

INSIGHT

A MESSAGE FROM THE SUPERINTENDENT

What a start to the school year this has been!

This newsletter – to be issued four times a year – is part of a new communication system that also will include an enhanced presence on social media.

It's part of the exciting launch of our new identity as the Middlesex County Magnet Schools. Since the flag-raising in September on all five campuses, surely you've seen the new logos, the changes to our website, the 30-second television spot, the new signs and banners at the school buildings, the new gym floors.

This rebranding is an ongoing process that will continue as the school year progresses. I hope you find it as exciting as I do as we let the world know about the dynamism of our school district and the opportunities it offers to Middlesex County residents.

As we continue to assess and evaluate our curriculum to meet the needs of our students and the employment needs in Middlesex County, we have added new career majors in physical therapy and finance, bringing to 34 the number of majors we offer.

As we continue to add articulation agreements with post-secondary institutions, almost 500 of our students received college credit in the last school year.

As November began, state and Middlesex County officials joined the Magnet Schools administration to announce the construction of a new Magnet School on the campus of Middlesex College – the Magnet School of the Future.

The good news about the Middlesex County Magnet Schools just keeps on coming. This newsletter will keep you in touch with all the exciting things that are happening!

Kind Regards,

Jorge E. Diaz
Superintendent of Schools



Board of Education

- Keith Jones II, *President*
- Laura Czarneski, *Vice President*
- Karen Eastman, *Member*
- Vittorio Tartara, *Member*
- Kyle Anderson, *Interim Executive County Superintendent of Schools*

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REBRANDING INITIATIVE

Our district has fully entered a new era in its more than 100-year history with a new name and visual identity to accurately present the exceptional, specialized, free education it offers all Middlesex County students.

Announced in June by county and district officials, the exciting change was trumpeted by flag-raising ceremonies on all five campuses in September.

Superintendent of Schools Jorge E. Diaz explained the district's plan to further unify its schools under a brand identity that authentically matches the true experiences and offerings at the Middlesex County Magnet Schools.

"This school district has grown and evolved with the times, expanding the program offerings to include not only skills-based training, but rigorous academic coursework as well — particularly in STEM subjects," said Middlesex County Commissioner Director Ronald G. Rios said.

Rios said the rebranding is in keeping with Destination 2040, the county's master plan for long-term economic success.



REBRANDING INITIATIVE

Diaz continued: “The world of education is evolving, and the very nature of our schools is meeting the needs of today’s students and future generations, right where they are. Middlesex County Magnet Schools are igniting and enhancing the passion points of young and adult students, providing a clear direction, a ‘north star’ to success — College Ready. Career Ready. Life Ready. Our students are and will be the bedrock of the County’s workforce of the future, driving economic prosperity.”



“The timing is right for a new name and brand identity that closely describes the kind of learning that happens in our classrooms -- it will ensure that students in our community fully understand the range of high-quality educational options they have by simply living in this county,” said Board of Education President Keith Jones II. “This levels the playing field by providing an educational system that is diverse, equitable, and inclusive where every student has a chance to succeed.”

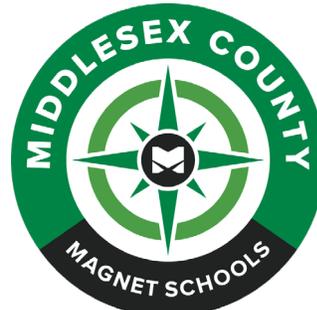
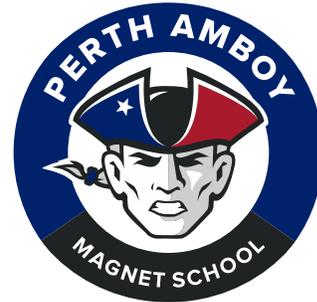
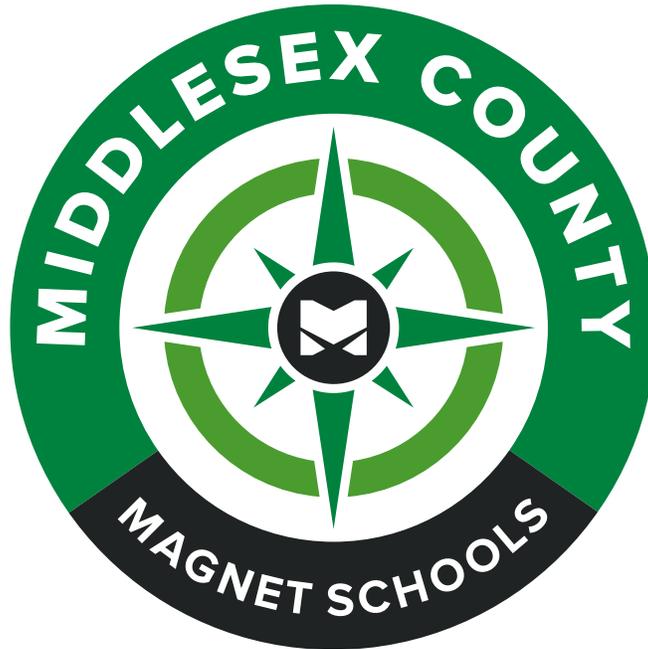
The rebranding has included new logos, banners, flags and other identifying materials to unify the Magnet Schools identity across the entire district.



