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# A MESSAGE FROM THE SUPERINTENDENT

### Magnet Schools Students Embark towards new Milestones, Continuing their Journeys

As the end of the school year has arrived, and before we swap our books for summer hobbies. let us take a moment to review a few milestones our school district has reached this year.

We started the second portion of our school year with the announcement that the Middlesex County Magnet Schools had been recognized by the State Department of Education with its prestigious Lighthouse Award for advancing educational equity. Commissioner Director Ronald G. Rios commended the district "for investing in the community by attracting students that are reflective of our culturally rich population and offering every resident free access to top quality, competitive education."



As a district, we are able to say that we rank among the best in the state, placing 2nd and 3rd out of the best public high schools in New Jersey according to the U.S. News & World Report. And, the New Jersey Department of Education's Summative Ratings ranked our Woodbridge Academy Magnet School #1 in New Jersey.

Recently we joined Middlesex County and Middlesex College to announce the breakthrough on Phase 1 of the Community, Innovation, and Opportunity Strategic Investment Plan. Part of this initiative includes construction of a new Middlesex County Magnet School on the Middlesex College campus. This will be our second Magnet School at Middlesex College, and we look forward to developing programs in Sustainable Energy Technology; Sustainable Construction and Environmental Technology: Global Logistics, Robotics and Drone Technology: Information, Communications, and Cybersecurity Technology; and Biotechnology and Plant Science.

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### **Board of Education**

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

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# A MESSAGE FROM THE SUPERINTENDENT

Our facilities staff worked diligently in all five Magnet Schools, including the completely renovated and fully functional Performing Arts Center at East Brunswick Magnet School. The first performance held was the Senior Arts Gala, featuring art exhibits and productions by students in the School of the Arts. This showcase performance was the culmination of a four-yearlong, \$4.6 million renovation project. A job well done by all!



Yearly, we commend and congratulate ten recipients of the District Teacher of the Year and Educational Professional of the Year Awards. They have created a lasting and positive impact that surpasses their classroom or office. It is their commitment to the profession of education that lays the foundation for the future of our students, thank you for all that you do.

Middlesex County Magnet Schools External Affairs Department won first-place awards in two categories in the New Jersey School Public Relations Association Communication Awards. We were the only school district to receive two first-place honors.

More than 400 students at all five Magnet Schools participated as we celebrated National Career and Technical Education Month with our annual Tech Expo. Winners went on to present their projects to guests attending the Spring 2024 Advisory Dinner. That same evening, the Career and Technical Education Department honored Christopher Gioffre, service director of the Ray Catena Auto Group, as Business Partner of the Year.

We have extraordinary students throughout our district who continue to receive national – and even international – honors. Woodbridge Academy Magnet School students Anika Bukkapatnam, Sara Manjaly and Rachana Senthil wrote a preliminary machine-learning model to expedite the diagnosis of sepsis, potentially facilitating earlier and more successful treatment. Their paper was accepted for presentation at the 13th International Conference on Current and Future Trends of Information and Communication Technologies in Healthcare in Kazakhstan and was

published online by the Dutch company Elsevier Science in the openaccess Procedia Computer Science series.

> A photograph taken by East Brunswick Magnet School senior Euridice Sagastume was chosen for publication from among more than 200 entries from high schools around the world in "We The Present," a book being distributed by the School of Visual Arts in New York City to universities, high schools and the professional film community.

> > (continued on next page)

The Athletic Department has been making headlines. A senior member of the tennis team at Edison Academy Magnet School won the first Greater Middlesex Conference individual championship in the history of the Middlesex County Magnet Schools, and the Edison Academy Boys Tennis team won the Group 1 State Championship, achieving the first group state championship in district history. The Piscataway Magnet School baseball field was named Sports Field of the Year by the Sport Turf Managers Association of New Jersey. The award was presented to Michael Morvay, head grounds foreman of the Middlesex County Magnet Schools Building and Grounds Department in November.



He was cited for "improving the safety, playability and appearance" of the field.

The Adult Education Department has trained and graduated nurses, cosmetologists, electricians and plumbers, contributing to the county's workforce and the well-being of the people. Middlesex County Magnet School District has had an impressive school year and I am extremely proud of each student, staff, and district employee.

Lastly, I would be remiss to not mention our graduating class of 2024. You have experienced uncertainty and worked through various challenges as high school students. May you continue to find strength within yourself and build meaningful relationships with those around you. Good luck to the Class of 2024, may you have continued success.

Have a great summer!

Kind Regards,

Jorge E. Diaz Superintendent of Schools



### **ALUMNI PORTAL**

### Graduating This Year? Alumni of the District? **Register Today!**

Congratulations to the Middlesex County Magnet Schools Class of 2024. We couldn't be prouder of all our seniors, who weathered unprecedented challenges to reach their senior year.

As you embark on the next phase of your lives and careers, please consider staying in contact with your alma mater and all your fellow alumni. Click here for the official announcement video.

In our schools, we believe in the power of lifelong connections and in providing students with opportunities to benefit them

throughout life. The bonds formed within our schools can continue to grow after graduation day, and we're very excited to announce a new platform that will further strengthen those connections. Our alumni website is a dedicated online platform designed exclusively for our graduates who have passed through our halls in East Brunswick, Edison, Perth Amboy, Piscataway and Woodbridge. This digital hub will be a centralized place for networking, mentorship, career development, and much more.

Whether you were a Vo-Tech student years ago or are a recent Magnet Schools graduate, with the alumni portal, you'll be able to:

- Connect with fellow alumni: Reconnect with old friends and make new connections within our growing alumni network. Find classmates, join affinity groups based on graduation years, and expand your professional network.
- Explore career opportunities: Discover job openings, internships, and mentorship programs tailored to our career and technical education community. Perhaps you'd like to seek career advice from other graduates – or post a new job opportunity? This platform will be your go-to resource.
- Stay updated: Receive the latest news, events, and announcements from the Magnet Schools and throughout Middlesex County. Stay informed about reunions, alumni gatherings, and other opportunities to engage with your alma mater.

Our student successes reflect our community's strength, and we actively want to forge lifelong relationships with every member of our extended family. Join us today on alumni.mcmsnj.net to connect, and help recent graduates continue to unleash their passion.



