

# THE FOCUS

THE OFFICIAL BYRAM HILLS HIGH SCHOOL NEWSLETTER

## INSIDE THIS EDITION

**DANIEL NDOCAJ NAMED PRESIDENTIAL SCHOLAR CANDIDATE**

**JSHS RESULTS**

**SPEECH & DEBATE TEAM NEWS**

**NIKOLET VATAJ, LOHUD ATHLETE OF THE YEAR**

**GRACE CORELLI BREAKS 1,000 CAREER POINTS**

**DARIO AMICUCCI SETS NEW 55M RECORD**

**GAGA CLUB TAKES TOP FUNDRAISING HONOR**

**VARSITY HOCKEY WINS BIG AT PINK THE RINK**

**THERAPY DOGS**

**BYRAM'S GOT TALENT/ONE WORLD BENEFIT CONCERT**

**JOIN AUTHOR JENNIFER BREHENY WALLACE IN A NIGHT OF DISCUSSION**

**PARENT & TEACHER TRAINING FOR THE BHCSO INTERVIEW COMMITTEE**

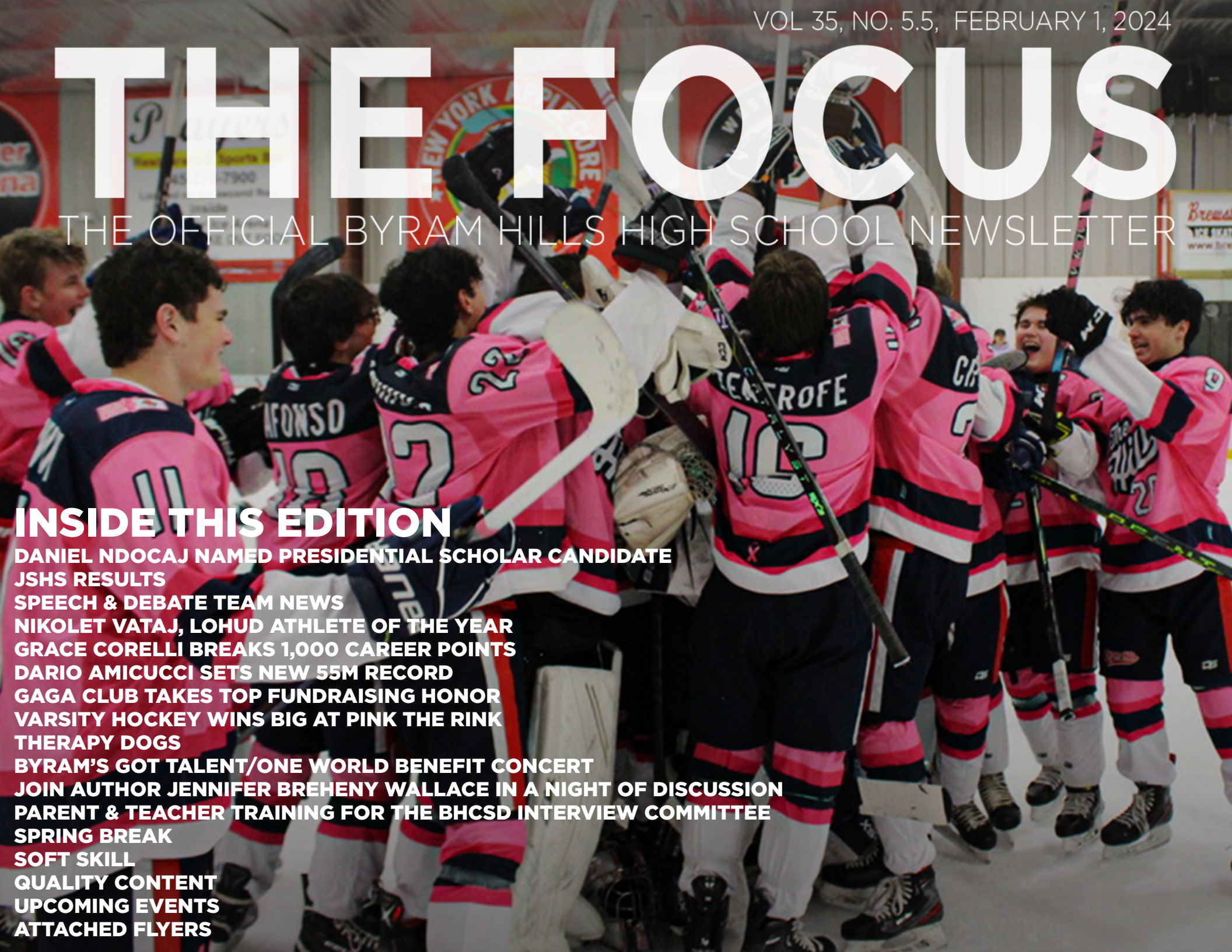
**SPRING BREAK**

**SOFT SKILL**

**QUALITY CONTENT**

**UPCOMING EVENTS**

**ATTACHED FLYERS**





## DANIEL NDOCAJ NAMED PRESIDENTIAL SCHOLAR CANDIDATE

We are thrilled to announce that BHHS senior, **Daniel Ndocaj**, has been named a 2024 Presidential Scholar Candidate. The Presidential Scholars Program, established in 1964 by the President's Executive Order, recognizes and honors some of the nation's most distinguished graduating high school seniors for their outstanding academic success, leadership, and service to their schools and communities. As a Presidential Scholar Candidate, Daniel joins an elite group of students from across the country who demonstrate exceptional potential. Finalists will be selected based on academic achievement, personal characteristics, leadership, and service activities, with the opportunity to receive the Presidential Scholars Medallion and participate in various recognition events in Washington, D.C. We commend Daniel for this remarkable achievement and wish him the best of luck as he advances in the selection process.



## JSHS RESULTS

Congratulations to the BHHS seniors who presented their research at the Westchester-Rockland Junior Science and Humanities Symposium. Many were honored with awards, and several will move on to Upstate JSHS at SUNY Albany in February, with the chance to compete nationally. **Ayaka Ammon** earned 2nd place in Animal & Plant Science, **Jacob Fenster** took 2nd place in Biochem & Cellular Molecular Biology, and **Rocky