



Report of the Superintendent

December 17, 2025

Our Student Representatives

Bernardsville Middle School

Joseph Gomez

representing Wrestling

Titus Knaus

representing Boys Basketball

Bernards High School

Nolan Baker

Sophia Fazel-Sarjui

THE CRIMSON

THE STUDENT-LED NEWS SOURCE FOR BERNARDS HIGH SCHOOL

*The Crimson is the 7th school, out of 452 internationally,
to receive the Distinguished Sites award from SNO.*

Congratulations to...

Heather Hunkele, Advisor

Ella Patel, Editor-In-Chief

Andrew Tropp, Editor-In-Chief

Colin Caggiano, Junior Editor-In-Chief



*Section Editors and
Podcast Crew:*

Jack Martin

Will Simpson

Ben Balian

Charlotte Caggiano

Lyla Carey

Cara Falzarano

Olivia Highland

Ashika Papishetty

Aletha Reynolds

Macklin Dunnder

Charlie Quinn

Julian Bonk

Cameron Bong



Honoring Outgoing Board of Education Members

Ms. Silvia Gils

Community Service to the Board of Education: 2023 - 2025

Three Years of Community Service

*Member of Curriculum Committee, Policy & Personnel Committee, Ad-Hoc
Referendum Communication Committee*

Oversaw budget development, a long-range facility plan, program development to raise funding for capital projects, enhancements to the BMS Media Center, PAC lighting and sound improvements, athletic facility enhancements and the introduction of certain high school and middle school athletic teams and extracurricular opportunities.

Honoring Outgoing Board of Education Members

Mr. Robert Baker

Community Service to the Board of Education: 2007 - 2025

Eighteen and One Half Years of Community Service

Member of Business Operations Committee, Facilities and Operations Committee, Negotiations Committee, Board of Education Delegate to New Jersey School Boards Association, Past President of SHSD Board of Education, 2018 Nominee NJSBA Board Member of the Year

Oversaw balanced budget development, multiple long-range facility plans, developed multiple plans to raise funding for capital projects, enhancements and renovations to Bernards High School Media Center, an energy savings improvement program and assisted the Board in the negotiation of labor contracts.



Mrs. deGrandpré Shares

In The News...

SHEF Mini-Grants

The Somerset Hills Education Foundation (SHEF) is honored to announce the recipients of the 2025 Classroom Mini-Grants, totaling \$15,646 in funding for innovative educational projects across the Somerset Hills School District. This year's awards support five inspiring teacher-led initiatives:

Newstein Chang, BHS, 9th Grade Biology
Biotechnology in Conservation Biology: \$3,337

Holly Jablonski & Debbie Rokosky, BES, 1st Grade
Step Into Learning: An Outdoor Sensory Path for Whole-Child Development: \$5,000

Jade Pietroluongo, BHS, Social Studies/Performing Arts
Performing Arts Workshop: \$2,000

Tyler Nadolny, BHS, Health & PE
Disc Golf Baskets & Equipment: \$1,710

Judge Ellis, BHS, Woodworking (Grades 9–12)
Portable CNC Tool (Shaper Origin) for Advanced Design & Fabrication: \$3,599



“We extend heartfelt congratulations to this year’s awardees. It is our pleasure and privilege to support educators whose creativity and dedication enrich the learning experience for all SHSD students. We look forward to seeing these projects come to life and to hearing about their positive impact across our schools. Our mission is to promote and provide innovative educational opportunities that elevate teaching and learning in the Somerset Hills School District. These five projects embody that commitment, and we are proud to champion them.”

~SHEF

In The News...

Magnificently Macabre *The Addams Family*

Dah-dah-dahdah (snap-snap)



All families are unique to say the least... especially the Addams, with their penchant for the creepy, the kooky, and the altogether spooky! Performing to a packed house on both November 20th and 21st, the Bernardsville Middle School Drama Club impressed audiences with their rendition of *The Addams Family*! Auditions for the musical comedy were held in early fall and practices began on September 13th. The cast and crew worked diligently for 10 weeks on the sets, costumes, script, and music.

