

SPECTRUM

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2020 National Blue Ribbon School

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NAMED BLUE RIBBON SCHOOL

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BYRAM HILLS HIGH SCHOOL NAMED BLUE RIBBON SCHOOL

Byram Hills High School was recognized nationally as a 2020 Blue Ribbon School. This award was based on student achievement and Byram Hills' commitment to education. Byram Hills is one of nine public high schools in New York State to receive this award in the "Exemplary High Performing" category.

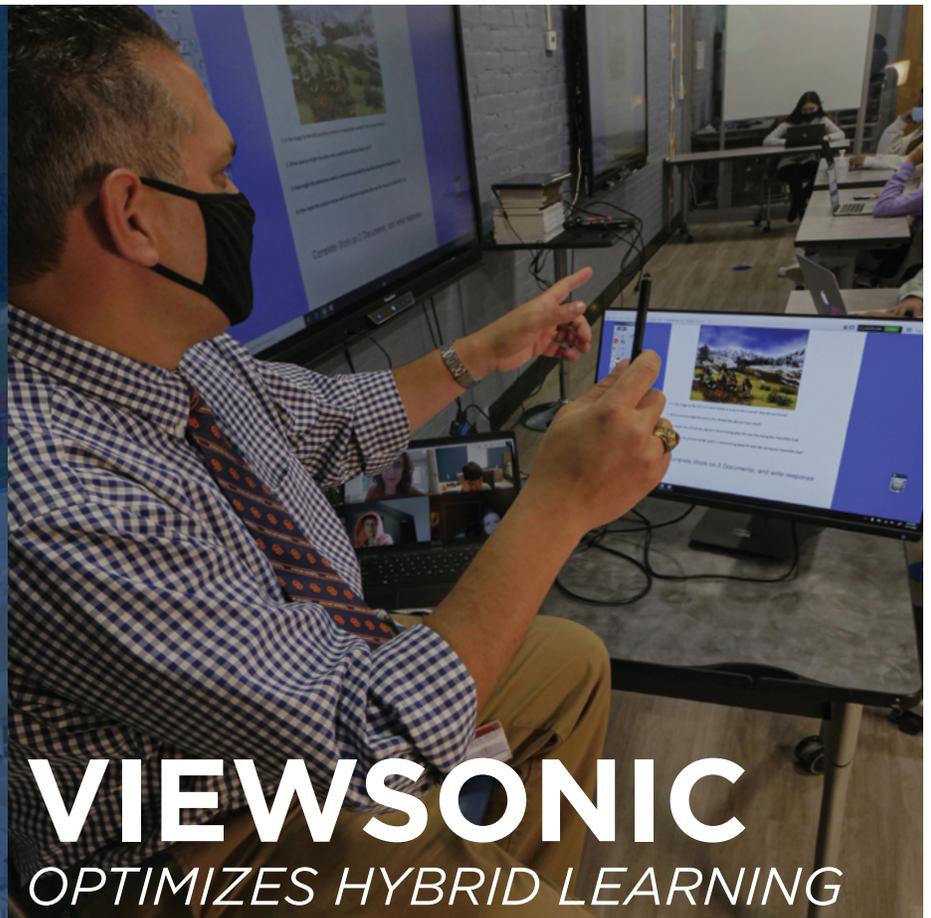
The United States Secretary of Education recognized 367 schools as National Blue Ribbon Schools for 2020.

The coveted National Blue Ribbon Schools award affirms the hard work of educators, families, and communities in creating safe and welcoming schools where students master challenging and engaging content. Now in its 38th year, the National Blue Ribbon Schools Program has bestowed almost 10,000 awards to more than 9,000 schools.

"Byram Hills High School is so successful because of the alignment between the expectations of the community, the professionalism of the faculty, and the engagement of the students," said Byram Hills Principal Mr. Christopher Walsh. "This is a tremendous honor."

National Blue Ribbon Schools are honored at an annual awards ceremony where each school receives a plaque and a flag to signify its admirable status. The flag gracing a school entry or flying overhead is a widely recognized symbol of exemplary teaching and learning. These schools serve as examples for other schools throughout the nation, and details of their achievements are shared on the U.S. Department of Education's website.

