



BYRAM HILLS SCHOOL DISTRICT SPECTRUM

A COMMUNITY OF LEARNERS COMMITTED TO EXCELLENCE



HOMECOMING

The entire Byram Hills community came together in early October to celebrate the 2019 Homecoming. Bobcat pride was on full display in the hallways, bleachers, and athletic fields throughout the week.

To kick things off, traveling pep-rallies visited H.C. Crittenden, Wampus, and Coman Hill to get the younger students into the spirit of Homecoming. High school athletes, cheerleaders, and our own Bobcat mascot greeted students with energy and enthusiasm.

Kallie Hoffman, a Byram Hills senior said, "The school spirit was outstanding this year. There was such an energy seen and heard throughout the hallways, and fan participation was higher than ever."

High school students celebrated the week with different daily spirited themes. Spirit Week culminated with the high school's annual in-school Pep Rally. The Pep Rally featured a stunning routine from the varsity cheerleaders, contests between grade levels, stirring performances from the band, the introduction of the Homecoming Court and the Homecoming Dance announcement.

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***"IT'S A GREAT
TIME TO BE
A BOBCAT!"***

- ROB CASTAGNA, DIRECTOR OF ATHLETICS

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"The pep rally was bittersweet for me, as I finally sat in the corner of the gym solely reserved for seniors, said Kallie Hoffman. On the bright side, I lost my voice screaming the chants, participated in the silly games with my friends, and lead the girls soccer team cheer when the team was invited to the floor to celebrate our season."

The event was run by seniors Amanda Nivasch and Jack Eagle who kept the crowd hyped. "The best part about being an MC for our pep rally was interacting with every part of the school. I had never been able to work with each grade, the teachers, and the administration all for a single purpose," said Jack Eagle, Byram Hills senior. "The whole process demonstrated to me how the entire Byram Hills community could come together in one group and have such a great event."

For the second year in a row, night games were played under the lights. Large, enthusiastic crowds filled the bleachers long after sunset each night during the week. The Bobcat Boosters organized a number of food trucks during the games for the hungry spectators. Even the youth soccer teams got in on the action, adding to the already notable sense of community.

The BHHS Pep Band, under the direction of Mr. Alan Lounsbury, punctuated highlights of the game with upbeat music that kept the crowds chanting while Byram Hills High School art students contributed to the festivities through their creative, Bobcat chalk artwork.

Homecoming was also the official opening for the new Byram Hills turf field. The turf was crisp, visually stunning and included impressive upgrades for multiple sports. "The facility upgrades created such a positive buzz and I believe the athletes all felt it," said Rob Castagna, Byram Hills Athletic Director. "The improvements reinforce how much the Byram Hills community supports our students."

Homecoming was a great way to bring students, faculty, and the community together to celebrate school spirit. "What I see and hear are happy athletes and successful teams," Mr. Castagna said.

"I am incredibly thankful to the District, Board of Education, and school community for supporting our students with this necessary renovation," said Christopher Walsh, Byram Hills High School Principal. "So many of our students' lasting memories of high school will be connected to their athletic participation. It makes me happy to know they will make those memories on such a beautiful track and field."

"Homecoming 2019 was definitely the best in all of my high school years at Byram Hills," said Kallie Hoffman. "I am honored to have been able to participate in the events and represent my school."



PARENTS AS READING PARTNERS

Research often shows that learning does not begin and end in the classroom. Parent involvement is extremely important to early literacy and future academic achievement.

"PARP stands for Parents As Reading Partners," said Raina Silver, Chairperson of PARP. At Coman Hill, the entire school read the same book that was chosen by the PTSA in collaboration with Principal, Mrs. MaryBeth Crupi.

Parent volunteers visited each classroom to read the book, facilitated a guided discussion, and conducted activities planned around the theme of the book. "The goal was to choose a book that aligned with age-appropriate, school-wide objectives," Mrs. Silver said.

This year the book was The Recess Queen by Alexis O'Neill. "It tackled the issue of bullying and friendship while

providing a positive lesson of choosing kindness. This book helped our students learn about regulating emotions and the basic act of being kind to one another," Mrs. Crupi said. It also reinforced Coman Hill initiatives like Kelso's Choice, The Buddy Bench, and the District-wide goal for emotional wellness.