Act I began with the full cast performing *When You're an Addams*. It was quick to grab everyone's attention with funny line dancing, the bunny hop, and the twist - Addams family style - and laughter erupted from the audience when the last dance move was rigor mortis! Following that, Uncle Fester played his ukulele with the support of ancestors from the crypt, in *Fester's Manifesto*. Wednesday and Pugsley went on to share a sibling rivalry/bonding moment as Wednesday is being pulled in a different direction. She then explains to her father, who is sworn to secrecy, that she has found love in a boy named Lucas Beineke. Her mother Morticia senses something is awry, wondering what is "wrong" with Wednesday since she is actually smiling! Her husband Gomez's actions are suspect as well, so she seeks to uncover the truth. In an upbeat and ironic performance of *One Normal Night* by the full cast, it is clear that Wednesday and Lucas want just that, one "normal" night, for themselves and their families. When the Addams and Beineke families meet, greeted first by a grunting Lurch, the actors continue to deliver line after line with humor and wit. In the final scenes before intermission, the group plays a "game" called *Full Disclosure*. In a hilarious plot twist, Pugsley has stolen 102-year-old Grandma's potion which gets into the hands of Lucas' mother and a whole new level of chaos ensues. After a brief intermission, the cast has to make sense of the secrets confessed, as they sing numerous catchy tunes including *Crazier Than You*. The audience was mesmerized by the characters' development as they learned if Wednesday and Lucas were meant to be.

The choreography was on point with all actors hitting their marks, and the delivery of lines, both in dialogue and lyrics, turned young love drama into family comedy. From the opening of Act I with its serious, morose facial expressions and dark, gothic costumes...to the rousing finale of Act II with bursts of color and energy...the BMS Drama Club production of *The Addams Family* was able to deliver a magnificent macabre musical that did not disappoint.





In The News...

PLAYBILL
A TRUSTED THEATRE RESOURCE SINCE 1884

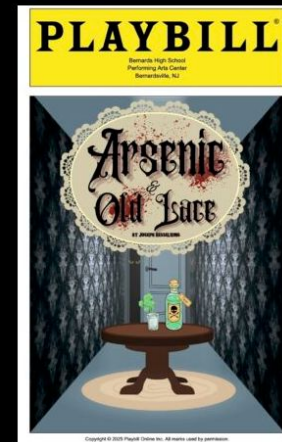


BRAVO!



Once again, BRAVO to the participants in this year's BHS fall play, *Arsenic and Old Lace*! The play had four successful performances and was recognized twice in Playbill.com for the Playbill cover design AND for the creative ways Bernards High School is engaging the full student body and the community. Check out the two highlights on Playbill.com and get ready for the spring musical, *The Wizard of Oz*, with performances running March 6th-8th, 2026.

13 HAUNTING HALLOWEEN PLAYBILLDER COVERS



Bernards High School's *Arsenic and Old Lace*

Nate DeNicola

In The News...

Bedwell Backpacks... Where Function Meets Fantastic

A back-to-school tradition or rite of passage for many, is selecting a new backpack at the start of the year...or dusting off an old faithful, excited for the prospect of what lies ahead. For almost a decade, 3rd graders at Bedwell Elementary School have been taking it a step further when it comes to their backpack quest. Beginning mid-fall, Tech & Design teacher Allen Thurlow kicked off a design unit with a discussion that garnered *a lot* of feedback, as students were asked what they like, dislike and would want to improve on their own backpacks. Answers ranged from basic elements such as color schemes and patterns, to the more critical concepts of function and special features.

The students watched a video from well-known backpack brand, Columbia. In the video, backpack designer Chris Araujo explained the entire process of backpack development from start to finish, and then Bedwell students teamed up to get to work. In addition to collaboration, cooperation, and problem-solving, their major goals were functionality and, as one can imagine, to have a cool design. After sketching a variety of proposals, students used items such as cardboard, bubble wrap, old fabric, duct tape and more to create their backpacks. Then they tested their prototypes, continuing to alter and adjust in order to see their vision through to completion. Each backpack had to hold books and a full water bottle, as well as have extra space for folders.

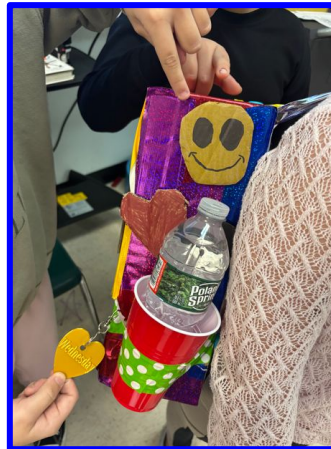


While their final backpacks were the highlight for many, some children were most excited about creating a logo for their backpack business; in some cases students even used 3D printing to elevate and bring their ideas to life!

While clearly fun and engaging, the unit had important lesson objectives each week that included utilizing the design process, applying math skills, working as a team, compromising and sharing ideas, using recyclable materials, creating something functional, and honing their speaking and presentation skills.

At the end of the unit, the teams were allotted two minutes to pitch their ideas in a commercial-like format which allowed all students the opportunity to organize their thoughts and make it exciting, while focusing on why their backpack was unique.