[Click here to view our Flag Raising Ceremony Video](#)

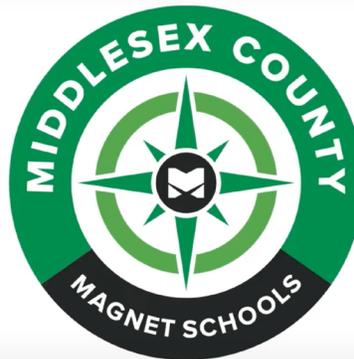


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- Fox News
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- TNT
- Food Network
- TLC
- ESPN - including
"Monday Night
Football" and
College Football
- AMC - including
"The Walking Dead"
- News12
- TBS
- Bravo
- YES - Yankees
games

**We have also been
featured in:**

- [Tap Into](#)
- [CentralJersey.com](#)
- [Middlesex County](#)
- [Patch.com](#)
- [MyCentralJersey.com](#)
- [Amboy Guardian](#)

STUDENT AWARDS AND ACHIEVEMENTS

Edison Academy senior **Samuel Lihn's** Governor's School of Engineering and Technology research paper, "Analysis of the Optimal Adjustment Frequency for a Dual-Axis Solar Tracker," has been accepted to the MIT Undergraduate Research Technology Conference.



His research was done in collaboration with his Governor's School research group and the Rutgers Industrial and Systems Engineering Department. Sam then traveled to the MIT campus with his group and gave a short talk about the project.

During Governor's School this past summer, he was able to engage in a robotics-related research project in which his team measured the efficiency increase of solar panel power generation when a device was used to align the solar panel to the sun. His team developed a framework for measuring these efficiency increases and also found clear results that promote further study in this field.



Out of more than 2,500 submissions from 50 states and 40-plus countries, eight **Digital Film students from the East Brunswick Magnet School** had the honor of being Official Selections at the All American High School Film Festival 2022 at the AMC Empire 25 in New York City, as well as at the Teen Indie Awards at the historic Kings Theatre in Brooklyn.

The selections included "Il Tetto (The Rooftop)" by Gabriel Werts, "Paradise Island" by Alexandra Mars (alumna 2022), and "A Self Portrait" by Caitlin Bieri (alumna 2022).

Alexandra's film was selected as a Best Adventure Travel Nominee. For a list of all 2022 Nominees and Award Winners, [click here](#).



HEALTH AND WELLBEING



Middlesex County Magnet Schools, in partnership with the Society for the Prevention of Teen Suicide, is introducing Lifelines, a school-based suicide prevention and response program. Lifelines is an evidence-based program that assists districts with crisis prevention and intervention as well as traumatic event response.

The successful implementation of this program starts with you! We need your feedback on the School Readiness Survey. On average, the survey takes five to seven minutes.

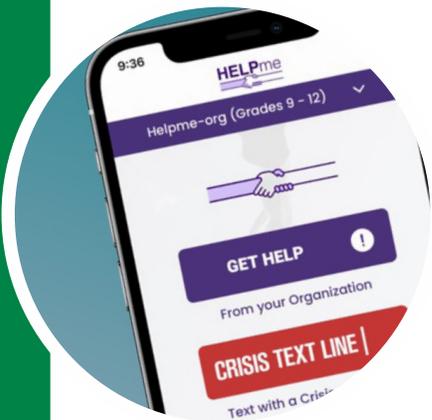
Your input will provide valuable feedback that we will consider as we implement the program.

...

Use [this link](#) to complete the survey. When prompted, our school district code is 1202. This number is also found at the top of the survey so you do not need to memorize it.

Thank you in advance for choosing to complete this survey in support of our plan to implement Lifelines across the district.