Students listened intently as PTSA parent volunteers from each class read the book in their child's classroom.

During discussion time, every grade had something to offer and students participated eagerly in all of the activities. For example, kindergarten students were asked to draw their favorite character from the story by using their imagination.

"This year's topic focused on friendship and how to be a good friend. I think PARP was a good way for parents to have that dialogue with their children," said Mrs.



PARP Chairperson Raina Silver discusses "The Recess Queen."

Silver. The students were buzzing with enthusiasm as they spoke of the book and its important themes. "The children absolutely loved PARP," said Mrs. Crupi. "This is just one example of how the PTSA helps support us academically, emotionally, and socially. We are so grateful for their assistance in creating the home/school relationship for the betterment of our children."

WAMPUS COMMUNITIES CONTINUE TO GROW



Wampus 5th graders walk independently to class.

The Wampus climate is carefully tended to on a daily basis so that when anybody comes into our building it feels warm, safe, happy and loving," said Wampus Principal, Peggy McNerney. "Climate permeates everywhere and is part of everything we do."

This summer, Wampus embarked upon a major reshuffle of classrooms with the intent to support community and culture in the school.

"The concept of building a school community this way seemed simple, but was a herculean task in which we moved over 70% of the school around," Mrs. McNerney said. "The move was daunting and felt like a giant puzzle."

"Logistics included childhood development research, infrastructure investigation, manpower hours,

technology in each classroom, moving art and music rooms and more," continued Mrs. McNerney. The physical work started in June and was completed in August, just in time for the arrival of teachers and students.

Grouping students of the same grade in their own hub within the building helps in several ways. It creates a general feeling of safety and togetherness for our children which are hallmarks of building a community. It also keeps teachers organized, as they can better share resources and have common planning times.

A tremendous amount of research, historical data, and understanding of childhood development went into these decisions. Mrs. McNerney explained, "7 and 8-year-olds are far different developmentally than 10 and 11-year-olds

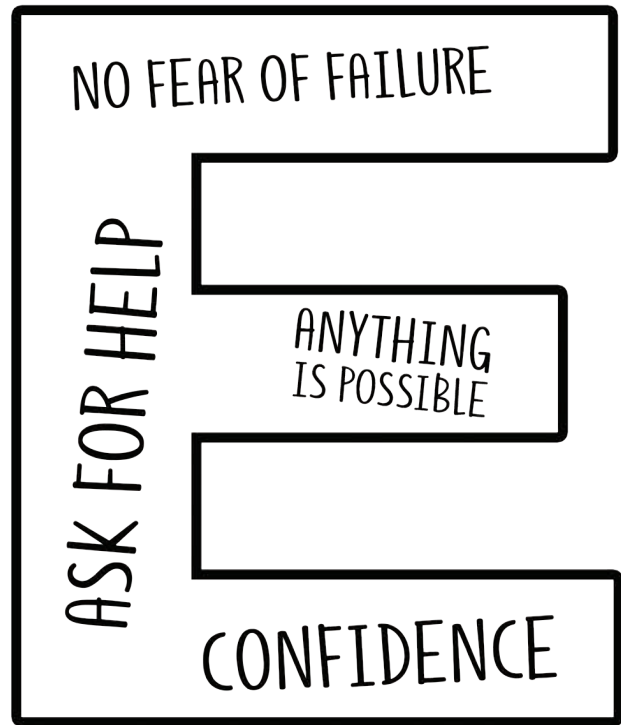
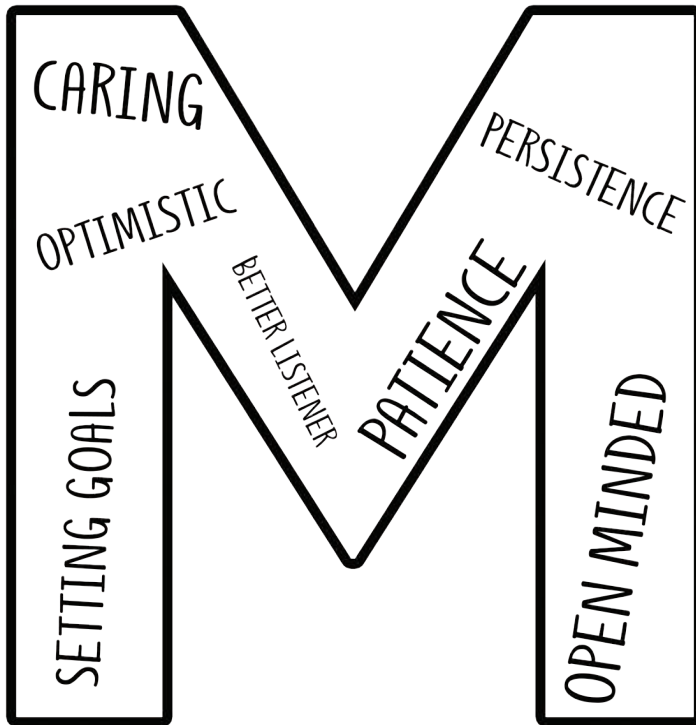
and require different elements to foster the type of sub-communities needed at each stage of their growth." She wanted to ensure that the building felt like an elementary school setting while allowing students to spread their wings. There was the desire to promote independence for the 5th graders by giving them a space of their own. The new layout provides them the opportunity to travel to their special classes independently.