Yang** won 2nd place in Engineering & Technology. All three students will present their work at Upstate JSHS for a spot at nationals. **Benjamin Levy** earned 3rd place in Math & Computer Science, and **Abby Cushman** and **Calvin Cai** won 4th place in Biochem & Cellular Molecular Bio and Medicine & Health, respectively. All three students will present their work as a poster at Upstate JSHS. **Zachary Pero** and **Jonathan Manowitz** (Biochem & Cell Molecular Bio), **Benjamin Curley** (Math & Comp Sci), and **Daniel Ndocaj** (Physical Science) all won 5th place. They will serve as alternates for a space at Upstate JSHS. At the local level, **Jack Canter**, **Nicolette DiSano**, and **Romy Schweitzer** all won 2nd place in Behavior. Congratulations to all of our students!



## SPEECH AND DEBATE TEAM UPDATES

On January 13th, the Byram Hills Speech Team showcased their talents at the prestigious NYCFL Sister Raimonde Memorial Tournament. In the riveting realm of Declamation Speech, **Avni Sundaram** dazzled with a stellar 5th place finish, while **India Edwards** soared to an impressive 3rd place, and **Emi Nagura** claimed a remarkable 2nd place.

On Saturday, January 27th, our team participated in the Ridge Invitational at Ridge High School in Basking Ridge, achieving notable success. Highlights include:

- **Byram Hills placed 7th out of 52 schools.**
- **Allegra Jooss** secured 1st place in Oral Interpretation, repeating her victory from the previous year.
- **Aidan Aldea-Lustig** claimed 1st place in Original Oratory.
- **Vedanshi Ravi** achieved 1st place in Declamation Speech.
- **Avni Sundaram** ranked 6th in Declamation, while Emi Nagura placed 7th.



## SPEECH AND DEBATE TEAM UPDATES CONT

- **Zabelle Shil** and India Edwards reached the Semi-Finals in Declamation.
- **Aiden Schames** attained 7th place in Extemporaneous Speech, with Rohan Sundaram in 8th place.
- **Sophie Cai** and **Alexa Zodda** achieved 5th place in JV Public Forum.
- **Alex Pollack** and **Chase Keller** were recognized as Medalists in JV Public Forum.
- **Karis Lee** and **Kate Wolvius** also received recognition as Medalists in JV Public Forum.

