

BERGENFIELD PUBLIC SCHOOL DISTRICT DISTRICT NEWS



WINTER EDITION - FEBRUARY 2026



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FROM THE DESK OF THE SUPERINTENDENT

By Christopher M. Tully Ed.D., Superintendent of Schools



As we enter the second half of the school year, it is clear that we are off to another strong start. Our students and staff continue to demonstrate dedication, resilience, and a commitment to excellence as they challenge themselves to grow and achieve at the highest levels.

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to our taxpayers and community members for their continued support. Your investment provides the financial foundation that allows our district to thrive. We take great pride in using these resources responsibly and efficiently. Our most recent annual financial audit affirmed our strong fiscal practices and confirmed that we continue to manage district funds wisely.

At the same time, we remain mindful of the financial challenges facing school districts today. With rising inflation and decreasing state aid, careful financial planning is more important than ever. One area of significant impact is employee health benefits, which continue to increase at an unprecedented rate. For example, participation in the State Health Benefit Program resulted in a 37% premium increase effective January 1, 2026. These rates are set at the state level, leaving districts with little flexibility. As we prepare the 2026-27 budget, we will work diligently to balance these rising costs while maintaining the high-quality programs and services our students deserve.

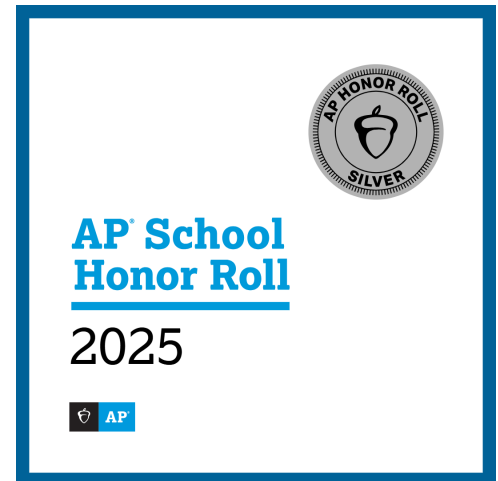
We are also proud of the meaningful traditions that reflect our values as a community. On November 11th, we had the honor of hosting our annual Veterans Day ceremony to recognize and thank our local veterans for their service. This special event featured heartfelt tribute essays from our elementary students, and outstanding performances by the BHS Marching Band. We are grateful for the opportunity to celebrate our heroes.

BHS continues to achieve impressive academic success. In December, 14 students earned the prestigious College Board AP Capstone Diploma, and 16 students received the AP Seminar and Research Certificate. In January, the school was named to the College Board's AP Honor Roll. These achievements reflect the dedication of our students and staff and our commitment to providing rigorous academic opportunities that prepare students for college and careers.

The new year also marks the conclusion of our current five-year strategic plan, which has played a vital role in guiding our district's growth and progress. In the coming months, we will begin the process of developing our next strategic plan to support continued success through 2031. We encourage community members to visit our website for additional information on how to participate.

As these accomplishments illustrate, our district continues to move forward in positive and meaningful ways. While we are proud of our progress, we remain committed to continuous improvement. With the continued support of our families, staff, and community, we are confident that we can build upon our success and provide outstanding opportunities for every student. Thank you!

BHS EARNS PRESTIGIOUS AP SCHOOL HONOR ROLL RECOGNITION FOR 2025



The school earned Silver status on the AP Honor Roll.

Bergenfield High School earned Silver recognition on the College Board 2025 AP® School Honor Roll.

The AP School Honor Roll recognizes schools whose AP programs deliver results and broaden participation for students. Schools can earn the Honor Roll recognition annually based on criteria that reflect a commitment to increasing their college-going culture, providing opportunities for students to earn college credit, and maximizing college readiness.

The AP School Honor Roll offers four levels of distinction: Bronze, Silver, Gold, and Platinum. The BHS Class of 2025 was recognized for the following criteria:

- » 61% took at least one AP Exam before graduating, earning Silver
- » 42% scored a three or higher on at least one AP Exam, earning Gold
- » 18% took five or more AP Exams, earning Platinum

Congratulations to our students and staff on this achievement!



DISTRICT NEWS



ROY W. BROWN HOLDS HOLIDAY FOOD DRIVE



Some students and faculty members who participated in running the food drive.

