

SPECTRUM

A COMMUNITY OF LEARNERS COMMITTED TO EXCELLENCE

LIGHTS, LEARNING, ACTION!

A PROPOSAL FOR BYRAM HILLS HIGH SCHOOL

CHARACTER STRONG

AT COMAN HILL ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

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OFFERS INCLUSIVE SPACE TO SHOWCASE CREATIVITY

SEAL OF BILITERACY

BHHS STUDENTS OBTAIN PROFICIENCY IN TWO OR MORE LANGUAGES

REGENERON SCIENCE COMPETITION

FOUR SENIORS CHOSEN AS SCHOLARS

UNPRECEDENTED FALL AND WINTER SEASONS

FOR BHHS ATHLETES

PROJECTED TIMELINE	FALL 2023	WINTER 2024	SPRING 2024	SUMMER 2024	FALL 2024	WINTER 2025	SPRING 2025	SUMMER 2025	SUMMER 2026	SUMMER 2027
CONSTRUCTION DOCUMENTS PRODUCTION	◆									
NY SED PERMIT REVIEW & ISSUANCE										
MAY 2024 BUDGET VOTE			◆							
BID / BOE AWARDS CONSTRUCTION CONTRACTS										
CONSTRUCTION DURING SCHOOL YEAR										
BHHS TAKES POSSESSION OF NEW LEARNING COMMONS							◆			
LEARNING COMMONS PROJECT CLOSEOUT							◆			
TURF FIELD INSTALLATION								◆		
LIGHTING INSTALLATION (TURF FIELDS)									◆	
LIGHTING INSTALLATION (BASEBALL, SOFTBALL, AND TENNIS)										◆

LIGHTS, LEARNING, ACTION!

A PROPOSAL FOR BYRAM HILLS HIGH SCHOOL

The District is proposing an exciting three-phase renovation at Byram Hills High School. The plan calls for modernizing the 1960s-era library, the installation of turf on the practice field and lighting at the fields and courts.

“We have been planning for the needs of our current and future students,” Superintendent Dr. Jen Lamia said. “These updates are overdue at our high school and will benefit our students for decades to come.”

The District is seeking voter approval to use \$8 million from the District’s Capital Reserve Fund to support the project, called *Byram Hills High School: Lights, Learning, Action!* A proposition seeking authorization of the funds will appear on the May 21 ballot, along with the Budget Vote and the Trustee Vote.

The District is also collaborating with the Byram Hills Education Foundation (BHEF) to support Lights, Learning, Action! The BHEF has been integral in supporting all library renovations in the District, in addition to millions of dollars in significant grants approved for all schools.

The proposal would include a reconstruction of the library, nearby hallway and lecture hall to create an educational hub called *The Learning Commons*. The remodeled space would have comfortable and flexible

seating, state-of-the-art technology, dedicated spaces for large and small groups and a new outdoor courtyard for students to meet and learn.

The goal of *The Learning Commons* is to provide students with an updated learning environment where they can collaborate and interact with each other. The hallway between the library and lecture hall would feature a food kiosk and seating, another area for students to work together and enjoy during the community lunch period.

“The proposed new Learning Commons would provide a 21st-century space that meets the educational needs of today’s students,” Principal Christopher Walsh said.

Next, turf would be installed on the high school’s current practice field, which is adjacent to the main turf field. A second artificial field would benefit physical education classes, sports practices and games. Lighting systems at the fields and courts would culminate the three-year project, and allow the athletes and community to enjoy the thrill of night games.

The District estimates *The Learning Commons* would be finished by March 2025, the turf field by September 2025 and the lighting by September 2027.



PERSEVERANCE, EMPATHY, RESPECT: COMAN HILL STUDENTS STUDY IMPORTANT CHARACTER TRAITS

During morning classes at Coman Hill Elementary School, second graders were using their focusing skills to find the subtle differences in two nearly identical pictures. The students came to the smartboard to circle the inconsistencies, like a different number of buttons on a snowman.

On another day, first graders listened to the story of "Bubble Gum Brain," a character with a growth mindset, and the power of adding the word "yet" to something they cannot do.

These lessons on perseverance were part of Character Strong, a curriculum being taught to all first and second graders for the first time this year that combines character education and social and emotional learning. The curriculum aligns with the New York State Social Emotional Learning standards.