The 2020 National Blue Ribbon Schools Awards Ceremony was held virtually on November 12th and 13th.



VIEWSONIC OPTIMIZES HYBRID LEARNING

Dr. Andrew Taylor, Director of Technology and Professional Development, introduced teachers and staff to the ViewSonic platform, a technological system established to help with synchronous and blended learning throughout the District. The technology enables teachers to develop interactive lessons with students in the room, in another room, or at home (for secondary students).

"There was a need for a 'command center' where a teacher could reach students remotely from their homes or down the hall," said Dr. Taylor. "ViewSonic incorporates a document camera and a laptop to provide a productive teaching environment." The set-up becomes an interactive display, so students can follow along on their computer screens and listen to real-time audio. They can see everything in the classroom, hear what their teacher and classmates say, and actively participate and collaborate from different locations.

"I have found the ViewSonic to be extremely helpful with my management of the hybrid synchronous teaching model, said Steve Borneman, Byram Hills High School science teacher. "It allows me to see my students at home and in class and simultaneously engage in a lesson." In chemistry classrooms, cameras can be pointed downward, directly into beakers and test tubes, providing incredibly close views of experiments. "In one class, the camera showed that when baking soda and vinegar combine, bonds are broken, and new bonds are formed," said Mr. Borneman. "This was apparent in the visible carbon dioxide which created a white bubbling foam that all students viewed up close, thanks to ViewSonic."

The Technology Department trained teachers to become proficient with this new technology tool. It allows elementary teachers to maximize their time with students. Teachers can facilitate art projects, read poems, and even solve math problems all from a desktop in one room, while students in a different classroom participate concurrently.

"Using a Google Meet and ViewSonic, we can observe the students in another room while manipulating the digital presentation in real-time," said Mary Beth Devery, Coman Hill kindergarten teacher. "Through Wonders lessons, we can read interactive stories, use the drawing tools to highlight, circle, or find words, and model letter formations." The system can simply display their daily schedule or play a video so the integrated class can view and respond to the material together.

Article continued on page 8.

GLOBAL SCHOLARS STUDENTS TAKE ACTION

The Global Scholars Program is a three-year interdisciplinary course that focuses on global awareness, critical thinking, and leadership skills for the 21st century. Each year centers around project-based learning with relevant topics drawn from the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. Students develop global competency skills and work toward understanding growth mindsets, dispositions, and design thinking skills by investigating the world and taking action through research and authentic tasks.

The requirements to enter the program are an interest in global issues, a desire to engage in authentic learning, and a willingness to take action to make a difference. Year 1 of the program focuses on an introduction to the most significant issues facing our world today including poverty, human rights, and the environment. This seminar-style class, taught by an interdisciplinary team of teachers, helps students recognize multiple perspectives on both local and global issues, and helps develop skills needed to take action.

During Year 2, students continue to expand their global understanding through group and independent projects and develop an individual learning plan to investigate a global issue of their choosing. Through the utilization of design thinking, they cultivate empathy, conduct in-depth research, and take action to address their chosen universal challenge.

The 2019-2020 school year included three projects for Year 2 students. The first was to study Hurricane Dorian's effect on the Bahamas and was used primarily to practice empathy interviews. "Although students could not conduct interviews themselves, they viewed interviews conducted by others. They began to understand that if you want to help people, you first must learn from the people you are looking to help," said Ms. Jen Laden, Byram Hills Social Studies Chair. "They researched charities and made a recommendation of an appropriate one to raise donations for."

For their second project, students had to develop a plan to encourage Westchester residents to complete the 2020 Census.

They were required to conduct research, interview stakeholders, collect data, identify problem areas, and develop a realistic action plan.

Student groups wrote emails, made calls, and scheduled appointments for interviews with various local organizations. "This was one of the best elements of the process," said Mr. Duane Smith, Byram Hills English Chair. "Rather than viewing their teachers as the sole purveyors of knowledge, the students used interviews to learn from various individuals in the field."

One successful outcome of the project came from a student group that created a public service announcement video targeting an immigrant community in Mount Kisco. The five group members collaborated with the Advanced Via Individual Determination (AVID) class at Fox Lane High School to identify and reach out to trusted community members. Neighbors Link, an organization that provides services and education for the immigrant community, helped make the decision to produce the video in Spanish with English subtitles to effectively reach their intended market.