"In collaboration with teachers and other stakeholders, independent spaces were created for students because that helps foster emotional wellness and stability for each grade unique to their needs," Mrs. McNerney said. "It is a delicate dance to carefully plan so that we have every child in their appropriate zone of development."

There was a conscious effort to create structures that provided the opportunity for students to see their peers as role models. Decisions on the placement of classrooms and specific times for grade overlap were considered. The 3rd and 4th-grade classrooms were planned close to each other so that 4th graders would act as role models throughout the day for the younger students. Also, the 4th and 5th graders are together for morning arrival, so that 5th graders have an opportunity to be leaders and set good examples for 4th graders.

Mrs. McNerney has set high expectations in a caring and sensible way. The Wampus Community is thriving and continues to grow and flourish.

PROJECT



“Project ME grew out of the idea that we wanted to celebrate the accomplishments and growth of all students at the end of the school year,” said H.C. Crittenden Middle School Principal, Ms. Kim Lapple. “We were striving to acknowledge students’ individual growth in addition to the traditional achievement-based model.”

This plan was centered on the collaboration with Challenge Success, an organization that works to help foster learners who are healthy, motivated, and better prepared for adult life. Ms. Lapple and her staff knew they aspired to integrate the concept of ‘growth over grades’ and honor all students.

The year-long search of how to define student success was set in motion. There were many discussions with the HCC faculty who looked at various prototypes before determining the most beneficial one for their student community. Project ME transpired after thoughtful research and consideration from stakeholders. The project’s goal is to build and foster a community where personal growth and self-reflection are foundational values.

“Project ME benefited from a vision that came from professional development that some of our HCC teachers were engaged in,” said Ms. Lapple. “Members of our faculty participated in a year-long workshop experience that centered on the work learned at High Tech High (HTH). The HTH concept began in a single high school in California and has grown to include a network of schools where students pursue their passions through project-based learning.”

As teachers were developing their own units, they were inspired by the impact of HTH and wanted their students to have an empowering middle school experience. Their vision propelled Project ME to be an innovative way to culminate the year. They felt the components of this project would go hand in hand with their mission while complimenting the District initiative of emotional wellness.

Project ME focuses on the idea of becoming an active learner. The goal is to allow students to explore what active learning means to them. As a result, students will be more present in their

AT HCC

own learning, make their own decisions and then reflect upon their decisions.

The process will begin with each student identifying a behavior, disposition or mindset that they feel is necessary to become a more active learner. To aid in this work, there will be monthly meetings where students will be placed in squads, consisting of small student groups of mixed grade levels, and a faculty facilitator who will share and support each other through their work.