Thurlow commented that year after year he sees growth in his students through this experience, and always shares a quote from Araujo that resonates, “If you have a pen and a napkin and a good idea, you can design anything!” Very true.





Congratulations to our Stellar Spellers!

In The News...

A shout-out to several students from Bernardsville Middle School who participated in the Bernardsville Public Library's third annual spelling bee this school year. Three BMS students placed in the top three, with Krish Ram as runner-up, and Noah Flinn and Emme Wasserman sharing third place.

And it was a "family affair" as this year's second-place finisher knew the winner of the prior two spelling bees quite well!

Ameya Ram, attending in support of her brother Krish, was asked by the Friends of the Bernardsville Library to award the top prize.

Congratulations to all of our SHSD spectacular spellers!



In The News...

Through the eyes of a Preschooler... Morning Routines at Bedwell!

“When I walk into my classroom in the morning, the room is lit by the sunshine peeking through the window, soft music is playing, and the room is warm and waiting for us.

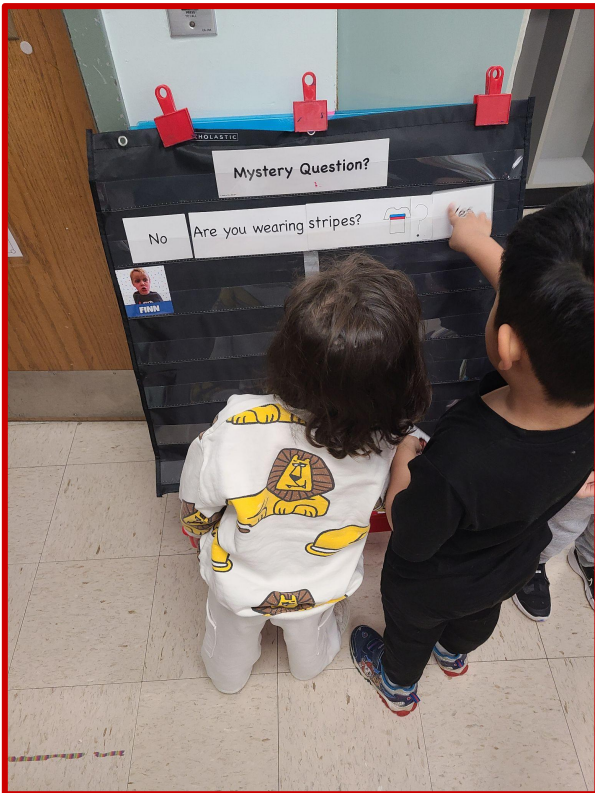
I feel so big as I unpack my lunchbox and water all by myself and carefully place my folder in its special spot.

Then it’s time for my favorite part of the morning...the mystery question of the day! Today, it asks, “Am I wearing stripes?” I think carefully and look down at my shirt. I grin and happily tell my teacher “I’m wearing stripes today!” before moving my picture over to yes.

Next, I look up at the bulletin board to find the letters of my name and see which color table I’ll be working at today. At one table, I’ll be painting with cookie cutters to make some rainbow cookies, at another I would be cutting out sprinkles with my scissors, and at another I’ll practice writing letters in real sugar!

I settle in and my friends join me one by one. Our classroom fills with quiet, happy hands... *and another exciting day at preschool has begun!*”

Special thanks to Preschool teacher Mechu Lippert for creating so many multisensory routines!





El Desfile de Moda de 2025

In The News...

Following fall lessons at Bernardsville Middle School, differentiating between Dia de los Muertos and Halloween, students were involved in a variety of fun and engaging projects. Seventh grade students worked to create a celebrity Spanish family tree, focusing on how families and traditions in the United States are similar to, and different from, families in Mexico. Eighth graders learned about clothes and accessories, describing products with adjectives agreeing in gender and number, and displayed their description skills by pointing out items in a store, classroom, and the fashion world. As a culminating activity, they held the annual 8th grade BMS fashion show which was a lot of fun and laughs... and learning, of course! Special thanks to Señor Zoltan Gilly!





In The News...

BHS CARES... Blood Drive 2025

Another successful Blood Drive was held at Bernards High School thanks to the National Honor Society who hosted it. Students organized appointments and spread the word to their peers. There was so much interest that there was a wait list! Vitalant collected the blood and distributed the units to hospitals throughout New Jersey. Fun fact: Fourteen of the students donating were first time donors! Special thanks to advisor Theresa Murphy, to members of the National Honor Society, and to all who donated their time and lifesaving blood!