*Census PSA Global Scholars students:
Lindsey Noel, Dylan Green, Nick Varsemes,
Andrew Zimmerman, & Max Berman*

"What I got most out of this project was how impactful design thinking can be. This is a fool-proof way to be successful," said Lindsey Noel, a Global Scholars student. "I will take these skills with me through the rest of my education and into the workforce."

Students chose their own topics for the third project. "They started with research on their problem, conducted empathy interviews, developed action plans, and right in the middle of that great work, the pandemic hit," Ms. Laden said. "Students then altered their ideas and many

developed social media campaigns to raise awareness about their issue.



Skylar Silverstein, Class of 2021.

Skylar Silverstein, Byram Hills senior, focused on the increase of current adolescent mental health issues. "The most important thing I learned was how to be flexible and professional while working virtually," expressed Skylar. She is currently creating activities and workshops about youth mental health and socialization.



Alexa Tusiani, Class of 2021.

Alexa Tusiani, Byram Hills senior, chose the topic of how factory farming impacts various systems within our society and government. "Many people are not aware that this system involves raising livestock under harsh and confining conditions or the negative stigma surrounding becoming vegan," said Alexa. "I wanted to change that perception and demonstrate the many positive aspects of a plant-based lifestyle." Alexa learned the importance of researching various perspectives of an issue, and how valuable it is to listen to others.

"Seniors explore their leadership abilities and hone their skills using the leadership practices of Kouzes and Posner as a framework," said Ms. Melissa Stahl, World Languages Chair. "Year 3 students culminate the year by synthesizing all of their learned mindsets, design thinking, and leadership skills and develop a global summit for the freshmen class."

The Global Scholars Program has just completed its first three-year cycle and continues to draw approximately 50 new students each year with over 100 students in the program.

CREATING COMMUNITY AT COMAN HILL

Creating a supportive and nurturing environment is essential for growth and success. At Coman Hill, teachers focus on developing a community that highlights positive learning behaviors. They call it the unwritten curriculum. “Learning how to make eye contact, listening attentively, following directions, and being responsible and respectful are essential behaviors that are necessary for success both academically and emotionally,” Coman Hill Principal, MaryBeth Crupi explained. “At Coman Hill, we believe in educating the whole child. Life skills that can be utilized in any situation and help all children to flourish.”

“Once we establish learner expectations, then the foundation is set for academic learning,” said Mrs. Crupi. “These habits help students engage in our curriculum. They discuss characters during reading, write about topics that matter to them, and explain their thinking during math lessons. When children understand how learners behave within the school setting, they know how to put their best effort forward academically.”

Establishing learner expectations has never been more critical than during the pandemic. Coman Hill students learn to be responsible by practicing handwashing protocols and the proper way to wear face masks. Teachers have applied their creativity as social distancing is taught using hula hoops or keeping arms out while walking. Movement breaks are now a frequent occurrence as teachers are engaging in GoNoodle activities within the classroom. Thanks to the Byram Hills Education Foundation, outdoor spaces are utilized for instruction, snacks, and mask breaks. The children have adapted well to new protocols and are conscientious as they follow the necessary guidelines to maintain everyone’s health and safety.



Coman Hill Communities at work.

“While our environment may look different, what has not changed is our dedication and love for the children,” said Mrs. Crupi. “Our remarkable teachers continue to make Coman Hill a great place to learn. They have designed a warm and nurturing community where students are learning how to be respectful, responsible, and safe.” From health and safety protocols to how to be a friend in a socially distanced world, Coman Hill teachers have created a sense of community where kindness counts. “We feel so fortunate to be together again as a learning community,” Mrs. Crupi concluded.

INVESTIGATIONS AT WAMPUS

In 2016, a study group began researching new and innovative methods to teach and assess mathematics at the elementary school level. The result was a robust program adopted by Byram Hills, known as Math Investigations. “We chose Investigations because it aligned with our philosophy of how to engage students through a hands-on approach,” said Peggy McInerney, Wampus Principal. “It is an inquiry-based model. It allows students to acquire the skills and knowledge in mathematics that they need to build upon in the second half of their educational journey.”