Superintendent Diaz has announced that the district has enrolled in HELPme, by STOPit Solutions. HELPme is a technology platform to assist students, parents, and staff in asking for and privately accessing a wide variety of help and resources.



Our aim with HELPme is to provide the following:

1. Private access to basic-needs resources.
2. Convenient linkage to school, community, local, state, and federal resources and helplines.
3. A culture that recognizes that all of us need help at different points in life and that asking for help is an important life skill.

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HEALTH AND WELLBEING



HELPme is a tool that works by empowering students, parents, and staff to access the help they need with dignity and privacy.

All parties will have access to the HELPme mobile app, which has three main features:

GET HELP can be used to anonymously request help from local school contacts, including Messenger, which allows anonymous two-way communication with school contacts and help requesters.

CRISIS TEXT LINE can be accessed directly from the app to text with other trained crisis counselors.

GET RESOURCES can be used to search community, local, state, and federal resources and helplines.

Our designated administrators will have access to HELPme's backend incident management system to manage and track requests. The system may also be used to assign requests to other individuals.

We will launch the HELPme app within the next few weeks.

Our next step is to train all district users, and our goal is to introduce the HELPme app to all staff, students, and parents before the end of this month.



**Get help in the way you need it.
Download today.**

ADULT EDUCATION

At the Practical Nursing Program September monthly staff meeting, instructor Jennifer Kean demonstrated an Easy Test Maker for creating assessments. Instructors discussed the use of Shadow Health's Digital Clinical Experience, a digital standardized patient that allows students to practice and refine their assessment skills. Students will replicate patient education, empathy, and communication found in a real-life patient interaction. Upcoming in-person clinical schedules and locations were fine-tuned.



Practical Nursing instructor Gina King took senior students to their first clinical experience at ProMedica Skilled Nursing and Rehabilitation in Piscataway.



Adult Cosmetology students visited Gregg's Wholesale and Retail Beauty Supply in Linden for a presentation on the cosmetology industry and being an entrepreneur. Students learned about starting a business and making it successful.



Dawn Lystad, Director of Adult Education, participated in the **New Jersey Pathways to Career Opportunities Electric Vehicle Workforce Roundtable**, a statewide program that looked at how the adoption of electric vehicles on a wide scale is driving workforce training needs across industries in New Jersey.



ATHLETICS NEWS

Eleven Middlesex County Magnet Schools

student athletes have been recognized by the Greater Middlesex Conference as All-Division soccer players: East Brunswick Campus, J. Paelez; Edison Academy, J. Counterman, A. Daga, P. Patil; Piscataway Campus, V. Godinez DeJesus, M. Gutierrez, E. Ramos, S. Ratainda; Woodbridge Campus, M. Dhoka, S. Dhoka, A. Surgan, A. Xehula. Michael O'Boyle of the Piscataway Magnet School was Coach of the Year, and the Sportsmanship Award went to Perth Amboy Magnet School.

East Brunswick Magnet School cross country

runners Isabella Marquez and Tiffany Crosby were recognized at Senior Night. Chef Rastelli and her class provided the food for the celebration.

Led by captains Uriel Juarez Lopez and Marquis Pullins, both the male and female student athletes of the **Perth Amboy Patriots soccer teams performed their best all season** and it showed on the soccer field.

Ultimately, their efforts and team culture earned them the sportsmanship award for the conference.

East Brunswick Magnet School cross country sophomore Milan Overton competed in the **Piscataway Fire Prevention 5K Run**.

She was the second-place female finisher and finished eighth overall.



[Click here to view Athletic Schedules](#)



CAREER AND TECHNICAL EDUCATION



A new partnership has been launched that would pair Magnet School students and graduates with employers and training centers in maritime and defense work. On September 13th, Magnet School representatives attended the Pennsylvania Talent Pipeline Project's Kickoff Partnering Review in Philadelphia. The project is crossing the Delaware to partner with county vocational programs across New Jersey, including Middlesex County Magnet Schools.

Students enrolled in the **Pre-Apprenticeship in Career Education program** have begun to receive their grant-funded tool kits. These industry-standard tools will help our students work in the field as they continue on their careers.



Over fifty Magnet Schools students and recent graduates are enrolled in the PACE grant program, which has placed students into workplace training and prepared them for apprenticeships in career programs related to manufacturing.



On Sept. 27, the Magnet Schools were represented at the **New Jersey Pathways Technology and Innovation Collaborative meeting at Rowan University.**

Presenters focused primarily on opportunities in the world of cybersecurity and how hiring in related fields is almost entirely based on stackable credentials instead of college completion.