### Middlesex County Magnet Schools in the Top of National Rankings of U.S. News World Report of Best High Schools



The U.S. News World Report of Best High Schools released their rankings of nearly 25,000 public high schools throughout the nation. In New Jersey, 426 high schools were ranked based on state assessment proficiency, AP performance, and graduation rates. Edison Academy Magnet School was ranked #2 in New Jersey and #42 in the nation, and ranked the #6 STEM high school nationally. Woodbridge Academy Magnet School moved into the #3 spot from #4 the previous year (#58 nationally). East Brunswick Magnet School increased their state ranking moving up to #202 from #330 the previous year, and ranked amongst the top 25% nationally. Perth Amboy Magnet School increased their ranking to #243 from #288 the previous year. While Piscataway Magnet School's ranking remained the same at #349, they boasted a significant increase in Math proficiency.

#### New Jersey Department of Education (NJDOE) Summative Ratings

The NJDOE released the summative ratings for every high school in New Jersey. The summative ratings are based on graduation rates, state assessment proficiency, and chronic absenteeism. We are proud to announce all of our schools ranked among the top 6 high schools in Middlesex County, and ranked in the top 18% of the state rankings. Woodbridge Academy Magnet School topped the rankings at #1 in New Jersey! Congratulations to all!

#### └<u>▶ View County & State Rankings</u>

\*Note: NJDOE & U.S. News use different metrics to rank schools

Not a bird, not a plane but the Solar Eclipse! Magnet School students view solar eclipse with special glasses.



The eclipse wasn't total in Middlesex County but the enthusiasm for watching it was.

All students and staff at the Middlesex County Magnet Schools

were provided with solar eclipse safety glasses, and students at all five Magnet Schools were given the opportunity to go outside to observe and learn from this exciting natural phenomenon.

In an email to parents and guardians, Superintendent of Schools Jorge E. Diaz explained the decision to purchase eclipse glasses for students and staff.

"We are excited to inform you about an upcoming event that presents a unique educational opportunity for our students: the solar eclipse occurring on April 8th," the superintendent wrote. "To ensure the safety of our students while maximizing the learning experience, we are pleased to announce that the school district has purchased solar eclipse glasses for all students and staff.

"This initiative aims to incorporate educationally appropriate lessons surrounding the solar eclipse into our curriculum. By providing each student with solar eclipse glasses, we can safely observe this natural phenomenon while engaging in meaningful discussions and activities that enhance their understanding of astronomy, science, and the wonders of the universe.

"Safety is our top priority, and we want to assure you that the solar eclipse glasses provided to our students meet the necessary safety standards recommended by experts. These glasses will allow students to view the solar eclipse without risking any harm to their eyesight."

All of the students were permitted to go outside at about 3:10 to watch the eclipse – when the clouds allowed. At Edison Academy Magnet School, students went out at 2:45 for a demonstration with props of just what occurs as the moon obscures the sun in an eclipse.

There was general agreement that it was a unique experience, exciting and educational.

▶ <u>View some photos from the event here.</u>

# School of the Arts seniors showcased in renovated Performing Arts Center

Seniors in all seven career majors in the Middlesex County Magnet Schools School of the Arts were showcased on March 22 as the renovated Performing Arts Center at East Brunswick Magnet School officially reopened.



The evening began with an art exhibit in the atrium of the auditorium with a display of works by seniors in Multimedia Art and Design and in the Graphic Arts: Commercial Art and Design programs. Guests were served hors d'oeuvres made by Culinary and Baking students.

Performances on stage were by Theatre, Music Performance and Technology, and Dance students. Works by Digital Film students also were shown.

Throughout the program seniors in the Arts Technology program worked behind the scenes. Architecture Technology and Building Trades students provided stage hardware and audio stand design and construction.

Special guests included Magnet Schools Board of Education members Laura Czarneski and Christine Faustini, Assemblyman Sterley Stanley, Superintendent of Schools Jorge E. Diaz, and East Brunswick Magnet School Principal Michael Cappiello.

The Performing Arts Center underwent a four-year-long, \$4.6 million renovation that replaced seats and flooring, upgraded the sound and video systems and added a green room with 12 changing stations and a scenery workshop with storage space.

View photos from the Senior Arts Gala here.

Middlesex County reaches design milestone in the Community, Innovation, and Opportunity (CIO) Strategic Investment Plan. Middlesex County announced the completion of design in Phase 1 of the Community, Innovation, and Opportunity Strategic Investment (CIO) Plan on Tuesday, May 14 at the North Lawn of Middlesex College. The event showcased the completed designs of the Multipurpose Venue, the Student Center, and the new Middlesex County Magnet School, marking a pivotal point where progress becomes tangible, and construction is poised to begin. Attendees dove into the new designs t



and construction is poised to begin. Attendees dove into the new designs through virtual-reality technology, enabling a true immersive experience.

Sharing the significance of this milestone, speakers included Board of County Commissioners Director Ronald G. Rios; Middlesex County Administrator John Pulomena; Middlesex College President Mark McCormick; and Middlesex County Magnet Schools Superintendent Jorge Diaz.

"We've been touting this plan since November 2022 and we are beginning to see our vision take shape. The CIO Plan isn't merely an aspiration or a 'hope' of ours, it's a reality," said Middlesex County Commissioner Director Ronald G. Rios. "For all of us who call Middlesex County home, the CIO strategy will be a game-changer in our economy and the quality of our lives – this includes improving the lives of students, faculty, and staff that work and attend this College."

"These amazing additions to our campus will provide new and enhanced opportunities for our students to learn, study together, and engage in a wide range of extracurricular activities including athletics and student clubs," said Middlesex College President Mark McCormick. "Working closely with Middlesex County and the contractors, College administration will seek to minimize disruption to day-to-day campus operations and is committed to regular communication with the College community regarding the construction phase."

"Students from every municipality in the County are eligible to attend our Magnet Schools. Building this new Magnet School means we will be able to serve even more students," said Middlesex County Superintendent of Schools Jorge Diaz. "Its location here on campus will make it convenient for our students to participate in dual enrollment programs. It will also help us to continue building our relationship with the College and the County."

