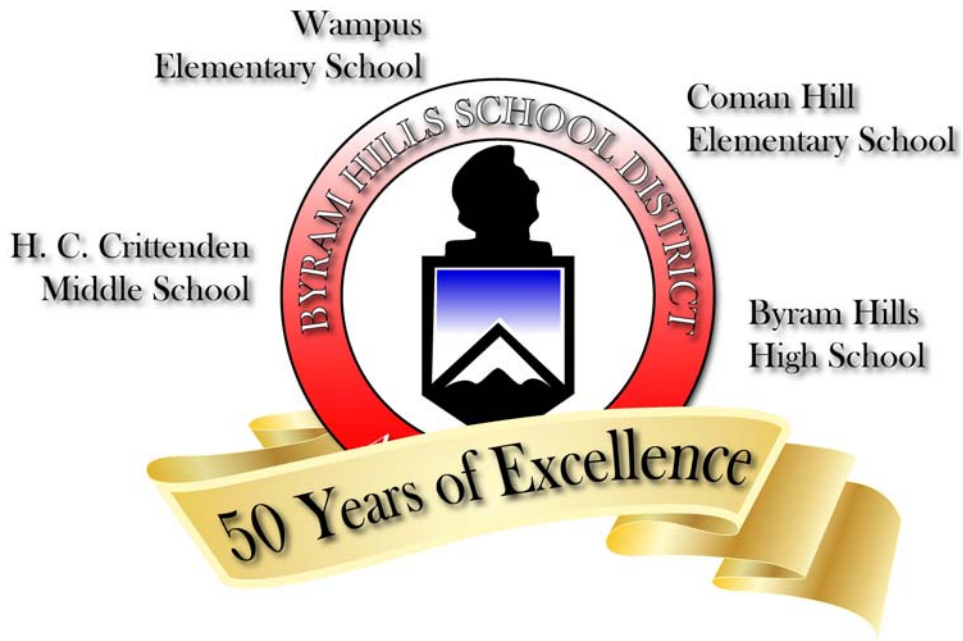


BYRAM HILLS CENTRAL SCHOOL DISTRICT

Celebrating 50 Years of Excellence in Education



The Byram Hills School District celebrates its 50th birthday this year. On June 11, 1961 the Armonk, Middle Patent and Bear Ridge School Districts were consolidated into the Byram Hills Central School District.

Mission Statement: In an environment of mutual respect, the Byram Hills School District and its community will provide students with the means, the knowledge, and the opportunity to excel in order to become productive and responsible citizens of the twenty-first century.

In fulfillment of our mission, the District embraces excellence and a continuous improvement philosophy.

Each month we share some examples of excellence at the Board of Education meetings and post them on the District's website. Feel the pride!

Byram Hills
50 years of Excellence

HCC Achieves National Recognition

(Presented at the September 28, 2010 Board Meeting)

H.C. Crittenden Middle School was recognized as a great place to learn by the state and federal governments by winning the most prestigious national award for schools: the Blue Ribbon School Award from the Department of Education. HCC was nominated for the award by New York's Commissioner of Education, based upon our students' outstanding performance on state tests over a three year period. Once nominated, the school provided evidence of how it achieves excellence and commits to continuous improvement. Key elements were the school's use of a team structure to organize the school and its systematic use of data review to inform instructional decisions. The faculty's use of assessment data to identify improvement goals, as well as their efforts to share best practices, develop academic interventions, map curriculum, initiate professional development, and implement interdisciplinary studies were all recognized through this award.

Congratulations to the HCC school community for its recognition as one of America's Blue Ribbon Schools, an award that has been achieved by fewer than 4% of schools in the nation!

Byram Hills
50 years of Excellence

Leadership Makes the Difference

(Presented at the October 12, 2010 Board Meeting)

Strong leadership has been a hallmark of the Byram Hills School District for many generations. There is no doubt that strong leadership is a major factor in the success of any organization. The professional research makes clear that teacher accountability and student achievement are closely related to the supervision that comes from strong leadership. At Byram Hills, the Chairpersons, Directors, Assistant Principals and Principals have played the major role in developing an excellent and responsive faculty who create outstanding opportunities for student learning and achievement. Beyond supervision, our leaders are actively engaged in developing and implementing programs and initiatives that teachers would not have the time or influence to create on their own. Some accomplishments that are directly attributable to our leaders include: K-12 Curriculum Maps that reduce redundancy in instruction and provide assurance that all students receive a standardized curriculum; a consistent 6-12 program of Guidance services; K-12 Technology integration; the high school's portfolio writing assessment and the implementation of meta-cognitive writing skills; the inclusion of Facing History and Ourselves across three disciplines; the development of a sportsmanship program for athletes, coaches and parents that has been regionally recognized for improving our athletic culture; the establishment of K-12 Art Shows; the development of Bobcat TV; and the articulation of a comprehensive, K-12 philosophy of Math instruction.