School counselor Abbey Fitzgerald teaches the curriculum, visiting each

classroom twice a month to dive deep into important character traits. In the fall, she covered respect, responsibility, gratitude and empathy. Additional lessons will focus on honesty, cooperation, courage and creativity. The program creates a common language around the traits, which are reinforced throughout the school, appearing on electronic signs, in the library and classrooms.

"Our Character Strong curriculum creates a sense of belonging, positive engagement and well-being among our students," Ms. Fitzgerald said. "The students are learning skills that help them connect with one another, become more focused and better manage their emotions and stressors."

"When a whole school community learns these skills together, we can see wellness embedded in our school culture, creating an inclusive, compassionate environment for all," Ms. Fitzgerald said. "Students are prepared to engage in the classroom and be productive learners when they feel settled, focused and valued."

The Character Strong lessons begin with a mindful breath and a review of a trait, which includes going over the definition and singing a song. Ms. Fitzgerald may read a book or lead an interactive activity or game.

During one class, when she asked what perseverance means, the young learners had answers: "Don't give up," a second grader said. A first grader responded: "Even when it's hard, you have to keep trying."

As she worked with the second graders trying to spot the differences in the

similar pictures, Ms. Fitzgerald urged them to use various strategies to encourage focus and perseverance, like positive self-talk, taking a break and asking for help.

She discussed "the power of yet," the idea of training your brain to think that although you can't do something right now, you can keep working toward it.

The first graders drew two things they can't do yet and the strategies they can use to help them achieve their goals, which included riding a bike without training wheels, reading a chapter book and climbing a mountain.

Students say they are enjoying the program and using the skills they are learning.

"We always learn new things like perseverance and then I do it and then I get better at things," first grader Levi Bensik said.

His classmate Eve Sinkman said the lessons "help me and they're really fun." They are useful, she said, when she is feeling like something is "really hard."

"Sometimes when I come to moments when I have those feelings, I can remember those strategies and use them to help me," Eve said.

Second grader Poppy Lovell reflected on the Character Strong lessons. "They're very fun," she said. "I think that it really helps me understand my feelings and helps me control them."

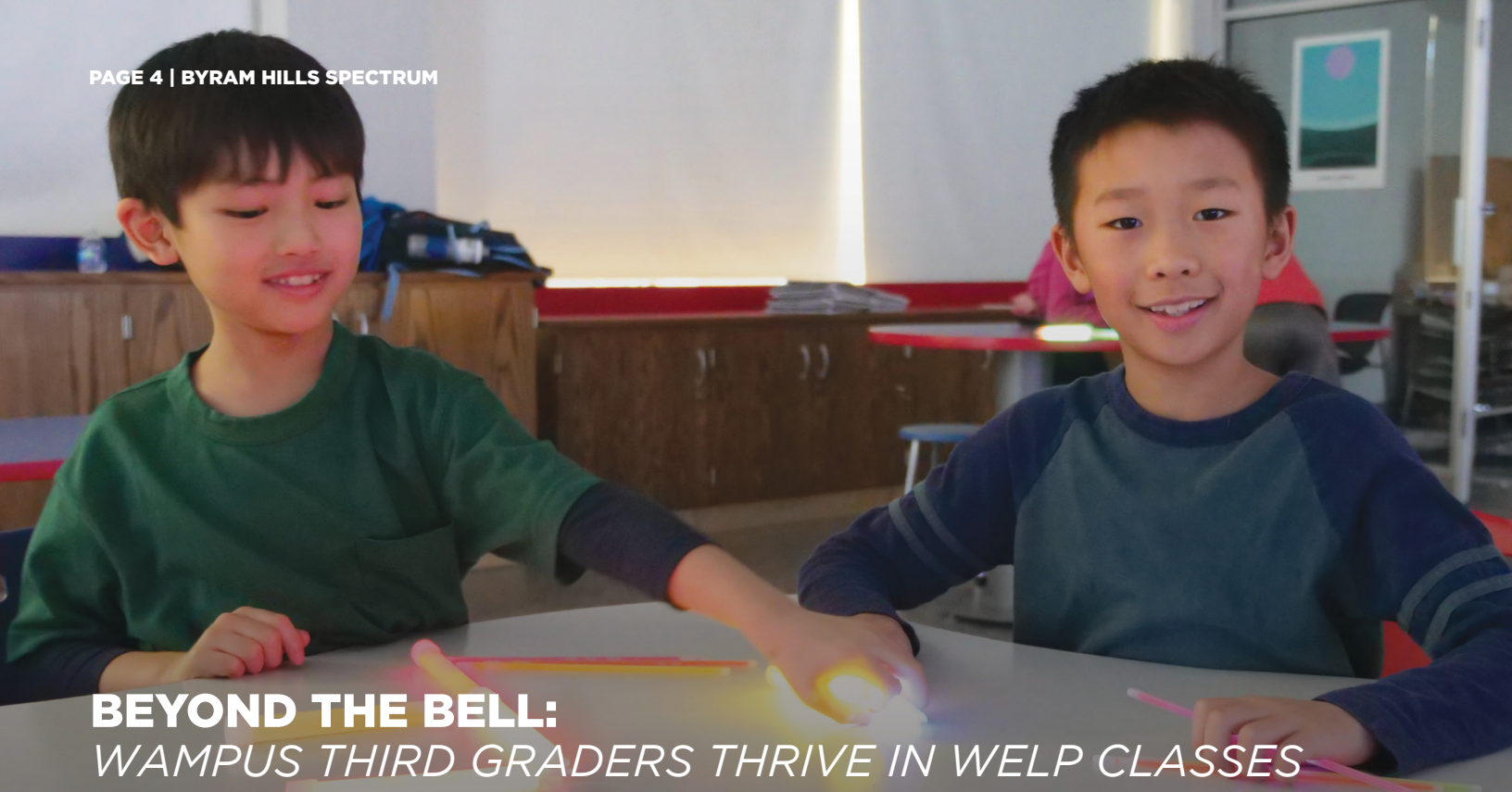
Ryan Campion, another second grader, said the program "teaches us how to focus and how to control our feelings."

