire safety tips with students. They encouraged students to speak with their families about their family fire safety plan, to use smoke alarms, and to remember to *get out and stay out* during a fire.

Firefighters also dressed up staff and demonstrated what students may see and hear from firefighters' masks and tanks if they ever had to enter their home. Students engaged with firefighters during the visit, answering and asking many questions!

KEY POINT - SAFETY FIRST!

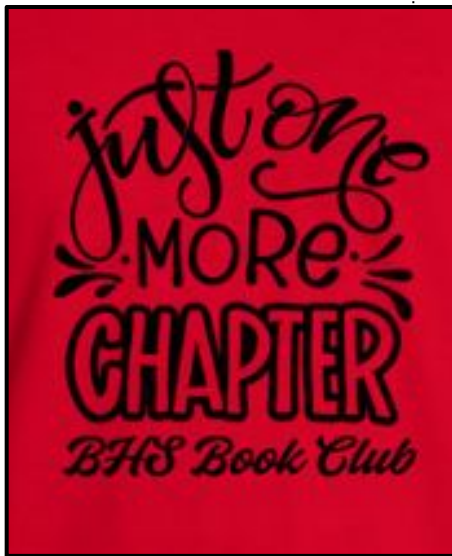


In The News...

Get Lost in a Book

The BHS Book Club, along with their advisor Peg Dolson, is on their second title of the school year. November is Native American Heritage Month, so the club brainstormed a large selection of titles about Native American life. Seeing that the group loves mysteries, *The Bone Thief* by Vanessa Lillie was chosen.

The BHS Book Club currently has 18 members who share a love of reading. They meet once a month in the Community Room, where the quiet atmosphere allows for a great space to engage in a lively book talk. Each month Ms. Dolson presents a slew of questions to spark the discussion, and then it takes on a life of its own! Book Club President Robbie Lopez and his peers analyze and critique each book from a variety of lenses. They often share about additional titles they are reading outside of the school curriculum and the book club selection. At the end of each meeting the group considers what genre they'd like to read next and Ms. Dolson sends a follow-up survey for students to vote. We can't wait to hear of their winter titles!



Fundraiser!

The BHS Book Club is currently hosting a fundraiser to raise money to install a Little Free Library in the community. Shirts with this logo can be purchased [here](#).



In The News...

“Digital Art is in full creative mode! Students in Digital Art 1 have been experimenting with surrealism and advanced Photoshop techniques in their latest photomontage projects, while Digital Art 2 students have been designing rooms that reflect their personalities!”

~Kristina Rovtar, BHS Art Teacher

**DIGITAL
R
T**



Untitled
by Colette Shovlin
Digital Art 1 Surrealism Project

Spider Punk Room
by August Roy
Digital Art 2 Honors



Water
by Robbie Lopez
Digital Photography 1



SHSD SPORTS

“We’re building a program!”
~Coach Gajewski



“The boys developed good team chemistry. I’m proud of them!”
~Coach LaSpada



“The Bernards Girls’ Soccer team fully embraced the role of reloading and not rebuilding this season. After winning 4 divisional titles in a row, making it to a sectional final, and graduating multiple all-state players, this group had a ton of success defeating multiple powerhouse schools including Voorhees, Gil St. Bernards, Watchung Hills, Somerville, Mountain Lakes, North Hunterdon, and many more. These young women delivered a well-balanced approach, with starters at every grade level, 11 different players scoring this year, and fighting defensively each game with numerous shutouts.” ~Coach Boudreau

In The News...

Have you checked out our recent newsletter?

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 field science (lab renovations), career/technical education (culinary arts, television/podcasting), and Kindergarten

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 - Loteria (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!



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 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...



...in teaching. His first nine years were spent between Ridge High School and in Basking Ridge, and now this is his 9th year as the BMS Reading Specialist. I am as happy as ever teaching and coaching at Somerset Hills; it is absolutely

...that "the best programs are player-run, and that culture trumps everything. I want to be a player that helps plan practice, breaks down film, and works with me competitive fresh air, we also have a home for you here. While we have a different role in the program, each player's status is the same. I also truly evolve from these soccer fields!"