▶ <u>Read the full article here.</u> | <u>View photos from the announcement here.</u>

Dr. Joseph Howe has been named business administrator for operations of the Middlesex County Magnet Schools.

For Howe, it is a return to his alma mater: He graduated from what was then East Brunswick Vo-Tech in 2003.

He comes to the new post from Rutgers Graduate School of Education, where he was senior director of finance and administration.

Previously he worked for the Freehold Borough School District, where he was

superintendent, assistant superintendent and business administrator/board secretary.

Prior to beginning his career in schools, Howe worked for the federal Social Security Administration and for the State Comptroller's Office.

"We are thrilled to add Dr. Howe to the Magnet Schools administration," Superintendent of Schools Jorge E. Diaz said. "He brings with him excellent qualifications and, being a graduate, has keen insight into what we do at the Magnet Schools."

The current Magnet Schools business administrator, Karl Knehr, is transitioning into a new role as the business administrator of facilities and capital planning, where he will oversee the vast capital improvement projects throughout the five campuses.

Howe has a doctorate in educational leadership, management and policy from Seton Hall University, a master's in finance from Rider University and a bachelor's degree in political science from Kean University and is a certified public accountant.

He began his college education while a student at East Brunswick Magnet School majoring in computer assisted drafting, graduating with 15 credits from Middlesex College. He also began his career in public service while still in high school, working for Old Bridge Township through the cooperative education program and volunteering as an EMT with the rescue squad.

"I think there's something for everyone at the Magnet Schools," Howe said.

He said he wasn't sure of his career path when he started high school but found he had an aptitude for computers.

"There's been a big push in the last few years for career and technical education," he said, "but that was something the Magnet Schools have always done – we were way ahead of our time."

Howe lives in Helmetta with his wife, Rebecca, and 4-year-old son, Henry.



# **2024 ADVISORY DINNER**

On the evening of April 25, Middlesex County Magnet Schools hosted its annual Spring Advisory Dinner, held at Piscataway Magnet School.

Community partners including students, parents, instructors, guidance counselors, administrators, representatives from higher education, industry professionals and more were treated to presentations from Tech Expo winners, an enormous assortment of creative hors d'oeuvres, and a delicious dinner and dessert all before providing essential feedback for our many Career and Technical Education programs through their advisory meetings.



County Commissioner Director Ronald G. Rios, County Commissioner Chanelle Scott-McCullum, Superintendent Jorge E. Diaz, Director of Career and Technical Education Lee Neamand, and Supervisor of Career and Technical Education Adam Recktenwald delivered remarks on the current state and future goals of our district. Ray Catena Auto Group's Christopher Gioffre was publicly awarded as the district Business Partner of the Year.

A host of colleagues and students made this night a huge success especially the culinary talents of Chefs Antonia Mastrella, Christian Rios, Nadia Guzman, and Kevin Diemer and their students, Agriscience students led by Kylie Naylor and Liam Ryan, who provided the floral centerpieces, Machine Tool Technology students led by Mark Eisenbrey, who created the VIP table centerpieces. Tables also featured laser cut District-themed confetti designed by Jamie Sobolewski's Graphic Design students and cut by Architecture instructor Leo Malave. Thanks also to Joe Coyle, Francis Wass, Chantel Joyner-Rogers, Marie Bowen, and Nikita Patil, whose Tech Expo finalists presented, Andy Greatorex's Music Performance and Technology students, who performed, and Gargyee Roy's Graphic Design students, who exhibited artwork.

This event would also not have been possible without the help of the Piscataway Magnet School Administration team, the maintenance and custodial staff, Jason Baer and the Aramark team, External Affairs, and our Administrative Assistants, who helped conceptualize and organize the event: Karmela Hadjioannou, Mo Onafowora, Adrienne Cardinale, and Nancy Giacalone. Thank you to you all. We look forward to celebrating again next year!

▶ <u>View photos from the 2024 Advisory Dinner here.</u>

# **CELEBRATE MIDDLESEX**

### Magnet Schools Students Join in on the Fun in This Year's Celebrate Middlesex Day

Celebrate Middlesex, a free family event that showcases the programs, services and people of Middlesex County, was held June 8 at Roosevelt Park in Edison.



Middlesex County Magnet Schools had a strong representation throughout the day which started with a live performance from the East Brunswick Magnet School Dance program. Then guests would make their way to our Middlesex County Magnet School tents where they could have some career focused fun. Students and teachers from 13 of our career programs such as Global Logistics, Welding Technology, Baking, Agriscience Technology, HVAC-R, Pre-Engineering and Manufacturing Technology, Digital Filmmaking, Architecture Technology, Automotive Technology, Health Services, Civil Engineering created some of the most interactive presentations that were loved by all. Children and parents alike were blown away by our students and programs. Many made their way to speak with our Guidance Counselor who welcomed conversations ranging from when can my child apply for school to how can my child transfer to the Middlesex County Magnet Schools? There was no shortage of excitement!

The day was filled with meeting new people and learning about some of the best aspects of Middlesex County. We can't wait to participate again next year and hope you will be able to join in on the fun. If you are interested in volunteering with us for Celebrate Middlesex 2025 email: HadjioannouK@mcmsnj.net. View photos from Celebrate Middlesex 2024 here.



# 2024 MAGNET SCHOOLS PROM - STARRY NIGHT

Seniors showed up in their best for this year's prom on May 16th. Prom is a yearly celebration that students look forward to as an unofficial mark of warmer weather, graduation, and the upcoming next chapter of their lives. Hilton East Brunswick Grand Ballroom is where everyone gathered to mingle and dance, this year's theme of the evening was Starry Nights. Many took their photos with our district logo decorated with blue, silver and gold balloons that matched the centerpieces at every table which were created by the East Brunswick Magnet School Agriscience program.



Prom king and queen were named from every Middlesex County Magnet School and they are:

- East Brunswick: Joseph Squillante (king) and Lilly Clements (queen)
- Woodbridge: Bhavesh Manne (king) and Medini Kodali (queen)
- Edison: Pratham Ashar (king) and Surabhi Bachhav (queen)
- Perth Amboy: JohnKelly Jimenez (king) and Kiara Tapia (queen)
- Piscataway: Sir Zecariah Rayland (king) and Aaralyn Whitworth (queen)

It was a fantastic night for everyone and a beautiful production from the Prom Committee.