He added: "I think it's important because I like learning about math a lot and the more focused I am, the more I get to learn about math."

The skills students are learning will help them throughout their education and lives. "Our goal is for our students to live their most content and fulfilled life," Ms. Fitzgerald said. "These are the skills that will help them do that."



Students learned about the "power of yet," and how they can work toward their goals.



BEYOND THE BELL: *WAMPUS THIRD GRADERS THRIVE IN WELP CLASSES*

Third graders are now immersed in the after-school opportunity at Wampus Elementary School: The Wampus Extended Learning Program, a series of classes where students are thinking deeply, working together and having fun as they learn.

The program, known as WELP, features four classes, The A in STEAM - Visual Art, Mandarin, Math Inquiry, and Wellness, which are repeated in three sessions throughout the year.

The classes provide students with the chance to continue their learning after the school day is over. Third graders strengthen their collaboration skills and make new friends as they work in small groups with students who may not be in their regular classroom.

"WELP is empowering our third graders and fostering their curiosity, creativity and their love of learning," said WELP adviser Liza Devaney, a Wampus literacy specialist. "The students are all going home excited and talking about everything they've learned. They love the program."

On a late afternoon, students in Wellness began with a warmup, doing high-knees and arm circles before moving into fitness stations, where they did movements like the tree pose in yoga, jumping jacks and jogging in place. Each class focuses on a new wellness activity for the mind or body, including mindfulness and self-care.

Next door in Mandarin, third graders were learning to write simple Chinese

characters. They will learn words and phrases, like numbers, colors and greetings, and about Chinese traditions. The students sing songs and break down the lyrics to practice the vocabulary.

In Math Inquiry, students are going around the world to explore how different countries and cultures use math. As they traveled to ancient Egypt, students learned how to write numbers in hieroglyphics and practiced by doing word problems and basic computations. Other areas of study include sudoku number puzzles that are popular in Japan, and the ancient Mayan civilization in Mexico, where sticks and stones were used to help identify numbers.

In The A in STEAM - Visual Art, students use materials they might not otherwise get to explore, often in unconventional ways. One day they studied artists who use light as a medium and made sculptures out of colorful glow-sticks. Another project is sun prints, which are created by placing objects on light-sensitive paper to create a unique photograph with a blue background when exposed to the sun.