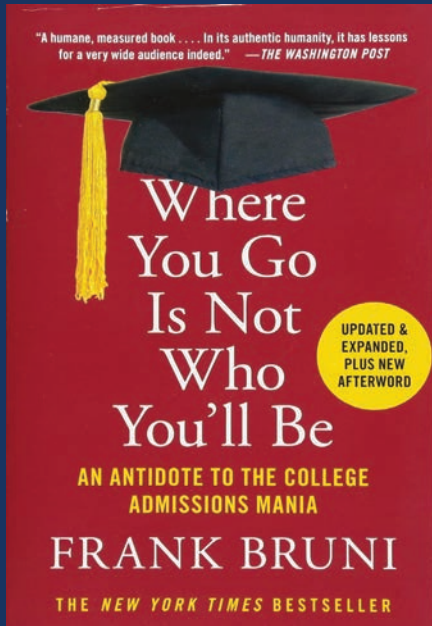
“Last year, in our Voice Circles, students expressed a desire for more opportunities to interact with other grades. Project ME honors this feedback,” said Mr. Angelo Ancona, H.C. Crittenden Middle School’s Assistant Principal.

Students will track their personal progress throughout the year and document their advancements in a digital portfolio. They will also collect and retain artifacts as evidence during the process. “At the end of the year, Project ME will be shared through the student’s digital portfolio and the ‘Presentation of Learning’ about their growth through time,” Ms. Lapple said. Students will present to their squad and other audience members which helps to build confidence and strong communication skills.

“Students will reflect on their successes and struggles and celebrate their hard work and accomplishments. They will also be asked to consider other ways they can grow into the next school year,” said Ms. Lapple. Through the exploration of Project ME, HCC students will have a better understanding of themselves both personally and academically. This is a very positive way to end the school year.

#projectme

COMMUNITY BOOK READ



On Thursday, October 17th, Byram Hills High School held its first Community Book Read. In an effort to make the student experience more positive, the District has worked closely with Challenge Success, an organization that collaborates with schools with an emphasis on student wellness and engagement. During a spring workshop, other districts mentioned the success of holding community book clubs. A popular read at other schools was, *Where You Go Is Not Who You'll Be - An Antidote to the College Admissions Mania* by Frank Bruni. The Challenge Success Steering Committee thought that it would be the perfect book for the Byram Hills community.

"The book choice dovetailed nicely with several of our district-wide initiatives," said Greg Quirolo, Byram Hills High School Guidance Counselor. "Our work with Challenge Success supports activities that allow our students, parents, and staff to reflect on how we engage our students in the most comprehensive and healthy college exploration experience."

The format of a book club discussion was new for many participants. "This is the first book club that I have had time to attend," said Byram Hills High School Principal, Mr. Christopher Walsh. "I liked reading this book knowing we would be discussing it and debating back and forth." Some members of The Challenge Success Steering Committee, an organized group of parents, teachers, administrators and students, helped guide the discussion by choosing relevant quotes from the book to explore. The attendees were responsive, engaged and enthusiastic as they shared stories and asked pertinent questions.

"This is an important topic in our community," Mr. Walsh continued.

"It is not a one size fits all in the college admissions process. This book expands the realm of possibilities for our students and makes the process transparent."

The theme of the book ties into the work of Challenge Success quite closely. When collaborating with BHHS, Challenge Success hit on three relevant areas that could improve the overall student experience. The first opportunity lies in examining the community expectations around the college admissions process. The raised awareness and conjecture about colleges is embedded in a student's DNA from an early age. The second opportunity aims at tackling the pressures caused by curricula that the faculty do not control, such as advanced placement classes and Regents exams. The third opportunity addresses the dynamics related to the new pressures students face due to social media and changes to communication. Although the book focuses only on the college admissions process the other two points are closely connected in the Byram Hills community.

Debra Goldman, member of the Challenge Success Steering Committee and parent in the community said, "The book was an important reminder of what is truly important about the college search and application process - helping parents and students realize how flawed the system is and reminding us that what is most important about a healthy and successful college experience, goes so much beyond the name of the school they choose."

The evening was filled with lively conversation and many different points of view. Mr. Quirolo said, "My biggest takeaway was a greater appreciation for the diversity of opinion that exists among different stakeholder groups in our community. In addition, the book and follow-up discussion affirmed my opinion

that student-centeredness drives our District's mission."