▶ <u>Click here</u> to view photos from the night.



### **BEYOND THE BOOKS**

### **Serving Beyond Our Classrooms**

Edison Academy senior M. Patel organized a school and community wide clothing drive to donate apparel to second-hand shops. The school community donated over 15 bags of clothing, shoes, hats, and other items that will go towards keeping New Jersey thrift shops in service and affordable.



Perth Amboy Magnet School students completed painting an inspirational mural near the Guidance offices featuring the message, "In a world where you can be anything, be kind." Students experimented with painting techniques, including blending and shading various values of colors. Outlines are painted in contrasting colors with an attention to balance of hues spread throughout the design. Art Time students enjoyed painting this radiant mural and hope to spread more color throughout the school hallways with future murals.

An amazing collaboration among Construction Technology and Architecture Technology students at Piscataway Magnet School.

Mr. Leahy's Construction Technology students fabricated pickleball paddles and Mr. Minella's Architecture Technology students applied school logos and finished the paddles. The pickleball paddles will be used by our students in our Physical Education classes. This was an amazing effort between school programs to benefit our Physical Education students.

Graphic Design students in Mrs. Sobolewski's class created portraits of Syrian children for "<u>The Memory Project</u>". This is a charity that Mrs. Sobolewski has been working with for many years. The owner, Ben Shumaker, presented the portraits to the children on the border of Jordan and Syria, where they live as refugees. They were so excited to receive these gifts of kindness, care, and friendship from halfway around the world.





### **BEYOND THE BOOKS**

### **Serving Beyond Our Classrooms**

The Piscataway Magnet School DECA club and The Hook Marketplace collaborated on a project to raise awareness, encourage acceptance, and promote inclusion for people with autism. The students created pins by using recycled puzzle pieces and paint. The pins were marketed and sold by DECA students at The Hook Marketplace.

On April 26, everyone who purchased a pin was invited outside to participate in a Bubbles for Autism event to continue to raise awareness and spread information about autism. Participating in the playful act of bubble-blowing united our school community during Autism Awareness Month, nurtured a welcoming atmosphere, created community bonds, and recognized the significance of embracing our diverse society. The DECA club donated 50 percent of the proceeds to the Eden Autism organization, which provides educational and therapeutic ABA services to children and adults with autism in New Jersey.

East Brunswick Magnet School senior Cara Weaver has earned the Girl Scout Gold Award, the highest award that a Girl Scout can earn, equivalent to the Boy Scouts' Eagle Award. Her project benefited the First Presbyterian Church of South Amboy. For her project she took a little-used room in her church and renovated it into a children's space.

For the 2023-24 school year, Edison Academy Magnet School collected 1,500 pounda of food for the needy in Middlesex County through REPLENISH. This was the 10th highest total of any school in the county.

Thank you to Interact Club adviser Ms. Simmons and to all the parents, students and staff who contributed during the fall and spring food drives.







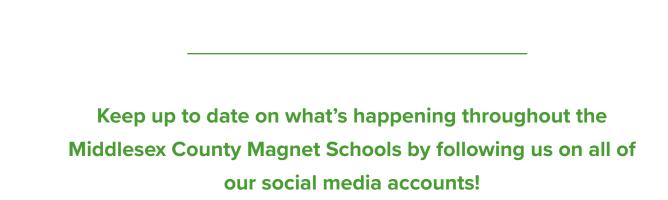
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ADULT EDUCATION



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- InsiderNJ
  - <u>The Middlesex County Board of County Commissioners reflect on achievements</u> and vision for 2024 in State of the County address

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## **STUDENT SPOTLIGHT**

# Extraordinary Students Making a Difference in Their Own Way

East Brunswick Magnet School senior Graphic Design student Harrison Pearce has decided to enlist as an active-duty member of the Army. His MOS (Military Occupation Specialty) is Eye Specialist – 68Y. Harrison will head to a 10-week basic training at Fort Sill in Lawton, Oklahoma, on Aug. 19. After which, he will head to Fort Sam Houston in San Antonio, Texas, to start his job training.

Harrison will be trained as an eye specialist; he will work with optometrists and ophthalmologists to conduct diagnostic vision tests and help care for and treat patients with eye or vision problems.

Senior P. Sitaraman has been named a U.S. Presidential Scholar.
This prestigious award is one of the nation's highest honors for high school students. Awardees are selected by the White House Commission on Presidential Scholars based on academic success, essays, commitment to the community, and other attributes.
P. Sitaraman is one of only six from New Jersey and 161 Presidential Scholars nationally.

Students from the Edison Academy Magnet School accepted congressional awards from Congressman Frank Pallone Jr. at the sixth Congressional District Spring Awards Ceremony at Middlesex College.

R. Patel, N. Travis, L. Gundla, and A. Raman were part of a team who created an app called SafeSphere, an all in one event planning and organization platform. The team was awarded Third Place in the 2024 Congressional App Challenge.

E. Poon was honored as a winner of the ninth-annual Poetry Showcase under the category of Social Justice.





### **HEALTH AND WELLBEING**

Positive Thinking and Social-Emotional Learning When students have limited social-emotional skills, they're more likely to struggle when they face a new challenge or conflict. A lack of social-emotional skills can even cause students to drop out.

Teaching social-emotional learning (SEL) is not a solution for all of the challenges our students face, but there's a lot we can do as educators to make a significant positive impact. It starts with our own social-emotional skills. One way to enhance our social-emotional skills is through positive thinking. To explore ways to incorporate positive thinking into your daily life check out

5 Tools For Positive Thinking.

Our school district recently paired with NJ4S to continue enhancing the mental well-being of our students. NJ4S is a statewide innovative "hub and spoke model" of services and resources to support youth mental wellness and promote prevention initiatives. This program offers tiered service interventions for students, families, and participating districts like us. <u>Click this link</u> to access free online webinars, receive information for in-person events, and access online resources.

Frustrated? Confused? Stressed?