Byram Hills' position as one of the best school districts in Westchester would not have been possible without the extraordinary work of our leadership team.

Byram Hills
50 years of Excellence

Wampus Builds Character

(Presented at the October 26, 2010 Board Meeting)

An important, but complicated, instructional need that has been in the news and on the mind of educators in recent years is character education. Schools have struggled with how to reinforce parents' efforts to help their children develop strong character in a culture that changes quickly and is so influenced by media. Emphasis on raising academic standards has distracted many schools and districts from this important and traditional role of the schools. Wampus Elementary School has been a notable exception! By applying the same serious approach and consistency to Character Education that Wampus brings to academics, the school has met the challenge of creating programs and methods that encourage pro-social behaviors and empathy among young students. Called the "I-Care Program," it has become an integral part of the students' experience. Every teacher has committed to the program, which deals with behaviors as simple as learning basic greetings, to more abstract skills, such as developing awareness of others' feelings. Teachers and parents have celebrated the program for giving them ways to challenge disrespectful behavior in constructive and positive ways. A visit to the school reveals that the program is indeed part of the culture. Bulletin boards, skits, assemblies and parent involvement all attest to the success of the program. I-Care has also provided a natural way for teachers to talk about related issues, such as bullying, diversity and sustainability.

Congratulations to the Wampus School for making character education as excellent as academic education!

Byram Hills
50 years of Excellence

Excellence in Music

(Presented at the November 9, 2010 Board Meeting)

On Thursday evening, November 10 the best high school student musicians in Westchester County joined their talents to present the annual Area All-State Music Festival Concert at Purchase College. Student vocalists and instrumentalists from 40 public and private schools auditioned for this honor last spring and were selected through a competitive scoring system. Byram Hills students won 26 spaces in the ensembles – the most of any school based on enrollment size. In addition, 8 Byram Hills musicians qualified for the All State level performances to be held in December in Rochester. This was more than any school (of any size!) in the county.

In addition to the honors that come to the students and the District through our success in this program, the students' membership in the Area All-State performing ensembles provides an exceptional learning opportunity. They participate in Master Class style instruction from expert conductors and in a concert hall performance that approximates a professional experience. These are unique experiences that cannot be created in a school environment.

Congratulations to our outstanding musicians and their teachers. Their achievements are yet another example of why Byram Hills is a great place to learn!

Byram Hills
50 years of Excellence

Volunteer Service

(Presented at the November 23, 2010 Board Meeting)

As this report is being made a few days before Thanksgiving, it seems appropriate to focus on an achievement that is related to understanding and appreciating the strong value for service to others that is apparent in our schools and our community. Encouraging service is not strictly the province of the schools. It is a value and commitment that is strongly endorsed by our parents, town and community leaders, and many residents. As such it was no surprise when we conducted a confidential survey of our 9th and 12th graders and discovered that an overwhelming majority participated in volunteer service: more than 80% during their middle school years, and more than 90% during high school. Power of One Day, Make a Difference Day and the VIP club at HCC are prime examples of how the middle school supports this value. At the high school more than a dozen clubs are dedicated to service to others and the annual Blood Drive and Relay for Life give the whole community an opportunity to come together for a service activity. Our younger students at Wampus and Coman Hill learn about the importance of service through drives, "VIP Jr" and programs that promote awareness of the larger world in which they live. Appreciation that we live and work in such a caring community is a great way to enter the Thanksgiving holiday!

Byram Hills
50 years of Excellence

Affective Education Makes the Difference
(Presented at the December 7, 2010 BOE Meeting)

At the December 7 Board of Education Meeting, the Board heard a presentation on the purpose and impact of the Facing History and Ourselves' curriculum which has been integrated into a number of disciplines at the middle school and high school. This curriculum is one that uses the content of history to encourage ethical behavior, understanding, empathy, and tolerance. This “affective” side of education is often overlooked in discussion of school excellence, and yet the developmental issues inherent in educating young people require that affective education be recognized and practiced.