Investigations emphasizes the notion that we are surrounded by math in our daily lives. The earlier it can be recognized and understood, the more mathematically secure students will be when they move on to middle school. This conceptual way of thinking is more comprehensive than a procedural program. It values collaboration and exploration in problem-based learning by allowing students to make connections and draw upon prior knowledge to deepen their understanding.

An example of math practices in Investigations is Ten Minute Math. “This activity provides a daily routine and review that supports each unit of study,” said Jeanne Marie Key, fourth-grade teacher. “These lessons also create a community of math learners that discuss problem-solving strategies while listening to their classmates’ techniques.” Talking about math helps elementary students deepen their understanding as they process concepts differently.

“At this age, we utilize ‘learning to read’ and ‘reading to learn’ to support the language of mathematics. Reading comprehension plays a huge part in understanding the Base Ten Number System. As students progress through the elementary years, the importance of reading ability plays a pivotal role,” Mrs. McInerney explained. “They must learn and understand all of the components that go into the Base Ten Number System to master fluency and comprehension.”

Math Investigations prepares students for the next stage of learning. “We need our children to understand math from its different representations, from concrete to pictorial, to procedural, to linear, to abstract,” said Mrs. McInerney. “One of our most important jobs is to help students keep an open mind about math problems. This program allows our abstract thinkers to find flexibility in math, which is an important learning disposition in the development of strong math thinkers.”

Investigations is accessible for all students regardless of academic aptitude. A teacher may ask how students arrived at a particular answer and request to see their work. They may receive several yet equally viable explanations that can start a conversation about the language of math. “This system helps students think about the meaning of the numbers,” Mrs. McInerney said. “The benefit of Math Investigations is not to over complicate math, but to recognize that it is all around us.”

This mathematics system corresponds with the Byram Hills School District’s initiative of producing life-long learners. “Investigations works with our goal of creating the leaders of tomorrow,” Mrs. McInerney concluded. “Tomorrow’s leaders need to learn how to think critically, solve problems, and work collaboratively while also being proficient in core skills and concepts in mathematics.”

H.C. CRITTENDEN FINDS THE SILVER LININGS

While the country continues to face challenges and uncertainty, the H.C. Crittenden community is actively taking steps to provide social, academic, and emotional support for their students. “We try to seek opportunities that we believe in, build on them, and find the silver linings,” said Ms. Lapple, H.C. Crittenden Middle School Principal.

During X-period, small groups of students, known as x-pods, can discuss academic goals, successes, and areas for improvement while preparing for their day. X-Pods were initially intended to stagger students’ entry into the building but have since evolved. “Most adults in the building mentor a group of 10-12 students either remotely, live, or a mix of both, depending on the day,” said Mr. Angelo Ancona, H.C. Crittenden Middle School Assistant Principal. “X-pods are excellent student support, as they provide a place to review homework, go through schedules,

check the portal, and they give students the consistency of one person they can connect with each day.”

Many of the larger, open spaces within HCC, including the gymnasium, cafeteria, and music rooms, needed restructuring to allow for sufficient social distancing. Several moveable walls between classrooms were opened, nearly doubling their size. “The silver lining is the caring and nurturing environment that the teachers have created,” said Ms. Lapple. “Teachers have committed to making these spaces their own - inclusive and welcoming.”

The adoption of virtual and e-learning technologies has also become a significant focus at HCC during these times. Teachers use Google Meet and collaborate daily with students in a variety of ways. Viewsonic has been a game-changer, thanks to the Byram Hills Education



6th Grade Socially Distanced Classroom

Foundation. HCC teachers can now adeptly and masterfully conduct hybrid classes. Also, students have the privilege of utilizing their cellphones in school on the District network and the ability to FaceTime friends and family during lunch. HCC students are socializing, engaging, and using technology responsibly and safely, another silver lining.

“I am so proud of the positive energy at HCC,” expressed Ms. Lapple. “Everyone has kept their eye on the prize, making sure that our students have the opportunity to learn, grow, and be middle schoolers. The devotion that the faculty and staff have put forward is remarkable.”