CAREER AND TECHNICAL EDUCATION



Representatives from **Universal Technical Institute** presented to the combined classes of Auto, Pre-Engineering and Manufacturing, and HVAC on Oct. 4 to share opportunities for post-secondary training.

Upperclassmen from the **Pre-Engineering and Manufacturing and Machine Tool Technology programs** attended a Manufacturing Day event October 7th at Silver Line Building Products' New Brunswick facility. Students were able to tour their plant, see demonstrations, and network with employees.

Piscataway welding students Liam Hoag and Robert Saintz traveled to the Philadelphia Navy Yard with instructor Glen Foli to represent Middlesex County Magnet Schools at the Project MFG Career Discovery Day Welding Competition. Liam and Robert had a two-hour time frame to complete their project using GMAW and/or FCAW processes to fabricate a carbon steel pressure vessel with the carbon steel materials provided. The event was sponsored by the Pennsylvania Talent Pipeline Project.



SCHOOL CLUBS AND ORGANIZATIONS

More than 30 clubs and activities were presented at the club fair to Edison Academy ninth to eleventh graders in the Commons, the CAD Lab, and the Media Center. Club leaders presented on their organizational missions, trips, events, fundraising and membership. Pizza and snacks were available for purchase from the Student Council.



East Brunswick Magnet School AgriScience Technology students and FFA members Y. Nunez, D.Peralta, and L. Clements attended the New Jersey State FFA annual Leadership Experience and Development (LEAD) conference in Mount Laurel. They attended Chapter Officer Leadership Training (COLT) to learn how to develop their leadership skills, set personal and chapter goals, and construct a program of activities incorporating SMART goals. Members also had the opportunity to network with FFA state officers and FFA members from across the state. State FFA Vice President L. De Sousa Rego (Magnet Schools alumna 2022) along with her fellow state officers guided COLT attendees through various sessions and team-building activities.



The Edison Academy Esports Club participates in competitions and tournaments for League of Legends and Rocket League at the high school level, with other games being added as time goes on. Club activities include practice matches to introduce newcomers to the game, fun nights for casual and competitive players, alongside actual tournament matches in the winter and spring.



ALUMNI NEWS

Joshua Houskeeper, a 2019 graduate of the East Brunswick Magnet School with a career major in heating, ventilation, air conditioning, and refrigeration, is putting his knowledge and skills to work in the Marine Corps.

After service on a tank crew, Houskeeper is now a corporal and a refrigeration specialist. He visited his alma mater while in New Jersey to assist the Marines in recruiting efforts.

“We’re proud of all our graduates and appreciate them when they stay in touch,” said Magnet Schools Board of Education President Keith Jones II. “We thank Josh for his service to the country and for carrying the banner of the Middlesex County Magnet Schools with such distinction.”

“The Magnet Schools have a lot of success stories, and Joshua’s is certainly one of them,” said Superintendent of Schools Jorge E. Diaz. “We’re very proud of him.”

“On the skills side, the one thing I got that most 17- or 18-year-olds don’t usually get was coaching and counseling. I realize now how important those life skills really are,” said Joshua.

“Joshua was an earnest student who made the most of his time in our school to become a strong leader,” said Thomas Leiberling, East Brunswick Magnet School mathematics teacher.



Leiberling said Houskeeper joined the school’s SkillsUSA chapter as a sophomore hesitantly after being talked into it by a classmate.

“Once he was in though, he started running and didn’t stop,” Leiberling said. “He became chapter treasurer his junior year, running meetings, organizing fundraisers, and earning a silver in his shop contest as well as a bronze medal in state banner design when he volunteered to fill in for a competitor who could not make the presentation.

Houskeeper became a state SkillsUSA officer as a senior and traveled across the state as a representative of both the school and the SkillsUSA organization while also maintaining his position as chapter president and attending regular Marine recruitment events.

“He was such a quick study and understood the material so well that I hired him to work at my HVAC company, where he thrived and broadened his HVAC knowledge,” HVACR teacher Francis Wass said. “I knew from the start that Josh had the ability to excel on whatever path he chose in life.”

Houskeeper, who just re-enlisted for another four years in the Marines, is stationed at Camp Lejeune, North Carolina.

ALUMNI NEWS

Isaiah Gomez, a 2019 East Brunswick Magnet School digital film graduate, has returned to the district as part of the new External Affairs Department and is in charge of video and still photography and film editing.