The students are engaged in the extended learning classes.

Third grader Sam Scheinkman took Mandarin in the first session and Wellness in the second. Before he got into a yoga pose, he said he liked WELP because it's fun.

"You learn lessons, it's entertaining and I love all the teachers," he said. "It's educational and I love staying after school. It's a really good program."

Florence Mast said she likes being at Wampus after school. She took the art class in the fall and Wellness in the winter session. "I like to stay at school for a long time," she said. "I think school is fun."

In Math Inquiry, Ryan Arnold said he appreciates the variety of the class topics. He liked "that we do different math and we don't stick with the same thing every day."

Alexa Bajraktari was enjoying her first WELP class, Math Inquiry.

"I really like studying math because it's my favorite subject in school," she said.

The WELP program has been available to fourth graders, and Principal David Mack is pleased to offer it to the youngest learners at Wampus for the first time this year.

"WELP is also a fantastic extracurricular activity for our third graders," Mr. Mack said. "The classes help our students become confident, independent, curious learners and provide students with options to do more at school, which strengthens our Wampus community."



lot about feelings and emotions and “tips that I can use to help find logic in what I’m feeling.”

“Since a lot of people are on social media, this class is helping everybody learn to be a better person on social media and online in general,” Ava said.

Eli Wolland said through the program, his digital well-being has improved. “I like that they’re trying to help us manage our digital well-being,” he said, adding that the lessons have helped him “be more productive and get my work done” along

with making social plans and getting outside more.

Emily Dushi’s digital well-being goal was to reduce her phone use and read books. “On the weekends, I try to remember what we do in tech and I try to work on my goal,” said Emily, who had just finished a book and was starting another.

Technology teacher Danielle Brooks said the program helps students better understand how social media can affect their emotional, physical and social well-being.

“By working through the curriculum, students saw how social media can affect the way they feel about themselves and the relationships they have with others,” Ms. Brooks said. “This will help them navigate social media as they begin to use it more. The #HalfTheStory lessons pushed students to reflect, communicate and share in valuable ways.”

H.C.C. SIXTH GRADERS FOCUS ON DIGITAL WELLNESS THROUGH #HALFTHESTORY

Did you know that sometimes your mind lies to you?

After learning that our brain doesn’t like uncertainty, sixth graders at H.C. Crittenden Middle School put this idea to the test in technology class by considering this scenario: A friend doesn’t text you back, but you know your message was seen.

Students offered possible explanations: Maybe the friend is mad, busy, doesn’t like you or isn’t sure what to say, or perhaps fell asleep. Which one is true?

“Our brains will fill in the blanks even if it’s not accurate,” technology teacher Dawn Selnes said, adding that the students are vulnerable to making up stories that may hurt their sense of self. The only way to know the real reason is to talk to the person, she said.

The exercise was part of #HalfTheStory, a digital wellness curriculum taught to all sixth graders in November and December.

The program helps students find balance by focusing on digital wellness and teaches them strategies to help navigate technology use and social media. Students set a digital well-being goal, like spending less time on devices and more time outside or with family, and created a digital well-being plan for the future.

In #HalfTheStory, digital well-being is defined as “the relationship between your digital habits and your emotional health.” Through the lessons, students learned about their developing brains, the range of emotions and mindful technology use. Students learned that feelings are not facts, and that other people may be feeling the way they do sometimes.

“Students worked collaboratively throughout the curriculum to assist each other in processing big ideas about their relationships with technology,” Ms. Selnes said. “The curriculum helps students understand how they’re feeling when they’re using technology and provides them with a toolbox of strategies to use when tech or life becomes intense.”

Students said they found the lessons helpful and appreciated that all students in the grade were learning about digital wellness.

Ava Abbaspour said she learned a



Sixth graders engaged in a digital well-being exercise as part of the #HalfTheStory program.



NEW BYRAM HILLS ART GALLERY OFFERS SPACE TO SHOWCASE CREATIVITY

There's a new space to display art at Byram Hills High School, an area that provides an artistic outlet for the entire school community.

The student-run Art Works gallery, located in a dedicated area of the library, opened in the fall and has held two shows featuring the work of Byram Hills students, faculty and staff members.