Get help. 732.745.3810

**Behavioral Health Navigators** 

WE LISTEN | WE GUIDE | WE HELP







# **STUDENT ACTIVITIES**

The East Brunswick Magnet School Theater and Arts Technology career majors completed a successful run of Iphigenia, a modern retelling of Euripedes' Greek tragedy Iphigenia in Aulis.

The Woodbridge Academy Magnet School HOSA volleyball team participated in the South Plainfield HOSA Bump, Set, Match volleyball tournament and achieved an incredible feat by winning four matches and advancing to the finals, where they emerged victorious! Despite facing some tough moments during the games, their teamwork and perseverance lead them to finals, where they won with an incredible score of 2-0.

HOSA students organized a Prom Fashion Show at Piscataway Magnet School. Students were very excited to participate in this show. Dresses were borrowed from David's Bridal in Freehold and the suits were borrowed from the Quails store in the Menlo Park Mall. Hairstyles and makeup were provided to the participants by Ms. Colabella and her Adult Cosmetology students. The balloon arch decorations were donated by a parent, Mrs. Mayorga. Fun was had by all that participated and the guests.

Woodbridge Academy Magnet School's Model U.N. students, under the direction of their advisor, Mr. Stiles, hosted its first ever Model U.N. conference. Over 70 students participated in the conference, including students from Woodbridge Academy Magnet School, Edison Academy Magnet School, and West Windsor-Plainsboro High School South.



## STUDENT AWARDS AND ACHIEVEMENTS

Graphic Design, Multimedia Art and Digital Design, Theatre, Music Performance and Technology, and Dance students attended the annual Middlesex County Teen Arts Festival to perform, attend workshops, and display artwork. The Theater performance received a "Distinguished" scoring on their group presentation. A special congratulations to junior Jayden Perrotta, whose artwork was chosen as a top submission and will now move on to the New Jersey State Art Competition.

Edison Academy Magnet School's Future Business Leaders of America members attended the State Leadership Conference at Harrah's Resort in Atlantic City. Students competed against the best students in New Jersey in presentation and test events, earning first place in 13 events. The school was named Conference Champion (1 to 100 attendees). The winners will go on to compete in Orlando, Florida, at the National Leadership Conference in June.

Woodbridge Academy Magnet School students Ishaan Anand, Navya Venkat and Prisha Shah placed third in the "Chemical Nomenclature" event at the New Jersey Chemistry Olympiad held at NJIT.

Members of the East Brunswick Magnet School SkillsUSA Chapter competed against the best vocational students in the state. Every competitor made an amazing showing and represented their school with skill and professionalism. In total, East Brunswick Magnet School brought home 20 medals. Congratulations to all of our competitors and medal winners!

## **ADULT EDUCATION**

Instructor Robert Drudy's Home Repair and Maintenance class completed their final class. Superintendent of Schools Jorge E. Diaz stopped by for a visit when the students received their certificate of completion for the course. Students who completed this class gained knowledge and new skills in routine home repairs and preventive maintenance that all homeowners need over time. The students learned a lot and enjoyed taking the class.

Piscataway's Practical Nursing junior class began their clinical experience at Children's Specialized Hospital in Mountainside. CSH is a long-term hospital for medically fragile children. The nursing students study pediatric nursing theory in class and supplement their studies with observations at CSH. All the students said they enjoyed the experience and gained a lot of knowledge, with a few even saying they would like to volunteer there.

Adult Cosmetology students visited Salon Voltage in Edison.

The Adult Cosmetology class was welcomed by two former graduates of the Middlesex County Magnet Schools Adult Cosmetology program, Jackie Russomanno-Clementi (Class of 2013) and Estrella Marrero (Class of 2020). Jackie Russomanno-Clementi is a salon owner and Matrix Educator, while Estrella Marrerro is the salon manager. Congratulations to Brielle Williams, Adult Cosmetology Class of 2024, who was hired to work as an assistant at Salon Voltage. Adult Cosmetology students also had the opportunity to visit Lash Lounge in Metuchen. Stephanie Manger of Lash Lounge, who is a graduate from the Adult Cosmetology program, provided a demonstration, discussing the products and services offered at Lash Lounge, as well as opportunities to work at the salon for students.



# **ATHLETICS NEWS**

Five of the Middlesex County Magnet Schools teams competed in the Autism Awareness Challenge, East Brunswick Magnet School baseball and softball, Perth Amboy Magnet School softball, Piscataway Magnet School softball and Woodbridge Academy Magnet School softball. A. Batista Cortorreal, Perth Amboy Magnet School softball player, hit a home run during the Autism Awareness Challenge. A. Lewis, Piscataway Magnet School softball player, also hit a home run.

#### The Edison Academy Magnet School boys' tennis team

defeated Metuchen to become the Central Jersey Group I state champions. Congratulations to all team members and special thanks to Coach Smith, Coach Foli, and Athletic Director Pede for supporting the program.

Perth Amboy Magnet School senior Kiara Tapia and junior Jeremy Valdez were awarded the GMC Sportsmanship and Kindness Counts Awards at Pines Manor in Edison. Congratulations to them both for representing themselves, on and off the court and field, and Perth Amboy Magnet School in a great way. Abraham Aparicio-Rosales and Deborah Villacorta of Piscataway Magnet School were also recognized as recipients of the Sportsmanship Award.

Another successful season for the East Brunswick Magnet School softball team, who competed and eventually won the 2024 Gold Division Championhip. Also featured this season is player A. Torres-Perez, who was selected as All-Conference, a first in school history. Go Tigers!



# CAREER AND TECHNICAL EDUCATION

East Brunswick Magnet School was visited by Acting Commissioner of Education Kevin Dehmer, President of the State Board of Education Kathy Goldenberg, and Board Member and Former President of the State Board of Education Arcelio Aponte. Our esteemed guests had an opportunity to see multiple shops, including Multimedia Art and Design, Music Performance and Technology, Pre-Engineering and Manufacturing, Baking, Digital Film, and Architecture Technology, as well as performances in the new Performing Arts Center by Dance and School of the Arts majors. Our thanks to all the Career and Technical Education staff who invited us into their classrooms and the students who presented or performed. Our guests spoke highly of the experience, our programs, and the talented staff and students they met.