The Byram Hills Guidance Department has completed two small research studies that reinforce the importance of affective education and indicate that Byram Hills is very successful in its efforts. The first study was an analysis of the annual survey of graduates. Among other things, the survey asks graduates if a particular teacher “made a difference” in their educational experience and how. The majority of students responded by describing a teacher who went out of his or her way to provide emotional support, or who made learning interesting because of the personal connection they forged with the students. In a second study the Guidance Department interviewed students who, during their high school years, managed to change from being unsuccessful academically (poor grades) to successful. Invariably these students described emotional support from teachers as the key to finding motivation and strength to transform their lives. In the professional research literature the dynamic described here is called “Emotional Presence,” and we are proud that it is practiced well by our teachers and staff.

Byram Hills
50 years of Excellence

Byram on Broadway

(Presented at the January 24, 2011 Board of Education Meeting)

When it comes to identifying programs at Byram Hills that evidence the quality of “value added,” some of the most unique examples may be found in the extra-curricular program. Extra-curricular programs can be much less costly to run than academic programs: they tap into interests that are often un-addressable in classrooms, they can reach a wide variety of students, and they can achieve excellence in measurable ways. A great example is the Byram Hills Theatre Program, which introduces students to performing and production skills as early as elementary school and culminates at the high school. Certainly audiences have subjectively judged the program to be excellent based on their enjoyment of performances. More objectively, the excellence of the program is apparent in the number of students who have gone on to the highest levels of professional achievement after getting their foundation at Byram Hills. Two notable, current examples are Tony Award nominee David Harbour, Class of '93, who is starring on Broadway with Al Pacino in “The Merchant of Venice” and Tony Award winner and composer Tom Kitt, Class of '92, who won the 2010 Pulitzer Prize for Theater for the score for “Next to Normal.” The roster of accomplished professionals who have graduated in the past 20 years is remarkable and includes at least five actors appearing in major motion pictures, theater and television; two working as producers on Broadway and television; a film casting agent; several lighting designers; two composer/musical directors on Broadway; two opera singers; script and comedy show writers; and a college theater professor! We want all of our graduates in the Performing Arts to know that we are proud of their accomplishments and celebrate their success.

Byram Hills
50 years of Excellence

National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Exam

(Presented at the February 8, 2011 Board of Education Meeting)

Every October more than 1.5 million high school juniors become eligible for the National Merit Scholarship Program by taking the PSAT exam. This is the largest scholarship program in the country, as well as the largest academic recognition program for high school students. Of the 1.5 million participants, about 2% are recognized as “Commended Students” in their senior year. This group is further reduced to name the “Semifinalists” who represent only 1% of all participants. For the past 15 years, 11% of Byram Hills High School seniors have enjoyed recognition as Commended Students, and 3% have earned Semifinalist status. These high performance rates are testament to hard working students, motivated families, a supportive community, and an effective K-12 system in our schools!

Byram Hills
50 years of Excellence

Interscholastic Athletics

(Presented at the March 8, 2011 Board of Education Meeting)

The excitement generated by the Boys Varsity Basketball Team's success and sectional championship makes this an ideal time to recognize the excellence of the Byram Hills Bobcats Athletics' Program! Athletic Director since July, 2001, Mike Gulino has set goals for the program that involve competitiveness, participation and sportsmanship. The basketball team's success, winning sectionals for the first time in 38 years and then going through Regionals to become State Semi-Finalists, is evidence of the competitiveness that has been achieved by the program. The larger picture of how the program has improved competitively can be found by counting the championship banners that drape the walls of the high school gym. In our 50-year history, the varsity teams have won 217 championships. Remarkably, 81 (37%) of those banners were won during the past nine years under Mr. Gulino's leadership

Competitive success has not come at a cost to other goals. In fact, it can be argued convincingly that our success in increasing participation and improving sportsmanship led to greater competitiveness. Current participation rates are impressive: during the fall and spring athletic seasons 50% of the high school's student body participates in interscholastic athletics. This spring the track team alone had 116 of the high school's 858 students join the team – that's almost 14% of the student body! Sportsmanship goals have also been important to the program's success. Efforts aimed not only at student-athletes, but also parents and coaches, have brought a sense of pride and class to the program that motivates everyone involved to do their best. Sportsmanship goals also recognize that the District's values for developing good citizenship and responsible behavior should permeate all aspects of our culture.