"Art Works serves as a creative hub, fostering ideas and celebrating artistic expression," said art teacher Michael Chunev, the adviser to the Art Works gallery and club. "It provides a venue not only for students but also for people outside of art classes to showcase their artistic side. The gallery also opens up possibilities for those who may have never recognized their artistic voice."

The gallery is a collaborative effort led by students in the Art Works Club.

"Our students are learning how to cultivate themes and manage a gallery space," Mr. Chunev said. "Beyond a display area, the gallery has become another inclusive and creative corner for our school community. The art gallery enriches the cultural landscape of our school and offers a platform for everyone to share their interests and talents."

Students in the Art Works club solicited submissions for the gallery shows, curated the work, helped prepare the gallery space and hung the artwork.



The inaugural show, which opened with an evening reception on Dec. 4, was "Captured Adventures: A Journey in Photographs." The travel photography exhibit featured 26 pieces that celebrated memories from meaningful places and the stories behind them.

The second show, "Visions & Verses," showcased poetry and visual art that expressed feelings and imaginative perspectives. The exhibit opened on Feb. 9.

Students are enjoying being able to show their work and see the creative side of their classmates, teachers and staff members at school.

Sophomore Max Charney attended the opening reception for the fall show, which included his photograph of Westminster Abbey.

"I think that the art gallery is a great example of the talent and creativity within our school," he said. "I never knew how artistically skilled so many of my peers and teachers are; the gallery provides an opportunity to learn about one another in unexpected ways."

Junior Maya Molloy, the club's social media coordinator, said she finds it meaningful that anyone can show their work.

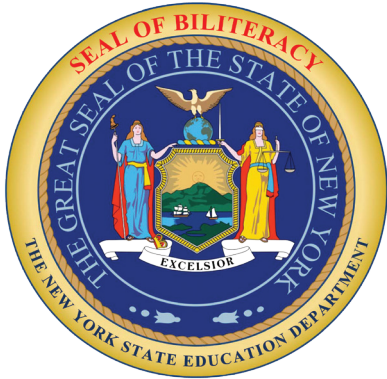
"Now we can showcase art from artists who aren't necessarily in an art class but want to show off the art they do at home, which is just as impressive as art that can be done in school," she said. "This doesn't exclude anybody. It's a great concept."

Ninth grader Chloe Ferreira Szilagyi, the Art Works website manager, said the gallery helps students get to know people better.

"If you don't really know someone and you see a poem they wrote or an art piece they made, you have a deeper understanding of that person," she said. "I think that's really beautiful."

Marc Beja, the Director of Fine Arts, welcomed the new space. "The Art Works gallery is a wonderful opportunity for all of our students and faculty to present their work and to engage with the arts," he said.

BYRAM HILLS HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS AND THE NEW YORK STATE SEAL OF BILITERACY



Seniors at Byram Hills High School are working toward obtaining an important honor on their diploma for the first time this year: The New York State Seal of Biliteracy.

The seal signifies a high level of proficiency in English and another language, which can be one students

are studying at Byram Hills - French, Italian or Spanish - or any language they speak at home.

The seal is available upon graduation to any senior proficient in English and a second language, and the criteria for earning it is determined by New York State. In addition to English, eight languages are spoken by the students pursuing the seal this year.

To earn the seal, students must demonstrate literacy in the two languages by meeting standards for course grades and national and state exams, and through a culminating project, essay or portfolio that meets criteria for speaking, listening, reading and writing in each language.

"The New York State Seal of Biliteracy is one more piece of evidence that helps us support our students to

become productive and responsible citizens and leaders of the 21st century," Principal Christopher Walsh said.

The seal distinguishes students as being biliterate, or proficient in the ability to listen, speak, read and write, in two languages, a valuable skill that opens many doors and is favored by future employers, World Languages Chairperson Melissa Stahl said.

"Gaining proficiency in a world language by earning this seal gives our students a global mindset through cultural understanding and new perspectives," Ms. Stahl said. "Our students seeking the seal have a dedication and commitment to the language. They are truly global citizens."

FOUR BYRAM HILLS SENIORS CHOSEN AS SCHOLARS IN REGENERON SCIENCE COMPETITION

Four Byram Hills High School students were selected as scholars in the renowned Regeneron Science Talent Search, recognized for their original research conducted in the school's three-year Authentic Science Research Program.