#### ▶ <u>View photos from the visit here.</u>

#### Piscataway Magnet School hosted its annual job fair.

Over 30 industry partners manned tables at the event in a variety of career areas, including Construction Trades, Cosmetology, Automotive, Health Careers, Culinary, and more. Students were able to speak with employers, share their resumes, and talk about employment opportunities. Our thanks to those who participated, to Piscataway Magnet School for hosting, Chef Mastrella and her culinary students, who served breakfast and lunch to our industry partners, Mark Mastrolia and Mike Perpente for bringing students from Perth Amboy Magnet School, and especially cooperative education coordinators Jim Wiater and Jenn Rastelli for organizing this amazing event.

# CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION NEWS

Read About Our Students' Latest Assessments, Programs, and How Our Faculty is Leading Students Towards Success

Mrs. Dennison, Mrs. Meagher-Di Ello, Ms. Wasco and Ms. Hoffman attended the New Jersey Writing Alliance at Rowan University. The goal of the NJWA is to build bridges between



secondary schools and colleges. This year's conference focus was on gaining ground after learning loss, and they offered workshops on improving decoding and fluency in reading, what to expect in a college writing class, building resilience and intrinsic motivation for teachers and students, the impacts of AI in the writing classroom, and engaging students in the writing process.

The completion of the New Jersey Graduation Proficiency Assessment (NJGPA) exams marks a significant milestone, showcasing the dedication and hard work of all involved. Deserving gratitude is everyone who contributed to its success – from the educators who tirelessly prepared the students, to the administrators who ensured smooth logistics, and the family and friends who supported the students every step of the way. The success of the students is a collaborative effort. The unwavering support of all involved has been invaluable throughout this journey.

Our district has been working with Inspired Instruction and Rutgers University to provide coaching at Piscataway and East Brunswick Magnet Schools for ELA, Math, and Science. This collaboration has been a great success, and we look forward to continuing our work together.

Preliminary results for the New Jersey Graduation Proficiency Assessment showed overall scores for the District have improved in both English/Language Arts and Math.

Perth Amboy Magnet School hosted Rutgers University graduate students from the Center for Youth Political Participation. Rutgers University students organized interactive workshops designed to foster active citizenship and political engagement. The students were introduced to the four facets of civic engagement: paying attention, getting political, speaking out, and volunteering your time. This is a civic engagement initiative to provide students with the motivation and tools to address public problems in the community.

## **TECHNOLOGY NEWS**

### The Heroes Behind the Screens: Middlesex County Magnet Schools' Technology Department.

#### **Technology Upgrades and Installations**

 Installed a logo wall at the Board of Education to represent the District and each Magnet School. The logos were printed on the new e-Color2 Poster Printer.



• Installed new 75-inch TV at East Brunswick Magnet School for the Longboard Project display.

#### Website Performance Report

• The May performance on Google Search report was released. The Middlesex County Magnet Schools website saw nearly 27,000 clicks in the month.

#### **Professional Development**

 The Technology Department attended the Professional Development Training and Information Session for the HoverCam PilotX. The PilotX is a wireless digital teaching station that allows for live interaction and increased student engagement. The HoverCam PilotX tablet was configured for use in the Piscataway LPN classrooms.

#### **Technical Support**

 Continue to provide daily technical support for staff and students via phone, email and workorder tickets. Provided technical setup and support for the Middlesex College Board Retreat that was hosted in the boardroom in the Central Office.

#### **Chromebook Repairs**

 Created accidental damage claims, packaged and shipped damaged Chromebooks, as well as manufacturer warranty returns for faulty Chromebooks. Repaired out of warranty Chromebooks in house.

Eleventh-grade Environmental Science students from Piscataway Magnet School visited Liberty Science Center in Jersey City.

Students were able to visit numerous educational exhibits at the facility. These exhibits included crawling through the pitch black touch tunnel, visiting various animals, seeing the butterfly touch exhibit, seeing naked mole rats, snakes, spiders and much more at the animal exhibit. Students also were able to visit the power exhibit and learn about different forms of generating energy, which related to the unit recently completed in Environmental Science.

Five junior students of Edison Academy Magnet School applied to the inaugural High School Student Poster Competition of the Rutgers Department of Materials Science and Engineering, and all were invited to compete. It was an exciting opportunity for students to experience research occurring at the highest levels in university and industry. This event was part of the annual Malcolm G. McLaren Lecturer Symposium at Rutgers' Busch Campus in Piscataway. At the evening reception, of the five awards given to high school presenters, two were won by Edison Academy Magnet School students. S. Singh won runner up and a \$400 prize for her poster titled "Microfluidic Paper-Based Device for Accessible Identification of Heavy Metal Contaminants in Water." S. Ravishankar won honorable mention and a \$250 prize for his poster, "Real-Time Reinforcement Learning Feedback Loop for Pyrolysis Recycling of CFRP Composites." A. Guruvayur, S. Kuthpadi, and A. Bhattacharyya were presented certificates by Department Chair Lisa Klein, who was very impressed by all of our students' posters. Special thanks to Dr. Colaizzi for inviting the students and chaperoning the whole day.









Perth Amboy Magnet School students from Mr. Moir's Culinary Arts class competed in two SkillsUSA competitions. Sol Garcia Castillo and Marquise Jones competed in Wedding Cake Decorating. The students had to plan, build, and decorate a wedding cake. Emily Ferrer, Yesmerlin Gomez, Ethan Chendorian, and Angel Robles competed in the Entrepreneurship competition. The students had to come up with a business plan and present their plan to their peers and judges. All students did an awesome job representing themselves, their class, and Perth Amboy Magnet School.

With Advanced Placement College Board exams behind them, along with intense preparation in the weeks leading up to them, students in Dr. Colaizzi's classes at Edison Academy Magnet School are exploring further into various areas of science. Juniors are having fun with fluid dynamics, including buoyancy and applications of air flow. Seniors are mapping and creating magnetic fields with electromagnetic induction and sophomores are doing their first kinematics experiments using constant speed vehicles as a prelude to their physics summer assignment.