The team is also proud to have contributed to establishing the middle school Speech and Debate Team during a visit last year. With support from middle school teacher Christopher Caliendo, this initiative formed a club in September. At the Ridge Invitational, students from HCC participated in the Middle School Public Forum Debate for the first time, achieving commendable results with students placing 3rd, 4th, and 6th.



## NIKOLET VATAJ, LOHUD ATHLETE OF THE YEAR

Congratulations to **Nikolet Vataj** for being named the LoHud Westchester/Putnam volleyball player of the year! Lohud noted Nikolet's impressive accomplishments this year, including that she was one of the driving forces behind the Bobcats' record-breaking season, which culminated with the program's first Section 1 championship, Class A regional title, and trip to the NYSPHSAA final four.

They note that Nikolet registered 299 kills, 72 aces, and 230 digs. In the postseason, she amassed 122 kills, 19 aces and 72 digs. Vataj garnered first-team all-state honors, along with all-section and all-conference honors.



## GRACE CORELLI BREAKS 1,000 CAREER POINTS

Congratulations to senior **Grace Corelli** for reaching a career milestone of 1,000 points at Byram Hills! Grace scored a game-high 24 points, which included four 3-pointers, during senior night against Fox Lane, securing her spot in the 1,000 point club.

## DARIO AMICUCCI SETS NEW 55M RECORD

Congratulations to **Dario Amicucci** on setting the new 55m school record at the league meet on January 21st. He now qualifies for the New Balance Indoor Nationals in Boston this March.

## GAGA CLUB TAKES TOP FUNDRAISING HONOR

The Byram Hills GAGA (Growth and Awareness Group for Alzheimer's) club has had a significant impact locally and beyond. Their recent achievement of securing the top position in fundraising during the Walk to End Alzheimer's event underscores their strong commitment to the cause. This accomplishment highlights their dedication and efforts in raising awareness and funds for Alzheimer's research and support.



Top Company/Organization Teams	
Team	Fundraising
1. Byram Hills HS - GAGA	\$32,082
2. Nonno's Vision	\$27,211
3. Visiting Angels Westchester	\$20,375
4. Ambassador Scarsdale	\$14,971
5. Dare to Care	\$14,906
6. POSB Bank	\$14,305
7. Hackley Alz Awareness Club	\$12,985
8. Bet Torah	\$12,220
9. Synergy Home Care	\$10,151
10. Kendal on Hudson	\$8,045





## VARSITY HOCKEY WINS BIG AT PINK THE RINK

Congratulations to our Varsity Hockey team for their outstanding performance at the Pink the Rink event! The atmosphere was electric as the community supported this important cause. The success of this 12th annual Pink the Rink event is truly remarkable, with over \$10,000 raised to support breast cancer awareness and research. This achievement reflects the incredible teamwork and generosity of our players, coaches, and community.



## THERAPY DOGS

On February 9th, Therapy Dogs from the organization “Therapy Dogs of Rockland” will make a visit to BHHS during lunch. As part of our ongoing efforts in alignment with Challenge Success initiatives, these therapy dogs provide students with a chance to “Paws & Relax” right here at school. Well-established and trusted research consistently demonstrates that animals, particularly dogs, have a profound positive impact on human comfort and overall well-being. Students can look forward to the presence of therapy dogs in Bobcat Hall throughout the entire school year, offering them ongoing support and comfort.

## BYRAM’S GOT TALENT/ ONE WORLD BENEFIT CONCERT

The Byram’s Got Talent/One World Benefit, initially scheduled for December 31st, has been rescheduled to Wednesday, February 7th at 7 pm in the high school theater. Come see our talented students and faculty members show off their skills!

## JOIN AUTHOR JENNIFER BREHENY WALLACE IN A NIGHT OF DISCUSSION

Byram Hills Central School District, in partnership with the BHEF, is excited to welcome Jennifer Breheny Wallace, author of “Never Enough - When Achievement Culture Becomes Toxic - and What We Can Do About It” for a night of discussion at Byram Hills High School. Families with children of any age are welcome!