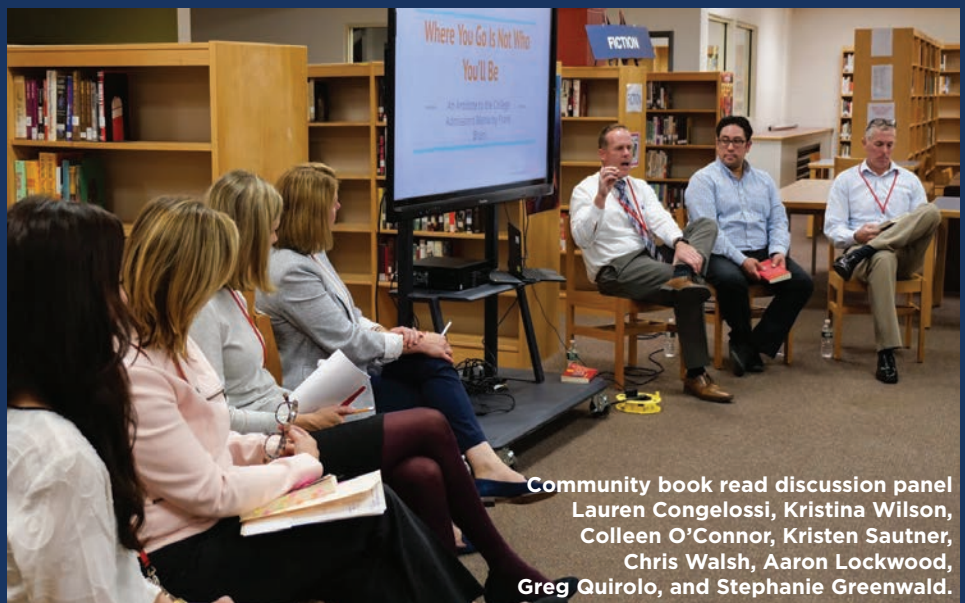
There were many highlights of the book and the evening but as Mr. Walsh reminded the group, "There is no set formula and no equation for 100% certainty that students will get into the school of their choice."

Maybe students need to look at their approach differently? The Guidance Department is introducing a new idea this year by presenting a different school once a month to expose students to colleges and universities they may not be familiar with but could potentially fit their needs. This might help expand the often narrow list of schools that Byram Hills students apply to.

The audience was left with a great deal to think about after an evening of enlightening dialogue. "It was such a pleasure to have an open and thoughtful book discussion with other parents and with our BHHS faculty and administration. Such a rare opportunity to hear so many different perspectives in one room," Mrs. Goldman said. "We all shared our collective frustration with this process, but most importantly, it is clear how each stakeholder shares the same goal - the happiness and well-being of our kids!"

The intent is to continue book clubs in the future and to choose challenging, thought-provoking books that generate curiosity and conversation. "I am always interested to find out what people are reading and learning about books that help us as a community," Mr. Walsh said.

Please join the next Community Book Read on January 23rd at 6:00 pm in the Byram Hills High School Library. The book is *Permission to Feel* by Marc Brackett from the Yale Center for Emotional Intelligence.



Community book read discussion panel
Lauren Congelossi, Kristina Wilson,
Colleen O'Connor, Kristen Sautner,
Chris Walsh, Aaron Lockwood,
Greg Quirolo, and Stephanie Greenwald.

WORLD LANGUAGES HONOR SOCIETY INDUCTION CEREMONY

In early October, sixty Byram Hills High School students were inducted into the World Languages Honor Society. These students were celebrated for their hard work and education to the study of Spanish, Italian or French. Carlos Toribio, a Byram Hills senior, was the keynote speaker this year. He presented a touching and powerful keynote address describing his own language journey before a supportive audience of fellow inductees and community members. *Félicitations, congratulazioni, felicitaciones!*



World Languages Chairperson Melissa Stahl addresses the 2019 inductees.