*Remember! Every two seconds, someone in the U.S. needs blood... those battling cancer, in the burn unit, getting surgery, in the emergency room, and more. **So save a life this winter!***

BHS CARES... Food Drive 2025

The Food Drive was also a success, as well as a collaboration facilitated by the Class of 2026, Class of 2028, Class of 2029, and the Life Club. Special thanks to the students and staff who donated food items, to the students from all grade levels who put up posters and got the word out, and to advisor Lauren Volosin for her work and effort.

All told, they amassed 30 grocery bags filled with staples for the Food Bank Network of Somerset County.





BHS CARES... Dodgeball Does Good

In The News... Additionally, the Student Council donated \$1,000 to the Food Bank Network of Somerset County from their tournament proceeds!



BHS CARES... for the environment!

The BHS Garden Club spent late fall weeding and cleaning the beloved BHS courtyards, with special attention devoted to the native rain garden installed last year after a \$1,000 grant from the Garden Club of Somerset Hills. In the off season, the club is selling new sweatshirts designed by freshman Lucy Rickert, and is having a houseplant sale on January 9th to celebrate National Houseplant Day!

GARDEN CLUB CREWNECKS AVAILABLE FOR PREORDER NOW!

All proceeds benefit the BHS Garden Club and their school beautification efforts!



Gildan Midweight 50/50 Crewneck Sweatshirt

Order Form

Sweatshirts are preorder only and must be paid for at time of form submission. Cash or check payable to Bernards High School. Please submit orders to Mrs. Snyder in room B303 or her main office mailbox. Sale ends November 26!

NAME OF STUDENT OR STAFF MEMBER _____

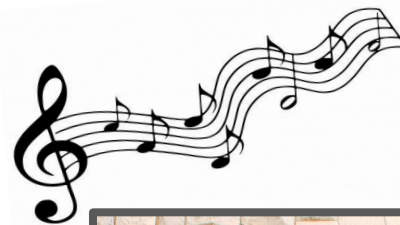
QUANTITY OF SWEATSHIRTS ORDERED PER SIZE (\$35 EACH):

SMALL	MEDIUM	LARGE	X-LARGE

GRAND TOTAL (Enclosed): \$ _____



Sounds of the Season



In The News...

Bernards High School students proudly released their annual holiday album, *Sounds of the Season 2025*. This high-quality digital album features festive performances from talented BHS choir and band students, making it the perfect seasonal soundtrack or gift for the holidays.

This project was a comprehensive, student-led operation, managed entirely by the BHS Madrigals Choir. Students were responsible for every phase of the album, including producing, recording, mastering, financing, publicity, and sales, providing them with valuable, real-world experience.



The album, released on December 6, 2025, is available for purchase until December 31st.

By purchasing the album for \$20, community members directly support the BHS music program, with all proceeds funding future opportunities for student performers.

To purchase *Sounds of the Season 2025*, visit their [sales page](#) by December 31st.

BERNARDS HIGH SCHOOL

SOUNDS OF THE SEASON 2025

PRODUCED BY THE BHS MADRIGALS

A digital holiday album by Bernards High School students

ONLY \$20

LIMITED TIME ONLY
DECEMBER 6TH – DECEMBER 31ST, 2025

Buy the digital album at <https://www.bernardschoir.org/album-2025>

HAPPY HOLIDAYS!

For more information, contact lrobles@student.shsd.org or npereyra@student.shsd.org



In The News..

BHS Art Club



Portrait Drawing Day!

And the pumpkin award winners were:
Riley for LaBuBu as the Fan Favorite;

Sean for Sméagol as the Scariest;

and *Maddie* for Pennywise as the Most Creative.



Pictured above are the thinkers, doers, sketchers, drawers, painters, designers, creators, and artists of the 25-26 BHS Art Club, with their advisor Gillian Crisman.



In The News...

The BMS Math Club is busy preparing for the NJ Math League Competition in February, using their meeting times to practice problem-solving strategies and to sharpen their skills. Students have also been working on a real-world math scavenger hunt, searching magazines and newspapers for authentic mathematical connections. Along the way, they are enjoying friendly challenges with math competition games like 24. The BMS Math Club meets every other week after school. There are 10 students in grades 6-8 participating in the club which is lead by advisor Annie O'Halloran. We wish them good luck this winter!

BMS Math Club





Winter Sports Snaps

In The News...

By the numbers...

Basketball:Boys = 38

Basketball:Girls = 23

Fencing = 29

Ice Hockey = 16

Skiing = 17

Swimming = 41

Winter Track:Boys = 25

Winter Track:Girls = 24

Wrestling = 30



In The News...