The students, Lily Anchin, Benjamin Levy, Jonathan Manowitz, and Daniel Ndocaj, were among the top 300 scholars chosen from the 2,162 students who entered the competition. The scholars won \$2,000 each and Byram Hills received \$8,000.

"We are proud of our incredibly talented and hard-working student-scientists who are striving to make a difference in the world through scientific discovery," said Stephanie Greenwald, Director of the Byram Hills Authentic Science Research Program. "Our students are passionate, dedicated, and resilient and have produced exemplary work."

The Society for Science, which runs the competition, said scholars were chosen for their outstanding research, leadership skills, community involvement, commitment to academics, creativity and exceptional promise as STEM leaders.

"We are so proud of our four top scholars for this terrific

achievement," Principal Christopher Walsh said. "They have worked on their research for three years and I am so happy that their hard work and dedication are being recognized at such a high level. I want to thank

all of the faculty and staff who have guided these students over the years as well as our community for supporting our Authentic Science Research Program."



Four Byram Hills High School seniors were named top scholars in the Regeneron Science Talent Search, the prestigious science and math competition. They are, from left, Jonathan Manowitz, Lily Anchin, Daniel Ndocaj and Benjamin Levy.



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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 and leaders of the twenty-first century.

"A great place to learn."

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BYRAM HILLS HIGH SCHOOL ATHLETES NOTCH UNPRECEDENTED FALL AND WINTER SEASONS

Byram Hills High School student-athletes had extraordinarily successful, history-making fall and winter seasons. It was the first time in a school year that six teams won section titles and competed at the state level, and two students competed at the state level in individual events.

In the fall, Boys Varsity Soccer finished as finalists in the Class A State Championship, the Girls Varsity Volleyball team reached the Final Four, and a ninth grade swimmer competed at the state championship meet, finishing 38th in New York.

The winter season brought more success. Boys Varsity Basketball finished as a regional semifinalist while the Boys Varsity Ice Hockey team was the state semifinalist. Girls Varsity Ice Hockey, a merged team, won the Section 1 championship, and the Varsity Wrestling team, another merged squad, also captured the Section 1 title. A sophomore competed at the New York State wrestling championship in an individual event.

"The Byram Hills community is immensely proud of the exceptional accomplishments of these athletes," said Scott Saunders, the District's Assistant Director of Health, Physical Education, and Athletics. "They exemplified the values of integrity, perseverance, and dedication, becoming role models for future generations of student-athletes."

The boys soccer team played in the state final on Nov. 11 at Middletown High School, a thriller that ended in double overtime. The team had an amazing run, winning the Section 1 and

regional title, finishing with a record of 18-3-4.

The girls volleyball team also captured the Section 1 and regional championships, both for the first time. The team played in the state Final Four at the Cool Insuring Arena in Glens Falls, New York, on Nov. 18, the furthest the team had gone in program history. The girls volleyball team finished 21-4 and was ranked fourth in the state.

Ninth grader Eva Morin competed at the state Swimming and Diving Championship Meet at Webster Schroeder High School in Webster, New York, on Nov. 17-18. In the 100-yard backstroke, she swam in 1:01.08, which improved her statewide ranking from 44th to 38th.

In the winter season, the boys basketball team nabbed the Section 1 championship with a 47-44 win over Rye on March 2, and advanced to the regional semifinals. The team finished the season 18-7.

The boys hockey team also had a thrilling season, winning the Section 1 championship and regional championship for the first time in Byram Hills history. The team became regional champions with a 4-2 victory over St. Lawrence on March 2 and finished as state semifinalists with a 19-5 record.

The merged girls ice hockey team, the North Avalanche, won the Section 1 title on Feb. 8 in its inaugural season with a 5-0 victory over the Rockland Rockies and finished with a 10-3-2 record.

In wrestling, the merged BBHVV team (Briarcliff, Byram Hills, Valhalla and Westlake) became Section 1 champs for the first time in program history in the team event on Feb. 11. Competing individually in the 108-pound weight class, Nick Fortungo was the Section 1 champion and competed at the state championship.

"Congratulations to all of our fall and winter athletes for their unprecedented success," Mr. Saunders said.