Jordyn Bernard



Luke Briody



Talia Dinstein



Jared Ilan



Kathryn Petlyuk

Congratulations to the five Byram Hills High School seniors named semifinalists in the 66th Annual National Merit Scholarship Program for 2021. Jordyn Bernard, Luke Briody, Talia Dinstein, Jared Ilan, and Kathryn Petlyuk were selected among 16,000 nationwide semifinalists based on their skills, accomplishments, and potential success in rigorous college studies. They will go on to compete for 7,600 National Merit Scholarships worth more than \$30 million.

Over 1.5 million juniors from approximately 21,000 high schools entered the National Merit Scholarship Program. The nationwide pool of semifinalists represents the top 1.25% of United States high school test-takers. Kristina Wilson, Guidance Department Chairperson, said, “This accomplishment represents years of both an excellent education and outstanding effort on the part of our students.”

These unprecedented times have had a direct impact on standardized testing. “Our students took the PSAT last October and so much has changed since that time,” said Byram Hills Principal, Christopher Walsh. “I am very happy that they could still be recognized for this accomplishment and for having such high achievement.”

These five students will have the chance to be considered as finalists for the National Merit Scholarships in the spring of 2021.

BYRAM HILLS NURSES ARE THE HEARTBEAT OF OUR SCHOOLS



Wampus Nurses Theresa McGlynn [left] and Randi Wolchock [right].

School nurses play an integral role in monitoring and maintaining the health and well-being of students. They are on the frontline for potential emergencies while providing a safe environment in case of illness or injury. Byram Hills is fortunate to have six full-time nurses and two assistants who share a passion for their profession.

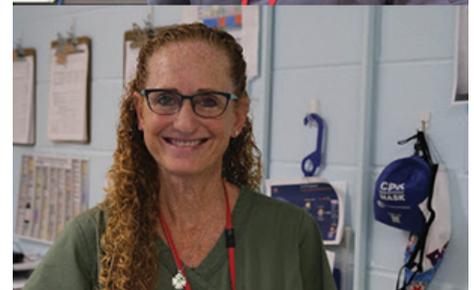
Betsy Gordon has been at Coman Hill for over 15 years. “The students are all of our kids and I come here first as a mother and then a nurse. That gives us a perspective that makes the kids feel safe and secure,” she said. Nurse Gordon spoke of caring for her students’ injuries and discussing how they occurred with them. She finds that hurt feelings go way beyond their scratches and that all gets reconciled in her office. Students are happy and intact both physically and emotionally when they leave her office.

During the pandemic, school nurses faced a myriad of new challenges in order to keep students safe. One of the many priorities within Byram Hills was to adapt nurse’s offices to accommodate healthy and potentially sick children simultaneously. Nurse Gordon explained,

“We changed our space from a small, sweet health office to a larger area with a division between well and possibly ill students. We also needed a location by an outside door for easy access to exit students from the building, if needed.” While safety protocols are of utmost importance, school nurses still have the responsibility of instilling safety throughout their schools. “Some people think the nurses just put on bandaids or keep track of physicals but we are much more,” said Deborah Negrin, H.C. Crittenden School Nurse of 11 years. “My role is to make sure that students are healthy and in the best place they can be to learn.”

“Being an advocate and a positive role model for students is the most important part of this job,” said Mrs. Julie Gallagher, Byram Hills High School nurse of 16 years. “If kids have any health conditions or medical problems, it is my job to educate them on how to manage these conditions. Teaching these kids is my favorite part of the job,” Mrs. Gallagher said. “I teach them to navigate the school on crutches, play field hockey with a diabetic pump, general wound care, the whole gamut.”

Many districts are unable to have a qualified full-time nurse in each school. With today’s ever-changing public health landscape, that can make it extremely difficult to reopen. In districts such as those, nurses drive from school to school distributing necessary medication. “We have always required a registered nurse in every school and because of that we are well prepared,” said Mrs. Gallagher. Byram Hills nurses bring a remarkably broad set of skills and experiences to their job and were invaluable in reopening the schools. These individuals are doing everything in their power to keep our students in class and are helping to preserve normalcy. Their constant care, efforts to manage safety protocols, and devotion to students should not go unnoticed. Please thank your school nurse and recognize the unique and daunting challenges they face daily.