BHS Everyday Hero

Mengchen
Zhang



Mengchen Zhang, a junior at Bernards High School, was recognized by the school as the “Everyday Hero” for December.

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.

December’s Everyday Hero is the kind of student who steadily and unmistakably strengthens a community simply by being part of it. In the classroom, Mengchen brings a thoughtful, grounded presence. Her questions aren’t just academically strong; they reveal a sincere desire to understand people, histories, and viewpoints that often go unnoticed.

Outside of school, her participation in youth leadership and social justice research programs reflect that same instinct to engage deeply with the world around her and to confront societal problems head-on; she is, without question, a young changemaker whose actions already reflect that title.

What stands out most, however, is the warmth this hero brings to everyday interactions: Mengchen often arrives to school with homemade baked goods for no reason other than to share joy, and if you glance at the books she carries, you’ll find stories that uplift diverse voices and broaden understanding...evidence of her curiosity and her wish to leave the world better than she found it. This young woman never seeks recognition, yet she inspires others through her kindness, responsibility, and genuine care for her peers and community, making her an ideal choice for the Everyday Hero award.

Congratulations to December’s Everyday Hero, Mengchen Zhang!



CONGRATULATIONS!



WE ARE SO PROUD!





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

- Total projected costs: \$38,024,257
- Total projected State Aid: \$11,344,849
- Financing rate used for projections: 4.00%
- Recent Bond sales: 3.75%
- Bedwell: Security Infrastructure, Security Vestibule, STEM, Roofing, ADA toilets, Kindergarten access
- BMS: Security Infrastructure, Science, Roofing
- BHS: Security Infrastructure, Science, STEM, Culinary Arts, Technology, Radio/TV/Podcasting

Regionalization Study 2026

Key Points

Study Commencement: November 2025

Steering Committee: Nine total members between the two districts include Superintendent, Business Administrator, Board President, a BOE Committee Chairperson, and an at large member. To be determined after the annual Reorganization Meeting.

Regionalization Study 2026

Key Points

Advisory Committee: 21 total members between the two districts include school principals, teachers, elected municipal officials, HSA representatives.

Regionalization Study 2026

Key Points

Advisory Committee and Steering Committee Joint Meeting:

January 29, 2026

February 5, 2026

Regionalization Study 2026

Key Points: Workflow

1. Develop proposed outline of study with Advisory Committee and Steering Committee input (December through February)
2. Data collection: March 2026 through June 2026
3. Develop analyses: Summer 2026 and Fall 2026
4. Make recommendations based on analyses, draft report, review report with Steering Committee and deliver report: by Thanksgiving 2026
5. Present findings publicly: by Winter Break 2026

Regionalization Study 2026

Report Composition: How will it look?

1. Executive Summary/Study Purpose
2. Introduction
3. Governance and Law
4. Education and Program
5. Demography and Facilities
6. Finance and Operations
7. Findings and Recommendations

Regionalization Study 2026

Report Composition: How will it look?

3. Governance and Law
 - a. District profile
 - b. Statutory review and transition features
 - c. Election process and Board composition
 - d. State monitoring status
 - e. Stakeholder input (Advisory Committee, Steering Committee, other data collection)
 - f. Potential political matters
 - g. Governance and legal impact

Regionalization Study 2026

Report Composition: How will it look?

4. Education and Program
 - a. Curriculum and Instruction
 - b. Performance Measures
 - c. Preschool Education
 - d. Special Education
 - e. Support Programs
 - f. Extracurricular Programs
 - g. School and District Staffing
 - h. Educational and Programmatic Impact

Regionalization Study 2026

Report Composition: How will it look?

5. Demography and Facilities
 - a. Municipal Profiles
 - b. Housing Starts
 - c. Enrollment History
 - d. Enrollment Projections
 - e. Disaggregated Enrollments
 - f. Facility Utilization
 - g. Demographic and Facilities Impact

Regionalization Study 2026

Report Composition: How will it look?

6. Finance and Operations
 - a. Collective Bargaining Agreements
 - b. Operating Expenses
 - c. Borrowing Margin, Debt Allocation, and Reserves
 - d. Contracted Services and Tuition
 - e. Shared Services
 - f. State Aid
 - g. Local Tax Levies and Potential Cost Savings
 - h. Financial and Operational Impact

Regionalization Study 2026

Report Composition: How will it look?

7. Findings and Recommendations

Looking Ahead

Upcoming Dates

Reorganization Meeting: January 5, 2026

Annual Ethics Training: January 5, 2026

Legal Training, Board Member Usage of Social Media: January 5, 2026

Regionalization Study

Referendum

FY 27 Budget Preparation