This event is free to attend and proudly co-sponsored by the Byram Hills Central School District and the Byram Hills Education Foundation. Specific details of the time of the event will be sent in a follow-up email.

**SAVE THE DATE - FEBRUARY 5TH**

**A SPECIAL EVENING WITH JENNIFER B. WALLACE**

DON'T MISS THIS IMPORTANT DISCUSSION FOR PARENTS WITH KIDS OF ALL AGES

The rise of “toxic achievement culture” is overtaking kids' and parents' lives. In *Never Enough*, award-winning reporter Jennifer Breheny Wallace investigates the deep roots of toxic achievement culture, and shares what parents must do to fight back.

SPONSORED BY THE BYRAM HILLS SCHOOL DISTRICT AND THE BYRAM HILLS EDUCATION FOUNDATION

## PARENT & TEACHER TRAINING FOR THE BHCS DISTRICT INTERVIEW COMMITTEE

Each year, the Byram Hills Central School District establishes interview teams for the hiring of teachers and administrators. The District has been successful in hiring and retaining excellent teachers and administrators as a result of teacher and parent committee participation.

Gina Cunningham, Assistant Superintendent for Human Resources, will be offering two sessions for parents and teachers to attend a training session in order to be part of a hiring committee in the future.

If interested, please email Laura Coughlan at [lcoughlan@byramhills.org](mailto:lcoughlan@byramhills.org) with one of the following session dates:

**Session 1: Monday, February 5th, 3:30 PM to 4:30 PM**

**Session 2: Tuesday, March 5th, 3:30 PM to 4:30 PM**

## SPRING BREAK

“Spring Break” has grown into a major industry that now attracts as many high school students as their college counterparts. The potential for abuse of sex, drugs, and alcohol remains a major concern. In addition, the popularity of international resorts as Spring Break locations has occasionally led to the exploitation of students who are vulnerable as minors and foreigners in unfamiliar cultures.

Before confirming any plans, we suggest that you check into <http://travel.state.gov/> for more information about travel advisories and the country under consideration. We also suggest

## SPRING BREAK CONT

that you check references for any charter companies that you are depending on for flights and accommodations. Canceled flights, switched hotels, and even exploitation by local police have occurred to Byram Hills students in the past. This information is provided to give parents as much information as possible to make informed decisions. The school district does not organize, support, endorse, or partner with any travel companies providing "Spring Break" vacations or services to our students. Additionally, student-athletes should fully understand the consequences of missing games or practices over the break prior to making Spring Break plans.

## SOFT SKILL

**EMPATHY** - The action of understanding, being aware of, being sensitive to, and vicariously experiencing the feelings, thoughts, and experience of another of either the past or present without having the feelings, thoughts, and experience fully communicated in an objectively explicit manner. For an interesting perspective on empathy, please read [THIS ARTICLE](#).

## QUALITY CONTENT



## UPCOMING EVENTS

### Monday, February 5th

- Last Day for Schedule Changes
- Jennifer Wallace Presentation

### Tuesday, February 6th

- Grades Posted
- Board of Education Meeting 7:30 pm

### Wednesday, February 7th

- Byram's Got Talent/One World Benefit Show 7 pm

### Saturday, February 10th

- Science Olympiad
- ACT
- Lunar New Year

### Tuesday, February 13th

- Gr. 5, Gr. 8 & BHHS Band Festival @ BHHS
- Site-Based Team Mtg. @ BHHS 4 - 6 pm
- PTSA Exec Mtg. @ DO 9:30 am