[From top to bottom] Coman Hill Nurses Betsy Gordon and Lisette Meyers, HCC Nurse Deborah Negrin, and BHHS Nurse Julie Gallagher

THE BYRAM HILLS MEDIA CENTER ONE YEAR ANNIVERSARY

Whether it be producing District content, posting on social media, administrating the website, or writing for publications, the Media Center at Byram Hills is strategizing how information is being communicated internally and to the community.

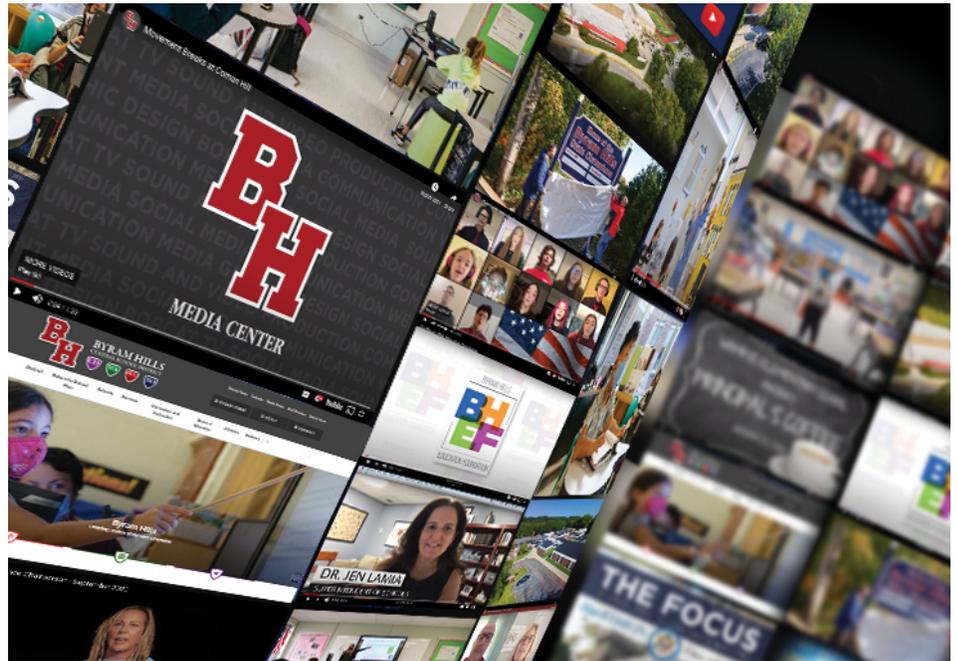
"We like to think of ourselves as the communications hub," said Elise Trainor, District Communications & Production Specialist. "We feel we are creating a window into the schools so the community can share the compelling and inspiring achievements of our students."

Dr. Jen Lamia, Byram Hills Superintendent, spearheaded the concept of integrating all communications and developing an internal Media Center. The mission is to showcase student accomplishments, District initiatives, and events through digital and social media, web content, and print publications. The District is committed to educating students, engaging volunteers, creating interpersonal communication, and sharing information with the Byram Hills community.

In addition to bTV programming and social media, the Media Center publishes Spectrum, the District's newsletter, and the bi-monthly BHHS digital newsletter, The Focus. The designs and user experience were updated, which provide a more interactive and aesthetic read.

bTV has an active video presence as the production arm of the Media Center. The Department hired Ms. Gabriella Medrano, Media Associate, who assists in all aspects of production and is a tremendous asset to the team. Besides producing student award ceremonies and curricular programming, the Media Center also helps the schools with more significant communication projects, such as the virtual Back-to-School Nights at BHHS/HCC and remodeling department sites.

The Media Center also offers two extracurricular clubs for students, run by Brian Melso, District Communications Strategist. "When we officially changed from Bobcat TV to the Media Center, the HCC and BHHS clubs also changed," Mr. Melso said. "Instead of focusing on video production, we now include digital marketing and media as they are common



practices in the industry. Website design, photography, videotaping and distribution, social media, and cross-platform digital marketing all go hand-in-hand."