...record (as of this newsletter publication) is 62-25-4. The "current" record over his five years is the best mark amongst all 20 public schools in

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 current [school profile](#). Best of luck to the seniors as they explore their post-secondary options!

Applications by College (Top 25)



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.





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)



**Good Luck BMS
Cast & Crew!**



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

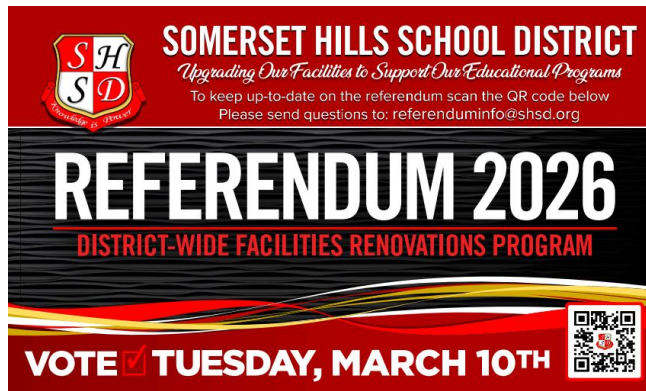
DISTRICT-WIDE FACILITIES RENOVATIONS PROGRAM

VOTE TUESDAY, MARCH 10TH



Referendum 2026: Community Forums

Date	Community Forum
November 25, 2025	BHS Media Center, 7pm
December 18, 2025	BHS Media Center, 7pm
January 27, 2026	BMS Media Center, 7pm



SOMERSET HILLS SCHOOL DISTRICT
Upgrading Our Facilities to Support Our Educational Programs
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REFERENDUM 2026
DISTRICT-WIDE FACILITIES RENOVATIONS PROGRAM

VOTE TUESDAY, MARCH 10TH

The banner features the Somerset Hills School District logo on the left, which includes a shield with 'SH' and 'SD' and the motto 'COURAGE TO LEARN'. The background is dark with a red and yellow wavy border at the bottom. A QR code is located in the bottom right corner.

2026-2027 and 2027-2028 School Calendars

Features for Consideration

Extended School Year Program: Increased from 4 weeks to 5 weeks

New Staff Orientation moved from last week of August to week prior

First day for students prior to Labor Day features advanced instructional time prior to standardized testing to be multiplied over time (NJSLA, K-12 and Advanced Placement)

Back-to-School Nights announced in advance for alignment with sending district

Winter Break around Presidents' Day (Monday/Tuesday) for students

2026-2027 and 2027-2028 School Calendars

2026-2027

June 29 through July 30: Extended School Year (4 Days per Week)

August 10 through August 17: Student Athletes Return (Sport Specific)

August 18 through August 20: New Staff Orientation

August 25 through August 27: Staff Professional Development

August 31: First Day of School

June 11: Graduation

Spring Recess connected to Easter

“Snow Day Givebacks” prior to, and following, Spring Recess

April, May, and June undisturbed in advance of standardized testing

2026-2027 and 2027-2028 School Calendars

2027-2028

June 28 through July 29: Extended School Year (4 Days Per Week)

August 9 through August 16: Student Athletes Return (Sport Specific)

August 17 through August 19: New Staff Orientation

August 24 through August 26: Staff Professional Development

August 30: First Day of School

June 8: Graduation

Spring Recess in March - not connected to Easter

Good Friday - No School

“Snow Day Givebacks” prior to Good Friday and Easter Monday (if applicable)

Reduction of scheduling interruptions in advance of standardized testing

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.

The *Sweeney Center for Public Policy* led by the *Rowan University School Regionalization Institute* presented to both Boards in a [public meeting](#). Tonight there is a motion on the agenda to approve the *Center* to conduct the study.

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.

A Steering Committee and/or Advisory Groups from SHSD and Bedminster are being created.

Upcoming Events

Referendum Presentation: November 25

Committee Meetings: December 2, 3, and 4

Regular Public Meeting: December 17

Referendum Presentation: December 18