WORLD LANGUAGES HONOR SOCIETY INDUCTEES

FRENCH

Lucas Brienza
Christina Ferrari
Matthew Fliegel
Madison Higgins*

Sarah Ilany
Ella Manners
Seth Morrison
Isabelle O'Brien

Carolina Pedraza
Dominic Picca
Arielle Ragals
Ethan Resnik

ITALIAN

Jenna Adelsberg*
Lucas Brienza*
Oliver Brocato
Sofia Giamartino*
Abigail Glickman

Thomas Gomez
Kallie Hoffman
Cassandra Kaufman
Elena Lowe
Emily Ragals
Hallie Remnitz

Nicolas Rios
Jeffrey Sergio
Abigail Siconolfi
Allison Stillman
Amanda Tuzzo

SPANISH

Jenna Adelsberg
Ariana Dan
Jack Eagle
Madison Fang
Olivia Frischman
Victoria Ganeles
Sofia Giamartino
Samuel Goldman
Tyler Greenfield
Benjamin Hammond
Jonathan Hazan
Madison Higgins

Kallie Hoffman*
Spencer Karp
Kate Klein
Amanda Lammers
Alison Lehman
Isabelle Levy
Matthew Levy
Jackson Mackey
Ellie Margolin
Meredith Mayers
Andrew Miller
Jacob Mozarsky
William Mykytiuk

Isabelle Nelson
Eliana Reinhardt
Bryan Roden
Christina Salandra
Bennett Schwartz
Isabelle Seelig
Spencer Sidoti
Owen Skriloff
Reese Tateo
Arianna Tedesco
Carlos Toribio
Michael Vaquero
Jake Wild

**Second World Language Inductees*

20 STUDENTS INDUCTED INTO CUM LAUDE HONOR SOCIETY

Twenty Byram Hills High School seniors were honored for their academic achievement as they were inducted into the Cum Laude Society during a ceremony on Thursday, October 24, 2019.

Byram Hills High School Principal, Mr. Christopher Walsh, pointed out the importance of the event for three main reasons. He said, "First, it allows us to focus on and celebrate these students whose GPA are within the top 10% of their class. Next, we get to honor faculty members who are being inducted into Cum Laude and gain inspiration from their remarks. Finally, inductees have invited teachers who have had a positive impact on their learning and this tradition represents the best of Byram Hills."

Mr. Walsh continued by sharing that the class of 2020 is special to him because they were incoming freshmen the year he started as Byram Hills High School principal. The first time he met with them that year, he asked them to write down on index cards something special about themselves. Mr. Walsh salvaged the inductees' index cards and read their responses to the audience. Along with their academic growth over the years, the cards demonstrated tremendous growth in the inductees' character, personalities, and identities.

The faculty addresses were given by high school math teacher, Mr. Chris Lewick and Social Studies Chairperson, Ms. Jen Laden, who were inducted into the Cum Laude Society during last year's ceremony.

Mr. Lewick delivered his address in the form of an audience participation song with an impactful message - Create your

own opportunities, never set limits and enlist all the people you can in your life. Ms. Laden offered the following advice, "My wish for the honorees is that you can experience learning opportunities that help you to develop empathy and that you never lose the desire to engage with others."

Dr. Sandra Abt, Chapter President of the Byram Hills Cum Laude Society, said, "Perspective will help you become happier, more successful and more self-fulfilled. Try new things and don't judge in advance." Dr. Abt closed by saying, "Your future lies before you - make the most of it."

The Cum Laude Society is a nonprofit organization founded in 1907 to recognize scholastic achievement in secondary schools. Today it has over 350 chapters.



Pictured from left are: 2019 staff inductees Superintendent, Dr. Jen Lamia, and English teacher, Ms. Lisa Squadron.



The 2019 Cum Laude Inductees. Pictured in back, from the left are: Christina Ferrari, Caroline Kelly, Allison Stillman, Kallie Hoffman, Spencer Karp, Sarah Ilany, Sam Aberman, Benjamin Hammond, Victoria Ganeles, Alison Lehman. From the bottom left are: Madison Higgins, Reese Tateo, Michael Vaquero, Elena Lowe, Ella Manners, Meredith Mayers, Isabelle Nelson, Dominic Picca, Arielle Ragals and Bryan Roden.

MUSIC AREA ALL-STATE HONORS ENSEMBLES

The Department of Fine Arts is proud to announce 13 BHHS Orchestra, Band, and Choir students who have been selected to perform in the Westchester County Area All-State program. The selection process in Westchester is very competitive, as applicants are ranked and chosen based on their New York State School Music Association (NYSSMA) scores from the previous year. Students selected spend two evenings rehearsing with other student musicians from all over the County. The festival culminates with a day-long rehearsal and a final performance at the SUNY Performing Arts Center.