### Wednesday, February 14th

- Gr. 5, Gr. 8 & BHHS Orchestra Festival @ BHHS

### Thursday, February 15th

- Gr. 5, Gr. 8 & BHHS Chorus Festival @ BHHS

**CLICK HERE  
FOR UPCOMING  
ATHLETIC  
EVENTS**

# FEBRUARY 2024

SUN	MON	TUES	WED	THURS	FRI	SAT
				1 - 4	2 - 5	3
4	5 - 6  Last Day for Schedule Changes Jennifer Wallace Presentation	6 - 7  Grades Posted Board of Ed. Mtg. 7:30 pm	7 - 8  Byram's Got Talent/One World Benefit 7 pm	8 - 1	9 - 2	10  Science Olympiad ACT Lunar New Year
11	12 - 3	13 - 4  All District Band Festival Gr. 5, Gr. 8 & BHHS @ BHHS Site-Based Team Mtg. @ BHHS 4-6 pm PTSA Exec Mtg. @ DO 9:30 am	14 - 5  All District Orchestra Festival Gr. 5, Gr. 8 & BHHS @ BHHS	15 - 6  All District Chorus Festival Gr. 5, Gr. 8 & BHHS @ BHHS BHEF Board of Directors Mtg. @ DO 7 pm	16 - 7	17
18	19  Regular Varsity Athletic Schedule Winter Recess Presidents Day Schools & Offices Closed	20  Regular Varsity Athletic Schedule Winter Recess Schools Closed/Offices Open	21  Regular Varsity Athletic Schedule Winter Recess Schools Closed/Offices Open	22  Regular Varsity Athletic Schedule Winter Recess Schools Closed/Offices Open	23  Regular Varsity Athletic Schedule Registration Deadline for 3/9 SAT Winter Recess Schools Closed/Offices Open	24
25	26 - 8  Schools Reopen	27 - 1	28 - 2	29 - 3  Spring Sports Preseason Mtg. (Gr. 7 - 12) 7 pm C.H.I.L.D. Evening Event 7 pm		



## HEALTHY COLLEGE TALK

How can you improve your language?

**OLD**

**NEW**

Where are you applying to college?

What are you most excited about learning, doing, and experiencing in college?

What are you going to major in?

What are you passionate about learning?

What's your dream school?

What type of college or setting do you imagine you will enjoy the most?

What do you want to be?

What are your interests outside of academics that you want to cultivate?

What school do you think you want to go to?

What environment brings out the best in you?

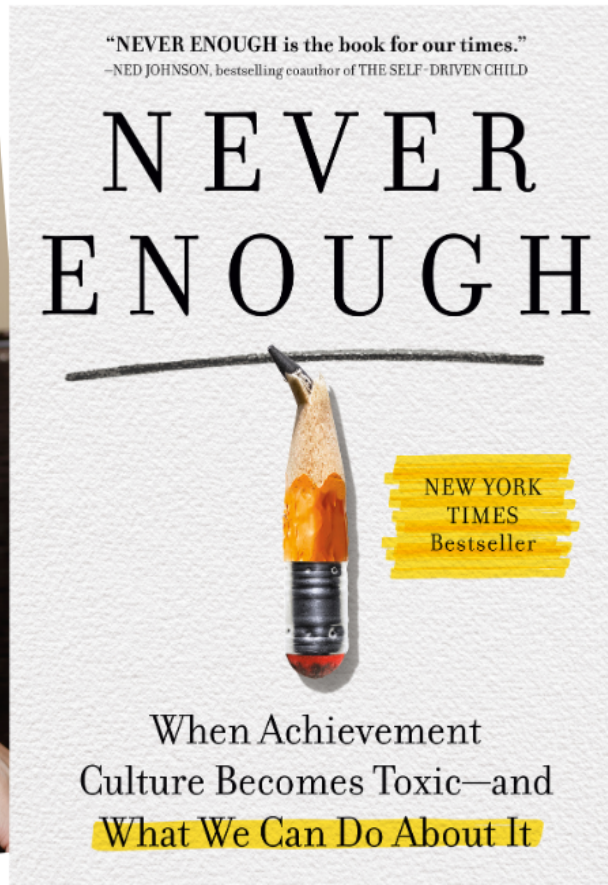




# SAVE THE DATE - FEBRUARY 5TH

## A SPECIAL EVENING WITH JENNIFER B. WALLACE

DON'T MISS THIS IMPORTANT DISCUSSION FOR PARENTS WITH KIDS OF ALL AGES



"Skyrocketing expectations and the unrelenting grind to achieve are doing immeasurable damage to an entire generation – but as Jennifer Wallace persuasively argues, it doesn't have to be this way."

**-Katie Couric**

The rise of "toxic achievement culture" is overtaking kids' and parents' lives. In *Never Enough*, award-winning reporter Jennifer Breheny Wallace investigates the deep roots of toxic achievement culture, and shares what parents must do to fight back.



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