Woodbridge Academy Magnet School students, under the direction of Dr. Frank, competed at the Science Olympiad in all twenty-three competitions. This was the team's first year competing in person and they made it to States.









Students from the HOSA club recently showcased Mrs. Zendjebil's Health Services program at the Sayreville Middle School Career Fair, where they enthusiastically shared their knowledge and clinical skills with middle school students. The younger students eagerly engaged in hands-on activities such as CPR and PPE, and displayed a keen interest in learning about anatomy and physiology. Our students were thrilled to meet Sayreville Superintendent Dr. Labbe, who expressed his happiness with the program and offered support and encouragement to the hardworking participants. Overall, the event was a fantastic experience, leaving both groups with valuable life lessons and a sense of accomplishment.

Students from the Architecture Technology Program and the Construction Maintenance and Planning program at Piscataway Magnet School installed Phase I of the project, a 30 foot by 16 foot platform at the Piscataway Fire Training Center on Baekeland Avenue in Piscataway. Students designed and constructed the platforms to hold a house roof training prop for the volunteer firefighters of Piscataway.

In the fall, students will complete and install Phase II and Phase III of the training prop for the local volunteer firefighters to drill and train. The props are designed to simulate real-world conditions that firefighters may encounter, like being on a ladder with a saw or ax to vent heat, in a safe and controlled environment.

Mr. Minnella, Architecture Technology teacher, says, "When Chief Hayducka and Chief Perez came to meet with us earlier this year, Mrs. Slade and I knew this was an opportunity for our students to apply known skills and learn new skills. And helping the volunteer firefighters is a great way to help our community."









Mr. Hickman's sophomores and juniors from Perth Amboy Magnet School completed their OSHA 30-Hour Construction Training through Rutgers University. During the students' training they were taught about electrical hazards, fall protection, caught in or between hazards, struck-by hazards, and health hazards in the construction field. OSHA 30-Hour Construction is the industry standard in the construction field. This training will help the students stay safe when they work in the shop and begin working in a construction setting.

The East Brunswick Magnet School Digital Film program would like to congratulate "Me vs. Me" by Lucas Rodriguez (senior) being awarded the Special Jury Prize – Social Impact. Montclair Film's Emerging Filmmaker Competition celebrates the work of filmmakers who are in the sixth through 12th grades.

Lamont Harris (junior) was accepted into the SCAD Rising Star Program (Atlanta Campus) offered by Savannah College of Art and Design. SCAD Rising Star students participate in two courses taught by SCAD faculty.

Josias Ortiz (sophomore) was accepted into the prestigious Film and Video Cherub Class 2024 and receiving a \$2,000 grant. Lucas Rodriguez (senior) had the privilege to participate as an audience member for NBC News NOW Town Hall "Digital Parenting: Raising the AI Generation" in Studio 8H – home of "Saturday Night Live", 30 Rockefeller Plaza, New York City. Lucas was also interviewed by NBC News 4 New York, which aired June 4. View his interview here.

Senior Mentorship Presentations were held at Edison Academy Magnet School. Students reflected on their workplace experience and lessons learned. Using photos from the day here.









Edison Academy Magnet School sophomore H. Rizvi was named a finalist and runner-up at Edison Youth Poet Laureate Contest and was recognized by NJ Senator Patrick Diegnan.

Under the direction of Ms. Goldstein, Piscataway Magnet School Safety Ambassadors visited a local elementary school. The students delivered impactful lessons about safety to first grade students at Randolphville Elementary School in Piscataway. This was a great experience to develop leadership and communication skills for our amazing students.

Saurish Arora and Divyesh Kuppam, have been selected as regional finalists (Top 3) in the Northeast in the ECybermission Research Competition, which was determined after they placed first in the state. Ecybermission, organized by the Army Educational Outreach Program (AEOP) and evaluated by the National Science Teachers Association, is a highly respected platform for student research with over 2,000 submissions nationwide each year. They each were given \$1,000 U.S. Saving Bonds (which will be worth \$2,000 when they mature).

Ms. Hill and the Perth Amboy Magnet School Interact club celebrated "Read Across America Week" by visiting a local elementary school and reading to young students. This was a great opportunity for our high school students to connect with young children and encourage them to read and expand not only their vocabulary but their mind as well. Thank you, Ms. Hill and the Interact club.









Senior Anika Bukkapatnam of Woodbridge Academy Magnet School won the Amanda Gorman Award for Poetry from Penguin Random House Publishing. Since 1993, this program has awarded more than \$2.9 million to public high school students for original poetry, memoir/personal essay, fiction/drama, and spoken word compositions. This signature program continues to empower and celebrate hundreds of young writers each year and underscores our unwavering commitment to identifying and nurturing new literary talent. <u>Read Anika's entry here.</u>

Twenty-three Piscataway Magnet School students took the Advanced Placement Environment Science examination. This is the first time that the school has ever held an AP course. This course is taught by Ms. Tiahna Selby and she was extremely proud of her students. We are thrilled for our students and so proud of this amazing achievement.

Kaitlyn Taylor, a senior in the Music Performance and Technology program at East Brunswick Magnet School, performed with her band *Crowfield* as part of the State Theater Inaugural Jersey Talent program, and they took first place. This program consisted of an open call from the State Theater of New Jersey in New Brunswick for video submissions of talented young New Jersey artists ranging in age from 5 to 25. The theater's program directors selected 27 acts from hundreds of submissions statewide. After completing a live audition, the field was narrowed to 10 acts. These consisted of ages 8 to 24, with several different types of acts. The theater intends to run this program annually due to the success of this first installment.







### **ALUMNI NEWS**

# Police chief started public service career at Magnet School

Middlesex County Magnet Schools alum and Perth Amboy Chief of Police Lawrence Cattano began his public service career while still in high school.

"I got involved at a very young age," he said. "I started riding in an ambulance at 14." A 1986 graduate of what was then Perth Amboy Tech, Cattano's path to becoming chief in his hometown started when he was an electronics career major in a school quite different from today's Perth Amboy Magnet School. For one thing, there were only about five girls enrolled. Starting as a volunteer for the rescue squad, he became an emergency medical technician at 16 and then was a volunteer firefighter. His electrical training in high school led him to an interest in emergency radio wiring, eventually leading him to follow in his father's footsteps into the police department.