“I’ve always wanted to work in marketing and do visual media,” he said. “It’s exciting to be back and to have a job where I’m doing something I like to do.”

Isaiah is working part time while attending Montclair State University as a film and television major.

A Perth Amboy resident, he has experience photographing dance and theater performances, and some of his short films have been chosen for screening at prestigious film festivals.

He credits instructor Louis Libitz with bringing an artistic sensibility as well

as technical

knowledge to the East Brunswick Magnet School digital film program.

“I think he took the program to another level,” he said.

Mr. Libitz also helped Isaiah get his first freelance job, coaching him to obtain his license as a drone pilot. Isaiah has taken pictures of Magnet Schools graduations from aloft for the last three years.



[Click to view Isaiah's portfolio and professional account](#)



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Piscataway Magnet School Welding students at the Philadelphia Navy Yard. #quickclicks

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The seniors at Edison Academy Magnet School had a great day touring Rutgers University. RU RAH RAH! #quickclicks

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The senior soccer players at Piscataway Magnet School were celebrated in a Raiders Parade! Go Raiders! #quickclicks

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We had a great Open House showcasing Woodbridge Academy Magnet School! #quickclicks

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Adult Nursing program students have been working hard learning and developing new skills #quickclicks

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East Brunswick Magnet School FFA members at the Leadership Experience and Development (LEAD) conference #quickclicks

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Congratulations to our Woodbridge Academy Magnet School 2026 class officers! #quickclicks

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Perth Amboy Magnet School HVAC students working on their Ice Rink project. Brrrr! #quickclicks

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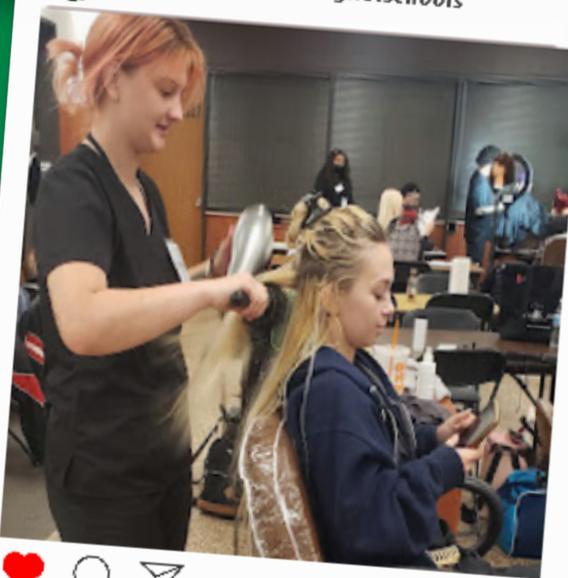
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East Brunswick Magnet School Health Services students practicing their impressive skills! #quickclicks

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Our Adult Cosmetology students are bound to make you look beautiful! #quickclicks

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Students of Middlesex County Magnet Schools attended the College Fair this Fall! #quickclicks

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Students had lots of fun celebrating at our Diwali party! #quickclicks

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Perth Amboy Magnet School Culinary students are always making the halls smell absolutely delicious! #quickclicks

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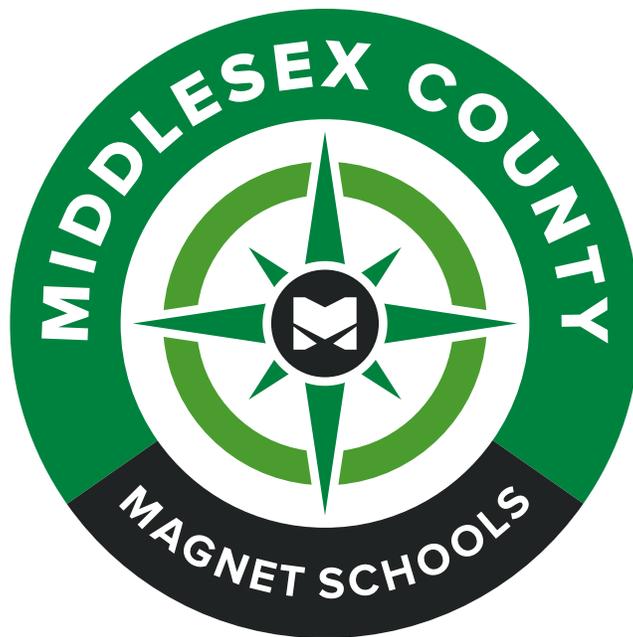
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The halls were certainly haunted this Halloween! #quickclicks

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