During the first year of operation, the Media Center faced a unique set of challenges that resulted in producing all spring events virtually during the pandemic. "At the start of remote learning in March, I came up with a technical plan to hold virtual Board of Education Meetings," said Mr. Melso. The plan allowed all Board members to be present and for community members to ask questions. "Working with administration and staff, we produced and live-streamed most calendared events, and made sure families had the closest representation of live in-house ceremonies. All had outstanding viewership." The Media Center had over 200,000 cross-platform views, 175% growth from the previous year, and helped distribute over 250 videos during the pandemic.

"The feedback has been extremely positive and gratifying from the administration, our colleagues, and community members," said Ms. Trainor. "The Media Center's goal is to enhance communication by effectively reaching our community, and while our first year has been unpredictable, we are delighted about the beneficial impact we are making in the Byram Hills School District."

"We are creating a window into the schools so the community can share the compelling and inspiring achievements of our students."



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OUR MISSION

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.
"A great place to learn."

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VIEWSONIC

Continued from page 2

"ViewSonic started as an idea, and just one unit was purchased to pilot internally," Dr. Taylor explained. "We realized that this was a unique tool but were not sure how to get it in every teacher's hands." The Byram Hills Education Foundation saw the value and fully supported a grant for which the District is grateful.

"Our goal for technology is to provide teachers and students the tools they need to grasp content and support student learning," said Andrew Taylor. "Teachers are masters at what they do, and technology can and should support the master teachers." Dr. Taylor continued, "Technology and distance became an obstacle, and as a technology director, I wanted to remove those obstacles for teachers." ViewSonic is an excellent teaching tool in the current learning environment and will help transition to full remote learning if that should become necessary in the future.

INSIDE FALL INDUCTION CEREMONIES

On October 22nd, nineteen seniors were inducted into the Byram Hills Chapter of the **Cum Laude Society**, the high school's academic honor society. Cum Laude was started in 1906, and today there are over 350 chapters in the United States.

"This ceremony allows us to recognize the students whose GPA's are within the top ten percent of their class," said Principal Christopher Walsh. "They arrived there through hard work, perseverance, grit, and the support of their families."

"I urge you to reflect on the positives these unprecedented educational experiences have given you," Lisa Squadron, English teacher and 2019 faculty Cum Laude inductee, said.

Byram Hills Superintendent and 2019 inductee, Dr. Jen Lamia shared, "Think about others, learn how to talk to people by being a better listener, take another's perspective, stop complaining, and learn how to express yourself."

Dr. Sandra Abt, Byram Hills Cum Laude Chapter President, said, "If you respect perspective, you will be happier, more successful, and make better decisions." The 2020 faculty inductee was Byram Hills High School Social Studies teacher, Mr. Thomas Andriello.

On October 8th, 71 Byram Hills High School students were inducted into the **World Languages Honor Society** through a virtual ceremony. These students were recognized by faculty, staff, and family members for their hard work and dedication in studying another language.

Three students delivered the induction pledges in their respective languages of study: Ariel Sheinberg - French, John D'Avanzo - Italian, and Illeana Baquero - Spanish.

"Language helped families reconnect during the pandemic," said Ms. Stahl. "It helped us learn, heal, and share feelings." She concluded by saying, "Use your love of language to expand and challenge your thinking, to help others, and to make our world a better place."

SCAN THE QR CODES TO WATCH THE CEREMONIES



WORLD LANGUAGES INDUCTION CEREMONY



CUM LAUDE INDUCTION CEREMONY



MEET PETE PAULIKS
DIRECTOR OF FINE ARTS

Byram Hills welcomes Pete Pauliks as the Director of Fine Arts. Mr. Pauliks began his career teaching high school music, chorus, theatre, and music technology. He moved into a leadership role in 2008, where he led a national non-profit, building sustainable and comprehensive music education programs. After receiving a master's degree in Educational Leadership from Fordham University, he became an assistant principal in New York City. "We teach the arts because it helps students with critical thinking and processing information," Mr. Pauliks said. "That sets up students for success no matter what field they enter. I am eager to collaborate with colleagues and community members in creating new experiences and opportunities for growth in Byram Hills."