BHHS Area All-State Performers. Back row, from the left: Seth Morrison (Trumpet), Mark Fakler (Tenor Sax), Tom Lombardo (Alto Sax), Cyrille Jousse (Trombone), Emery Cohen (Bass), Jake Wild (Tenor), Caroline Kelly (Flute), Alison Zeng (Flute). Front row, from the left: Amelia Chung (Violin), Nora Lowe (Tuba), Rebecca Frieden (Soprano), Christina Ferrari (Violin), Elena Lowe (Oboe)



BYRAM HILLS SCHOOL DISTRICT
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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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FROM CLASSROOM TO CELLPHONE: MY BOBCAT APP CONNECTS BHHS

An idea that started as an assignment in a Web Design class has blossomed into a cell phone app that can be found on nearly every student's phone at Byram Hills High School. Senior Zach Malter developed the app three years ago, hoping to make it easier for students to plan, organize their work, and stay informed about upcoming events at school.

Zach has always had an affinity for technology and making ideas come to life. He developed an app for HCC students when he was in Grade 7 called "Day to Day Homework," which compiled homework by teams and made it available to all students who uploaded the free app. "The feeling that people were using my app and benefiting from it felt amazing," Zach said.

The app received 400 downloads over two years, at a time when apps were not

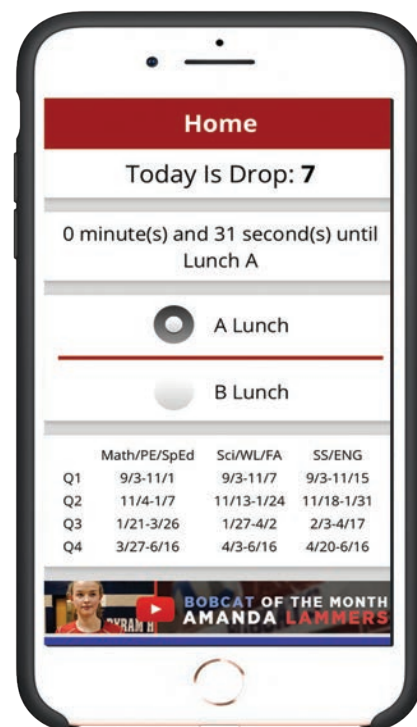
as prevalent as they are today. The praise he received from then HCC Principal, Dr. Powderly, gave him the confidence to continue looking for ways to help others, through coding and app design.

Upon arrival at the high school, Zach began working with Ms. Marna Weiss, his Web Design teacher, on a new idea that would help the entire student body. That idea evolved over time into the My Bobcat app. Zach loved working on the technical aspects of the app and sought the help of others for the layout and practical components. "When people asked for a specific feature, I always tried my best to give it to them," Zach said.

The app launched on May 10, 2017, and was an immediate success with over 1,128 downloads. My Bobcat can be downloaded from the Apple App Store or Google Play Store. Ansh Arvati, a Byram Hills freshman said, "The My Bobcat app is an amazing tool that I rely on every day. Whether it's writing my homework down, checking my GPA or most importantly seeing when my next class begins, I depend on My Bobcat."

"Given almost every student at BHHS has this app, Zach really created a window for us to showcase student programming at Byram Hills. Students can enjoy innovative content created by their peers," said Brian Melso, Byram Hills District Communication Strategist.

Zach has received a tremendous amount of support from BHHS Principal, Mr. Walsh, and the high school administration. They have My Bobcat running on monitors outside the main office and in the cafeteria. "The My Bobcat app is a perfect example of the types of authentic assessments we



value," said Mr. Walsh. "It demonstrates his understanding of the topic while having a positive impact on the community." Students and faculty use it as a resource and some parents have even installed it on their phones.

Zach always has multiple projects in the pipeline. Currently, he is working on a new addition to My Bobcat, which is geared toward helping freshmen better understand their schedules. He said, "When I'm passionate about something, it becomes my complete focus."



Zach Malter,
My Bobcat app designer.