The RWB Social Committee—led by Ms. Debbie Calle—set up a holiday food drive and asked students and teachers to donate canned goods, boxed goods, and toiletries for twelve local families in need. They set a goal to collect 900 items; however, by the end of the collection, the school surpassed that goal and collected nearly 1,500 donations!

With the help of teachers, administration, and volunteers from the National Junior Honor Society and Incorruptible Us, the group was able to sort and make baskets for the families. The baskets were then distributed along with \$25 gift cards to Stop & Shop.

The food drive was an amazing success due to the hard work shown by the entire school. Throughout the drive, the spirit of kindness and giving was evident at RWB, and the school plans on making this an annual tradition.

MAKING AN IMPACT



Ms. Villone with Oprah Winfrey and her nominator.

In November, Franklin School Guidance Counselor, Ms. Katherine Villone, was recognized by *Oprah Daily*. She was nominated by a parent of a former student for making a positive impact on her child's education. Ms. Villone was hosted at a special event at the Waldorf Astoria, where she met Oprah and Gayle King.

ALL-ACADEMIC TEAM



Ihzar Mendoza is presented with a certificate.

Congratulations to BHS senior Ihzar Mendoza for being selected to the first-ever Super Football Conference All-Academic Team! Ihzar was one of seventy-five high school football players in the conference selected for this honor, and one of only eighteen who attend a Bergen County public school district.

ESP OF THE YEAR



Ms. Wolanski with colleagues and family.

Congratulations to Hoover School Paraprofessional Ms. Debby Wolanski on being named the 2026 Bergen County Educational Support Professional (ESP) of the year! She was recognized on November 19th—National ESP Day—at the Bergen County Education Association's annual Fred Frangiosa ESP Dinner.



Students carrying donated food.



Bins of collected food products.



Students carrying donated food.

DISTRICT NEWS



VETERANS HONORED AT ANNUAL APPRECIATION CEREMONY



Xavier Lacap and Jaymie Milaor read the names of fallen BHS graduates.

On Tuesday, November 11th, Bergenfield High School hosted its annual Veterans Appreciation Ceremony in the gymnasium. All staff and community members who had served in the military were invited to attend the event as honorees.

As part of the ceremony, the BHS Marching Band performed patriotic songs, including "The Star Spangled Banner" and "America the Beautiful." Jaymie Milaor, Class of 2026 President, and Xavier Lacap, Student Congress Executive President, read the names of fallen graduates of BHS.

During the weeks leading up to the event, students in grades 3-5 participated in a letter-writing contest. Three grade-level winners from across the district were then selected. These students were invited to read their letters to the veterans in attendance.



Ethan Bonifacio Ortiz, the 3rd grade winner.



The 4th grade essay contest winner.



Cairo Ward, the 5th grade winner.

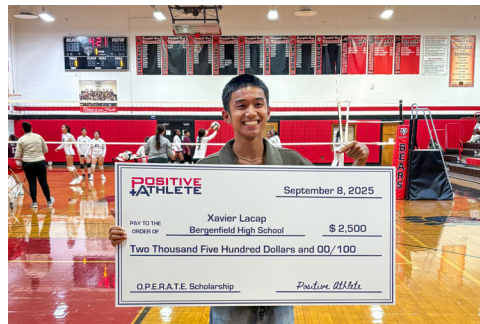
BIG BROTHERS BIG SISTERS



High school and middle school students collaborate.

The Big Brothers Big Sisters Program had its first session in October. BHS mentors and their RWB mentees began with a "get-to-know-you" board game, rolling dice to land on questions that helped participants learn about each other. It set the stage for strong, lasting connections to grow throughout the year.

POSITIVE ATHLETE AWARD



Xavier was recognized at a game in September.

Congratulations to BHS senior Xavier Lacap for being selected as a top-seven award winner of the Northeast Region in this year's Positive Athlete Program! Xavier was one of seven high school athletes chosen from a pool of 825 students nominated in this region. In addition, he received a \$2,500 scholarship!

FEEDING THE HOMELESS



Students and staff at the church.

In December, students and staff members from Bergenfield High School volunteered at Emmanuel Christian Church in Hackensack, where they helped serve a delicious, warm meal to the homeless. In addition, over sixteen music students played traditional holiday music while dinner was served.

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A SALUTE TO OUR VETERANS

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