"I just love what I do," he said. "I wouldn't change anything."

He has been a paid police officer since 1991 after starting as a volunteer auxiliary officer in 1987. He became chief in 2022 after a year as acting chief. He now supervises a force of 145 officers, the largest number in the 305-year history of the department. Civilian staff bring the total under his supervision to 280 employees.



Other hats he has worn during his tenure include fire chief and director of emergency management, a position he still holds. He said among the skills he learned in high school electronics classes that have served him well in his career were problem-solving and trouble-shooting.

"Police work is just another kind of problemsolving," he said.

A trained EMT, he was often called in when there were accidents or illnesses involving his fellow students.

"I would be pulled out of class for emergencies," he said.

After graduation he received additional training at Middlesex College, the University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey and Thomas Edison College.

He said he thinks career and technical education in high school are important whether you eventually pursue the career path you studied, since it gives you skills you can use to earn money while pursuing further studies.

Read the full story on mcmsnj.net.

### **ALUMNI NEWS**

### Magnet Schools Engineering Graduate Now Works for Navy

An early exposure to computer engineering at Edison Academy Magnet School started Kipsy Quevada on a career path of service to her country.

A 2014 graduate of what was then the Middlesex County Academy for Science, Mathematics and Engineering Technology, she went on to Stevens Institute of Technology and now works as a computer engineer for the Naval Air Warfare Center Aircraft Division in Lakehurst.

"Getting exposed to engineering at a very young age was crucial," she said. "It gave me the opportunity to have the engineering mindset. It definitely prepared me for what was to come."

Quevada said her Edison Academy experience taught her time-management skills, as she juggled the demands of academics and a very active extracurricular experience, including playing soccer and being a member of the orchestra club and the National Honor Society. She participated in the talent show and sang the National Anthem at events.

She was part of a team that won an MIT invention competition by designing an agricultural drone.

She now works as a civilian on the Navy's Electromagnetic Aircraft Launch System and says she is "really happy" in her job.



"This was one of the best decisions I made in my life," Quevada said. "I want to be doing something that matters, impacting people in a positive way.

"I do really care about the country and the people who protect the country. People's lives depend on what I do."

Quevada's parents were immigrants from the Philippines and she grew up in Iselin.

She recently returned to Edison Academy Magnet School to talk to students during Engineering Week.

"It was really emotional for me to return to the place where I first began to fall in love with STEM," she said.

She said she was pleased with the changes she saw since her graduation and was happy to visit with Principal Amro Mosaad, who had been "amazing" as one of her teachers.

Read Kipsy's full interview on mcmsnj.net.

### **ALUMNI NEWS**

### Owner of *Hairapy Salon* learned her trade at Piscataway Magnet School

Shannon Breen says her mother knew she was destined to study cosmetology when she was still quite little.

"I had to cut the hair of every doll that I got," Breen said. "I loved to go to the salon with my mom."

An Edison resident, she enrolled at Piscataway Magnet School – then Piscataway Vo-Tech – and cycled through a number of career classrooms, as all freshmen do. She had some familiarity with the school since her brother Shawn was a 1998 graduate in heating, ventilation and air conditioning.

"I met new people, which was a good thing," she said. "When I finally got to cosmetology, I was in heaven.

"I really loved my time there," she added. "You really make a bond with the other students. The cosmetology girls ruled the school."

Breen began working at salons while still a student, initially just shampooing clients. When she graduated in 1999, she worked her way up in the trade, eventually becoming a shop manager and then managing three shops with 35 employees.



She is in her second year as owner/operator of Hairapy Salon on Ryder's Lane in Milltown, employing five stylists.

"We specialize in color," she said.

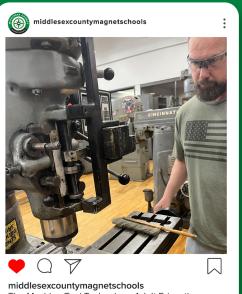
Breen advises aspiring stylists to take their time learning the trade.

"If you have the passion, 100 percent go for it," she said. "You're going to start at the bottom and grow.

"Really educate yourself before you go out there and put yourself behind the chair."

└ Visit the Hairapy Salon website.

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The Machine Tool Technology Adult Education Class puts the "super" in superturbochargers! #quickclicks

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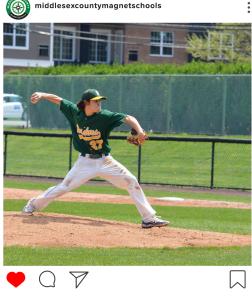
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An artist at work in the Graphic Design classroom at Perth Amboy Magnet School. #quickclicks

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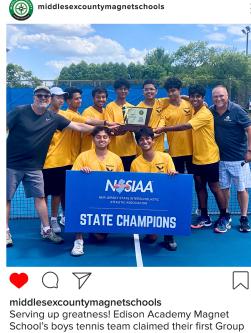
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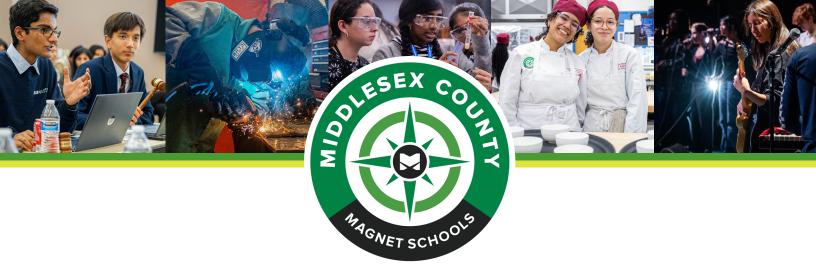
1 final state championship. #quickclicks





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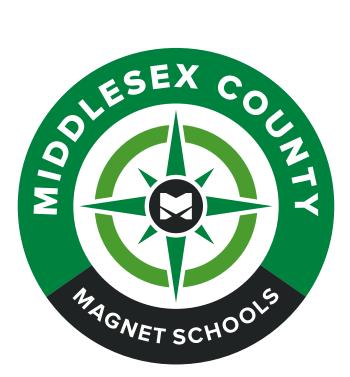
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