During this 2010-11 school year, the varsity teams have already added two championships to the totals recorded above. Here's wishing our spring athletes success in adding to that total. **Go Bobcats!**

Byram Hills **50 years of Excellence**

Science Research Program

(Presented at the April 12, 2011 Board of Education Meeting)

The Authentic Science Research Program at Byram Hills High School is an exceptional example of the excellence that we celebrate on this 50th anniversary and of the growth that has occurred in the District since 1997. In 1997 Science Research was taught by one very motivated Biology teacher during his free periods as an independent study course for a few very motivated students. It became a full time program as part of the High School's efforts to create a comprehensive elective program that meets our students' needs. Previously there had been only a few elective courses offered, and most students had several "free" periods in their day.

In terms of providing excellence and added value to our students' educations, there are few programs that match the BHHS Science Research Program. The program's emphasis on authentic learning and original research preceded recent reformers emphasis on these qualities as models for "21st century learners." Moreover, the culminating activity of the program is the submission of papers to the Intel Science Research Competition which annually selects 300 semifinalists and 40 finalists nationally. Byram Hills students have been named national semi-finalists 74 times and national finalists 18 times. Intel named Byram Hills High School one of the five best science research high schools in the world. (Only two of the five schools named were in the U.S.) In addition to these honors, our students have had a number of other honors and achievements associated with their research including: publications in academic journals, presentations at professional science conferences, registered patents, and paid research grants.

Perhaps the most remarkable thing about Science Research at Byram Hills is that it is **not** reserved for the so-called "top" students. Admission to the program is based on motivation and desire, never on test scores or past grades. The fact that students of all learning abilities have taken the course and earned national awards is a source of special pride within the program. Science Research, arguably Byram Hills' "best and most famous" program, is available to every student at the high school.

Two final notes:

1. It is worth mentioning that programs like Science Research are not mandated by the state and risk being squeezed when budgets become difficult, or the state increases its mandates with new courses and requirements. Ironically, there are few protections for the best programs.
2. Byram Hills' Science Research Program was officially re-named the Dr. Robert Pavlica Authentic Science Research Program in honor of the late BHHS teacher and founder of the program.

Byram Hills
50 years of Excellence

Advanced Placement Program

(Presented at the May 31, 2011 Board of Education Meeting)

Many observers consider a high school's Advanced Placement Program to be the gold standard for evaluating its academic program. Although this is arguable, it is an attractive measure because the Advanced Placement curriculum, which covers college level work, and the standardized tests, which provide college credit, are administered by the College Board, providing a degree of objectivity. There is no doubt that colleges weigh Advanced Placement courses heavily in their admissions decisions. Byram Hills has seen tremendous growth in the A.P. program since 1997 when nine A.P. courses were offered to a very select population of students. During 2010-2011, 29 sections of 17 different A.P. courses were offered. 55% of the senior class took at least one A.P. course; in addition 73 juniors and 39 sophomores "took A.P." In other words 27% of the student body took and was tested on college level course work. It is worth noting that in addition to the students taking A.P. courses, 51 BHHS students were enrolled in our equally renowned Science Research Program and Perspectives in Literature classes.

High enrollment in A.P. classes may be admirable, but it is the test scores that provide evidence of successful achievement. Fully 90% of our A.P. students earned a score of 3, the equivalent of a 3 credit undergraduate course, or higher. Last year the average A.P. test score was 4.43. 17 seniors (8% of the class) earned "A.P. Scholar" honors by scoring 3 or higher on 3 different exams; and 30 seniors (30% of the class) earned "Scholar with Distinction" by scoring 3 or higher on 5 or more exams with an average score of at least 3.5.

Perhaps the most important, and most overlooked, aspect of this report is the implication that it has for the so-called middle student at Byram Hills. It is often assumed that the academic program benefits only the most talented academic students. In fact, simple Math belies this assumption. 55% of seniors in A.P. means that every middle student took at least one A.P. class and achieved college credit. The fact that 29 sections of A.P. courses were offered is also indicative that A.P. courses are not reserved for an elite group

of students. We can see that the program is actually designed to bring challenging curriculum to as many students as possible. The success of this design is further reflected in the fact that as many as 65% of our seniors earn admission to the top 7% of colleges, according to Barron's competitiveness profile. In summary, excellence is achieved by a wide spectrum of Byram Hills' students!